

munism and American Intellectual Life," was moderated by Kovel, the Hiss prof. Historian Blanche Wiesen Cook was not happy: "We stand morally isolated before the world, allied with South Africa and other killer countries . . . always bellowing, when we are not shrieking, and thumping and bumping and burping our bombs and tanks and missiles Communist Communist Communist . . . incredible shrinking American heart . . . polluted the discourse . . . debased . . . deformed . . ."

Zoologist Stephen Jay Gould offered up his sunny view of personkind: "Ordinary daily behavior is geniality . . . we step aside for people, we say thank you to the man who sells the newspaper, we smile at a child . . . there are acts of ordinary geniality even on Times Square . . . the species is peaceful . . . the problem is the kind of government we have." There was happy, genial applause.

Kovel said that the coming times would be grim, but "the U.S. is weakening and has less capacity to enforce a megalomaniacal ideology like anticommunism." Anticommunism was a weed, a deep pathology, a generalized dementia. Kovel looked deeply into himself and saw a black hole: "We all have to deal with our own internalized

anticommunism . . . an exploitation of the deep structures of racism for the purpose of managing threats to capitalist rule . . ." How could something so . . . low . . . so smarmy . . . as anticommunism understand something so exalted, so totally unrelated to it, *the exact opposite of it*, as Communism? "Anticommunism is no more capable of understanding the reality of Communism than racism is capable of perceiving the reality of the Afro-American experience. . . . Anti-communism destroys time itself."

And so it went. Multiply this by thirty-eight panels.

But there were flora and fauna, uniquely rich in color, beyond this. Like the young lady who saw "anticommunism as basically a reaction to any kind of horizontality whatsoever." Or Angela Davis, who conceded that "women wait on long lines in the USSR," but quickly added that "they wait on long lines in supermarkets here." Dr. Nathaniel Lehrmann attended many panels, with a comment for almost every question period. He opined that "Jesse Jackson is the best Jew in America." A life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, he handed out his broadside,

"Anti-communism: Conspiracy and Terrorism, Psychiatry and AIDS" (hyphen in the original). His musings suggested that, as the Soviet Union itself has hinted, AIDS is yet another example of capitalism's dirty tricks. "What is being hidden behind the new billion dollar HIV industry?" he said.

When asked what the perfect daily newspaper would look like, Alexander Cockburn replied that "an expanded version of the *Nation* magazine would be ideal." Esther Kingston-Mann, a professor of Russian history at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, won the Walter Duranty prize for Soviet reporting; she complained that too many Sovietologists and journalists think that the only things that matter in the Soviet Union are human rights and politics. Simply not true! One of the best kept secrets of today's world is the social achievements of the USSR. Their social welfare guarantees! Women and children, housing and unemployment, welfare rights! The magnitude of these achievements! And glasnost: the Soviets are facing up to their criminal past, unlike post-World War II Germany and post-Vietnam America.

At the closing plenary session on Sunday, the assemblage broke into small groups for discussion and then

reported on their findings. The "rapporteurs" were required to be women. Among the suggestions for future action: pressuring newspapers for positive reporting on the socialist countries; sabotaging newspaper vending machines (inserting false fronts on boxes with "progressive" news about El Salvador, etc.); pushing the "MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour" and National Public Radio to the left; increasing political action through the Rainbow Coalition; *more conferences just like this one*. Plans were announced to prepare curricula based on the conference. As one person noted, there are plenty of veterans of the 1960s teaching high school just waiting for this material.

There were many new faces at the conference, newly activated college students, reactivated war-horses, and many who were just returning to the fold. Their organizations are proliferating wildly. They fluttered back to their nesting places in academia, the alternative press, college campuses, the Rainbow Coalition, senior centers, progressive unions, and Communist party headquarters, dedicated to wiping out that nasty word.

Few as they are, anyone who could survive three days of this is a force to be reckoned with. □

SPECTATOR'S JOURNAL

PONDERING PERESTROIKA

by John Train

"Our past has become unpredictable."
—the editor of *Znamia*, 1988

One day last spring, on a trip to Moscow to talk to ministries and institutes, I turned on the television in my hotel room. It actually worked, unlike some of the other pieces of equipment. I was startled to see the face of a much younger Andrei Vishinsky than the white-haired one I remembered from the 1950s when he was the Soviet delegate to the U.N. This Vishinsky had dark hair and black owlsh glasses. An old flickery black-and-white film was showing him addressing a courtroom in harsh and strident tones during the Moscow purge trials. "They should be shot like dogs," he snarled at a series of wretched anti-Stalinists who had been dragged before him. (Alas, these victims of state

John Train's most recent book is Famous Financial Fiascos (Clarkson N. Potter/Crain).

paranoia were indeed shot like dogs.) Then the scene shifted to today, in Red Square, a few hundred yards from where I was sitting at that moment. An old man was grimly reciting his memories of the bad times, not so long ago, when a daring phrase could send you to Siberia, perhaps not to return. (For many years, one of the official heroes held up for the admiration of Soviet youth was an enthusiastic boy who denounced his own parents for a deficiency of socialist zeal.) The TV audience was hearing words that at one time could have meant death for the speaker and listener alike.

Is Perestroika Real?

It's *necessary*, whether or not it ever really happens. Indeed it's a recurring Russian idea: Peter the Great tried something similar, as did Lenin with his New Economic Policy (NEP).

Any monopoly becomes atherosclerotic. Only competition keeps you on

the *qui vive*. So you have to shake things up on occasion. But the most convincing reason for perestroika is that Gorbachev probably has no choice. Here are three and a half reasons:

1. The Soviet nightmare is not West Germany, whose feeble birth rate condemns it to fade away as a great power, but China, whose proud and able population is multiples larger than the Soviet Union's and growing faster. China, by shedding some of Marxism's *impedimenta*—all farms belong to the farmers, for instance—is booming, while the Russians are just whispering about incentives. The possibilities are suggested by Taiwan, which with less than 2 percent of the mainland's population has 30 percent of its GNP. Looking ahead, the Soviets must transform their economy and government drastically to keep up with the traditionally hostile Chinese. Deng himself has complacently said that if perestroika does not work, then the Soviet Union will

lose its superpower status in the next century.

2. Some military analysts underline that the Soviet Union is not yet technically able to manage the most complicated aspects of space defense. It is said that the battle management of the campaign against each ICBM requires a computational power equivalent to one of the large Cray computers. The Soviet Union can quite easily reverse-engineer most pieces of hardware, given enough time. However, Cray's chairman told me that his big machine, quite aside from the immense amount of programming required to set it up for missile defense, would take years to reverse-engineer, by which time the knowledge would be obsolete. In other words, the Soviets can't readily compete in the highest-tech part of strategic defense, although they started earlier, have emphasized it more, and are well ahead of us in some aspects—e.g., particle beams.

Some analysts draw the following

comparison: In the 1930s, both Mussolini and Hitler foresaw war. Mussolini switched over to war production early, and looked fine in his campaigns against Ethiopia, Libya, and so forth. Hitler, on the contrary, let the civilian economy run on full blast for several more years, rapidly building his industrial bases. So when a general European war in fact came, Mussolini found himself frozen into obsolete weapons and an inadequate munitions industry, whereas Hitler was ready to go. Similarly, say these analysts, the Soviet economy requires a period of expansion to stay in the running for the military competition of the next century. This requires military relaxation now, particularly in the strategic defense arena.

3. The Soviet empire (Eastern Europe and so on) is restless. Why accept dictation in economic matters from a country that is not only an economic basket case but admits that its whole approach is wrong? The justification for the Soviets imposing their rule on the satellites was that it would lead the people to the economic promised land. No one believes that anymore, least of all the rulers themselves. One ministry I visited had no computers, and said it was ordering them from Hungary. (The Soviet Union has about one-thousandth as many PCs per capita as the U.S.) Are the Hungarians going to believe in Soviet leadership?

3½. One presumes that the Soviet people can be held down indefinitely. But the economy is still slipping further and further behind the advanced countries, and the people are increasingly aware of what's happening. Western TV and radio, magazines, tourists, and gossip get the word around. Furthermore, there is the nationalities problem. We've all seen what's been happening in the Baltic countries and Armenia. Less known in the U.S. is that the Central Asians live in far worse conditions than the European Russians, and regard them as exploiters. (I never saw a Central Asian behind a desk in a ministry.)

Thus the European Russians know that the other nationalities within the Soviet Union are unhappy (and have two to three times their birthrate!); the Soviet Union knows that the empire is restless; the empire sees its great competitor, China, pushing in front of it; while the socialist camp in general sees the West disappearing out of sight ahead. A grim prospect, quite aside from the SDI problem.

So things *must* change, if they can be changed.

There are those who observe that Gorbachev's proposed changes seem for real, but grumble that the

Russians are only doing it out of necessity, not out of what we would consider democratic good will. Of course! And it is precisely because circumstances *have* forced their hand that one can believe in the authenticity of what is happening.

It's like Afghanistan. No one outside the Institute for Policy Studies orbit claims that the Russians are pulling out because they have achieved their objectives there or have been converted to self-determination for their subject peoples. No: it is because the dead and the losses in tanks and helicopters became intolerable, along with the disastrous loss of face in the rest of the world. It is precisely because we can see why the Russians had no choice that we can be sure the withdrawal is authentic and not a temporary tactical maneuver, like the withdrawals from Hungary and Czechoslovakia before the tanks rolled back in.

All the same, in spite of a vast coordinated campaign of talk, there has so far been little sign of reform outside the biggest cities. The Russians joke that it's like a forest: light at the top and dark at the bottom. And as one General Staff officer said grimly, it hasn't reached the KGB. (Indeed, it may be backed by the KGB to reform the bloated bureaucracy.)

However, Gorbachev has ordered that 500,000 bureaucrats should lose their cars with chauffeurs. With this stroke he created two million determined enemies: the 500,000 drivers and their patrons, plus the 500,000 pairs that find themselves at the head of the line for the next cut . . . not to speak of their families.

And Gorbachev has repeatedly declared that he proposes to fire some 40 percent of the Soviet Union's 18 million managers. Yes . . . over seven million bureaucrats! That's seven million ardent opponents of perestroika. What will happen to them all? Oh, they'll find jobs in the service sector, one is told: the service sector needs to develop. And I heard repeatedly that a huge portion of the top Soviet bureaucracy has been shifted in the last two years, perhaps to loosen up their hold on their positions. You wouldn't do all this unless you meant it.

But Will Gorbachev Succeed?

The Russians are dominated by bureaucrats, not, I suspect, because of Lenin, but because they are Russians. They have an extremely strong herd instinct, and for half a millennium have been ordered about by autocrats in the Kremlin. They have never known anything approaching self-rule. You can't just say "be free!" and make a people free. Freedom must be earned; indeed,

must be fought for. And then its institutions must take root—free courts, civilian control of the army, a free press, and so on. But the entrenched nobility of the Soviet Union, the nomenklatura, is immensely powerful and corrupt. It's like a mythical beast that can't be killed with one blow, but must be poisoned, then beheaded, then burned, then put through a mincing machine and fed to the fish . . . and will regenerate even then. The 1789 revolution didn't end the idea of French aristocracy, just some aristocrats. The aristocratic principle revived soon enough.

And the Russian national experience is quite unlike ours. For roughly half the last 500 years, they have been fighting on their own soil. Since this vast territory is open to invasion from all directions, and since major segments of the empire would prefer to get out, the Soviet Union relies on the organs of state—the KGB, the army, and so forth—to penetrate and destroy potential enemies abroad, and to infiltrate and suppress internal opposition. The challenge has kept these organs fit—and paranoid. They will be exceedingly hard to wrestle down.

So to my mind the odds favor the nobility rather than the reformers, at least for now. Western-style democratic government is not even under discussion, of course. Gorbachev proposes that there be several candidates for each party job, with a limitation on the number of terms of office, but the candidates will naturally come from the party, and the dominant role of the party is not in question. Thus, things may not change that much whatever happens. When every mayor of New York was chosen by Tammany Hall it made little difference who became mayor, any more than it matters who becomes president of Mexico today.

There's another possibility: Perhaps the Soviet empire, like the Roman Empire or the Ottoman Empire or indeed all previous empires, is in a state of irretrievable decay. It is bloated and heterogeneous, which means a huge defense establishment, at crippling expense, to hold it down. A rough figure for the part of Soviet GNP that goes to maintaining their prodigious and growing military establishment is 20 percent—three times our proportion. But that's of an economy half as large as ours and much less efficient, with very little to spare. So it's a killing burden, which stifles everything, at the same time that the productivity of a demoralized population is declining. Perhaps a parallel to Gorbachev is Diocletian, whose endless reorganization and reforms could not forestall his empire's decay. □

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EUROPEAN DOCUMENT



U.S. OUT OF NATO? A FRENCH SCENARIO

by Roger Kaplan

The European allies paid very little attention to the U.S. election last year. Press and politicians alike borrowed the American liberal elite's line that voters were faced with mediocrities who rendered the whole contest an embarrassment to American democracy.

In general, however, George Bush was preferred as the mediocrity they knew, and as soon as he was elected, he began winning points in the European press as a tough guy who had been mistaken for a wimp all these years. This interpretation was all the more pleasing because the one thing Western Europeans are truly worried about is the future of the grand old alliance that has kept the peace here for forty years. After the INF treaty—which in public they approved but in private they view as the beginning of the long-dreaded “decoupling” between the Atlantic allies—they considered it much better to have a conservative in the White House than a liberal.

Yet the Europeans may well err if they think decoupling will be a consequence of American rather than European foreign policy. After INF, the ball is really in their court: they can become the “third pillar” John Kennedy encouraged them to be, thereby turning INF and its aftermath into a great political victory for the West, or they can wait and see. At the moment they are waiting and seeing, with the French foreign minister stating that the question of “modernization,” current jargon for Kennedy’s “third pillar,” should be postponed until Gorbachev’s intentions become clearer.

So far, this situation has not become a major public issue—defense issues rarely are here—but there is a great deal of pressure, especially in Denmark and West Germany, to take Gorbachev at his word, ask the Americans to leave, and expect—or hope for—the best. It is against this background that a remarkable new thriller, *Le Jour le Plus Court* (*The Shortest Day*), was

published here. It is a fictionalized version of what could be an eventual reverse D-Day. As its author, André Soussan, has been pointing out in television and radio debates all over Europe, it need not happen this way. But whether it does or not will not depend on us Americans.

Le Jour le Plus Court begins in 1993. The United States is led by the sort of hard-line anti-Communist Democrat that evidently exists only in the fantasies of Ben Wattenberg and Richard Perle. Western Europe, except France, has relapsed into muddled-headed social democracy, with the chancellor of the *Bundesrepublik* a functioning traitor, committed to the Soviet cause. Greece has left NATO.

Yet matters do not appear precarious, except to people like the editors of *The American Spectator*. Perestroika is chugging along on Western credits, and an immensely attractive Soviet premier named Gorchkov is assuring everyone that his fondest wish is for peace all around. SALT III has effectively denuclearized Europe. President Nixon used to say, “The Soviets don’t want war. They want the world.” But in 1993 no one listens to him much any-

more, although his quip expresses Soviet thinking exactly.

In this deceptively benign context, a mysterious terrorist organization launches an aggressive assault upon U.S. forces stationed in Germany. The worst attack comes when a transport carrying GIs home for Christmas is blown up just after takeoff. A simple message is circulated: the presence of American troops brings insecurity to Europe. The Americans are occupiers, they spread AIDS. It is time for them to get out. The media, lulled by glasnost and the long period of peace that the American Army maintained on the Continent, slant their coverage of the tide of terror with a “blame America” thesis. The U.S. Congress increasingly gives vent to the proposals of isolationist politicians, including the Speaker of the House, a demagogue who, though a member of the President’s party, is one of his worst enemies.

Now this: Before the public has recovered from the shock of the hundreds of young soldiers murdered on Christmas Eve, the terrorists grab a little girl, the daughter of a U.S. Air Force ace, and her mother. In a few days, the pressure on the American leadership becomes unrelenting, as the press hypes the story for all it is worth, including the fact, purely symbolic but potent, that the little hostage is the same age and bears the same name as the President’s daughter. A powerful movement, “S.O.S. Barbara,” takes off in the United States, clamoring for a cave-in on the grounds that the Europeans are ungrateful and are certainly not worth the lives of our sons and daughters.

Then the mom’s head comes back in a bag, along with a little child’s finger. And a message: one month to send the troops home.

The President, Mike Harkins, is advised by Jeane Kirkpatrick and Edward Luttwak look-alikes, and they counsel firmness. The Israelis come to the rescue with information on Mikhail Gorchkov that Harkins can and does use to force him into a deal that would not seem to be a complete U.S.

capitulation. But the immediate problem remains: the terrorists are apparently not under direct Soviet control, and the media circus, complete with a television interview of the brutalized child in an unknown location, renders the President’s position untenable.

Le Jour le Plus Court is, of course, fiction. But André Soussan knows his subject. His characters, their way of thinking, their control or lack of control over events, all have a frightening ring of truth. Soussan is an international security specialist, a former Israeli paratrooper who works in both broadcast and print journalism in France and Denmark, and an editor at the quarterly *Politique Internationale* (which in format resembles *Foreign Affairs* but in content is closer to the *National Interest*).

As Soussan himself admits, his scenario is just that, a scenario. But it is not inconceivable that a comparable conjunction of circumstances could put an American President in the bind Mike Harkins finds himself in. Although some will dismiss Soussan’s novel as a fanciful and improbable thriller, the fact is that he has written a book that is perhaps the most starkly straightforward to date on the question of whether or not, or under what circumstances, U.S. troops should stay in Europe. By resorting to a fast-paced genre, Soussan makes accessible to a large public an issue that thus far has been confined to war colleges, think tanks, high-powered political jet-set conferences, specialized journals, and editorial pages. By positing a crisis leading to a U.S.-Soviet poker game that results in a “global Yalta,” Soussan succeeds in making it very clear that the discussion has been about not only money and defense resources but also the ultimate shape of our strategic position in the world.

To judge by *Le Jour le Plus Court*, Soussan agrees with Irving Kristol, who has been provoking passionate arguments in the U.S. with his sugges-



Roger Kaplan is a Paris-based associate editor of Reader’s Digest.