

Reagan, Gorbachev in Iceland: All things fall apart

by Raya Dunayevskaya
Chairwoman, National Editorial Board of
News & Letters

The collapse of the hastily-called Reagan-Gorbachev "pre-summit" in Iceland—which turned out to be the real summit—is the most ominous happening in this changed world. It actually opens up the race to the nuclear holocaust, meticulously prepared for. It is this precisely—the need for highly technological preparations on the level of who can be superior in space—that is making the bi-polar nuclear behemoths walk so softly, making sure that the blaming of each other for the collapse of the summit is shrouded in a note of hope.

I. THE NEGOTIATIONS AND THE TRAP

As against the flim-flam man in the White House, who has been called the Great Communicator, and the head man in the Kremlin, who has passed himself off as from a totally new generation, it becomes necessary to examine what did happen at Reykjavik. Why was the collapse such a total surprise not only to observers, but to Reagan himself?

So confident was Reagan that he was going to have another Geneva-type summit capitulation from Gorbachev, who he felt was nowhere as sophisticated as he, that Reagan came to the summit empty-handed. On the other hand, Gorbachev came well prepared, precisely because he had taken the measure of Reagan's immovable stance on Star Wars at the Geneva summit.

It began with bringing his beautiful wife, Raisa, with him for public relations chores. After all, Iceland, where the U.S. has a nuclear installation, is much closer to Russia's border than to the U.S., and is a country with which Russia and the U.S. have very good relations.

At the summit itself, Gorbachev read a prepared, collective statement from the Politburo. One more thing was left. He convinced Reagan to have unscheduled meetings of their respective arms control specialists, who worked through the night to 6:30 a.m. Statements were coming from both sides that made it clear that arms control was the issue, and that they

were getting so far on that, that all other issues from Afghanistan to human rights were forgotten.

It was at this point that Gorbachev sprang the trap that would make Reagan responsible for the break-up of this "pre-summit." That is to say, he made it clear that all the radical things they had agreed upon concerning reductions in intermediate and intercontinental ballistic missiles were all a "package" which depended on leaving Star Wars at the laboratory stage. Down came Reagan's Great Illusion, down came Gorbachev's package, down came whatever hopes the masses of the world had that we weren't headed for nuclear holocaust.

Indeed, in this week that was, all things fell apart. This included those which had no direct connection with the summit, as was seen when the U.S. C-123 cargo plane, with arms for the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, was shot down over Nicaragua. (See "Our Life

and Times" p. 12).

As if that were not enough, the natural disaster of the El Salvador earthquake—which the U.S. certainly could not be blamed for—still revealed how deadly is the U.S. embrace of a colonial country. The devastation was so great that the guerrilla rebel army unilaterally declared it would not attack and asked for similar action on the part of the government. Whereupon, both the U.S.-backed army and the U.S.-chosen President Duarte gave a resounding "No" as their answer. Indeed, Secretary of State Shultz went there not merely to announce U.S. aid, but to "warn" against the revolutionaries "taking advantage" of this disaster.

II. THE AFTERMATH: FIRST REACTIONS AND THE WHITEOUT

Whatever shock and rage Reagan displayed to his close entourage on his way from the Hofdi House Sum-

continued

mit to the U.S. airbase was well wrapped in a mixture of superpatriotism and light jokes by the time he addressed the assembled airmen, uttering words about being so glad to be "at home."

As against this utter subjectivism, Gorbachev's first statement was objectively framed and full of internationalism. He even used the Chernobyl nuclear disaster to show not only the lessons they themselves had learned from it, but what Russia had as well learned from the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, which resulted in the establishment of international machinery on nuclear safety: "We must take steps away from the nuclear abyss...we were guided by the motive of freeing the European peoples from nuclear catastrophe..." Whereupon he proceeded to talk of the summit and how the Russians were for "on-site verification," as against the U.S. attempt to actually replace the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972).*

Gorbachev concluded that it "was not just a matter of reducing arms as was the case with SALT I and II and other treaties. But here we were speaking about the actual elimination of nuclear weapons in a relatively short time."

And it is this message that he had his "diplomats" present not only to the Third World, who he takes for granted will support him, but within the NATO nations as well.

That his framework will go far could be seen right in Washington, D.C., with the visit of West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who spoke of the necessity of resuming the negotiations with Gorbachev.

So insoluble is the contradiction between trying to present the collapse as both a great victory for Reagan and as a non-collapse for the West as a whole—a veritable "whiteout," not only for what actually had happened, but of the orders to Weinberger at the Pentagon for a helter-skelter rush with Star Wars—that there has been as well a return to the old theme of the alleged backwardness of Russian technology, which cannot possibly catch up with the U.S.

III. THE BACKWARDNESS OF RUSSIA OR OF SCIENCE?

In the deluge of articles on just how backward the Russians are on computers, the indispensable tool for space wars, there has been but one article disputing the alleged backwardness by Daniel Greenberg, the editor and publisher of the Washington-based newsletter, Science and Government Report, who wrote for U.S. News and World Report (10/20/86). Mr. Greenberg stressed that we better not forget that Russia beat us into space with Sputnik. (At that time Khrushchev was having a good time at the U.S. expense, saying that they had sent a Volkswagen into space while the U.S. had only sent a grapefruit.) Greenberg notes that right now the Russians are "building the biggest ever atom smasher, and it is clear that their theoretical mathematicians and physicists rank with the world's finest."

But even Greenberg is so busy pointing to the backwardness of Russia in agriculture that he does not seem to recognize that the superior technology of U.S. agriculture has not stopped it from having a total crisis that has brought the family farmer back to Depression days.

*See Tom Wicker, "Origins of the Collapse," New York Times 10/19/86, which deals with article 6 of the ABM treaty which is being given a "re-interpretation" by the Reagan administration.

In Russia, what had suddenly brought mathematics into the center of everything at the end of the 1920s was the fact that what they thought would bring them everything, would bring them "socialism"—the Plan—brought them a crisis as big as the 1929 Great Depression had brought to private capitalism. Bureaucratic planning was no more than a moment of the chaos of the market. In the 1930s, in the middle of the first 5-Year Plan, they suddenly "discovered" Marx's Mathematical Manuscripts. Instead of seeing the genius of Marx in defining Plan as "despotic plan of capital"—the barrack discipline over the workers on the production line—they embraced the law of value. The mathematicians' clinging to the formalism of Newton flowed from Stalin's christening the law of value as "socialism."**

IV. MORE BIG POWER MANEUVERS

The most ominous part of that summit collapse is that Russia and the U.S. are so much alike that these two nuclear titans are twins. Though one is state-capitalist and one is private capitalist, both practice exploitative capital/labor relations. Though not identical, both are creating some loopholes that seem to contain a ray of hope one moment, to be dashed apart the next moment. Witness the fantastic new expulsion of 55 Russian diplomats (added to the 25 who were just expelled). Whereupon Gorbachev has now expelled not only five Americans, but ordered all Soviet employees in the American Embassy in Russia not to work there any longer.

Much more serious is the search on the part of both Russia and the U.S. to more closely align science with its "application" on the production line.

What has followed the Reagan-Gorbachev summit is that on Oct. 16 the leading Soviet mathematician and science administrator, the Ukrainian Guri I. Marchuk, was elected president of the Academy of Sciences. What is interesting about Marchuk is that back in 1964 he organized the computer center and was then transferred to what they devoted a whole city (Akademgorod) to, the research center in Novosibirsk. That far back he became the deputy director. Now this mathematician, computer-wise, is the head of it all.

The whole so-called reforms of Gorbachev are all directed to making inseparable scientific research and the production line. In a word, we are back at sweated labor and how much unpaid labor you can get from any worker depending on the speed of the machine.

The mad dream is that Reagan with his computers is sure the U.S. can get "there" first and destroy Russia before the Russian laggard can reach the U.S.

Each nuclear Behemoth is aiming for superiority, for single mastery of the world. This helter-skelter unabated "computerized" arms race must be stopped now! The stakes are nothing short of humanity itself.

—October 22, 1986

**See The Fetish of High Tech and Karl Marx's Unknown Mathematical Manuscripts, News & Letters, 1984. I hope to develop more on this shortly.

Notes from the Speeches of Gorbachev

NYT 10/13/86, p. 8, reports, though in abbreviated form, (i.e., excerpts only) so that even though its only excerpts as well from Reagan, we get such big coverage also on the front page) ~~with references~~ which shows how far a tiny bit of Marxist language can take you, as against all the small talk and jokes, Gorbachev's way of telling ~~the facts~~ facts consisted of the sequence of events since Geneva, one that not only had the Warsaw Pact met, in June of this year, and presented a comprehensive program for major reductions of arms and armed forces in Europe, but they had learned lessons from the Chernobyl disaster by having met with international Atomic ~~Agency~~ Energy Agency in Vienna and thus put an international framework because they recognized th that nothing is more urgent in the world now ~~than~~ ^{for} the question of the safety of nuclear energy and for that an international machinery was established.

He then makes clear that he is just relating facts and not just intentions and therefore the carrying out of the spirit of Geneva had actually continued throughout the year. And he had worries that that spirit was vanishing and therefore, that ~~the~~ ~~problem~~

11077

is the reason he wrote the letter that he did to Reagan suggesting that they have a pre-summit in Iceland (in addition to mentioning the world situation, the international framework for trying to establish safety of nuclear energy after the Chernobyl disaster, there was the also the question of what was happening in the arms talks in Geneva, and that was that they were going nowhere. Their initiative in trying to control arms "have not been duly understood by the U.S. administration" so the "situation is deteriorating, the concern of ~~the~~ people throughout ~~the~~ the world was increasing, and I think I am not exaggerating...I think you are here representing the people of the world and you know that the world is in turmoil...and I said to the President in my letters and I said to the President during this meeting that we should not allow, Mr. President, a failure of our meeting in Washington, and that is why I proposed an urgent meeting here" ~~it~~...He then speaks about the fact that America came empty-handed, ~~it~~ without new proposals. It is after G. presents how "those nuclear arsenals and this (strive for superiority) make the situation in the world very dangerous," that he first shows that he has presented everything "as a package."

11078

* * * * *

Back on October 10, i.e., before the Summit, p. 7 of NYT of 10/10, has pictures of the strategists of both the Soviet Union as well as the United States, and what they call the five main issues including regional--Afghantistan, Central America, South America, the Middle East, as well as human rights--at the same time as a caption 'Soviet-American Accords' which stresses that to the administration all the Russians are spies, as witness the 25 who have to leave the U.N.

** * * * *

NYT, Wednesday, 10/15: Published excerpts from Gorbachev's speech on Soviet television begins his accounting of what happened--the collapse--with the announcement that that is what the Politburo had just met and discussed, and that they will publish a report of that the following day, that the important thing is, that in Iceland the center was "the most important issues of international affairs." He contrasts this to the way the U.S. has been playing R down Russian capabilities especially in economics and that all they'd have to do is press a little more and we'd give in: "and this, by the way was also something that we noted in the speech by President Reagan after the

11079

meeting. ~~and~~ He then tells him that nothing could be more dangerous because such ~~plans~~ plans are built on sand, and ~~he~~ he is opposed to any "power game". "We must take steps away from the nuclear abyss."

(This is what incidentally I would like to take up if I decide upon a theory/practice column. To laugh at the "backwardness" of Russia in computers is to put all their eggs in the one basket of high-technology and ~~both~~ both to disregard the human being and thus human power. How short ~~our~~ our memories are to have forgotten the that they defeated the superior Nazi army and though they underwent the ~~greatest~~ greatest devastation, losing no less than 20 million lives, they were the first ~~in~~ in science when they sent up Sputnik into the skies while we had not yet penetrated. What I'm saying is the Russian ^{leadership} bureaucracy ~~are~~ are as good as the Americans plus having a plan and when they they concentrate, they achieve. You can't at one and the same time not know your enemy and be conceited about your prowess, especially when it's all in high tech, rather than human beings.)

11080

He then presents the package which "had they been accepted, would make a new beginning--open a new era into the life of mankind" and was "not just a matter ~~xxxx~~ of reducing nuclear arms, as was the case in SALT I and II and other treaties. But here we were speaking about the actual elimination of nuclear weapons, in a relatively short time."

✓ "We were guided by the motive of freeing the European peoples from the fear of nuclear catastrophe..." He makes clear that they were ready for on-site verification where the president of the U.S. was not only talking ~~my~~ of the SDI, but actually "replacing the existing ABM

* treat (1972) by some new ABM treaty; after which he ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ asked the president "how can you go back on all this which was preserving a strategic balance," and yet have us believe that you would share, calling what G. defined as "a mothball type of trap which is now stifling and suffocating ~~the~~ the Geneva talks."

Clearly, he states that the Americans came empty-handed whereas they presented ~~all~~ all these tremendous steps and in fact could be called a "draft agreement which we could then sign, pending my visit to the U.S. (ICBM's)". The triad of strategic offensive weapons--i.e., land based ICBM's, submarine based missiles, and air-based missiles. "Europe deserves to be free from nuclear weapons, to cease to be a nuclear hostage."

"Mr. President, I cannot take this idea of yours seriously, the idea that you'll share results of SDI with us. You don't want to share with us even the blueprints for dairy plants at this point, and now you're promising us that you're going to share results of SDI."

11082

Oct. 14, 1986

To the REB:
Dear Colleagues:

The collapse of the hastily-called Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Iceland is the most ominous happening in this changed world. It actually opens up the race to the nuclear holocaust, to be meticulously, as well as highly technologically, prepared-for. It is precisely this meticulousness in the preparations that is making both nuclear giants walk so softly, to make sure that the blaming of each other for the collapse is shrouded in a note of hope.

The aim of the waffled note of hope is to give the Pentagon time to prepare seriously both the weapons and getting the endless amounts of money from Congress and the people to heat up the Cold War. Whereas that might for a brief time keep the rhetoric of the "evil empire" one degree below the boiling point, Gorbachev will be sure to create some ideological statement for the greatest fake ideologue, Ronald Reagan, to then go off into the super-patriotism of "defense", as he sells his madman's nightmare --Star Wars.

What actually happened in Iceland was a total surprise, not only to us, but to Reagan. That B-class actor, to whom the whole world is a stage, felt conceited enough at Geneva that he read Gorbachev as a capitulator. This led him to read Gorbachev's most recent letter, suggesting a pre-summit meeting within two weeks, as an invitation to continue Geneva, to culminate in Washington, D.C. in December. Reagan quickly accepted. In truth, however, Gorbachev capitulated at Geneva because he had correctly read Reagan's stance on Star Wars back then. He therefore felt that he would need a great deal more time to work out how Russia could become part of this new stage of the mad race for war. The recent letter for a pre-summit in Iceland resulted.

Iceland is a NATO base country, where the US has nuclear installations, but which is much closer to Russia's borders than to the US, and with which Gorbachev wants to develop good relations. Having his wife play the game of public relations added to what was the more crucial point-- setting a trap for Reagan. It was a trap that would make Reagan responsible for the break-up of this "pre-summit", a trap that had Reagan forget Afghanistan and human rights, and instead openly declare to the world that there were going to be some unscheduled meetings-- a suggestion made by Gorbachev that both sides go into an all-night session (which lasted to 6:30 AM), but not a word said of Star Wars. Whereupon, Gorbachev says that all of this is a package, and it all depends on restricting Star Wars to the laboratory stage. And down comes Reagan's great delusion. He quickly ran out of the negotiations to the NATO base, to get US soldiers applauding him, supporting their Commander-in-Chief.

11083

The shocker of this so-called pre-summit that was the actual summit makes it imperative for us to change the next issue of N&L, in order to meet the challenge from these objective happenings. Because the objective situation has always been a determinant inseparable from the Marxist-Humanist world outlook, Eugene was assigned to write the Editorial with topic unspecified. It goes without saying that the topic will be the collapsed summit. I think, however, that it will be important for me to sign this Editorial, and that is why I am giving you some of the ideas I will work out with Eugene, as I ask you also to send this note out to the locals along with the minutes of the REB meeting.

Yours,

Raya

11084