THE SOVIET UNION: PARADIGM LOST?

By Michael Celik

Perhaps the two most enduring truths that Lenin has left us are those that eventually became fateful to his country. The first was that capitalism will never give up the idea of destroying socialism and the second one is the inevitability of advanced capitalism degenerating into imperialism. The Soviet Union succumbed to the first one and Russia now is trying to hang on for dear life against the second one.

This article attempts to deal with some causes of the Soviet Union’s demise. This should not be considered a final and comprehensive pronouncement on this topic. The collapse of the Soviet Union has given rise to a perpetual ongoing speculation as to who or what has caused such a powerful, rich and colossal country to lower its flag and throw in the towel. Those in search of short and simplistic answers will be disappointed to find that the answer is rather broad and complex. One cannot even broach this subject without noticing that the USSR was sentenced to destruction right at the time of its birth and that this death sentence was never lifted or commuted.

Foreign interventions and occupation, civil war and chaotic situations plagued the country and robbed it of its potential up to 1924. The Soviet Union had to struggle with illiteracy of its population and its transformation to cultural and economic modernity. This was followed by denial of legitimacy abroad, economic blackmail and geographic containment. The United States of America refused to recognize the USSR until 1933, long after the Russian whites ceased to be a factor in the scheme of things. In the end, the US government recognized the USSR because of its own Great Depression and concerns over Japanese expansion in Manchuria. The American recognition by itself did not end hostility towards the Soviets; it just reformulated those efforts.

Whatever antipathy and hatred towards the Soviet Union existed anywhere in the capitalist world, they paled by comparison to what was being cooked up in the German political kitchen. With American capital and domestic German grievances aplenty, nationalism and racism were tailor made to be the antidote to Soviet socialism. (Wall Street and the Rise of Hitler, Sutton, Anthony, Seal Beach, California 1976) On September 30, 1938 the British conservative Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed the Munich Agreement with Hitler, giving him the green light to invade Czechoslovakia and train his guns to the east.

Neville Chamberlain

Not to be outdone by their Conservative government, in 1939 the British Labour Party offered Germany a deal of mutual non interference in matters of each empire, and a sphere of influence for the German Reich in eastern and southeastern Europe. (Документы и Материалы Кануна Второй Мировой Войны Том II, Министерство Иностраных
Moreover, Chamberlain was determined that his deal with Hitler must stand against all foreign detractors.

On March 17, the Soviet Government had proposed a conference of powers, within or without the League of Nations, to consider means of seeing that there was no further German aggression. Chamberlain took a chilly view of any such meeting and on March 24, in the House of Commons, publicly rejected it. (The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, Shirer, William L., Fawcet Publications, Greenwich, Conn., 1962. p. 480)

This appeasement opened the door to Hitler’s launching World War II. The scope of this paper does not allow mentioning numerous details of Soviet WWII losses. The country was devastated and suffered some 25-million citizens killed with many more wounded. Industrial and human resources for reconstruction were severely set back. The USSR bore the brunt of the German war machine. The United States entered the war in earnest only when it was clear the Soviets were going to win. The American attitude to this continental tragedy is perhaps best understood from the statement of Democratic Senator and future US president Harry S. Truman on June 24, 1941. When toward the war’s end the German and Japanese war situations became exceedingly precarious, those two Axis Powers, independent of each other, sought to negotiate a secret deal with the Soviets to avoid certain defeat. (Nazis sought Soviet deal, book says. The Toronto Star, Sept. 28, 1986) The Japanese initiative came straight from the Emperor. “On June 30, Tōgō told Naotake Satō, Japan’s ambassador in Moscow, to try to establish ‘firm and lasting relations of friendship.’” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrender_of_Japan)

In both cases, Soviet negotiators expressed interest in the process but stayed true to their Teheran and Yalta promises. This however, did not prevent Churchill and the Americans from launching Cold War hostilities against the USSR as soon as the ink on the German capitulation document had dried. A genocidal nuclear war against the Soviet Union was planned but not executed because the Americans did not have enough nuclear bombs for the project and the Soviets had tested their own bomb before this diabolical concept could be applied. In addition, the Americans did not yet have any missile capable of delivering those bombs on target and would have been forced to use short-range B29 bombers which stood the chance of being shot down en route.

As early as 1945, classified Pentagon documents show that “striking the first blow” with nuclear weapons was adopted as official US military policy. The directives stated clearly that this was a departure from previous military doctrine. In October 1945, before the outbreak of the Cold War and when the US and the Soviet Union were still close allies, Truman asked Eisenhower to draft OPERATION TOTALITY, a hypothetical plan for an all-out conventional war with the Soviet Union. The same month, the Air Force began drafting a Top Secret plan called “Strategic Vulnerability of the U.S.S.R. to a Limited Air Attack,” studying the effect of dropping 20 to 30 atomic bombs on Soviet Cities. (Kaku, Michio and Axelrod, Daniel, To Win a Nuclear War, Black Rose Books, Montreal, New York, 1987 [p. 11])

Twenty to 30 Hiroshimas would be genocide well beyond Hitler’s Holocaust.

What was not achievable through sheer application of military force against the Soviets was to be augmented with economic measures. On March 19, 1947 animosity toward the Soviet Union was on full display. “The western Allies rejected a Soviet demand for $10-billion in war reparations from Germany” as reported in The Globe and Mail. (March 19, 1997 “Moment in Time”)

In the seven years since Neville Chamberlain sent Hitler marching east, that project boomeranged. The East was now in Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest as well as in the Far East of Asia. Where there was only one socialist country in the world at the outset, there were now 12 and not a single fascist one remained.

Destroying socialism henceforth became American obsession and raison d’être. Everything was mobilized to achieve that objective, employing both covert and overt methods, and the CIA and NATO were created to see that process through. The degree of despair and trepidation in the imperialist camp rang alarm bells in the citadels of the capitalist world because socialism began to be seen as a viable option in post war Europe. Resistance to Nazi occupation of Europe had been led by Communists and they emerged as a political force in countries such as Italy,
Greece and France. This was while Great Britain began shedding her colonies in Africa and Asia.

Italian Communists and Socialists won a majority of seats in the parliament and were poised to take control. In January 1947 Christian Democrat Premier de Gasperi dissolved his cabinet—three days after returning from the USA, and the new cabinet had all communists removed.

A CIA-organized “letter writing camp” for American Italians that flooded Italy with 10-million letters and cards with prepaid postage. A typical letter:

*We implore you not to throw our beautiful Italy into the arms of that cruel despot communism. ... If the forces of true democracy should lose in the Italian election, the American Government will not send any more money to Italy and we won’t send any more money to you, our relatives.*


Other themes emphasized were Russian domination of Italy, loss of religion and the church.

These threats were backed up by the US Secretary of State George Marshall, *Voice of America* broadcasts, and all state-to-state communication. Variants of the Italian scheme were used to achieve similar political results in France and Greece. In Greece communists were massacred.

To understand this American quest to destroy communism and the Soviet Union, it is instructive to read a book by Annabelle Bucar who was an American diplomat with previous intelligence assignments. Posted to the American embassy in Moscow, Bucar was uniquely able to reveal what was going on under the guise of diplomacy. In her book, *The Truth About American Diplomats* (Russian version) she explains, as an eye and ear witness, how American policies towards the USSR were formulated by George Kennan who had been handpicked by Secretary of State George Marshall to redefine US foreign policy.

In a nutshell, Kennan’s idea was to shift American policies from “what we can do with the Soviets” to “what we can do against them.” His confrontational approach saw little modification until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Bucar wrote: “Kennan proclaims that war between the USA and the Soviet Union is inevitable. He considers that the USA cannot allow successful socialism in the form of the Soviet Union” *(Правда об американских дипломатах Бюкар, Анабелла, Издание Литературной Газеты, Москва, 1949 [p. 31] (Translation mine)).* Bucar further wrote that Kennan’s policy of containment of the USSR extended to conquering the whole world. Kennan saw a great promise in the atomic bomb, which he hoped would be used against Soviet cities. Promoted in the West simply as “containment,” his private view, therefore, was beyond hawkish, to genocidal.

Bucar names many other “Soviet Experts” expounding similar sadistic ideology. In a short space of time, the American Embassy in Moscow was transformed into a spying lair and a minder would control all information going to the State Department so that nothing positive about the country could pass embassy censorship. No detail of life in the Soviet Union was left out as irrelevant. Anyone obstructing this covert ambassadorial regime would risk his or her career in US diplomacy. Soviet applicants for American visas who wanted to visit their relatives would be tormented with questions about life in the USSR, completely irrelevant to the visa application.

Anabelle Bucar’s revelations have been corroborated by other writers. British journalist Ralph Parker, who knew Kennan well, shares an eye-opening anecdote in his book *Conspiracy Against Peace* [Russian version used here]. While watching throngs of Muscovites on the way to the 1945 Victory Day Celebrations from the window of the American Embassy, Kennan remarked: “They are cheering...they think the war is over but it is only just beginning.” *(Заговор против мира Паркер, Ральф, Издание Литературной Газеты, Москва, 1949, стр. 4. Translation mine).*
Soviet Security Concerns

As the world’s only socialist country, the Soviet Union was savagely attacked by Nazi Germany with which it has had a non-aggression agreement. Hitler hated not only Jews and Communism; his hatred for the Slavs was equally fanatical. He saw Slavic countries as space for the Germans to expand into and the first Slavs to experience this were the Western and South Slavs who were not even communists at the time of Nazi attack. Hitler attacked the USSR with five million soldiers, ten times the numbers Napoleon used for his war on Russia. The Second World War was thus not only about preservation of a socialist state. It was a struggle for sheer survival of the Eastern Slavs and smaller peoples sharing the same homeland. They had to prevail and they did, chasing the enemy right to the top of the Reichstag in Berlin.

In the post WWII years, the USSR has emerged with a vastly improved geopolitical position agreed to with her wartime allies at Yalta. But the allies chose to become adversaries instead.

Once again, the country had to address the emerging foreign menace and retool its military machinery for new threats. In light of the horrific experiences of WWII, the USSR could ill afford to be caught unprepared again, especially when the adversary had nuclear weapons and elaborate plans to use them.

Whether the enemy feigned friendship or expressed hostility did not matter. The Soviet military had to be ready to meet any challenge or threat. This required a major redirection of economic resources at a time when rebuilding a ravaged country was an unavoidable must.

But security had to come first and it always did. Soviet armed forces succeeded in making war unpalatable to the other side by showing resolve, military skill, professionalism and readiness. In order to do so the country had to supply its forces with the best military tools, all produced domestically. This was only possible due to the high standards of free education the USSR achieved for its people, and the resultant superb level of state funded scientific research. At the 24th Party Congress in 1971, Premier Kosygin declared:

On the basis of the latest achievements of science and technology, many new types of modern armaments have been devised and are being produced and the combat and technical qualities of weapons have been increased. We can report to the congress that the Soviet armed forces are equipped with the latest combat equipment of the highest class. (Science and Technology as an Instrument of Soviet Policy, Harvey, Mose L., Goure, Leon, Prokofieff, Vladimir, Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, 1972 [p. 16])

In the words of Henry Kissinger, 1967 was a landmark year of strategic significance. “The decisive American superiority, which had characterized the entire postwar period, had ended by 1967.”

No matter what the imperialists dreamed of or wanted badly, Soviet might was always there to bring them to sobriety and that remained so to the very end. For the Soviets, postwar complications soon arose. Yugoslavia and Albania became cultist dictatorships. The former did not like Stalin and the latter one missed him. In 1956, CIA broadcasts convinced many Hungarians to rise against their government in a false belief that the US army is coming to help them.

The same trick worked in Czechoslovakia in 1968. The deceived had to flee to their foreign master who was nowhere to be seen in their hour of need. But what the enemy did not dare do to socialist states with their military forces, they more than made up for in cowardly underhanded methods. They were big in spying, subversion, infiltration and sabotage. A 1963 Soviet book claims that the total American espionage force numbered about 100,000. (Caught in the Act—Facts about US. Espionage and Subversion Against the U.S.S.R, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1963 [p. 14])

Western intelligence operatives had close contacts with fanatical Nazi and anti-communist émigrés among whom they found willing recruits. One of their conferences was held in Toronto where demands were made on the governments for anti-Soviet aggression:

The proposals presented at the meeting, attended by Canadian and British members of Parliament and political analysts from the United States included: Providing assistance in the form of military training, transport and arms as well as other political, material and technical means of support. A similar set of proposals was presented to the US Administration in June, calling for the “integration of national anti-Soviet liberation movements into U.S military and political strategy.

A Word About Spying

One of the more bizarre cases successfully undertaken by American spy operatives was a 460 meters tunnel dug from West Berlin into East Berlin to tap into the Soviet military cable system. It is believed that this operation was not used a long time before it was discovered and the equipment seized by the Soviets. Facts about such operations can be seen in Caught in the Act: Facts about US
Espionage and Subversion Against the USSR (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow).

According to a CBS news story of March 4, 2001 (http://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-not-so-secret-tunnel/) a tunnel was also dug deep underground below the Soviet Embassy in Washington where listening devices were attached to sewer pipes under the embassy. Spying continued even after Russia changed to capitalism.

From Caught in the Act, p. 67

Oblivious to the cost of the project, the CIA undertook to raise a sunken Soviet navy submarine armed with nuclear warheads from the bottom of the Pacific that the Soviet Navy had been unable to locate. The CIA did it clandestinely to recover secret communication equipment and codes on board. This story was later made public and documentaries were shown on TV.

The Economy

Soviet economic development and transformation were the envy of the world. As Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny (Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union, Keeran, Roger and Kenny, Thomas, International Publishers, New York, 2004 [p. 52]) wrote:

“The peasantry represented 83 percent of the population in 1926, but 20 percent in 1975. The workers in industry, building and transportation represented 5 million people in 1926 and 62 million in 1975.”

In 1950s the Soviet Union developed at twice the rate of most advanced countries. Between 1950 and 1975, the Soviet industrial production index increased 9.85 times (according to Soviet figures) or 6.77 times (according to CIA figures), while the US industrial production index increased 2.62 times. Soviet trade relations with the outside world depended on many factors. The USSR often engaged in barter where a trade partner lacked financial resources. The Soviets however, needed foreign currencies with which to buy goods needed for their domestic needs. Their most voluminous exports earning foreign currency came from exports of oil, gas and armaments. All three being much in demand, there was little the Americans could do to prevent that. Weapons were mainly sold to countries in fear of American aggression and that were friendly to the Soviets.

The Soviet Union’s normal trade partners were all socialist countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania, Cuba, Mongolia and Vietnam. These all had socialist economies and belonged to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA), established by voluntary membership in 1949. These countries have enjoyed special economic relations to each other and benefited greatly from Soviet supplied oil and gas at prices considerably below those in world markets. CMEA member states were coordinating their production and five year plans to avoid duplication and a central patent office was responsible for innovation. CMEA members also co-operated with non-socialist countries if they so desired.

Socialist economies provided stability unknown in the capitalist world. There was no inflation, unemployment or enrichment through manipulation. The Soviet ruble was a currency backed by gold, precisely 0.987412 gram of gold for one ruble until 1992. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_ruble)

The postwar Soviet economy was consistently the second largest economy in the world, superseded only by the United States, but it was not a close second.

American Economic Aggression

The Americans, however, tried to thwart or wreck all Soviet efforts to improve its economy. While preaching free trade as a mantra of their system, they apportioned prosperity to countries as a reward for submissive behaviour to US interests. The political and military needs of the American Empire were the uppermost considerations. South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and West Germany enjoyed a special status.

The USSR had no choice, because of the hostility and aggressive actions on all fronts of the American Empire to spend a significant portion of its budget on defence. It was US strategy, actually enunciated by President Reagan at one point, to “bankrupt” the Soviet economy by forcing the
expense of an arms chase on it. All possible means were employed by the Americans to deny the Soviets freedom to realize their economic potentials.

One tactic was preventing the Soviets from selling their technology internationally. No matter what the Soviet leaders tried, their initiatives encountered roadblocks. Even when the Soviets offered substantial benefits to a foreign business partner, the undertaking was sabotaged in infancy by various, usually secretive means. By some bizarre logic, even railway technology was considered as a defence asset to be denied them. “The Japanese Government has tightened its restrictions on railway technology transfer to the Soviet Union, allegedly for fear that Moscow may use such technology for military purposes, the economic newspaper Nihon Keizai wrote.” (The Globe and Mail, Technology Shift, July 7, 1982.)

The Americans also took extraordinary measures to prevent any new technology from falling into Soviet hands. They introduced severe penalties for anyone taking these orders lightly and used their spies to block every possibility. Fibre optics and computers were particularly guarded but also consumer items like video cameras which had some similar technology. Such items were confiscated from unsuspecting western travelers at home airports. (The Globe and Mail, “Computer users run into snag at customs,” October 29, 1986, p. B9)

The Japanese company Toshiba suffered greatly from an American accusation that one of its subsidiaries sold milling machines to the Soviet Union which could produce low noise submarine parts among other things. (The Globe and Mail, “toshiba probe,” June 25, 1987, p. B32). President Reagan said: “The Russians know that they can’t match us industrially or technologically.” (Morris, Edmund. Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan Random House, New York, 1999, p. 435.) Capital availability was also used to prevent Soviet economic projects from starting even though the Soviet Union had an impeccable record of compliance with terms of economic agreements and there was no danger of bankruptcy or default. “Economic spokesmen for both Vice-President George Bush and Mr. Dukakis have already expressed concerns about linkage between the credits and Western security,” read a story in The Globe and Mail headlined “Foreign bank lending to Soviets upsets the U.S.” on October 25, 1988 (p. B 32).

In an earlier instance a loan of 20 billion yen was refused. “The Soviet Union sought a Euroyen loan from Japanese banks but the negotiations were not successful, according to a spokesman for Sumitomo Bank Ltd. He declined to provide details.” (The Globe and Mail, “Soviet loan,” May 24, 1985.)

Lucrative business deals were scrapped just to please the Americans. But this did not always sit well with countries that missed out, sometimes after protracted efforts to reach an agreement. (The Globe and Mail, “Japanese want sanctions lifted,” June 23, 1982, p. B2.) These examples show us that the Americans were exercising veto power over their capitalist satellites and by extension ultimately also over Soviet economy. The Soviets were angry about these deceptions. They demanded penalties from companies which fail to honour their contracts. In one such case for a gas pipeline project German and Italian companies were unable to pursue due to American objections:

French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson said in an interview published yesterday that France was surprised the Reagan Administration extended the sanctions so soon after agreement was apparently reached on the pipeline issue at the recent Versailles summit of Western economic powers.

We were, therefore, very surprised that as soon as the American delegation got back home they took unilaterally, without consulting us, a decision that really is a decision of war, economic war,” he said. (The Globe and Mail, “Moscow threatens pipeline penalties,” July 7, 1982.)

In addition to those regular, customary, and on the spur of the moment economic hits against Soviet external economic activity, the Americans needed a permanent cattle prod to keep the USSR on its side of the economic iron curtain. They created a vile and sinister piece of legislation, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment which, once in place, would tie the hands of all future elected American governments to deal rationally with the Soviet Union.

It was all about institutionalized sadism against a country that had never done anything to provoke it. For lack of better analogy, it could be called economic McCarthyism. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment became law in 1974 and targeted countries with “improper” economic systems as interpreted by the USA as well as countries that did not—in American eyes—permit “free emigration.” This law remained in force even after USSR was dissolved and Russia became capitalist and allowed free travel to all.

Time after time, American behaviour has proven that those lofty American pronouncements on market economy, free enterprise and democracy are hypocritical instruments for achieving economic and political advantage over others. American bans on Soviet business deals with foreign countries were actually attempts to make the Soviet Union accept American hegemony, start
behaving in a submissive fashion and get used to it. The Soviets would have none of it.

The Golden Rule, American Style

The American dollar was linked to gold as part of the Bretton Woods Agreement. On Aug. 15, 1971 President Nixon delinked it, the Globe and Mail reported, “because of a rash of spending on the military and foreign aid during the Vietnam War; there wasn’t enough gold to cover the amount of dollars in circulation.” And the Americans have been printing fictitious currency ever since. By 1981, President Reagan was presiding over a deficit of $100 billion or more. He spent recklessly on the military as no president before him had, in order to bankrupt the Soviets and enrich capitalist arms corporations. By 1985, the USA had officially become world’s biggest debtor nation and has remained so to this day, adding trillions to that title. There was the possibility that the US economy would have collapsed if the Soviet Union had not been deceived by Gorbachev. But Reagan spared no expense to finish off the USSR. (http://www.nytimes.com/1985/09/17/business/us-turns-into-debtor-nation.html)

Always looking for an opportunity to do economic damage to the Soviet Union, the CIA glommed onto the fact that, as an article in The New York Times reported, the USSR had to sell 300 tons of gold worth $3.5 billion because of low oil prices and its need to import food. The CIA thought in 1982 that it was on to something.

This was after a third consecutive bad Soviet harvest. But the assessment of civilian economic experts mainly differed from that of the CIA. The situation was indeed unpleasant to Moscow but not threatening. Major points reported on March 15, 1982 in The New York Times and reprinted in The Globe and Mail included:

~Civilian economists say Moscow has well over $30-billion in gold reserves and hard currency deposits in the West, more than enough to pay off its total Western debt of $20-billion.

~ US bankers say the problem for the West in applying economic pressure there is that the West itself can be hurt economically.

~Government specialists say Moscow still has a strong credit rating. Its debt is “peanuts” in relation to its $1.5-trillion economy, one specialist said, and debt service is equivalent to only about 12 per cent of its annual trade in hard currencies, a lower ratio than in Canada for example.

~Soviet- watchers doubt that the Soviet economy can be pressed to the point of collapse from outside.

Gold for Grains

The planned socialist economy of the Soviet Union had no problem determining how much steel, cement or other materials the economy was going to consume. There was no problem, either, in deciding how many thousands of hectares of crops to plant.

However, the unpredictability of weather conditions played havoc with food production. Farmers of all countries have to gamble with this phenomenon and they owe their survival to good weather.

The CIA carefully tracked Soviet grain imports

What was different in the Soviet Union, unlike under capitalism, was that there was no bankruptcy and individual farm workers were permanent employees. Whatever the weather conditions, citizens in all corners of the Soviet Union had guaranteed staple foods at low prices. Even though Soviet agriculture occasionally underperformed, nobody in the country suffered from lack of food. In years of inadequate harvests, the Soviet

[This marks the interruption of this article in the final print issue of Northstar Compass]

Government supplemented its stocks with foreign food imports bought with gold.

This practice, however, imposed problems for the nation’s foreign currency reserves because they were needed for other sorts of trade. Sales of gold reserves were considered temporary emergency measures since they represented the exchange of one non-renewable resource for a variety of consumables.

But large purchases of grains on the open market meant volatile and unpredictable prices. This is when the CIA encouraged the US president to try to exact a heavy toll on
the Soviets. Reports on Soviet harvests were always an indication of what Soviet external purchases might be. Seeing this as a vulnerability, the Americans as early as January 1980 imposed a ban preventing the Soviets from buying their needed grains. The US, Canada, and Australia banded together and refused to sell. (Известия, Грубая ошибка 29 октября 1980 г.) This amounted to using food as a weapon of economic warfare.

In 1982 the Soviets taught the Western “refusniks” a lesson by buying 75% of Argentina’s harvest. (The Globe and Mail, “Argentina’s grain sales soaring,” February 15, 1982, p.B8)

When the Americans finally, under pressure from farmers, decided in April 1981 to resume selling grain to the USSR, President Reagan insisted it be shipped on American ships only. The American shipping companies charged a fortune, raising the cost of grain destined for the USSR above a reasonable price.

Endowed with natural resources as no other country, the USSR was the world’s second largest gold producer while South Africa ranked as unchallenged first. As the largest producer, South Africa was able to destabilize the price of gold at the time when Soviet Union was being forced to sell gold. The Soviets kept their sales “secret” but there are no secrets in the world of profits.

While publicly denouncing the white racist apartheid regime in Pretoria until the regime collapsed in 1991, the CIA did all it could to keep it in power so that South Africa could manipulate gold prices and hurt Soviet gold sales. By increasing its exports of gold, the South African government could drive down worldwide gold prices. Strongly anti-communist, the apartheid regime was in ideological sync with Washington. It remained in power until 1991, the same year as the dissolution of the USSR.

Poland, the Pope, the CIA and the USSR’s Destruction

Within this article and others in this issue, internal factors are cited as seriously contributing to the implosion of the USSR. It remains moot as to whether the USSR would have “fallen” had the American Empire pushed it off the ledge in a sophisticated unrelenting full court press. The tentacled CIA saw an opening into the heart of the USSR through Poland, the largest socialist country in the East European area and the most important link in the socialist defence community outside the Soviet Union. The CIA had a plan and it worked.

On October 16, 1978 Karol Józef Wojtyła became not only the first Polish Pope, but the first non-Italian Pope in 455 years.

What was behind this remarkable development? Was it all decided in and by the Vatican?

The previous Pope, John Paul I, died on September 28, 1978, just 33 days after he succeeded Pope Paul VI. Just days before his death, John Paul I said: “Another man better than I could not have been chosen.” It was of course Wojtyła. “He will come, because I will go.” (Bernstein, Carl and Politi, Marco. His Holiness John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time, Thorndike Press, 1997, p. 225)

Was this a lucky guess? Wojtyła had to be elected, and he won on the eighth ballot on October 16, the third day of voting and 18 days after Paul I made his prediction. Or was it wishful thinking? Or was something else involved to enable Wojtyła to be “recognised as helping to end Communist rule in his native Poland and eventually all of Europe.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II#Election_to_the_papacy)

The CIA already had a psychological profile on this Wojtyła. He had an American connection from the time he was still Archbishop Wojtyła. In 1976 he gave a lecture at Harvard. There he met Zbigniew Brzezinski who latched onto him like a leech and continued to communicate with him regularly in handwritten letters. Brzezinski then started working the Catholic hierarchy.

After Wojtyła’s ascendancy, he told Czech bishop Jozef Tomko that he wanted John Paul II to know there were sources of money, equipment and
With the new Pope firmly in the Vatican, the Solidarity movement sprang up in Poland and made demands the government could not meet. Some 250 underground publications sprang up in the country. “The CIA spent generously in this area (about $8-million in 1982-1983 alone).” (Ibid, pp. 560-561).

Pope John Paul II had never seen himself as a warrior against communism and neither did he plan to work with the CIA. The CIA skilfully grafted itself on to him and in numerous friendly chats began to imbue him with the idea of mutual benefit deriving from their cooperation.

The only problem was that the CIA created those difficulties in the first place just to blame communism and then enlist the Pope’s help in solving the problems—their way. The Pope was co-opted into his work with the CIA because of fears that his country could be thrown into bloodshed and—as the CIA told him—this could be avoided if the communist government of Poland surrendered to Solidarity demands. The CIA fed the Pope satellite pictures supposedly showing Soviet tanks poised to invade Poland and clearly the Pope wanted to be the saviour of his people.

Solidarity was receiving funds from the West. CIA chief William Casey had taken steps to ensure these monies would continue to flow. The highest priority of American foreign policy was now Poland, he informed the Pope. In Washington, Reagan and Casey had discussed the possibility of “breaking Poland out of the Soviet orbit,” with help from the Holy Father. (Ibid, p. 24)

Alarmed by the anarchy and ideological animosity of Solidarity in Poland, Soviet leaders demanded that action be taken against the movement. Polish leaders wavered. They even asked the Pope to help in the matter but when they finally decided to declare martial law, out of four high officers privy to this information, one was spying for the Americans. Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski knew that his cover was blown and escaped to the Canadian Embassy where he received false papers and left the country in disguise. It was later discovered that he had been spying for 11 years, providing, for instance, Moscow’s orders to the Warsaw Pact forces and the Red Army. (Ibid, pp. 379, 471-472)

In order to strike the gold mine of Solidarity in Poland, the CIA had to do a lot of preparatory work in Poland itself, in the Catholic Church, in trade unions and among western governments. They had to activate their agents in the media and trade unions and in Polish communities abroad.

It was a process in which small demands on the government snowballed into greater ones. It had to look like something that is not going to wreck the Polish state even though that was the ultimate aim.

Most important of all, this project had to look like a legitimate popular uprising of Polish workers. It was planned in such a way that the process rolls on into the Soviet Union itself under Gorbachev. World opinion was used to let the Soviet Union know in the most blunt terms that Soviet intervention in Poland would cause NATO to be tempted to intervene. Zbigniew Brzezinski even phoned Indira Gandhi to ask her to put pressure on Moscow. For all this, a lot of money was needed and it was always on tap at the CIA.

**Propaganda and influence**

It is fair to say that both the USA and the USSR fought for influence and a good image in the wider world. Not only did the two try to influence each other’s citizens but that practice extended to all the world.

Since the countries represented fundamentally different systems, their messages and approaches were dissimilar.

The USA was and remains un-matched in the reach of its massive propaganda machine. The United States had and has vast cultural clout through Madison Avenue, wire services, book publishing and of course TV.

The United States had and has a vast network of radio broadcasting systems in many languages. American magazines and newspapers were and are sold internationally on newsstands and in airports worldwide. Some were and are available in foreign languages. Add to this the availability of American products and services. On top of all that, the Americans have Hollywood, churning out propaganda films projecting an unrealistic glamorous lifestyle while earning big capitalist money at the box office. Many Hollywood films denigrated, slandered and misrepresented the USSR or the Russian people.
Perpetuation of the negative Soviet stereotype was the norm. The Americans even coined new words to encapsulate their propaganda ideology. Loaded terms such as "hard currency" to describe the US dollar, a dollar without gold backing, as opposed to "soft currency" for the Soviet ruble which was supported by gold.

The Americans projected the image of an affluent society subliminally promising riches to those who adopt "the American way." Then there is "democracy." This word can mean many things to many people, but the hallmark of "American democracy" is an exclusionary two party system, both capitalist.

That is one party more than North Korea has, but North Korea is not occupying other countries. The Americans have even invented a new class in the parlance of politics that Marx, Engels and Lenin probably "forgot" to invent. Without being challenged by anybody in the socialist camp, they coined the term "the middle class," creating an image of a progressive class where the working class can step up to a higher fictitious class. But the ultimate fraud must be "leader of the free world." That is American imperialism's self-styled title to conjure up a world outside of the American colonial empire as devoid of freedom. Perhaps the blessed statue of liberty in New York harbour can reveal to us when and where was that election that promoted the White House to the "leadership of the free world" and who else was on that ballot.

Capitalists have also deliberately obfuscated the difference between socialism and communism, hammering home incessantly that communism is expansionist and dangerous and that the words Socialism and Communism are completely interchangeable. The evidence does not support that claim but who has asked them to explain? Not a single country has been invaded by any socialist country since WWII. (Both the Afghan and Syrian governments invited, in the first case the USSR and in the second case Russia, to aid them in resisting American-led aggression. This is not semantics.) The list of countries invaded outright in that time by the USA is long—Vietnam, Panama, Cuba, Grenada, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, to name a few.

In their own right, the Soviets projected an image of a socialist power devoid of racism and prejudice. They expressed solidarity with the working class and for the cause of self-determination as well as national liberation of colonized and exploited peoples.

Beyond that the Soviet Union stood for dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes. It used the United Nations as a platform for tabling its policies for fair resolution of conflicts. It tried to nudge the Americans into more

An important area in which the Soviets made arguably their greatest impact in image building was space exploration, that proved the advanced state of their science and engineering. Sputnik I sent shivers down capitalist spines and ushered an age of education in western countries where higher education was previously the preserve of the rich.

**Conclusions**

Authors on the subject of dismantlement of the Soviet Union attribute the demise of the USSR to a range of causes. This obfuscates a general understanding of the issue. Let's eliminate false claims before any serious analysis is undertaken. The Soviet Union did not succumb to any of these 10 causes:

- As a result of foreign military defeat
- As a result of a military coup
- As a result of collapsing state order
- As a result of collapsed chain of command
- As a result of popular uprising
- As a result of anti communist revolt
- As a result of ethnic, nationalist or separatist sentiments
- As a result of economic collapse and privation
- As a result of religious craze
- As a result of significant political distrust and alienation from the state
None of the standard metrics of failed states are attributable to the demise of the Soviet Union. As in all states, normal dissatisfaction and discontent were indeed present but not in significant percentages by any measure.

In fact most Soviet people were planning their lives counting on things continuing being what they were and expecting a better tomorrow. Students were working on their degrees, young people were getting married and looking forward to being given a state apartment of family size. Some were even saving money to buy their first Lada car and pensioners were planning their retirement.

**Gorbachev’s Central Role in the Collapse**

The collapse of the Soviet Union began when Mikhail Gorbachev discarded scientific socialism and promised a better Soviet Union with capitalist attributes. If utopia was ever present in the Soviet political system, it was the time when the CPSU started believing in the goodness of its historical enemy and when it sought to remake itself to the liking of the most dangerous global predator.

The most senile of American presidents, Ronald Reagan, was still clever enough to outwit Gorbachev with catch phrases such as “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall,” the “(Soviet) Evil Empire” and “Trust but verify.” Mikhail Gorbachev, childlike, accepted any admonition and obeyed his adversary’s every order.

The Soviet Union was far from being a superbly run state able to be complacent and contented in its situation. The Soviets had been losing the propaganda war for a long time and the enemy was able to manufacture and sustain any and all innuendo, diatribe and fraud. They sabotaged the Moscow Olympics in 1980, sent Korean airliner flight 007 spying into Soviet airspace and confused Soviet jet pilots with sophisticated electronic jamming, resulting in the shoot-down of the airliner to waves of Western outrage.

The pilot was a member of South Korea’s CIA.

Whatever Gorbachev’s intentions were, the Soviet Union’s decay was clearly initiated and caused by what he was doing and it would only get worse and worse as he continued to do more of the same. The Americans manipulated him mercilessly and demanded of him to prove his goodwill toward them by doing more irreparable damage to what was left of his country. At this point, a return to the previous order of things was politically not possible. The Americans had been feeding him promises and he was serving them to his people.

In a bitter irony, Mikhail Gorbachev in 2008 accepted the Liberty Medal Award “for his role in ending the Cold War,” the U.S. National Constitution Center said.

When his services were completed, they replaced him with Yeltsin to dissolve the Soviet Union and the CPSU. For the first time since the 1917 October revolution, through Gorbachev, the Americans were able to manipulate the Soviet economy from the inside, something coveted for decades. Contrary to widespread opinion, the Americans did not want Gorbachev to succeed and stabilize the country. The more he failed, the greater was their gain. They did not come this far just to give up, they wanted to gain as much control and influence as possible in a short time.

Therefore it was not an accident that Gorbachev started his reforms with Perestroika and Glasnost and not with controlled economic management or even transformation under party control as was done in China. Perestroika and Glasnost are mutually exclusive because Glasnost is invitation for anarchy, strikes, grumbling, political paralysis and end of party authority, perhaps even civil war.

Essentially the Americans ran Soviet “reforms.” By all accounts the economy and standard of living were in a tailspin in spite of cuts to the military. A 23 per cent increase in food imports in 1989 ran up a negative trade balance for the first time since 1976. Widespread strikes and ethnic conflicts became the order of the day. “Soviet economy getting worse despite Gorbachev, figures indicate,” (The Globe and Mail, October 30, 1989, p. B5)

The Americans went as far as to expect Gorbachev to provide services in furtherance of their own foreign policy objectives. “Mr. Bush would like to see the Soviet Union
use its influence in Nicaragua to bring about a peaceful settlement to that situation," The Globe and Mail reported on March 31, 1989, in a story headlined "Bush urges Gorbachev to pursue Nicaragua peace." That would be on American terms.

To comprehend what Gorbachev was doing to his country, it would be useful to contrast what chief American post-war negotiator James Byrnes had to say about his Soviet interlocutors: "The best way I can approach that question is out of my own experience. And the first conclusion clearly indicated by that experience is that Russia’s leaders are stubborn and resourceful negotiators." (Speaking Frankly, Byrnes, James F., Harper & Brothers Publishing, New York and London, 1947, p. 277.)

Two pages later, he is even blunter: “Mr. Molotov’s answer will be ‘Nyet,’ the Russian word for ‘No,’ which I heard so often that I almost accept it as part of my own language.” (Ibid, p. 279)

It should be pointed out here that the Soviet Union at the time of Molotov’s negotiations did not possess even one nuclear bomb while the Americans had already dropped two on Japan. Mr. Gorbachev conducted his negotiations as if he was ashamed that his country was a socialist superpower admired and respected world over as the only country capable of destroying the United States of America.

“At the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had some 12,000 strategic nuclear warheads and bombs in its arsenal ..." according to Thomas Graham, Jr. and Keith A. Hansen in their book Spy Satellites and other Intelligence Technologies that Changed History (University of Washington Press, 2007, p. 104)

It would be highly speculative to hypothesize about what drove Gorbachev to pull the plug on his socialist homeland but some things are undeniable. He was not the only one of that persuasion. The ideas came from abroad and apparently entered Soviet Union without challenge or scrutiny.

Back in May 1983 Gorbachev visited Canada when he was still the Soviet Minister of Agriculture. Together with then Soviet Ambassador Yakovlev, he was invited to visit the farm of a Canadian politician. The two found they shared similar if not identical views and to the consternation of security minders insisted on a lengthy walk on the farm completely alone. According to two authors who wrote a book The Making of the Radical Behind Perestroika, that farm walk was a seminal moment in history. The Toronto Star ran a story headlined “How glasnost grew in Ontario.” (https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2010/03/28/how_glasnost_grew_in_ontario.html)

About a year later, we had another indication that his Canadian conversion was shaping his perceptions. The Polish quagmire, which caused great consternation and disquiet in Moscow, also produced a lot of diplomatic activity among all those involved. When General Jaruzelski’s Catholic church and Solidarity stance were evaluated by Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Defence Minister Ustinov, and Gorbachev in April 1984, instead of criticizing Jaruzelski as the other two did, Gorbachev gave him the benefit of the doubt.

“It seems to me that we don’t yet understand the true intentions of Jaruzelski.” Gorbachev paused. “Perhaps he wished to have a pluralistic system of government in Poland.”

In eleven months Chernenko would be dead and Gorbachev would succeed him. Then both he and Jaruzelski would together discuss the idea of pluralism, for both Poland and the Soviet Union.” (Bernstein et al, p. 571)

Yet another revealing quote. Frank Fahrenkopf told an interesting anecdote about Zbigniew Brzezinski being asked, at a public meeting in Berlin, when the Cold War was won. “This may surprise you,” said Zbig, “but I think it was won at Reykjavik.” (Morris in Dutch, p. 658)

Brzezinski presumably thought that by the time of Reykjavik, Gorbachev had reached the point of no return.

They knew they had him!

And what about the American people? We need to be reminded that the Soviets and the Americans ended WWII as friends. American popular admiration for the Soviet Union was very high after the war. Hatred had to be manufactured in a hurry. According to Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy against the Sino-Soviet Alliance 1949-1955 (Mayers, David Allan, Louisiana State University Press, 1986, pp. 157-158):

A January 1947 poll indicated that 40 percent of the American public thought Russia could still be trusted. And almost 75 percent believed the United States was as much to blame for global problems as the Soviet Union. Unless something was done, popular support would lag behind planned policies aimed against the Soviets. In Clark Clifford’s words, the administration had to “bring people up to [the] realization that the war isn’t over by any means.” Senator Vandenberg, in an even less felicitous phrase, advised Truman that one had to “scare Hell” out of the public to gain support for necessary policy.

In order to achieve American objectives vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, President Reagan used his acting skills to deceive his domestic audiences first.
In 1985, he began to spread fake alarmist news by “saying the Soviet Union is more dangerous now and rearming beyond its needs...our future hangs in the balance.” He asked Congress for a $969 billion budget. (The Globe and Mail, “President pleads for budget support,” April 25, 1985)

The use of rapid American rearmament and Star Wars (SDI) as a threat to Soviet security at the time when Gorbachev was in his Perestroika mode was disturbing. Soviet generals were not sure what to make of Star Wars. Those who knew that it was a ploy did not tell but a rare admission ended up in a newspaper, the Financial Post (July 1, 1988, p. 10):

Even the joint chiefs of staff have said that they don’t expect SDI to be able to intercept more than 30% of incoming Soviet missiles” “there would be a significant probability that the first (and presumably only) time that the ballistic missile defence system [was] used in a real war, it would suffer catastrophic failure.

Both Gorbachev and the Americans must have known what a Canadian journalist knew. In his column Jeffrey Simpson claims that SDI or Star Wars are illegal under the ABM Treaty. “...the treaty requires both sides” not to develop, test or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile based.” (The Globe and Mail, “A destabilizing idea,” January 10, 1985)

After careful examination of data and facts, almost any criteria we consult, there was asymmetry in the array of forces and strengths of the two sides. With nuclear weapons, the United States had only one possible nuclear adversary, the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union’s adversaries included the United States, Great Britain, France, Israel and China.

The fact is that jettisoning socialism did not change that equation. Soviet problems increased over time. Easy solutions were few. The Afghan War was costly in lives and expenses but that was not the only loss. Up to that point Soviet Union enjoyed solid support among Muslim and Arab peoples. The fact that Soviets were invited into Afghanistan and spent money rebuilding it helped little.

China’s flirting with the Americans and her embrace of capitalism must have weighed heavily in Soviet choices for their own future. There is nothing that the Soviets could have done to assuage American geo-political onslaught. Both the Cold War and detente were used to advance American aggression, blackmail, threats, deception, covert actions including false flag operations and more—the full array of American tactics in support of their strategy of world domination.

They used all these and bluffing and have managed to impose diminishing options on the Soviet side.

The Soviet military effort to protect the Afghan revolutionary government against the American-supported warlords cost the Soviets $3 to $4 billion a year. (Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union, Keeran, Roger and Kenny, Thomas, International Publishers, New York, 2004, p. 75)

As to nuclear weapons—hellfire on Earth that should have been banned decades ago but now constitute an insane threat to everyone—the Soviet Union declared on multiple occasions, in the U.N. and elsewhere, that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons in war. (The Globe and Mail, “Soviets will not be first to use nuclear weapons in war,” June 16, 1982, p. 12). The US and NATO refused any similar declaration.

A typical American response: “It was important for the United States to maintain the flexibility of using nuclear weapons first both as a deterrent to war and for tactical reasons in war, Gen. Rogers said.” (The Globe and Mail, “NATO keeps first-strike option,” June 17, 1982)

Few will disagree that there was a need for some policy adjustments in some aspects of Soviet society. A party-appointed committee could have restored resilience in the economy, and improved the standard of living and general satisfaction of the people.

On the foreign policy, the USSR’s financing of friendly states was an economic burden. Socialist solidarity calls for generosity for allies in need, but some countries were there just for the take; demands on the Soviet Union were threatening the donor.
Giving all the power to Gorbachev to mend country's problems was the worst choice. It proved suicidal. Once securely in power, Gorbachev purged all the valuable party figures and replaced them with his own network of con artists. When his house of cards started to collapse around him, he claimed that he needed more authority.

Gorbachev was able to deceive his countrymen by sweet-talking his way into their imagination. He promised normalization of relations with the United States and a lowering of the threat from the threat from the West by promoting trust. This is what the Soviet Union always wanted but not through unilateral disarmament and suicide.

Gorbachev started with high degree of domestic trust but squandered it all to become the most detested politician in country's history. Debt owed to Soviet Union was never collected either by Gorbachev or Yeltsin while the country fell into its own indebtedness. Some $20 billion of debt owed the Soviet Union was written off by Putin's Russia.

Soviet exploits and achievements will forever remain a testimony to human determination to create a more just society and to lay down lives to protect it. But we shall never know what such a society could be like if allowed to flourish without capitalist predators. The capitalists themselves must have thought that socialism makes for a viable vibrant alternative society and that is why they committed all their efforts to destroy it.

Now that there is no Soviet Union, we can see a rampant imperialist takeover of sovereign countries through force of war, plunder of resources and exploitation of peoples.

Capitalism has become more unrestrained, more brutal, more sophisticatedly totalitarian than at any time in its past. A past when a viable alternative, one that wanted to compete peacefully for the hearts and minds of humankind, in the interests of greater equality, did its best. Its very presence restrained somewhat the worst impulses of organized greed. Now one way or another humanity must decide if Socialism can be re-established in meaningful ways.

If it cannot, the future will be much darker than it needs to be.

Mike Celik

SHOWN HERE on his first visit to the USSR, Mr. Celik has always had a special affinity for the Soviet Union. He was born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1947, as son of a Partisan father who was left wounded in the battlefield by his unit in 1944, expecting him to die there. Three days later he was found by the advancing Soviet Red Army and transferred to a clinic which saved his life. Mike Celik and his two brothers owe their existence indirectly to the goodness of their father's Russian saviours.

Blessed with a lifetime of peace, Mike Celik himself has had a rewarding and interesting life. He has travelled to over thirty five countries and earned three university degrees while supporting himself through factory work. Beside English, Mike is also fluent in Serbian, German, Russian and Chinese. Always a fighter for justice, Mike never felt sorry for the time he spent on doing the right thing for the people and friends. As president of the Canadian Slav Committee, he keeps a keen interest in all aspects of Slavic life, both in Canada and in Slav homelands.

Mike Celik is retired with wife and two young children to whom he devotes a lot of attention but he never refuses to write an occasional article and share his knowledge on many subjects. His two children from an earlier marriage are independent with own families and his 91 year old mother is still alive. Whenever free Mike does research and gathers ideas for his next project.