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Russia: Who was, what was Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev?

Sunday 4 September 2022, by [TANURO Daniel](#) (Date first published: 3 September 2022).

There is a lot of nonsense on social media about Gorbachev.

Gorbachev was not the gravedigger of the revolution: the revolution was dead, at least since Stalin took power in 1928.

Revolution is the revolutionary power of the people self-organized in councils - the "soviets". By the time Gorbachev took office, power had long been in the exclusive hands of a layer of bureaucrats who lived like capitalists.

These parasites no longer even pretended to believe in socialism: their dream was to appropriate state property and pass it on to their descendants, to complete their metamorphosis and no longer be obliged to devoutly follow the dogmas of the "Marxist-Leninist" state religion (poor Marx, poor Lenin).

This clique of old men put Gorbachev in power to try to save the system from collapse. For they all knew: collapse seemed inevitable.

Gorbachev's plan was to introduce market reforms to boost the planned economy (perestroika) and democratic reforms to give legitimacy to the power of the bureaucracy (glasnost). It was not to break up the USSR or to restore capitalism.

Gorbachev failed for a variety of reasons (Afghanistan, Chernobyl, Reagan's arms race...). The atmosphere of the "end of the system" exacerbated the clan war within the bureaucracy, one could feel the curse coming on, each bureaucrat wanted to secure their power for the future, by any means available. Centrifugal forces grew, especially at the level of the federated republics.

But the bottom line is that the monstrous system of a collectivized economy functioning (very badly) in the service of a bureaucratic caste and at the expense of the working classes was impossible to reform.

There were only two solutions: either an anti-bureaucratic revolution with the reinvention of Soviet people's power; or the re-establishment of capitalism through the dictatorship of bureaucrats completing their mutation into capitalists and joining forces with international capital. After decades of totalitarianism and lies, the first solution had become infinitely unlikely.

The Chinese Communist Party quickly learned the lessons of Gorbachev: perestroika yes, glasnost no. And above all, no democratic rights for the Chinese. And above all no democratic rights for the nationalities of the Empire!

This is how the bureaucracy managed to keep power while transforming itself and China into a great imperialist power... at the cost of an iron dictatorship exercised by a police apparatus inherited from Stalinism, which employs the high-tech methods of Silicon Valley.

Putin too has learned his lessons. Rather than Gorbachev's "naive" plan, with its "glasnost", in 1988-1991 he should have cut off the heads, brought the Poles, the Balts, the Ukrainians and the Georgians to heel. Send in the tanks, as in Prague in 1968 and Budapest in 1956.

For Putin, this dictatorship should have been installed from the start, because it was the natural complement of the appropriation of state property by the bureaucracy. The transformation of the bureaucrats into capitalist oligarchs would then have taken place centrally, under the leadership of Moscow, instead of in a chaotic, savage, fragmented way in independent republics.

Putin wants to turn the wheel of history backwards (as far as his army can) to give the oligarchs the Russian empire that he believes they should never have lost. An empire based on grain and fossil fuels. This is the meaning of the war in Ukraine and it is indeed an imperialist war.

Turning the wheel of history upside down defines the reactionary fantasy. In the age of imperialism, it always has the features of fascism. This is the meaning of the ideology that accompanies the war against Ukraine. It is not by chance that Dugin is a follower of occultism and an admirer of Evola. It is not by chance that Putin's crime is blessed by Patriarch Kyrill as a crusade against gays and lesbians, those "degenerates of the West".

What about the left? It is caught up in its history, in its stories.

Those who have not understood anything about the bureaucratic phenomenon, those who do not understand that Stalin led a counter-revolution, those who think that the Gulag, the Moscow trials and the pact with Hitler "saved communism", are very lacking today. Their flawed political software pushes them to align themselves with Putin's "camp"

Some do it openly, others hypocritically, in the name of "peace, peaceful coexistence" (you sound like the Eurocommunists of the last century!) and the priority of the social problems of "our" workers "at home" (doesn't this phrase convey anything to you?). But in both cases, the result is catastrophic: a policy contrary to the rights of peoples, to internationalism, and therefore to revolution, is pursued while draping itself in the red-brown flag of a so-called "Marxism-Leninism". "History is our book", said Marx. Getting the wrong book is dangerous. It's like taking the wrong turn. Dangerous. Especially when you think that the Book is sacred.

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P.S.

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