

# Gorbachev: Soul of Capital Personified

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## Perestroika — New Thinking for our Country and the World

Mikhail Gorbachev  
Collins, London, 1987

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By S.W.

The importance of this book is that, to some extent, we can take Gorbachev at his word. He is dealing with drastic problems and drastic measures, which require him to reveal something of just what the Soviet ruling class is up to and why. They are serious about *perestroika* (restructuring) and they are telling the truth when they say it will require an unprecedented level of *glasnost* (openness) — that is, unprecedented since socialism was overthrown in the USSR thirty years ago. There is still the “socialist” mask, which is to say that there is still the problem of the contradiction between what they say and what they do. In the long run, however, there must be concurrence as well as deception. So we should analyse what Gorbachev says he is trying to accomplish and to whom — and on what basis — he is appealing for support.

People will always be the victims of foolish prejudices and deceptions, Lenin once wrote, until they learn to search out the interests of *classes* in every event in political life. Since in his new book Mikhail Gorbachev calls for a return to the “methods” (although not the content) of Leninism, and hails Lenin as a Russian leader whose stature is comparable only to his own, it seems fair to apply this Leninist approach to him.

First, what audience, what class, is Gorbachev addressing? Second, what is the problem, as he sees it? Third, towards what goal is all this directed, in whose interests?

### I FOR WHOM?

This book, Gorbachev tells us in the first sentence, is meant “to address directly the peoples of the USSR, the United States, indeed, every country.” In the West first edition print runs have been somewhere around 100,000 copies for the various national editions, meaning that the book is expected to be a moderate best seller. In the USSR 300,000 copies were printed for the first edition, though this book has a slightly more Western flavour than Gorbachev’s party speeches, for instance. It is fitting that it appeared on the eve of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, because it seems specifically aimed at Americans and people in other countries who want to know what Gorbachev has got to say in what is implicitly presented as a debate with the U.S. But there is a certain unity to the intended audience on all sides.

The book’s style itself reveals something about those for whom it was written. Despite the encumbrances of an ungainly, inconsistent and rushed translation, it faithfully follows the style of that most transnational of magazines, *Reader’s Digest*, the house organ of the philistine international — the smug, trite, narrow-minded and above all comfortably propertied (at least in aspirations). Its tone is, above all, reassuring.

In the press reports of the “Gorby-mania” that broke out dur-

ing Gorbachev’s visit to America, some of the most glowing tributes to the “evil empire’s” emissary seem to have come from among strata that have been the most strongly pro-Reagan. A Midwestern grain broker was pleased to discover that Gorbachev “is no radical” and that in fact he most resembles the man’s boss. Looking at it from the other side, can it be dismissed as an excess of vulgar pandering that led one of the USSR’s most senior journalists to “confide” to reporters that after Gorbachev, his favorite political figure is Ronald Reagan? Can it be that Gorbachev is pitching his *perestroika*, East and West, to some of the same kinds of strata that have supported “Reaganism,” “Thatcherism,” etc. in their respective countries?

Gorbachev says that this book is intended to appeal, in the West, to the “common sense” of “politicians and businessmen, scholars and journalists, teachers and physicians, clergymen, writers and students, workers and farmers.” (Certainly the rich West has no lack of “workers and farmers” afflicted with the “common sense” of businessmen, etc.) In reading the book, the reader finds that it is basically the same strata in the USSR itself that Gorbachev is addressing.

He doesn’t expect Soviet proletarians to be very enthusiastic. He uses a letter sent him from Lithuania to make the point: “There is no deep understanding of your policy among them [the proletarians] and there is still little trust in it.” A few pages later he reports, “the intelligentsia has enthusiastically supported the restructuring.” This requires more



*Afghani refugees in Pakistan hang Gorbachev in effigy.*

explanation, but not much subtlety. The main point that needs to be unraveled is that in Soviet terms "intelligentsia" refers not just to intellectuals but also to broader ranks of educated and therefore privileged urban strata. We'll leave aside, for the moment, the relationship between this intelligentsia and the real masters of Soviet society.

The question of audience is brought more clearly into focus by descriptions and insights written for the U.S. *Washington Post* by a Soviet-born, self-described "Sovietologist" now residing and working in the U.S., based on a recent trip back to the USSR. (We should add, in fairness, that Soviet society must be very open indeed these days, to judge by what would happen if an American defector to the USSR tried to return for a series of interviews with people on the street and old friends and acquaintances.)

Speaking of perestroika and what various people in the USSR have to say about it, Dimitri K. Simes writes, "The real beneficiaries seem to be the group I call Soviet yuppies — well educated professionals now prospering under Mr Gorbachev's

cultivation... Educated men and women, but mostly men, in their early and mid-40s... Unlike the workers, they were receiving higher incomes as a result of Mr Gorbachev's efforts to cultivate qualified professionals."

Simes describes one of them: "A university classmate of mine recently moved into a comfortable two-bedroom apartment in a prestigious building. He and his wife had just bought a second car and they talked casually about the separate vacations they took in the West. Their clothing would shine on New York's Fifth Avenue. Their candlelit supper table was loaded with sturgeon and salmon caviar, smoked fish, cold cuts and fresh vegetables. The bar boasted a variety of vodkas, scotch and an expensive brand of Armenian cognac. The furniture was made in Finland. The light from the imported lamps was elegantly dimmed. The spirit of proud prosperity was in the air."

Simes also paints a clear picture of who perestroika is *not* for. "We don't need all these nobodies exploiting perestroika to their advantage," a successful academic

administrator said. "The man in the street is unenthusiastic. 'Glasnost is for the bosses,' growled a young cab driver, and his comment seemed to speak for the Soviet masses who see Mr Gorbachev's reforms as an attack by the intelligentsia on ordinary working people."

A common trait of "Reaganism," "Thatcherism," etc., is their combination of reactionary appeals centring on patriotism with their ability to "deliver the goods," to some of the people, some of the time, in a bid to the already extensive privileged strata in these countries prepared to defend their imperialist fatherland because that's where their bread is buttered. Gorbachev, who speaks of learning from foreign experience, is their good and faithful student. Only he strives to give this technique a specifically *Russian* form, asserting he has rediscovered Lenin's method of "combining enthusiasm with material interest." Further, he is appealing not only to those strata satiated with imperialist plunder in his own country, but also to the same strata in the rival West, to whom he makes the claim that

friendship with the USSR is the best way to ensure more of the same. He even extends this appeal to certain strata in the oppressed countries who have never dared cut their ties to imperialism.

## II "A DRUG-INDUCED SLEEP" AND "INNER STIMULI"

All accounts of life in the USSR today (including Gorbachev's) are heavily laden with words like pervasive stagnation, suffocating lethargy, inertia, suffocation. Gorbachev himself describes it as "drug-induced sleep." Is it, as certain stupid Westerners claim, because people in the USSR don't have enough happy commodities? There are many countries far poorer than the USSR but few so stultified. Some people wait in line endlessly for vodka, a Christmas goose, a nice apartment ... instead of working or doing something useful. They often get it, too, or they wouldn't bother. Life seems, for many people, an endless chase for material comfort (not survival), and if the rewards are not always as plush as in some Western countries, that may be a reason to defect to the West but not a basic difference between societies. The East bloc can easily match the West for philistinism.

What is unique about Gorbachev, among recent Soviet leaders, is that in this lethargy that is part of the grease and glue of Soviet society he sees the danger of its imminent demise. He sounds the alarm: if things don't get moving in the USSR, if they don't do a better job of "combining enthusiasm with material interests," then the Soviet Union is going to go under. Why? A huge "braking mechanism" had begun to clutch at the heart of Soviet production.

Gorbachev spares no drastic words. He says, "This society is ripe for change. It has long been yearning for it. Any delay in beginning perestroika could have led to an exacerbated internal situation in the near future, which, to put it bluntly, would have been fraught with serious social, economic and political crisis..."

"At some stage — this became particularly clear in the latter half of the seventies — something began to happen that was at first sight inexplicable. The country began to lose momentum... In the last fifteen years the national incomes growth rates had declined by more than a half and by the beginning of the eighties had fallen to a level close to economic stagnation. A country that was once quickly closing in on the world's advanced nations began to lose one position after another... The country was verging on crisis."

Maoists analyse this problem in its political dimension: after 40 years of socialism and the greatest economic growth the world had ever seen, a new bourgeois ruling class emerged from within the Soviet party and seized power, restoring capitalism and thereby ensuring that the same economic contradictions gripping the Western economies would eventually capture the USSR. Remarkably, most of Gorbachev's description could be equally applied to the West. But even more remarkably, Gorbachev all but openly identifies the problem — the reason for economic stagnation — as being a lack of sufficient profitability, and to him the whole notion of increasing economic growth rates is inextricably tied up with restoring the profitability of production. This is the "common sense" he shares with Western "politicians and businessmen," etc.; not only does he speak their language but he shares their most basic assumptions.

"Our country's wealth in terms of natural and manpower resources has spoilt, one may even say corrupted, us. That, in fact, is chiefly the reason why it was possible for our economy to develop extensively for decades... As time went on, material resources became harder to get and more expensive. On the other hand, the extensive methods of fixed capital expansion resulted in an artificial shortage of manpower. In an attempt to rectify this situation somehow, large, unjustified, i.e. in fact unearned, bonuses began to be paid and all kinds of undeserved incentives introduced under the pressure of this shortage, and that led, at a later stage, to the

practice of padding reports merely for gain. Parasitical attitudes were on the rise, the prestige of conscientious and high-quality labour began to diminish and a 'wage-leveling' mentality was becoming widespread. The imbalance between the measure of work and the measure of consumption, which had become something like the linchpin of the braking mechanism, not only obstructed the growth of labour productivity, but led to the distortion of the principle of social justice... A gradual erosion of the ideological and moral values of our people began."

How do you restore ideological and moral values, remove the brake on productivity and ensure social justice? No shameless bourgeois could put it more bluntly than Gorbachev: give full play to the role of profit. In fact, for Gorbachev, just like any open worshipper of capitalist relations, profit is not only the mechanism but the very essence of social justice.

There are two aspects to Gorbachev's economic programme. "The initial task of restructuring — an indispensable condition, necessary if it is to be successful — is to 'wake up' those people who have fallen asleep." This is to be done by administering rude shocks to some and sweet promises of success to others. Here Gorbachev's idea of "social justice" has been well captured by the Labour-minded *Guardian* in which Martin Walker labeled it "the almost Thatcherite strategy of squeezing wages and raising prices and job mobility." Perestroika, Gorbachev explains, means "working an extra bit harder."

But that is only the first part. The other aspect, Gorbachev says, is "the management system." "The management system which took shape in the thirties and forties began gradually to contradict the demands and conditions of economic progress. Its positive potential was exhausted. It became more and more of a hindrance, and gave rise to the braking mechanism which did us so much harm later..."

"It was in these conditions that a prejudiced attitude to the role of commodity-money relations and the

law of value under socialism developed, and the claim was often made that they were opposite and alien to socialism. All this was combined with an underestimation of profit-and-loss accounting, and produced disarray in pricing, and a disregard for the circulation of money.

"In the new conditions the narrow democratic basis of the established system of management began to have a highly negative effect. Little room was left for Lenin's idea of the working people's self-management. Public property was gradually fenced off from its true owner — the working man. This property frequently suffered from departmentalism and localism, becoming a no man's land and free, deprived of a real owner."

By "commodity-money relations," Gorbachev is referring to the exchange of commodities (things produced to be sold rather than for direct use), including labour power, according to the amount of socially necessary labour time it takes to produce them. True, this is a Marxist concept or category; but Gorbachev's reference to it is like a thief justifying himself with a quote from his indictment. Marx considered commodity exchange the germ of all capitalist relations. When the USSR was socialist, until Stalin's death, a "prejudiced attitude towards the role of commodity-money relations" prevailed because the supremacy of commodity-money relations means the supremacy of the bourgeoisie and all that the Soviet masses fought to overthrow and keep overthrown.

First of all, labour power ceased to be a commodity. No longer was it the case that proletarians could eat only so long as they could sell their labour power to enrich some capitalist. Second, it is true that in determining how other commodities are to be exchanged, the victorious proletariat can not simply abolish the law of value that regulates capitalism; but it must restrict it and work to eliminate the basis for its existence. The line and policies carried out by the party — and the role of the masses in the class struggle around that line and policies — de-

termine whether the results of the proletariat's labour are used against the producers, to build up forces and classes that stand against them, or to build up the basis for eliminating all class distinctions and everything that corresponds to them, in other words, to revolutionise society and the world.

Because the proletariat cannot simply abolish commodity-money relations all at once, and because the differences between classes and other inequalities are so deeply embedded that they require a whole historical period to uproot, there is the possibility of capitalism coming back to life and turning socialism into a hollow shell. No matter who owns the means of production juridically (in name), the question remains: whom, what class, does production serve? The law of value is not neutral. When it has the upper hand, wage labour (work for wages) is wage slavery.

Capitalism is a "no man's land" in a certain sense, in that the driving and determining force is not anyone's will, but rather capital's own ceaseless expansion. Men and women can work and things can be made only as long as that produces a profit, while the results of their labour enslave them, their class brothers and sisters and whole nations, producing misery, horror and destruction. Capital, dead labour, rules over the living. If the Soviet leadership under Stalin hadn't had a "prejudiced attitude" towards "profit-and-loss accounting," what would have been the difference between the USSR and its enemies?

One can read a good bit of this book before Gorbachev's frequent references to a "braking mechanism" become clear. In the first reference cited above, it seems to refer to the attitude of workers towards work; in the second reference it refers to the "no man's land" created by "prejudiced attitudes to the role of commodity-money relations." It turns out that these are two sides of the same coin, so to speak, because what Gorbachev proposes is to sharpen the operation of the law of value in the Soviet economy overall and at the same time to drive it in more deeply in particular in relation to the

individual workers — resolving "social injustice" by fighting "wage leveling" and "sponging" and "unearned bonuses" and "undeserved incentives" ...in other words, by *unleveling* wages (increasing polarisation) and forcing Soviet masses to bow harder and lower to the almighty rouble, both at work and in the way decisions are made and everything is organised at every level.

This is what he means when he says "Perestroika is the all-around intensification of the Soviet economy."

Gorbachev explains the new law on state enterprises taking effect 1 January 1988: "the emphasis will be shifted from primarily administrative to primarily economic management methods at every level, and calls for extensive democratisation of management, and the overall activation of the human factor."

"The reform is based on dramatically increased independence of enterprises and associations, their transition to full self-accounting and self-financing, and granting all appropriate rights to work collectives. They will now be fully responsible for effective management and end results. A collective's profits will be directly proportional to its efficiency."

"Self-accounting and self-financing" and "independence" means that enterprises will expand or go under according to their profitability, which will play a more open role than ever in determining what gets made, where and how. (A major Moscow construction company was reported to be the first Soviet firm to go bankrupt under these new measures. According to Western estimates, a great many more are in danger.) "Appropriate rights" means more authority to enterprise managers, including increased authority to hire and fire. (Gorbachev calls this "the regroupment of labour.") "The overall activation of the human factor" means more rewards for management at various levels if they "produce" a profit and wages for producers more directly tied to the profitability of the company they work for and how much they produce — although, of course,

profitability means keeping down the wage bill.

Along with these measures, others include pricing reforms (beginning under Stalin and still to some extent today, some basic consumption items are sold at less than their cost); an increased role for small businesses and individual tradesmen; and steps to attract foreign investment.

"What is the main shortcoming of the old economic machinery?" Gorbachev asks, and then he answers, "It is above all the lack of inner stimuli for self-development." That "inner stimulus" he proposes is the *same* one so well known and hated in the West: the "cash nexus" standing at the heart of every social relation and the all-around rule of capital in every sphere of society.

It would be wrong to consider that this reform is making the USSR more capitalist, Gorbachev tell us. Once again there is some truth to what he says. Even the most blatantly "capitalist" measure in the reform laws coming into effect at the beginning of 1988, the decision to openly treat a large portion of the means of production themselves as commodities (so that capital is concentrated — including by one enterprise gobbling up another — more strictly according to profitability) is not, in itself, a decisive step, a change between social systems. The motive force behind planning, its basic criterion, since Stalin's death and Khrushchev's seizure of power, has been the accumulation of capital, including its concentration in the most profitable branches of production and so on, despite the evolving role of market forces since that time. That concentration is never, in any imperialist society, purely determined by *immediate* profit factors, but also by overall considerations of monopoly and empire.

Perhaps it is analogous to compare the USSR's 1 January 1988 economic reform with the "privatisation" of British Telecom and other UK industries, the sell-off of state enterprises in France, the dismantling of ATT and airline deregulation and all that's been associated with "Reaganism" in the U.S. This is no change of systems

but a matter of reorganising capital in the search for the fastest and greatest profit in certain fields — in the face of an overall deteriorating economic situation in *all* the imperialist countries, and in a context where the drive for the most rapid technological advances cannot be separated from preparations for fighting and winning a nuclear war.

Does the Soviet ruling class really think it can solve its most basic problems by adopting certain economic reforms already current in the West? Has the tremendous fluidity of capital achieved by Western finance resolved the Western imperialists' problems? Apparently the solution to imperialism's economic problems does not lie in the marketplace, even in the marketplace for capital itself, or at least in the world marketplace as it's presently divided. This cannot but lead one to ask if the "solution," East and West, might not lie in the political and military sphere to which various economic measures are subservient?

It is *not* the case that nothing was happening in the USSR in the seventies and early eighties, Gorbachev says: "Not that that period should be painted solely in dark colours... Science, the economy and culture continued to develop." The country was, in fact, undergoing an enormous military buildup, achieving strategic parity with the U.S. and its bloc in that field, despite the USSR's much smaller economic base. Its ability to continue that buildup is inseparably linked with perestroika.

### III "PERESTROIKA IS A REVOLUTION"

Gorbachev says that "perestroika is a revolution." In fact, Gorbachev's "revolution" is a revolution upside-down.

For instance, even many cynical defenders of the USSR consider its gross class inequality embarrassing, but Gorbachev is of the opposite opinion: "The widespread practice of equalising has been one of the prime deformities in the past few decades." Then he goes on to say, "Only work determines a citizen's real place in society, his social status... What we value most is a

citizen's contribution to the affairs of the country." This stand cannot be allowed to pass as "the principle of socialism" ("from each according to his ability, to each according to his work") "firmly translated into life." He is not referring to workers receiving pay in relation to how much work they do. He is talking about determining social status and privilege according to one's place in relation to the production process.

The bourgeoisie of any country will always claim that those who work more, get more and that this is their guiding principle; often they say this is what makes capitalism truly just. In fact, what they all conceal, including Gorbachev, is that whether pay be determined by wages or piece rate (or the "rate plus bonus" system Gorbachev is so proud of introducing), the determining factor in distribution is to be found in ownership and other relations of production. After all, Gorbachev does not propose that those "citizens" who bend and lift all day be paid more than those "citizens" who sit all day and plan other people's bending and lifting. Most importantly, he is against any such changes in how production is organised. He sees the division of labour inherent in capitalist production relations as part of the solution, not the problem.

At one point Gorbachev plays what he must think is his ace in East-West comparisons. "We will believe in the democratic nature of Western societies when their workers and office employees start electing the owners of factories and plants, bank presidents, etc., when their media put corporations, banks and their bosses under a barrage of regular criticism and start discussing..."

Gorbachev is exaggerating. What he's talking about electing is something more like foreman and managers, and not the real bosses, the owners, the bourgeoisie at the top of the Soviet party and state who decide everything of importance. But even so, even if workers could elect their own bosses, bosses would be bosses and workers would be workers and the "inner stimuli" of profit, the logic of

capitalist accumulation in its imperialist phase, would still be in command. There would be no emancipation in such elections.

The bourgeoisie not only disposes of the means of production, it also reserves to itself all political power and the right of all violence, exercising a dictatorship over those it exploits. Gorbachev no more admits that fact than does any bourgeois; like the Western bourgeois he refers to "the whole people" to hide "the people's" division into antagonistic classes. (He neither dares nor cares to claim that the dispossessed rule in the USSR.) But he does not try to hide all the political aims of his policies, and they, in turn, are revealing.

Perestroika, Gorbachev tells us, is meant to prevent "discontent and protest." It is "a revolution from above." "The bodies of authority and public and economic organisations must learn to work so as not to give any pretext to such manifestations"; otherwise, "unusual actions begin to take place at the grass roots level."

Glasnost "is not antagonistic class struggle; it is a quest, a debate on how we can really get going with the restructuring effort and make our progress solid and irreversible." Even if we were to take Gorbachev at his word, his most lofty promise is a country where "criticism" and "debate" are encouraged as long as their premise and purpose is how to make the system work. A "debate" in the service of Russian imperialism. Oh yes, since the USSR is supposed to be socialist there are the unions, which are allowed to complain about "bad working conditions at some enterprises, a poor health service, substandard locker rooms." The workers are permitted to restrict their attention to such matters, as they are in almost every country.


Gorbachev writes of the present political situation: "The masses suggest a lot of useful and interesting things." "Workers and farmers are becoming more optimistic; intellectuals and professional people have been speaking out in an authoritative and demanding way." "The worst thing that can happen is if, in these revolutionary times,

the creative intelligentsia ... expends its energy on senseless high words rather than creative endeavour." We should take all this as a description of what is permitted: optimistic labourers who are not too authoritative or demanding, intellectuals who can be arrogant as long as they stick to the slots defined for them, and suggestion boxes all around.

As far as any other kind of activity by the masses is concerned, Gorbachev says, "Of course, no self-respecting society can allow anarchy, a free-for-all or chaos. Neither can we. Democracy also implies law and order, and the strictest observance of the laws by authorities and organisations, as well as by citizens." This book mentions "law and order" more times than it has pages. Anyone who threatens it will gain first-hand experience in the fact that the USSR is the only major rival to the U.S. in terms of the percentage of its population in its prisons (apart from South Africa). That's an advanced, world-level standard of "democracy," where, as in any other class society, laws reflect and enforce existing property and social relations. It's also known as "the golden rule" — those who have got the gold make the rules.

#### No Steps Forward, Two Steps Back

Nowhere does the *backward* nature of this "revolution" stand more naked than in Gorbachev's chapter on "Women and the Family:" "But over the years of our difficult and heroic history, we failed to pay attention to women's specific rights and needs arising from their role as mother and home-maker, and their indispensable educational function as regards children. Engaged in scientific research, working on construction sites, in production and in the services, and involved in creative activities, women no longer have enough time to perform their everyday duties at home — housework, the upbringing of children and the creation of a good family atmosphere. We have discovered that many of our problems — in children and



***"Now, in the course of perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are holding heated debates in the press, in public organisations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."***

- Gorbachev's Self-Exposure



young people's behaviour, in our morals, culture and in production — are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and slack attitudes towards family responsibilities. This is a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal with men in everything. Now, in the course of perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why we are holding heated debates in the press, in public organisations, at work and at home, about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission."

Apparently *some* "heated debates" are to be permitted — for the most reactionary of reasons and in the service of the most barbaric so-



cial programmes. Once again under the rubric of "democracy" what we get is proof that the USSR has attained world standards in neanderthalism.

Gorbachev's chapter on the question of the minority nationalities in the USSR is equally rabid. The nationalities first freed by the October Revolution and lately oppressed by Russian domination have given rise to much of the resistance to the Soviet ruling class recently. (A Western Sovietologist tells us that glasnost means that Moscow intellectuals can sleep peacefully at night, knowing that now the ranks of political prisoners are being swollen "mainly in distant Asian republics" of the USSR.) Gorbachev demands that the minority nationalities get off their "nationalist arrogance" and recognise that "the Russian nation played an outstanding role in the solution of the national question." He even cites the United States as a positive example of how relations between different nationalities should be solved, since in the U.S. today, people are just "naturally" required to speak English. Perhaps the Afro-American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Indian and other peoples held in bondage in the U.S. could erect a monument to the "outstanding role" played by white Anglos in the "solution" of national oppression!

What this new Tsar's concept of "revolution" most resembles is the old Tsars' attempts to unleash reaction among certain strata and terror among others — or the "Reagan revolution" or any one of a long and terrible number of reactionary offensives *against* the oppressed and exploited.

#### IV "WE ARE A SUPERPOWER"

Gorbachev's brief history of the USSR seeks to make its revolutionary past serve its reactionary present. What is good about Soviet history is that it "brought formerly backward Russia to the 'right place' — the place the Soviet Union now occupies in human progress." What place is that? "Today they say, some with admiration

and others with open hostility, that we are a superpower!"

This is the point of view from which he divides Soviet history into "great achievements, dramatic mistakes and tragic events." His criteria are worth analysing.

First there was the "October revolution, an event that was a turning point in the thousand year history of our state." So much for the idea that the October revolution *smashed* that thousand-year-old state. So much for any mention of exploiters, oppressors, or imperialists the naïve reader might have thought the October Revolution was directed against. Gorbachev's history emphasises continuity, not overthrow. (He also mentions the "thousand-year anniversary" of the Russian Orthodox Church to be marked by a grand state celebration in 1988. These revisionists apparently need God's help to bolster the rule of Mammon.)

What was wrong with old Tsarist Russia, you see, was that "industrialisation and the collectivisation of agriculture was indispensable." The problem is viewed with bourgeois eyes. Gorbachev calls the collectivisation of agriculture "a great historic act, the most important social change since 1917," because it provided "the social bases for updating the agricultural sector of the economy and made it possible to introduce modern farming methods." For Lenin and Stalin, collectivisation of agriculture was above all the means by which a backward country with a predominantly peasant economy could become *socialist*.

Gorbachev's hatred for Stalin is so complete that in this book he never even mentions Stalin's name in discussing the USSR during the half of its history when Stalin was its leader. Not even in the relatively long section on the USSR's defense in World War 2 is Stalin allowed to appear on Gorbachev's stage. His name comes up only twice: both times praising Khrushchev for attacking "the Stalin personality cult."

It seems possible that Gorbachev makes so little mention of Stalin in *Perestroika* because as yet there is no consensus among the Soviet ruling class about just how far (and far

back) to go in openly attacking Stalin. Accounts of reactionary historical debates thriving in the USSR under glasnost seem to indicate differences as to whether Stalin should be considered mainly negative as of the mid-1930s, or the later 1920s. But there can be no doubt as to Gorbachev's stand in general. In his speech to the 2 November 1987 meeting of the CPSU's Central Committee, where he is more explicit in settling accounts with the party's socialist past, Gorbachev declared that the "guilt of Stalin and his immediate entourage" is "enormous and unforgivable."

What does Gorbachev consider Stalin guilty of? His criticisms of Stalin in the realm of theory could not be more telling: in that speech, Gorbachev attacks what he terms Stalin's "erroneous 'theory' of an aggravation of the class struggle in the course of socialist construction." Gorbachev considers the struggle against the bourgeoisie under socialism impermissible; his is the complete *opposite* of criticisms Mao formulated of Stalin because he did not "aggravate" the class struggle enough.

#### Khrushchev's "Great Contributions" and Lenin's "Method"

For Gorbachev the best thing since the October Revolution was its undoing. He labels the 1956 20th Congress of the CPSU "a major landmark in our history" which "made a great contribution to the theory and practice of socialist construction." To the destruction of socialism would be more accurate.

That party congress consolidated Khrushchev's pre-eminence as the leader of the new bourgeoisie and marked the beginning of the split in the international communist movement between emerging Soviet revisionism and the Marxist-Leninists led by Mao Tsetung. Khrushchev announced that the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union was finished, to be replaced by "the state of the whole people." The party of the proletariat, purged of most of its proletarian leaders and many members, was to be transformed into "the party of the whole

people.” These “theoretical” contributions and the practical measures to dismantle the socialist organisation of Soviet society considered by the 20th Congress would not have been possible without that Congress’s most infamous feature, Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin and complete renunciation of his heritage.

Gorbachev has a few criticisms to make of Khrushchev’s “subjectivist methods” and “improvisation” in economic management. We’re told that Khrushchev’s removal from office and the 1965 economic reform which “aimed at improving the mechanism of economic activity in industry and construction with emphasis on profit” represented “a new stage” in the process, despite the fact that “the substantial though temporary effect” of its measures “petered out,” giving rise “to stagnation and retardation in the country.” The revisionist bourgeoisie’s search for new forms through which to satisfy its interests has been a long one. But it is appropriate that Gorbachev recognises and praises the turning point that Khrushchev represented, and that he sees himself as Khrushchev’s successor, not Stalin’s. Stalin was a Leninist; Gorbachev is an imposter.

Given all this, the reasons behind Gorbachev’s call for a return to “Lenin’s heritage and methods” require some analysis, and all the more because this call stands in apparent contrast with Gorbachev’s style of barely pretending to be a Marxist and preferring to clothe himself in Western-style rhetoric.

Lenin is portrayed as flexible, realistic, unbound by formulas or dogma. (This is especially the case in Gorbachev’s speech on party history, which focuses on Lenin’s ability to lead the party through abrupt changes in the situation and in line.) All this is true, but rather one-sided. Lenin’s realism and flexibility was in the single-minded service of the interests of the world proletariat; his application and development of Marxist principles went hand in hand with his struggle to demarcate between Marxism and revisionism. If the man is presented as flexible and creative without regard to the question of flexible and creative for

what, then all we get is a portrait of a modern and successful business executive who happened to be Russian. Since the old Russian bourgeoisie never really emerged from the Tsar’s shadow and the new bourgeoisie has had so little to brag about, it should not be surprising that they have had to try to recast Lenin as the father of modern Russia.

Gorbachev insists that he has been helped by “Lenin’s works, especially his last.” It seems he doesn’t consider Lenin’s analyses of imperialism, the state, the party, the tasks of revolution, revisionism or philosophy to be relevant. What Gorbachev singles out is “Lenin’s valuable ideas on management and self-management, profit-and-loss accounting, and the linking of public and personal interests,” — ideas which he accuses Lenin’s successors of having “failed to apply and develop properly.” Even in this most limited sense he is not trying to borrow Lenin’s ideas but only his mantle in order to have something to cover up naked social-imperialism.

During the early 1920s, after a revolution and three years of civil war and battles against 14 invading powers, at a time when large-scale industry in the USSR had ceased to exist, when peasants couldn’t be persuaded to sell their crops because there was nothing for them to spend the money on, at a time when the only way of keeping everyone from starving was for the Red Army to go to the countryside and haul away the peasants’ surplus grain whether they liked it or not, Lenin determined that “a strategic retreat,” a “reverting to capitalism to a certain extent” was the only choice facing the ruling proletariat, if it wanted to preserve its political rule. It had to hire some former bourgeois factory owners and experts and functionaries because the proletariat had not yet had the slightest training in any of these fields. In fact, the few industries still going were filled with bourgeois and petit bourgeois riff-raff seeking an excuse to avoid going to the fronts where the politically advanced workers were offering their lives for the world revolution.

Lenin had the highest hopes in the advance of the world revolution

throughout Europe; he had been willing to risk the Russian revolution in its cause. But when the revolutionary tide temporarily receded and broader advance proved temporarily impossible, Lenin was determined to consolidate the proletarian revolution in Russia, for the sake of the world revolution, even if the economic conditions for socialism did not yet exist there. The proletariat could first seize power and then create such conditions, he said. Further, Lenin was extremely specific and careful not to label these economic measures as socialist. As he said, the name “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics” was to be taken as a declaration of intent and not as a description of the then prevailing economic system.

All this flexibility, creativity, etc., came from a fanatical devotion to the cause of the world proletariat. What Gorbachev would take from Lenin is not that, of course, but just a few superficial quotes turned inside out. He doesn’t even really examine Lenin’s writings on this subject nor his specific policies, since after all Lenin’s whole purpose was to develop state capitalism in such a way as to permit a transition to a socialist economy, and that was reflected in all Lenin’s thinking and measures.

#### “From Each According to His Ability”

Material incentives will still exist under socialism to varying degrees in various periods; in fact, during the whole historical period of socialism the principle “to each according to his work” (known as bourgeois right) can be restricted, but not yet eliminated. It must be restricted, as Mao summarised in his analysis of the historical experience of building socialism, because the inequalities and vestiges of the social divisions of the old society are the ground on which new polarisations and new potential exploiters will constantly and ceaselessly appear. You could say, using Gorbachev’s terminology, that Mao leaned towards “wage-leveling”; a more profound point is that instead of portraying pay according to work



as the supreme justice, as though universal piece-rate were mankind's highest goal, he saw the importance of tearing up *all* the inequalities left over from the old class society.

The same is true of commodity relations in general, which, Mao said, persisted but had to be subordinated to "politics in command." This is why Mao gave so much importance to worker and peasant involvement in "affairs of state" and to the party and its line and policies as the key arena of struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as well as to the revolutionisation of the relations of production, including the relations between people in production.

What Mao learned from Lenin, and further developed, was the understanding that the enthusiasm of the producers was the most important factor in increasing production, even though material incentives (specifically paying more for more work) in various forms and to various degrees would be necessary for a long time. That's why Mao pointedly recalled that in Marx's conception of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work," the first thing was the enthusiasm of the workers. As Mao said, if everyone needs material incentives, then who paid Lenin to lead the revolution?

Different things make different classes enthusiastic. Even the bourgeoisie combines the sticks and carrots of wage slavery with occasionally successful efforts to stir the enthusiasm of its workers without any direct promise of immediate material gain (for example, during war). Socialism's ability to do so on an incomparably more profound level and vast scale is due to its liberation of the means of production, including, above all, the producers themselves, from the chains that bind them. This means not only from bourgeois rule and bourgeois property relations, but also their step by step liberation from all bourgeois relations, ideas, customs and culture.

As Mao wrote, in criticizing a Soviet economics textbook that appeared after Stalin's death, "we find a discussion of the rights labour enjoys but no discussion of

**He declares  
that the USSR  
recognises how  
important "the  
Middle East,  
Asia, Latin  
America, other  
Third World  
regions and also  
South Africa are  
for American and  
Western Europe-  
an economies, in  
particular as raw  
material sources.  
To cut those links  
is the last thing  
we want to do,  
and we have no  
desire to provoke  
ruptures in histor-  
ically formed,  
mutual economic  
interests."**

- Gorbachev's Self-Exposure

its right to run the state, the various enterprises, education and culture. Actually, this is labour's greatest right under socialism, the most fundamental right, without which there is no right to work, for an education, to vacations, etc. The paramount issue for socialist democracy is: does labour have the right to subdue the various antagonistic forces and their influence? For example, who controls things like newspapers, journals, broadcast stations, the cinema? Who criticises?" (*A Critique of Soviet Economics*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1977.)

This is a question that could be

posed to glasnost Gorbachev. He has not invented anything very new, and Mao's contributions continue to expose him. Gorbachev's USSR can only dream of achieving the economic growth rates produced in revolutionary China by the approach Mao called "grasp revolution, promote production," or those of the USSR itself under the leadership of Stalin. The "inner stimulus" of profit is not so powerful after all.

In reading Gorbachev's comments on Lenin, one is reminded of another work of Lenin's, one of many that the Gorbachevs of this world never refer to because they and their ilk are the target. Lenin described "an international striving on the part of the bourgeois theoreticians to kill Marxism with 'kindness,' to crush it in their embraces, kill it with a feigned acceptance of 'all' the 'truly scientific' aspects of Marxism *except* its 'agitational,' 'demagogic,' 'Blanquist-utopian' aspect. In other words, they take from Marxism all that is acceptable to the liberal bourgeoisie, including the struggle for reforms, the class struggle (without the proletarian dictatorship), the 'general recognition' of 'socialist ideals' and the substitution of a "new order" for capitalism; they cast aside 'only' the living soul of Marxism, 'only' its revolutionary content." ("The Collapse of the Second International")

#### V IS PERESTROIKA WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS?

What is perestroika for? In fact, what is the USSR for — what cause, exactly, is Gorbachev trying to accomplish and rally others around?

Determined to enlighten the credulous, Gorbachev sternly explains, "We will proceed towards better socialism rather than away from it. We are saying this honestly, without trying to fool our own people or the world. Any hopes that we will begin to build a different, non-socialist society and *go over to the other camp* are unrealistic and futile. Those in the West who expect us to give up socialism will be disappointed. It is high time they understood this, and, even more

importantly, proceeded from that understanding in practical relations with the Soviet Union." (Emphasis added — *AWTW*.)

Part of Gorbachev's argument here is circular, and part isn't. Both parts are imperialist.

The circular part is Gorbachev's definition of socialism: "More socialism means a more dynamic pace and creative endeavour, more organisation, law and order, more scientific methods and initiative in economic management, efficiency in administration, and a better and richer material life for the people." What's the difference between his definition of "socialism" and most capitalists' definition of capitalism? Gorbachev's basic premise is that socialism is whatever the USSR does, or, to put it another way, that his camp is the good one. But his description of "more socialism" is a description of imperialism, which long ago organised production on an extensive scale and subordinated science and technology to capital.

The part about never "going over to the other camp" is not tautological. It is the essence of Gorbachev's argument. Whatever changes in Soviet society Gorbachev may propose, he cannot emphasise enough that the USSR will still be the USSR: a great power, one of two superpowers, and a contender for world hegemony.

His appeal on the home front is blunt: "The Soviet people are convinced," Gorbachev says, "that as a result of perestroika and democratisation the country will become richer and stronger."

Glasnost is a political measure to serve that end. In a word, Gorbachev says, it means "more socialism," and "more socialism means more patriotism and aspiration to noble ideas, more active civic concern about the country's internal affairs and about their positive influence on international affairs."

Glasnost means patriotism; "noble ideas" mean "civic concern" for profit and Soviet "international influence." Let us translate here, now that we've found the Rosetta stone for Gorbachev's language: more glasnost means more imperialism. As Lenin said, in modern

times, nothing, absolutely nothing, can be done without the masses — and he was referring to imperialism and its mobilisation of part of the masses for war. That's what glasnost is for.

### "The Last Thing We Want to Do"

What is this "influence on international affairs"? Gorbachev devotes half his book to it and ends it by declaring that the whole world needs restructuring. What he finds to be wrong with it is worth examining in detail.

The first thing to point out is that the division of the world into oppressed and oppressor nations is *not* what Gorbachev finds objectionable.

Gorbachev says, "While we do not approve the character of the current relations between the West and the developing countries, we do not urge that they be disrupted." "We do not pursue goals inimical to Western interests." He declares that the USSR recognises how important "the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, other Third World regions and also South Africa are for American and Western European economies, in particular as raw material sources. To cut those links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests."

Of course, no one can claim that those relations are equally "mutual." Gorbachev himself recognises that the "gap is widening rather than narrowing." So he mentions the idea of a "new world economic order" that he says came out of a conversation with French President Mitterand: "if the enterprise is to function effectively," he argues, "it is imperative that employees' incomes are guaranteed, and, despite their low level, are sufficient. The capitalist is forced to do this, realising that in doing so he is ensuring himself profit today and tomorrow. But capitalism taken as a whole, represented by the Western countries, does not want to understand even this simple truth in its relations with its former colonies."

This analogy is truly amazing. It

is capitalism's own argument that self-interest obliges the capitalists to provide for their workers; it is Adam Smith, not Karl Marx speaking. It is an argument *for* wage slavery, not its overthrow. It is a lie that becomes a thousand times more evil when applied to the countries in the grip of foreign monopoly capital, for imperialism's superprofits in these countries are obtained precisely because of the supermisery of the masses, and if there has been some improvement in the living standards of some workers in the imperialist countries, it is on the basis of these superprofits.

But this topic — the immiseration of three-quarters of humanity — is only of passing interest to Gorbachev. He spends about as much time on it as it would take to sign a condolence card. He spends a bit more time offering some specific deals to "stabilise" the present world set-up.

Latin America is for the U.S., as long as it allows the Soviets to have some internal influence within certain regimes (Nicaragua) and external with others (Mexico, Argentina): "U.S. right-wing forces and propaganda portray our interest in Latin America as an intention to engineer a series of socialist revolutions there. Nonsense! The way we have behaved for decades proves that we don't plan anything of the kind." He makes even less of Africa, where again he basically concedes to Western dominance while asserting Soviet interests in relation to several regimes and its contacts with others, as well as its particular ties with the ANC in South Africa. In these regions, the Soviets are mainly engaged in building up positions for the future.

In the Middle East Gorbachev sees more of an opening for a Soviet thrust, although not yet a decisive one: "We are not bent on elbowing the U.S. out of the Middle East — that is simply unrealistic. But the United States should not commit itself to unrealistic goals either." What has the USSR got to offer? Protection for imperialism's keystone in the region: he insists that only the USSR has the power to guarantee Israel's existence, in exchange for increased Soviet par-

tipication in the Mideast. As for Afghanistan, that's the Soviet's sphere of influence: "American interference delays the withdrawal of our troops." The U.S. makes a similar argument about "Soviet interference" requiring U.S. military intervention in Central America, with just as much justification.

When Gorbachev speaks of "realism," it is a threat, a throwing down of the gauntlet and not a retreat. He forthrightly challenges the U.S.-led empire and U.S.-leadership over other imperialist powers in those areas he considers most immediately strategic and accessible.

The first is "the Asian-Pacific region" which, he points out, includes "the USSR, the U.S., India, China, Japan, Vietnam, Mexico and Indonesia ... Canada, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand." The USSR, Gorbachev declares, is "an Asian country" and "due account" must be taken of its interests: "We are against this region as being somebody's domain." But it already is somebody else's domain. He is against this "almost half the globe" being the domain of the U.S. and its allies, including Japan, for the same reasons that Japan opposed U.S. and British domination of a smaller slice of the Pacific during the last world war.

The second is Europe, which gets the lion's share of Gorbachev's attention in this book: "If the world needs new relations, Europe needs them above all." "Some in the West are trying to exclude the Soviet Union from Europe." But "We are Europeans." (In point of fact, geographically speaking, the USSR includes both Europeans and Asians. "We" means Russians. But he is not talking about geography.)

Here, as elsewhere, he combines an abstract metaphor with a few modest proposals. He ambles through a long panegyric to "our common European home," comparing Europe to a condominium apartment house (where the U.S. is not a legitimate resident). "Every apartment in the 'European home' has the right to protect itself against burglars, but it must do so without destroying its neighbours' property," he warns — meaning

that any war on the European continent would be fatal to Europe's proprietor class. It is only "together and collectively" — i.e., with proper consideration for the condo's biggest proprietor — that "Europeans can save their home, protect it against a conflagration and other calamities, make it better and safer, and maintain it in proper order."

It is not true, as Gorbachev claims, that the U.S. "abducted" Europe; they eloped for mutual benefit. He is only flattering European imperialism in order to woo it, or at least to woo certain strata in these countries. That's why he praises "Western European intellectuals" for standing up for "inherently human European culture" against "the onslaught of 'mass culture' from across the Atlantic," a "primitive revelry of violence and pornography." (The U.S. may be a star pupil, but Europe started enslaving Africans, slaughtering Indians, massacring Asians, and generally carrying out war, terror and genocide for hundreds of years before Rambo.)

Gorbachev is not, for now, demanding that Europe evict its uncouth partner, only seeking a certain loosening of ties between some European countries and the U.S., and a shift towards more direct Soviet influence in Western Europe. His vision has both a present and future tense. When he deplores the post-WW2 division of Europe, he is both recognising it and offering a long-term claim to its redivision. (For instance, he offers both recognition and doubt about Germany's post-WW 2 division, as if to say, my Germany is permanent and yours longs to be reunited with it.)

His method is to mix a little incentive and a big threat. He extends "understanding" for nuclear-armed France and Britain's "national prestige and grandeur" but "it's known for a fact that if a nuclear war were to break out these weapons would only invite strikes and have no other real significance." He warns Europe that it is part of NATO and if an American military intervention such as the U.S. air raid on Libya were to involve an attack on one of the Warsaw Pact countries, "This

is war! The responsibility of all this has immeasurably increased in our nuclear age." Even in a conventional war, he warns, Europe's many atomic reactors could be bombed and wipe out Europe.

The USSR and the U.S., with their "colossal military, including nuclear arsenal" are "the most serious reality in today's world," he warns. Western Europe had better recognise the interests of its neighbouring "serious reality" or its house will burn down.

It should not be concluded that just because Gorbachev's most powerful argument for European cooperation is nuclear, the USSR is trying to conquer Europe. The USSR is not in a position to develop the same economic ties with Western Europe as the U.S., but the relations it seeks are not fundamentally different. He explains, "Western European states, like the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, have broad ties with the Third World, and could pool their efforts to facilitate its development. Such are, by and large, the imperatives of a pan-European policy determined by the interests and requirements of Europe as an integrated whole." (Gorbachev uses the same image in referring to Asian "security" as "building a house, with each of us putting a brick or two in its walls.")

To the USSR's fellow "serious reality," the United States, Gorbachev has a similar offer, though in a "realistic" spirit. He once asked Gary Hart, he says, "Can't America offer a different policy to developing countries than the one it pursues today? The U.S. can do much to build new interstate relations, and lose nothing economically in the process. On the contrary, America stands to gain from that. Why should the United States reject the opportunity as if it doesn't see on which side its bread is buttered?"

Again, the "new economic order": why doesn't the U.S. just wise up and treat the "developing countries" better? There is something of an appeal to some imperialist-dependent forces in these countries here, for there is certainly a hint that if the U.S. doesn't wise up on

***"Can't America offer a different policy to developing countries than the one it pursues today? The U.S. can do much to build new interstate relations, and lose nothing economically in the process. On the contrary, America stands to gain from that. Why should the United States reject the opportunity as if it doesn't see on which side its bread is buttered?"***

**- Gorbachev's Self-Exposure**

not seek to "disrupt" the West's exploitation of the oppressed countries. It seeks a greater share in it. What the Soviet Union challenges is the U.S.'s chairmanship of imperialism's worldwide "condominium" which includes not only the apartment buildings but the vast backward areas of the world that are especially profitable for the absentee owners. But "the last thing we want to do" is to tear down the whole reactionary edifice. What is this "condominium" metaphor about, if not a redivision of the world while preserving imperialist relations?

Is it impossible to conceive of a situation, especially on the eve of war or in the course of it, where some European imperialists might decide that they'd rather keep the house and gardens then get blown up trying to oust their Soviet neighbours? Or even that Gorbachev's proposals might find an ear among some American imperialists, especially under dramatic circumstances?

Gorbachev forbids us to believe "the traditional notion" that war is a continuation of politics by other means. Anyone who insists that it's still so, Gorbachev says, is "hopelessly out of date" and a war-monger. Maybe he insists on this so much because at every turn, even in the pages of this book, it's hard to avoid getting a glimpse of what politics a war between the two blocs, even a nuclear war, would be a continuation of.

#### **"A Richer and Stronger USSR"**

To understand what he's really saying about world war, you have to put together different, apparently contradictory assertions, because Gorbachev wants to play the dove while making the USSR's rivals tremble.

"The fundamental principle of the new political outlook is very simple: *nuclear war cannot be a means of achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals.* This conclusion is truly revolutionary, for it means discarding the traditional notions of war and peace." This part's the smile. He means you (Western Europe,

Japan, even the U.S.) can't achieve your goals in a war with us.

Then there's the other side, the teeth: "Some people say that the ambitious goals set forth by the policy of perestroika in our country have prompted the peace proposals we have made recently in the international arena. This is an oversimplification," Gorbachev warns in the beginning of his book. Towards the end he returns to this theme: "We would not beg for peace. We had more than once responded to challenges and would do so again." What else can "respond to the challenges" mean in this context except waging and winning a world war?

A nuclear war would be the U.S.'s fault, because "The U.S. sets the tone" for the arms race. But the Soviet Union can win it. His detailed descriptions of the devastation the USSR quickly overcame in the wake of WW 2 are as pointed as his remark that "not a single enemy bomb was dropped and not a single enemy shot was heard on the U.S. mainland" that time. "The Soviet Union emerged from the Second World War in a very difficult condition... Nevertheless, we succeeded in restoring what had been destroyed, in building up our economic potential and in confidently tackling our defensive tasks. Is this not a lesson for the future?"

The West, Gorbachev writes, "must first of all get rid of the delusion that the Soviet Union needs disarmament more than the West and that just a little pressure could make us renounce the principle of equality [in armaments]. We will never do that." Why not, unless your aim, just like that of your rivals, is world hegemony?

"Political goals," Gorbachev writes, "are more important than economic goals." Here he is referring to "normalising Soviet-American relations," and his point is that the USSR does not seek to do business with the West mainly for the money. He is telling the truth. The same thing could be said for perestroika: the goals put forward by Gorbachev go far beyond a certain amount of domestic economic restructuring. They are as global as they are reactionary.

its own the USSR might make it do so. But more fundamentally, this is an appeal to American imperialism itself, or at least to some U.S. imperialists. The USSR doesn't seek to make the U.S. "lose economically." The U.S. can't deal with the "powderkeg" of the oppressed nations alone. If it knows "on which side its bread is buttered," why not "join hands with us"? The bread is buttered on the imperialist side and the USSR is "realistic" enough to offer to let the U.S. keep it.

The image of a "condominium" is profoundly true. The USSR does

Let us take Gorbachev at his word. His goal is a "richer and stronger" USSR — a richer and stronger machine for the extended reproduction of capital in its imperialist phase, for accumulating capital by rending flesh on a continental and intercontinental level, Moloch, a man-eating, world-destroying machine. The emancipation of the Soviet proletariat and the liberation of the world's peoples require its destruction, along with the destruction of its arch-rivals and all the imperialist juggernauts.

To return one last time to the question of for whom this book was written, it should be pointed out that overall the Western media has been soft on Gorbachev. It has mixed admiration with hypocritical charges about how people are forced to live in the USSR. There is no real probing, no analysis of the relationship between his economics and politics. In this the West is returning Gorbachev's favour, since they share a common interest in hiding the motive forces and nature of the imperialist system. He is their mortal adversary, but he is also their brother.

Gorbachev is for Russian imperialism and against all others; he serves its interests in a particular and complicated historical situation that requires specific measures and language. But his soul is the soul of capital personified. □

