

Capitalism Needs Perestroika



Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it's time to take stock.

The Berlin Wall was one of the shameful symbols of the Cold War and the dangerous division of the world into opposing blocks and spheres of influence.

Many politicians of my generation sincerely believed that with the end of the Cold War, humankind could finally forget the absurdity of the arms race, dispense with dangerous regional conflicts, abandon sterile ideological disputes, and enter a golden century of collective security.

We hoped we would see the rational use of material resources, the end of poverty and inequality, and restored harmony with nature.

Alas, over the last few decades the world has not become a fairer place: Disparities between the rich and poor either remained or increased not only between the North and the developing South but also within developed countries themselves.

The social problems in Russia, as in other post-communist countries, are proof that simply abandoning the flawed model of a centralized economy and bureaucratic planning is not enough and guarantees neither a country's global competitiveness nor respect for the principles of social justice nor a dignified standard of living for the population.

While we politicians from the last century can be proud of the fact that we avoided the danger of a thermonuclear war, for many millions of

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people around the globe, the world has not become a safer place. Quite to the contrary: Innumerable local conflicts and ethnic and religious wars, along with terrorism, have appeared like a curse on the new map of world politics, creating large numbers of victims.

The new generation of politicians is acting irresponsibly. Defense spending by numerous large and small countries alike is now greater

than during the Cold War. Strong-arm tactics are once again the standard way of dealing with conflicts. Weapons of mass destruction are proliferating, and the erstwhile adversaries of the Cold War still compete to reach new technological levels in arms production.

Looking back, one real achievement we can celebrate is the fact that the twentieth century marked the end of totalitarian ideologies, in par-

