

The destruction of Western culture; the strange case of Yuri Lyubimov

by David Goldman

Soviet "dissident" Yuri Lyubimov, for the past several years a leading figure in Europe's cultural scene, shot to prominence in the United States in January 1987, with a surrealistic stage-version of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, on the stage of the National Theater in Washington, D.C. In principle, the National Theater represents a flagship institution of American drama, linked to the Kennedy Center, where Lyubimov's friend and political associate, Russian musician Mstislav Rostropovich, conducts the National Symphony Orchestra.

On Christmas Eve, three weeks before the Dostoevsky premiere, Lyubimov hinted that he might return to the Soviet Union on invitation from the authorities—a remarkable development, since the former Chernenko government had made a grand issue of stripping Lyubimov of his Soviet citizenship in 1984. In fact, Lyubimov's case opened what the Western press, and such Sovietologists as Marshall Goldman, see as a new cultural thaw in Moscow. Subsequently, invitations were extended to Lyubimov's friend Rostropovich, and to almost the entire galaxy of exiled Soviet ballet stars, either to return to Moscow permanently, or to perform there.

The importance of the Lyubimov case—as opposed to that of the re-invited dancers, for example—is that the Russian director remained under Soviet intelligence control before, during, and after his supposed "defection" to the West. Soviet intelligence attempted to cover for its control over Lyubimov's activity by instructing local Communist municipalities in Paris and Bologna, among other European cities, to harass him. But the control-network is one whose ties to Russian intelligence date to the period of the Russian Revolution.

Since the Lyubimov case became, in the eyes of Western analysts, something of a thermometer for Moscow's anticipated "cultural thaw," his continued control by Soviet or allied networks, sheds light on the greatest collective blunder of Western intelligence services during the postwar period: their failure to comprehend that the heart of Soviet policy is cultural warfare.

West Germany's mass-circulation newsweekly *Der Spiegel* reported Dec. 29, 1986, "Raisa Gorbachova, 53, wife

of the Soviet general secretary, apparently intervened in favor of the avant-guard stage director Yuri Lyubimov. . . . After a visit to the Taganka Theater, Lyubimov's former workplace, Raisa Gorbachova asked, after a discussion between her husband and the actors' collective, what had happened to the anti-Stalin theater piece, *The House on the River*, and complained that the theater no longer had it in repertory. The show had been canceled when the stage director was sent out of the Soviet Union, and is now being rehearsed again."

Reports of Raisa Gorbachova's personal intervention on behalf of one of Russia's most famous "dissidents" are highly credible; they coincide with the rehabilitation of Andrei Sakharov, the exiled Soviet physicist, who is now happily back at his job producing nuclear weapons for the Soviet military.

Perhaps with no special sense of irony, Moscow's power behind the throne, Raisa Gorbachova, waited for Lyubimov's triumph in the opposing capital, to make an extraordinary offer to the exiled theater director. Madame Gorbachova made the offer in her capacity as president of the **Soviet Culture Foundation**, which bears the Bolshevik ideological flame in a more profound way than, for example, the Marxism-Leninism Institute in Moscow; Gorbachova herself is the daughter of the last surviving "Old Bolshevik" collaborator of Lenin, Maxim Titorenko, and Western European intelligence observers point out that husband Mikhail Gorbachov married his way into the succession to the Soviet party chairmanship.

Lyubimov's directorial style had earlier won the unalloyed disgust of European audiences, artists, and critics. Notable was his first major production in the West following his 1983 "defection," Verdi's *Rigoletto* in Florence, where renowned baritone Piero Capuccilli walked out of the production, and the audience literally hissed Lyubimov out of the theater on the first night. His Washington *Crime and Punishment*, his sixth staging in the West, is an exercise in collective brainwashing: the audience must file past two bloody corpses, and submit to an inspection of their shoes by a flashlight-bearing actor searching for traces of blood.

Who's being led by the nose?

In November 1986, weeks before Gorbachova's friendly

offer reached Lyubimov, none other than **Jeane Kirkpatrick**, a member of President Reagan's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, dragged Lyubimov to Vienna, as part of a "human rights intervention" during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) talks in Vienna. While Secretary of State Shultz met his Russian counterpart, Eduard Shevarnadze, Kirkpatrick, Lyubimov, and just-released dissidents Anatoly Shcharansky and Yuri Orlov, took part in a rival conference sponsored by the Sakharov Institute. Within a month, Sakharov was back making bombs, and Lyubimov was negotiating his return.

Wittingly or not, American intelligence appears to have aligned itself with the extreme faction of Dostoevskan messianism, against the mere bureaucratic strain, which Gorbachova and her husband are now fighting.

Throughout all this, Lyubimov took every available opportunity to protest his loyalty to Mother Russia. At a July 1984 press conference in Bologna, Italy, announcing his appointment to head the ATER (the regional theater association controlled by the local Communist government), Lyubimov said, "I have been, I am, and I will remain Russian. . . . The people handling cultural policy in my country are completely incompetent. I do not consider myself a dissident and I did everything possible to find an agreement with the authorities."

The content of Lyubimov's efforts, particularly his stage versions of Dostoevsky, are sufficient to identify Lyubimov with the most extreme variant of Russian cultural psychosis, dating back to Dostoevsky's own plan for Russian world conquest. In Dostoevsky, Lyubimov is in his element. Turned loose on Western classics, he runs wild. Of his *Rigoletto*, produced under Luciano Berio's sponsorship, the London *Guardian* wrote on May 20, 1984, "The kindest thing one could say of the Lyubimov staging was that it was a totally unnecessary insult to the Verdi opera and to the audience. The production could be useful if it serves as a warning to theater managers everywhere to stop importing gimmicky directors from an alien culture for a purely homegrown opera or play."

The production featured puppets of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin on stage throughout, and required the tragic title character to imitate Charlie Chaplin's walk and costume.

Western intelligence services may well have no cultural criteria to speak of, but that is no excuse for their credulity (or worse) respecting Lyubimov. Provably, the gang that sponsored these outrages has been allied with Soviet intelligence, through the "Trust" network created during the first years of the Soviet dictatorship, out of earlier relationships between the old Venetian commercial families, and the Czarist secret service *Okhrana*.

Lyubimov's Italian sponsors belong to what Italian musicians refer to as the "Communist music mafia." In a forthcoming interview with the West German cultural magazine *Ibykus*, the leading Verdi baritone Piero Capuccilli, who

walked out on the Lyubimov *Rigoletto* in disgust, spoke for many Italian artists in denouncing the production as a "political operation" by the Communist Party mafia.

The Communist music mafia

For purposes of identification to the specialist, we identify such individuals as

Luciano Berio, the former Communist Party candidate for public office and modernist composer;

Luigi Nono, Communist Party leader, composer of operas glorifying terrorism, and son-in-law of the atonal Viennese composer Arnold Schönberg;

Claudio Abbado, Nono's closest friend, protégé of the Milan Communist party, and reported former homosexual lover of conductor Leonard Bernstein;

Massimo Cacciari, co-founder of the political currents that eventually became the terrorist Red Brigades, later a Communist Party deputy for Venice, and finally, an apologist for a fascist-Communist alliance, among others.

Except for Abbado, whose sponsorship by Bernstein vaulted a mediocre talent into a major international career, the above names are obscure to non-specialist audiences. Nonetheless, they are nodal points in the web of long-range Soviet cultural policy with respect to the West.

To be precise, they are not Soviet agents *per se*, but agents of the ancient Venetian families whose own nihilistic outlook coincides with that of the Russian oligarchy, and who collaborate with the Soviets, on the strength of their uneasy agreement to destroy the cultural heritage of Judeo-Christian civilization.

This writer interviewed Massimo Cacciari at his home in Venice in December 1985. Cacciari was for years the closest associate of fugitive terrorist **Toni Negri**; Negri went on to found the Red Brigades, Cacciari to the Italian parliament on the Communist ticket. According to well-informed sources, Cacciari's principal controllers are two: the aging grand old lady of the Venetian Communist Party, **Countess Foscari**, and her son, architect **Antonio Foscari**. The latter achieved minor prominence last year, as restorer of the "Futurist" art museum at the Palazzo Grassi, a cult-temple to the aesthetic ideals of Mussolini fascism, paid for by Fiat owner **Gianni Agnelli**. That orientation is no surprise, as Cacciari explained, since the Foscari family are the political heirs of Mussolini's foreign minister, the Venetian **Count Volpi di Misurata**.

Count Volpi, the definitive figure of Italian fascism, was a founder of what the Soviets called "The Trust," the external financial organization founded in collaboration with Western bankers, to further Soviet economic interests abroad. He was also the creator of the Venetian *Biennale*, the music-art-cinema festival which did more than any other entity in 20th-century history to promote modernism.

Under Count Volpi's personal patronage, and with the support of the ancient Venetian dogal families, Italian musi-

cal life fell under the control of the Western financier-network with the closest, and longest-standing ties, to Imperial Russia.

Luigi Nono writes cacophonous electronic music to accompany quotations from Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara, and so forth, cobbled together by librettist Massimo Cacciari, the latter-day prophet of a fascist-Communist alliance. One such "opera" premiered in 1975 under the title, *Al gran sole carica d'amore*; the exiled Lyubimov directed a new production of it.

Nono started under the sponsorship of Count Volpi's friend, Venice Conservatory director and leading fascist **Gian-Francesco Malipiero**, and became a major figure in Italian musical life thanks to Claudio Abbado, who produced Nono's trash at La Scala. Abbado, whose sister Luciana married the Communist Party's chief music theoretician, **Luigi Pestalozza**, took over the country's premiere lyric theater, La Scala, in consequence of the leftist rebellions of 1968, when the Italian Communists increased their power over the Milan municipality, which controls La Scala. Brother Marcello Abbado directs Milan's music conservatory.

Abbado's career was made, according to well-informed sources, when his father, fascist collaborator **Michelangelo Abbado**, a former instructor at the Venice Conservatory, introduced the adolescent Claudio to the sexually-voracious Leonard Bernstein, during Bernstein's 1949 visit to Milan. Abbado, in turn, made the careers of **Ricardo Muti**, now conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra as well as La Scala, **Richardo Chailly**, conductor-designate of Amsterdam's Concertgebouw Orchestra, and various other conductors.

Luciano Berio, the prominent atonal composer, also enjoyed Bernstein's patronage, during a long residence at the Julliard School of Music, and at the Tanglewood Festival of the Boston Symphony, where he dominated the teaching of what he euphemistically called musical composition. Bernstein's close associate (in the elaboration of a silly theory of "musical linguistics") is leftist academic **Noam Chomsky**—who formed in 1979 the American support committee for Toni Negri, closing the circle.

Although Claudio Abbado, the most prominent figure among the music mafia, takes no overt political role, his intimates such as Nono—with whom he spends most vacations—are frequent travelers to Communist states, and public advocates of bloody revolution.

Lyubimov was passed around this circuit following his "defection." His first assignment was the disastrous *Rigoletto*; he then obtained a permanent job under the Communist government of Bologna, at the instigation of Luciano Berio's friend **Umberto Eco** (author of *The Name of the Rose*). In December 1984, La Scala picked him up for a stage-version of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, with the support of Abbado's ally, **Carlo Maria Badini**, La Scala's director. This had been planned in 1983, before Lyubimov's "defection." Bernstein's intimate friend, **Seiji Ozawa**, conductor of the Boston

Symphony, brought the production to the symphony's summer festival at Tanglewood in August 1985.

Oddly, Lyubimov's reinstatement in the Soviet cultural pantheon, coincided with the death of his friend **Andrei Tarkovsky**, the theater and cinema director who died in Paris in January, reportedly of cancer. Tarkovsky achieved acclaim in the West when his 1962 film, *Ivan's Childhood*, received the top award at the Venice Film Festival.

On Jan. 9, the Soviet weekly *New Times* deplored Tarkovsky's "tragic fate" at the hands of "bureaucrats" who failed to understand his work. "Exhausted by suffering, did he have the force to understand that the time when bureaucrats edited artists had receded into the past in his homeland? Now, if he had come home, there would be no obstacles between him and the audience, the people," wrote the Soviet journal, which circulates internationally in multilingual translation.

Tarkovsky's defection in July 1984 was a unique case, since it was sponsored officially by the "New Age" cultural circles who otherwise promoted Lyubimov's career in exile. Lyubimov, along with his Washington colleague Rostropovich, attended the July 9, 1984 press conference announcing his defection. The press conference was held in Milan, under the sponsorship of the nominally right-wing Catholic organization, *Movimento Popolare*. The arrangement of defections is, under any circumstances, the most delicate of all matters, and it is difficult to clarify *Movimento Popolare's* role in this regard. However, Lyubimov and Rostropovich's presence at the press conference of the organization had an unambiguous meaning. The unhappy coincidence of Mrs. Kirkpatrick's enlistment of Lyubimov for a demonstration against Soviet human-rights violations, with Gorbachova's re-enlistment of Lyubimov in the cause of Mother Russia, makes clear who, ultimately, led whom by the nose.

If the "conservative" Mrs. Kirkpatrick, closely associated with "right-wing" Catholic circles, allowed herself to become an instrument of Gorbachova's war against the Soviet bureaucracy, the American liberals have virtually begged for this role. Writing in the *New York Times* Jan. 7, Harvard sovietologist Marshall I. Goldman claimed, "Mr. Gorbachov has apparently come to realize that such a policy [of censorship] is inappropriate in the age of high technology . . . that seems in large part to account for Mr. Gorbachov's call to Dr. Sakharov. It is also why the great director, Yuri Lyubimov, has been promised that he would have artistic freedom if he returned from the United States to resume direction of the Taganka Theater in Moscow."

Americans may find it ironic that Mother Russia controls the cultural life of America's capital; much more remarkable is that Gorbachova is willing to bring to the surface the oldest, and most successful, foreign intelligence operation Russia has ever undertaken: namely, the infiltration and subversion of the institutions which bear the cultural heritage of the West.