
Twenty-Five Years Since Khrushchov Overthrow

In Moscow, talk of coups, civil war

by Rachel Douglas

Coups are running a close second to queues as the number-one topic of discussion in Moscow, as October arrives. The coming month will see the 25th anniversary of the overthrow of Nikita Khrushchov. The discussions around that watershed are of more than historical interest.

Back from a vacation month away from Moscow, Communist Party chief Mikhail Gorbachov took to national television the night of Sept. 9, to speak about "both conservative and ultra-leftist attempts to discredit *perestroika*," as his "restructuring" policies are known. "From the midst of this discordant choir," Gorbachov intoned, "scare stories of imminent chaos and arguments about the danger of a coup or even of civil war may be heard. It is a fact that some would like to create an atmosphere of alarm, of there being no way out, and of uncertainty in society."

While Gorbachov was away, there was a wave of coup scares. Some, coming from Russian Republic or KGB-linked publications, were implied threats of a coup. Others came from close advisers to Gorbachov and were couched as warnings that he might be overthrown if he did not receive greater support, including from the West. But these stories are not mere propaganda or scare tactics; underlying the talk of "coups," "civil war," and "dual power" are the economic collapse, strikes, and ethnic clashes that have rocked the Soviet Union.

On Aug. 16, the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* printed the opinion of two professors, that the only force capable of transforming the "totalitarian" Soviet system into "democracy," would be an "iron hand," perhaps a Committee of National Salvation, that enjoyed total authority to impose reform. Gorbachov could be the dictator, they proposed, or else somebody else would be sure to take over. One of the professors, Igor Klyamkin, told the *Christian Science Monitor*, "I think [Gorbachov's] more likely to be an Allende, someone who loses power because of his unwillingness to use authoritarian methods." Salvador Allende, the President of Chile, was overthrown in a military coup in 1973.

Two days later, Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov revealed how sensitive this question had already become in the

Kremlin. In an interview with the weekly *Argumenty i Fakty*, as summarized by the news agency TASS, Ryzhkov "expressed the firm conviction that a turn from democratization to dictatorship was impossible in the Soviet Union. 'Even if somebody wished to do it, the people would never agree to it,' he stressed. 'I am sure of that.'"

In another issue of *Argumenty i Fakty*, Leningrad author Sergei Andreyev described the stages that could lead to civil war. Nationalist turmoil and strikes in industry could be followed by widespread riots and the creation of vigilante groups by highly placed opponents of *perestroika*. Ultimately, in Andreyev's account, the Soviet leadership, responding to growing calls for law and order, would have to impose martial law and send tanks into the street. With events running ahead of the scenarios, Gorbachov in his Sept. 9 speech welcomed the creation of "workers' volunteer militia groups . . . set up to assist law enforcement bodies," as critical to the establishment of "strictest order . . . in all towns and settlements in the country."

Comparison to October 1964

On Aug. 18, sociologist N. Mikhailov came out in the Moscow party daily, *Moskovskaya Pravda*, with the article, "Is October 1964 possible today?" He wrote, "To call things by their names, instead of hiding behind euphemisms, ultimately it is a question of a political coup, the removal of the leadership headed by Gorbachov, or at least making that leadership change course in running the country."

Mikhailov recalled the sentiments in society at that time, a feeling that "things can't get worse." Khrushchov's reforms had caused chaos. "The attitude of the workers, and of the entire urban population of the country, to Khrushchov was becoming increasingly negative as time went on." Food prices rose, inflation appeared, then shortages. Disturbances broke out, including the Novocherkassk food riots, "when weapons were used against workers and tanks were sent in." Khrushchov even lost the good will he enjoyed in the countryside, as a result of the big capital investments of the Fifties and Sixties, when he went on his binge of planting corn "from

Arkhangelsk to Kushka”—everywhere in the Soviet Union, regardless of the lack of infrastructure or appropriate climatic conditions. He became known as Nikita Kukuruz (Nikita the Corn). By October 1964, “Khrushchov’s moral authority had declined to an all-time low.”

Comparisons have their limitations, Mikhailov acknowledged, but the question arises: “Are we living through a revolutionary situation today?” Yes, he answered, and “the situation in 1989 is immeasurably more acute than it was 25 years ago. In 1964 we had no inkling of the present interethnic conflicts and ecological problems, the scale of today’s inflation, the situation that exists on the food and commodity market, the burgeoning of organized crime, corruption, and so on and so forth. . . . It is clear, however, that no society can remain in a state of tension for long. A relaxation of tension will come, in one way or another. How and when—those are the questions that only time can answer.”

Mikhailov compared the 1964 crisis in the Communist Party, which Khrushchov had divided at every level into separate sections for agriculture and for other matters, with today’s admitted “decline in party’s authority in the eyes of non-party population” and “growing confrontation between local party apparatus and central leadership.” Because of this, he said, the question is posed: “Will the party be able to exercise control over the situation in society? . . . Will parallel power structures spring up in the country? . . . A duality of power can only exacerbate the chaos and bring the country to the brink of civil confrontation. And from here it is not far to the introduction of a state of emergency, the formation of an emergency Committee of National Salvation (or whatever it may be called), the suspension of the Constitution, the dissolution of parliament, and so on, and so forth. It is not a sociologist’s job to frighten people, but elements of the duality of power already exist. Alongside the official organs of power, informal associations are being set up that are prepared to assume authoritative powers—people’s fronts, united councils of labor collectives, strike committees. . . . Regardless of the purposes for which they are set up, today they are already playing an objectively destabilizing role (a graphic example of this is the strikes).”

Cataclysm forecast

In case foreign devotees of *perestroika* missed the point, Soviet emissaries themselves came heralding the internal crisis of the U.S.S.R. “If *perestroika* falters and dies . . . the cataclysm will spread not just in the Soviet Union but in the United States as well,” Supreme Soviet member Boris Yeltsin told a Johns Hopkins University audience in mid-September. Forecasting revolution, Yeltsin sought Western economic infusions, allegedly to prevent such a turn of events.

In Germany, Deutsche Bank board member Eckard van Hooven told on Sept. 16, that the possibility of military coups in Eastern Europe was a big consideration in his bank’s deliberations about new loans to the East.

‘Che scandalo, Mr. Kissinger!’

by Mary M. Burdman and Scott Thompson

“What a scandal, Mr. Kissinger, that advice on China!” the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* ran on its front page Sept. 16. The whole nasty scandal about “international political guru” Henry Kissinger’s very venal personal financial interests in the People’s Republic of China is being well publicized throughout Europe, following the publication Sept. 15 of a feature article on Kissinger in all international editions of the *Wall Street Journal* based extensively on material first published last spring in *EIR* and the weekly newsletter *Middle East Insider*.

Quite a few of Kissinger’s friends were also hit by the scandal, when the *Journal* reported Sept. 18 that President George Bush’s brother Prescott had spent the previous weekend in Beijing trying to negotiate business deals to build luxury real estate, and that former NATO Supreme Commander and former Secretary of State Gen. Alexander Haig—a long-term intimate of Kissinger—would deliver the keynote address in Kissinger’s stead at the 10th anniversary of the founding of China International Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC), one of China’s biggest multinationals and a big weapons dealer.

The fact is also being duly noted, that Kissinger and the President for whom he opened up Communist China, Richard Nixon, are both refusing to give up their planned trips to China, even after the military crackdown in June in which at least 10,000 Chinese citizens were murdered and some 120,000 more imprisoned, according to the estimates of student leaders who fled Beijing. Both will go to China “privately,” after the controversial Oct. 1 celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the Communist seizure of power in China. The Communist authorities have made it abundantly clear that they will be maintaining martial law throughout the celebrations and for a long time afterwards. Kissinger will slip in in November to meet with the many people in high places in Beijing who do business with him, and Nixon will also visit sometime after October. “The purpose of the solo trip would be to have extensive discussions with the top leaders of Communist China,” the Taipei daily *China Post* quoted Nixon’s spokesman Sept. 13. “He is of course in touch with the U.S. government about his plans, and they have com-