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Gorbachev earned the praise of the West by betraying the USSR



Sources: Global Times [Photo: Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan (Boris Yurchenko/AP)]

Translated from English for Rebellion by Beatriz Morales Bastos

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the former Soviet Union, passed away last Tuesday [August 30]. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences. But where the real and widespread praise for him came from was from the West, from U.S. President Joe Biden to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and politicians of the same era as

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Gorbachev, who praised him for introducing "courageous democratic reforms," bringing "freedom," ending the Cold War, and making the world safer.

It could be said that Gorbachev was one of the most controversial world leaders. He earned widespread praise from the West by sacrificing the interests of his homeland. Thanks to him there was more security in the West. But the period following the fall of the former Soviet Union has led to a series of wars in those lands, first in Chechnya, then in Georgia and now in Ukraine, where the most brutal war since the end of World War I is taking place.

At just 54 years old, Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He aspired to end the economic and social stagnation of the Soviet Union through reforms. However, he sinned of a certain political idealism and a certain naivety (common among certain intellectuals) when it came to seriously underestimating the complexity, risks and challenges of reforms in a multi-ethnic country, in addition to lacking control over the reform process.

Under Gorbachev's leadership the reforms of the Soviet Union were initiated from the political arena by aggressively promoting "new thinking" and continuously transferring party power to the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union. A few years after coming to power the country began to fall into chaos.

As the party leadership weakened and the authority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union weakened, an intolerant nationalism began to spread rapidly throughout the Baltic and Caucasus countries. The first secretaries of some of the republics acted in collusion with the separatist forces and sought independence. Some did not listen to the central command and provoked "territorial disputes" and armed conflicts between the republics.

The nationalism of these small republics in turn fostered the awakening of Russian nationalism. In several places the combination of nationalism and democratization echoed, and eventually led to three great republics, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, proclaiming the creation of the "Commonwealth of Independent States" and the Soviet Union came to an end. Gorbachev was deposed.

Russia is the largest successor state to the Soviet Union. It has almost half the population of the USSR and its national strength declined drastically. Russian society is more "free" than Soviet society. He wanted to integrate into the Western camp with multiparty elections and at the time was a member of the G8. But it is a nuclear power, so the United States will not leave it alone. Washington's strategic objective is to continue weakening it and NATO's eastward expansion is proceeding step by step, all of which will end up provoking the reaction of Russia, which has been cornered.

After Gorbachev's death many people in the West were undone in praise of him. Some compared him to Putin and expressed their hatred of the latter. However, the Russian people have accepted and supported Putin, reflecting his awakening to the negative strategic consequences of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Yet today's Russia not only has little national strength, but it no longer has its former European allies. It seems to show a lack of strength in the face of U.S. pressure.

Going back to the past, the Soviet Union was very powerful and had a considerable capacity for technological innovation. Both the first artificial satellite and the first nuclear power plant were Soviet. Their problems at the time were weak agriculture and a smaller industry. With what we know today, the Soviet Union, which was rich in resources, would not have found it difficult to solve these problems. But Gorbachev misjudged the problems, chose the wrong path of reform, and lacked political leadership. Obviously, he admired Western culture and was aware of the praise that Western public opinion devoted to him at that time and enjoyed with them. The West largely deceived him.

Gorbachev had some good cards, but he played them badly and both the Soviet Union and himself lost everything. Russia has now fallen into unprecedented passivity and strategic difficulties. Everything he did as the last leader of the Soviet Union benefited the West, while most members of the former Soviet Union suffered long-term consequences.

The disintegration of one of the poles of a bipolar world has brought about global strategic changes and its impact will last for centuries. The feelings and assessments of different countries regarding this will be very varied. If you go beyond the idea that leaders should be responsible for the interests of their own countries, Gorbachev's assessment throughout human history is likely to be more interesting. However, a perspective from all of

humanity has not yet really been formed and the point of view is often raised from current political interests. Simply put, the controversy about Gorbachev will continue for a long time.

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