

DUM NOVUS NASCITUR ORDO¹
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No matter what one's point of view, the revolutions in the countries in the East present a spectacle that is unique in the annals of contemporary history. The immense dimensions of the lies that have become unusable; the magnitude and extent of the territories concerned; the simultaneity of the rebellions in the different countries within and outside the borders of the Soviet Union; the depth of the general, political, economic and social crises that have abruptly appeared in broad daylight; the fundamental tactic and strategic principles according to which the different revolutions in these countries have been prepared and accomplished; and, finally, the interests in the [future] history of the world that are currently at stake – these are all new elements to the eyes of the contemporary spectator.

That which Wittfogel defined as Leninist *lumpen-Marxism*,³ which in this century prevailed in the countries traditionally dominated by ancient Oriental despotism, has failed, and it first collapsed in all of the European “colonies” and then the vastest empire in the world crumbled away under our eyes. The rapidity with which all this has taken place is part of the exceptional character of the event.

One of the errors of contemporary Western historiography as a whole has been the fact that it has not understood that, just as “war is the pursuit of policy by other means” (Clausewitz), so-called Russian “Communism” is nothing other than *the pursuit of ancient Asiatic despotism under another name, but with the same means*. To see how little Russia has changed in the course of the last two centuries, it is enough to read what Alexander Radishchev wrote in 1790,⁴ thus winning himself a death sentence from Catherine II, or what the Marquis de Custine wrote in 1839⁵ in a book that George Kennan described in 1971⁶ as “the best of books

¹ *Author's note*: Latin: “While a new order is being born.”

² *Translator's note*: the day before he wrote this, the author fell head-over-heels in love with a woman named Monika Michalkova. It was in her honor that he used her name.

³ *Translator's note*: Karl A. Wittfogel (1896-1988). Cf. *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, Yale University Press, 1957.

⁴ *Author's note*: A. Radishchev, *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*.

⁵ *Author's note*: A. de Custine, *La Russie en 1839*.

(...) about the Russia of Joseph Stalin, and not a bad book about the Russia of Brezhnev and Kosygin.”

Today, with the collapse of the abusive attribution of Leninist-Stalinist *lumpen-Marxism* to the systems and crimes that were [in fact] ancient Oriental despotism, the great lie of “Communism” (opportunistically accredited in the West by the very people who combated it) definitively no longer has currency. Bureaucratic despotism has been shown to be *incapable of resisting the competitive pressure* of systems of production and dominations that are more modern and less rustic. The victory of the new capitalism is complete, since there no longer exists any place in the world that the Western proletariat can point to as the example to follow: that which *is not* an example quite simply ceases to be salable as such.

In an irony that history has never been stingy with, so-called Russian “Communism” finds itself involuntarily and paradoxically – for the second time this century – the best ally of Western capitalism: first when, starting in the 1920s, it excluded the endless territories of the former Czarist empire from the competition of the global market, thus permitting Western capitalism to develop intensively and tumultuously; and today it is the best ally of a new, over-developed capitalism because – at the moment of its own catastrophe – “Communism” is constrained to open to the West the immense markets that are deprived of everything and want it all.

At the very moment that Oriental-“Communist” despotism, founded on coercive voluntarism and prohibitions, is no longer able to prevent anything that is in the process of taking place, a *historical glaciation* comes to an end: the barrier that separates the two worlds has been removed by the impetuous waters freed by the thaw, which also carries with it flows of money, commodities and profits from virginal territories. By a kind of communicating-vessels phenomenon, all that there is in excess on one side sooner or later flows to the other, where the lack of everything increases all desires.

It is completely unrealistic to suppose that phenomena with such important geopolitical and economic consequences have been foreseen by the secret services of the States whose destinies are at stake, first of all, those of West Germany and the Soviet Union: the Germans by bringing to completion an extended and meticulous long-term effort towards *Ostpolitik*,⁷ reunification and the German economies; the Soviet services by withdrawing all support from the shameful

⁶ *Translator's note:* George F. Kennan, *The Marquis de Custine and his “Russia in 1839”*, Princeton University Press, 1971. We have quoted directly from the original text.

⁷ *Translator's note:* *Neue Ostpolitik* (German for “new Eastern policy”) refers to the normalization of relations between West and East Germany.

puppet-governments that they had previously imposed, subsidized and supported in East Europe.

The magnitude of the theatre of operations implicates very different local situations in the different regions of the empire because the only thing that this empire had in common from Riga to Vladivostok was the difficulty that it suffered: the hard and well-armed cement is now irremediably cracked.

We have already witnessed and we will continue to witness a kind of *Euro-Asiatic continental drift* by virtue of which the more than one hundred Soviet nationalities and satellites – feverish and disordered in the search for their own lost identities – will distance themselves from each other, divide up, fight each other, coalesce and, in very different ways (according to circumstances), find their own particular individualities. On the one side, to the west of the border that, from the Baltic countries, ascends to Hungary and Slovenia, there will be a drift towards the West; on the other side, the drift will be towards the East. Russia properly speaking, which finds itself in the middle, will be torn between its own imperial-despotic tradition and its recent leanings to rejoin Europe.

Despite the upheavals, to think that the *Volkgeist*,⁸ the spirit of the Russian people, will change quickly is an unrealistic hypothesis. The people, who are not used to the laws of the market, want the advantages without paying the costs: full stores and controlled prices, good salaries and low productivity. The Russian people complain about the scarcity of commodities and their bad quality, but they refuse to consider that, if for each ruble that is printed, one only produces ten kopecks of merchandise, with a single ruble one can only buy ten kopecks of merchandise, that is, if one can find it, after waiting in a humiliating line in 15- or 20-degree-below-zero weather.

The people, who can now speak, speak above all of their discontent: the domestic political situation is better, but the people are more discontented [than ever]. This might seem to be a paradox, but it is not.

With respect to the prosperity under the reign of Louis XVI before 1789, Tocqueville says that, “it isn’t always by going from bad to worse that one falls into revolution. It more often happens that a people who have supported the most oppressive laws without complaint – as if they did not feel [hurt by] them – reject them violently when their weight has been lightened (...) The difficulty that one suffers patiently, as if it were unavoidable, seems intolerable when one conceives the idea of escaping from it. Everything that removes the abuse seems to better

⁸ *Translator’s note*: “national spirit” in German.

uncover what remains of it and makes the feeling bitterer: the difficulty has lessened, it is true, but the sensitivity is increased.”⁹

The bureaucracy that for more than two-thirds of a century dominated the Soviet Union had claimed to direct, down to the smallest details, the entire development of society and, fearing the consequences for the stability of its institutions that any development would have, did everything it could do to prevent them. It was a fatal illusion that these institutions were stable, when in fact they were simply immobile, and it was precisely that immobility that rendered those very institutions unstable to the highest degree. A year before the Revolution of 1830, Benjamin Constant wrote: “One might say that the stability of the institutions is the unique goal, independent of the happiness of the people, and that kings and peoples, subjects and sovereigns, are only here to be offered in a holocaust for the stability of the institutions.”¹⁰

Just as in the West one has claimed to have totally subjugated nature by subordinating it to the necessities of an irrational industrial production, forgetting that afterwards “nature takes its revenge” (Engels),¹¹ the “Communist” bureaucrats who have claimed to uniformly subjugate the different societies in the East – by imposing a kind of social crystallization and a historical glaciation to prevent any autonomous developments – must now see that society has been “claimed.” The infamy of people like Honecker, Husák and Ceausescu¹² was not ill adapted for the system, because that infamy was only a product of it; it was the system that was ill adapted for people.

Mikhail Gorbachev is also a product of the changes that have taken place in Soviet society, and he is not at all their creator: he has grown up in the shade of the same apparatus that, obtusely wanting to prevent any change, no matter how small, has objectively created the necessity and urgency for it. And Gorbachev, whatever his destiny, is also the one who has known how to express the fact that the time has come, to express what the epoch demands, and what he has done is what he has had to do. He is not a Shakespearean hero, but someone such as Hegel described: “They draw from the hidden spirit that knocks at the doors of the present (...) the

⁹ *Author’s note:* Tocqueville, *L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, Book III, chapter IV.

¹⁰ *Author’s note:* B. Constant, *Mélanges de Littérature et de Politique*, 1829.

¹¹ *Translator’s note:* Frederick Engels, *The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man* (1876).

¹² *Translator’s note:* Erich Honecker (1912-1994) was the leader of East Germany; Gustáv Husák (1913-1991) was the leader of Czechoslovakia; and Nicolae Ceausescu (1918-1989) was the leader of Romania.

spirit for which the current world is only a shell that in itself contains a kernel that is different from what belongs to that shell.”¹³

Mikhail Gorbachev has removed the lid from the great pot of the empire, and all the peoples, all the social classes that were compressed within it, have come to a boil.

From the North to the South, the Baltic countries – which have demanded independence and are about to strike their own coins – the Poles, the East Germans, the Czechs, the Hungarians and the Yugoslavs have decreed the end of the post-Stalinist regimes that Moscow imposed on them. From the West to the East, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldavia, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan are bringing into the open demands, resentments, rancors, exasperations and nationalisms that have been repressed for too long.

What will happen? Contrary to what is being said, the future is not so difficult to foresee. One need only recall Machiavelli’s troubling precept: “No one who provokes a change for the worse in a city hopes afterwards to be its governor or to stop it according to his pleasure.”¹⁴

¹³ *Translator’s note*: Hegel, “General Introduction to the Philosophy of History.”

¹⁴ *Author’s note* (26 November 2012):

This text was published under the name Monika Michalkova with the editorial title (*Il Coperchio di Gorbaciov*) in one of the oldest Italian periodicals, *Il Ponte*, in April 1990. I wrote it in Italian in Prague. Some years later, I translated it into French, in which it has never been published, for some friends, to show them that the course of history (the wars in Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Georgia, and perhaps soon in the Ukraine, etc.) supported my “prophecies” of December ’89.

In this text, I was, I believe, the first to emphasize the role that the Western secret services played in these revolutions, which propaganda attributed to the peoples. What I did not foresee, and what I must say in a note to this text, are the precise and wild modalities that *the primitive accumulation of capital* have taken in these countries. These countries have in fact been the laboratories for experimentation with new techniques of domination and enslavement. Nor did I foresee that the systems by which the populations of the Eastern countries were expropriated *would also be applied in the West*, beginning with the American subprime crisis and the current global crisis. Current capitalism very little resembles the capitalism of 1989. And since it becomes more and more despotic, as does the bureaucratic system of the Eastern dictatorships, one can conclude by saying, following Horace, *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit* (Captive Greece captured her savage conqueror) because despotism is the principal form of domination that the East is in the process of exporting to the West. In any case, I

Prague, 30 December 1989

foresaw that, “By a kind of communicating-vessels phenomenon, all that there is in excess on one side sooner or later flows to the other.”