

misunderstood scapegoats?

ed by the KGB. Undoubtedly it is. Any group protesting against the policies of a government that is ideologically opposed to the Soviet Union is likely to be; just as any anti-Communist group in Latin America is likely to be financed by the CIA. We are living in a dirty world, full of distrust and subterfuge. Let us admit also that the USSR is working toward world communism, that Lenin once said that world peace could only be achieved if the entire world was communist. But the myths of communism are greater than the realities, especially when such remarks are taken out of context. Lenin also remarked in *The State and Revolution* that in a communist society, the state would eventually wither away, whereas in the USSR it has become increasingly omnipotent. By this token, if world communism was ever attained, then the first victims of the new society might well be those who had delayed its onset the most: the leaders of the USSR.

When Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher criticize the USSR, they are speaking not of 220 million Soviet citizens, but of the small clique that runs the country through the Politburo and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). That only about 8 per cent of Soviet citizens are party members illustrates well the deliberately elitist concept that the party represents. It is a dictatorship, yes, but not of the people, the so-called proletariat, but of the small ruling bureaucracy. One can make distinctions between the policies of the first Soviet leaders, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, as leftist groups still do today, but one cannot question that each favoured a small, tightly-knit urban-based group that would attain power and maintain it by force, especially over the huge rural community in the USSR (or initially, Soviet Russia) in the 1920s. Today, Yuri Andropov is far more frightened of Soviet citizens than he is of Reagan's warlike pronouncements. It is the former that constitute the potent and

ever-present threat to the continuing hegemony of the Bolshevik Party (one of the more ironic names in world history).

Not only is the ruling bureaucracy unstable, it is also extremely aged. Most Politburo members reached their political maturity in the 1950s (an exception is Mikhail Gorbachev, a relative youngster at the age of 52). Like the late Brezhnev, they are beginning to lose their grasp over the world situation. Andropov himself lacks the freedom to manoeuvre being still involved in a struggle for power with Konstantin Chernenko, Brezhnev's chosen successor for overall authority within the Politburo. The younger generation, the leaders are not merciless cut-throats, anxious to start a nuclear conflagration at the first sign of western weakness, but for the most part, divided, anxious old men, whose worst fears are the collapse of Soviet society and an attack from the West. These are the same men, we recall, who saw the Soviet armies surrender voluntarily in their thousands to the German invader in the summer of 1941, who still refer frequently to the loss of 20 million Soviet lives in the German-Soviet war, as a constant reminder that the USSR has to remain vigilant against its enemies both within and outside the country. Their trademark is nervous tension, a tension that is only exacerbated by thoughtless remarks on the part of western leaders.

What, then, should be the western response to the USSR? In the first place, it is to the West's interest to have closer contact with that country. High-level meetings, trade connections and sports events all have the effect of bringing Soviet citizens into closer communication with the western world. All have the long-term prospect of weakening the cohesion of Soviet society, which thrives on the isolation of that society from the outside world. As long as President Reagan makes his hostile comments in public, TASS and Pravda can claim gleefully "We told you so, the U.S.

imperialists are bent on war."

Second, a genuine commitment to peace talks on a multilateral level would force the Soviet leadership to show its hand and would enable the citizens of that fragile conglomeration of nationality groups to recognize that the West is prepared to negotiate. If the USSR was really interested in expansion, the cruise or MX missile would be little deterrent. The invasion of Afghanistan, for example, occurred during a period of rearmament. The habitual and preferred policy of the USSR, however, is to await events, to follow Stalin's example and let the cards fall into one's lap. Any change in the status quo is regarded as potentially dangerous, especially if initiated in Washington. The USSR has little to gain from an invasion of Western Europe or the destruction of western cities by nuclear missiles. The retribution would shatter its fragile society.

Finally, we should cease thinking of the USSR as the personification of the world's injustices. These have been magnified as a result of its emergence as one of the two Super Powers, in the same way that every deed of the United States is scrutinized by world observers. Those who have suffered at the hands of the Soviet leadership and subsequently emigrated to the West are naturally bitter and prepared to support wholeheartedly every threat of aggression against that country. But this is not a stance that we of western birth should try to emulate. Not more than ever, we need careful reasoning and serious negotiation.

Four decades ago, the USSR was our ally in the fight against Fascism. There is nothing to prevent another radical transformation of the world system of alliances if we so wish it. The NATO versus Warsaw Pact system has long outlived its usefulness. Will the current world tension be resolved by military conflict (which may involve the destruction of the earth), or by talks and negotiation? As members of a democracy, we should try to put the situation into perspective, abandoning the mental image of ourselves and an evil enemy, ignoring the invective delivered at the USSR by prominent politicians and journalists, and implore our elected representatives to support all efforts at meaningful dialogue and multilateral disarmament.

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