

THREE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF THE USSR

YOU CAN'T WIPE EVERYTHING OFF AS PAST MISTAKES

By Victor Alksnis

Colonel Viktor Alksnis also known as the 'Black Colonel' is a Peoples Deputy of the USSR. He's a well known hardliner and a leader of the 'Soyuz' Group. This interview with Col. Alksnis was conducted by Felix Alexeyev Parliamentary Observer of the Novosti News Agency.

Question: Does the political and economic crisis of facing the USSR bear evidence to the failure of the communist idea? Who do you think is responsible for the disintegration of the Soviet Union and was it possible to prevent it?

Answer: I am, convinced that the communist idea has not suffered a fiasco. This idea mirrors the common human christian values and man's search for justice and equality. But our way has proved the wrong one. The social system which now exists in the USSR cannot be defined as socialist in the proper sense of the word. In order to implement the socialist idea, we need to adjust our course and to work out a new model of socialism. Only then we shall be able to break the deadlock.

Today it would not be correct to blame everything on the past mistakes. What we now witness in politics and the economy are chaos and anarchy. I am of the opinion that Mikhail Gorbachev and his team are to blame for such a dismal state of affairs. Their policy of perestroika has ended in a failure.

Question: The People's Deputies Group Soyuz, of which you are one of the leaders, has demanded President Gorbachev's resignation. Does this group propose any alternative candidate?

Answer: We have moved such a demand, proceeding from the premises that Gorbachev has opted for the wrong way of reforms and therefore he must step down.

Should Gorbachev resign, the President's post will be vacant, with the Vice-President of the USSR, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet or the Premier charged with Presidential responsibilities. During this transitional period certain figures have to steer the country on a interim basis but in the right direction.

Another version is possible, which would also be constitutional - to set up a collective and coalition body of

power, which could be defined as a Committee for national reconciliation.

Question: Do you agree with Eduard Shevarnadze's statement on the possibility of a dictatorship in this country?

Answer: Yes, I shared his view. If chaos and anarchy which are constantly growing in scope will not be stopped, dictatorship will be inevitable. Both the leftists and the rightists, the radicals and the conservatives, and even the centrists will be crushed. Hence Soyuz stands for stopping the current mess within a democratic framework.

Question: The transition to a market economy is expected to put an end to the country's trialist. Do you think the past seventy-four years of the planned economy were a mistake?

Answer: The current dismal state of the Soviet economy is usually attributed to the blunders of the planned economy. But I would like to remind you about the years 1941 and 1942, when the red army was suffering one defeat after another and the country was on the verge of a total collapse. But it was the planned economy that helped us remove our major industrial enterprises to the Eastern areas of the USSR and launch a mass production of sophisticated military hardware. At that time, we had less electric power, steel aluminium and yet we managed to outstrip it in the production of armaments and supply the army with everything necessary. Likewise, in the late 1950's and the early 1960's according to objective data, the Soviet industry's annual surplus amounted to 15 percent. It was indeed the golden age of the socialist planned economy.

I am not going to worship either the planned or the market economic set-up. I think we shall eventually opt for a mixed pattern comprising a powerful state sector and relying on the principles of the planned economy. Parallel to it, an extensive market sector will emerge which will abide by the rules of self-regulation.

Question: Why does the people's Deputies Group Soyuz insist on the introduction of a state of emergency? Will it not imply a step back to the dictatorship of the Communist Party?

Answer: It's no use trying to cure the crumbling Soviet economy by therapy. The situation may only be mended by extraordinary measures. This approach is shared by democratic circles too.

In actual fact, the President's decision and consent on the part of the leaders of Union republics to introduce special operating conditions in the basic sectors of the economy signals a switch to extraordinary measures.

THE SOVIET CRISIS

If we do not resort to such measures, then by the end of this year there will be some 30 million jobless people in this country. So far, we have not established a system of unemployment benefits, and the army of the unemployed may act as a time bomb that threatens to demolish everything.

Therefore, Soyuz stand for the introduction of the state of emergency. For without political stability we shall not be able to carry through economic reforms and pass over to the market.

I don't think that the state of emergency will signify a comeback of the dictatorship of the communist party. Suspension of the activities of all political parties and movements, including the Soviet Communist Party, for the duration of the state of emergency will be one of the preconditions for the imposing of such a state.

Question: A "customs war" has recently swept the Baltic republics. Does a new wave of terrorism threaten these republics?

Answer: It certainly does. I warned on many occasions that the Baltic republics are heading for a major bloodshed. Confrontation is increasing and the burden of problems becoming heavier. Legitimate methods have proved inefficient. It may so happen that the problems which cannot be tackled by parliaments, may be resolved in armed clashes. Consequently as I warned previously, the Baltic republics are in for something like Ulsterisation.

Question: It is evident that the USSR's political influence on its neighbours is warring. How do you think this process can be checked?

Answer: The balance of international forces has been upset, while previously the whole world was based on confrontation and rivalry of the two super powers which always counterbalanced each other. Other countries were interested in the existence of a bi-polar world and lived a happy life in it.

At present, a uni-polar world is taking shape. The sphere of attraction of one of the superpowers may embrace the ever growing number of countries. I reckon this will make many world leaders seek for new opportunities to pursue an independent policy. In so doing, they will certainly seek to use the faction of the USSR's influence.

Question: The United States reproaches the Soviet Union for failing to comply with the disarmament treaties and claim that the Soviet Union moved a part of its military potential beyond the Urals. Is it really so?

Answer: It is correct. Some of our army units have been relocated to the areas beyond the Urals. As it known, the treaties that have been concluded up to date, pertain to the European USSR. It should also be taken into consideration that the concept of the Paris agreement and the Vienna treaty on conventional arms reduction has been discarded, is much it was based on the promise of the existence of the two alliances. Meanwhile, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation has ceased to exist. Therefore I would not describe the Soviet pull-out from Eastern of the Urals as failure to comply with the treaties and agreements signed. In so doing, we have to a certain extent compensated for the dismantling of the Warsaw pact. This is why I support this decision.

(Novosti Information Agency)