

Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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THE RUSTING OF THE IRON CURTAIN: HOW REAL?

by Gary North

There's still no free press in the Soviet Union, television is still under state control, there's no private property in the country and nobody expects it soon, and we're a dictatorship. How can you call it democratization when all power is being gathered into the hands of one man?

Gary Kasparov (1990)
World Chess Champion

All is not what it appears to be in life. Sometimes it is less, and sometimes it is more. In this case, it is both.

The remarkable political transformation that has been going on behind the Iron Curtain since the summer of 1989 is like nothing ever seen in the last three centuries. First, it has been peaceful, except for the execution of Ceausescu. Second, it is more than merely political. Marxism as an ideology has collapsed. Leninism is said by the Western press to have collapsed, although this has yet to be proven. But there is no doubt that original Marxism, with its commitment to pure socialism, is dead. Alexander Solzhenitsyn has said for twenty years that Marxism has been a dead ideology in the Soviet Union. Nobody believes it. Now, almost overnight, it has died in the West. The socialist experiment in the State ownership of the means of production is no longer taken seriously except on university campuses. The university is again revealed as the defender of lost humanist causes.

Third, this transformation of the Communist world has three major aspects: the ideological, the media (symbolic), and the military. The ideological transformation is the most significant in the long run. It will eventually undermine Communist civilization. The second is important for public consumption, both in the West and in the Communist countries. It is a public manifestation of the first transformation, an admission by the Soviet Union that communist economics has failed. The third is not well understood, and may constitute the most important threat to peace since the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. There has been no transformation at all. The military and the secret police in the Warsaw Pact countries are still run by Soviet-allied Communists. This aspect of the change has not been discussed by Western leaders or the Western media.

The Ideological Transformation

That Marxism is dead is highly significant. No society can survive indefinitely if the fundamental principles on which it is built and defended are no longer widely believed. Only power can preserve the society, and eventually this fails. There will be a revolt against the political status quo in the name of a new ethic or new religion. No one has described this transformation in history better than the brilliant refugee of the Soviet Communists, Pitirim Sorokin, who established the Department of Sociology at Har-

vard University in 1931.¹ In 1940, he wrote this warning:

Any great culture, instead of being a mere dumping place of a multitude of diverse cultural phenomena, existing side by side and unrelated to one another, represents a unity or individuality whose parts are permeated by the same fundamental principle and articulate the same basic value. The dominant part of the fine arts and science of such a unified culture, of its philosophy and religion, of its ethics and law, of its main forms of social, economic, and political organization, of most of its mores and manners, of its way of life and mentality, all articulate, each in its own way, this basic principle and value. This value serves as its major premise and foundation. For this reason the important parts of such an integrated culture are also interdependent causally: if one important part changes, the rest of its important parts are bound to be similarly transformed.²

The collapse of Marxism is symptomatic of a far more crucial collapse. Marxism's demise is the first stage of a much more significant transformation: **the collapse of Western humanist culture.** The West has not yet experienced the economic crises that have afflicted the Communist countries. Our time will come. Humanism is the true foundation of Western civilization; Marxism was merely an extension of it. What is happening inside the Soviet bloc is therefore the latest stage of a far more awesome revolution.

Sorokin became convinced by 1930 that the secular, humanistic, rationalist ("sensate") culture of the West is in the process of disintegration. Thus, we are now in an age of crisis. This crisis will not be resolved until a new philosophical foundation is established for Western civilization: either an outright theological foundation ("ideational") or a fusion of ethical and materialistic ("idealistic"). But we should not underestimate the magnitude of the transformation. The present materialist culture is doomed, he argued. It will not go away quietly. Its departure will produce a major historical change. We have the rare privilege, he said, of going through this change.

Even if it does not mean the extinction of Western culture and society, it nevertheless signifies one of the greatest possible revolutions in our cultural and social life. As such, it is infinitely deeper and more significant than the partisans of the "ordinary crisis" imagine. A change from a monarchy to a republic or from capitalism to communism is utterly insignificant in comparison with the substitution of one fundamental form of culture and society for another — ideational for sensate, or vice versa. Such shifts are very rare by comparison. As we

1. See especially his four-volume work, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*.

2. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Crisis of Our Age* (New York: Dutton, [1941] 1957), p. 17.

have seen, during the thirty centuries of Greco-Roman and Western history they occurred only four times. But when they do take place, they produce a fundamental and epoch-making revolution in human culture and society. We have the rare privilege of living, observing, thinking, and acting in the conflagration of such an ordeal.³

The Symbolic Transformation

Solzhenitsyn said years ago that Marxism was dead behind the Iron Curtain. The leaders, teachers, and students were only going through the motions of belief. They are no longer even bothering to go through the motions. This represents a profound shift. When a church abandons its creed and rituals because its leaders and members no longer believe the tenets of the traditional faith, that church is never the same. It is a new institution, even though it occupies the same buildings and retains the old name. As its present members die off, the church must replace them with people who hold the new doctrines and become accustomed to the new rituals. Very few churches survive this transformation. This is why the mainline denominations have been suffering steady losses in membership. A similar phenomenon has already taken place inside the Soviet bloc. The old Communist parties have changed their names in Eastern Europe. In the USSR, the 100% monopoly of the Communist Party has been abandoned. Russian voters are beginning to cross out the names of Communist Party candidates, making it impossible for a candidate to win by 50% even when he is the only candidate.

Most significant of all, the Communists are allowing millions of Bibles to be imported into their nations. The Colorado-based International Bible Society will print a million New Testaments on a State-owned press in Moscow to be distributed to the Soviet Children's Fund, founded in 1987 to support orphans. The IBS has already distributed over a million New Testaments to Russian churches. Similar mass distributions of New Testaments have taken place in Poland. The "window of opportunity" behind the Iron Curtain is being used well. People who had been prohibited from having Bibles want them; they are now going to get them. The Bible will be once again read behind the Iron Curtain, and read intensely.

Symbols are important. The Communist movement has suffered a major self-inflicted defeat by allowing the traditional symbols of power to be removed in Eastern Europe. They have abandoned the legal and emotional foundations of **authority**; only the techniques and instrument of **power** remain.

The Non-Transformation

What is not being discussed publicly is the fact that this Soviet liberalization has been planned for decades.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

The basic outline of the plan was revealed to the West in 1984 by a KGB defector, Anatoliy Golitsyn. In his book, *New Lies for Old* (New York: Dodd, Mead), Golitsyn described the next move of the Soviet leadership, what he called **the final phase** of the pincer movement against the West. No one took him seriously, at least no one with any power. He is now hiding in England. He refuses to give interviews. But the events since August, 1989, testify to the reality of his thesis. He wrote the book in Brezhnev's era; he predicted the coming to power of a "liberal" leader who would pretend to democratize the empire. He even said that they might allow the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. The key, he predicted, would be Poland. The Party had already sent a million agents into Solidarity, and from this base, he predicted, they would begin the bogus liberalization of Eastern Europe.

Every "liberated" Communist satellite except Hungary has Communists running the military and the secret police. The President of Poland is General Jaruzelski, the man who imposed martial law in 1981. He has a total veto over the civilian government. The new governments are all operating at the discretion of the Communists, who still possess the weapons. And a few hours away are tens of thousands of Soviet tanks. Meanwhile, NATO's nuclear missiles have been removed.

The West is celebrating. Politicians see democracy coming to the Soviet bloc. The media are covering up the strategic reason for the liberalization of Eastern Europe. Instead, they are parroting the Soviet leaders, who say the communist economic system has failed. Meanwhile, every 37 days, the Soviets launch a new nuclear-powered submarine. Meanwhile, they send \$300 million per month to their client state in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Castro uses his drug money profits to create a nuclear warhead facility to match his enormous store of chemical weapons.

Conclusion

Will power win the day? Will the Soviet Union's long-scheduled "liberalization" backfire? We should consider Joseph's words to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

This must be our prayer: that God has raised up Gorbachev to execute this final phase of the Soviet strategy against the West, only to see his plan thwarted. The result, we must pray, will be the saving of many people. If this is not the case, then the threat of blackmail—nuclear war or chemical and biological war—makes a pre-emptive surrender to the Soviets more likely. We should not be naive. The Soviets still retain enormous superiority over the West in the technology of power. Whether they use it successfully against the West is in God's hands. It is not in NATO's.