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L.A.: The twenty years separating Khrushchev's "thaw" from the current one were a time of stagnation not only in the economy, but also in the country's intellectual life. Because the authorities did not intend to change anything in the Soviet socio-economic system, it was forbidden to criticize it or to discuss desirable paths for its development. Under such circumstances, the samizdat became the main platform for the exchange of opinions and ideas. It became the repository of ideas about the future of the Soviet Union that differed from the ideas recognized by Brezhnev's government. Samizdat was the only distiller of such ideas, because there were only two ways to write about changing the Soviet system – either into the table, or for samizdat. What did Soviet society manage to accumulate in samizdat in the last 30 years?

One finds three main tendencies of independent public thought about a preferred future for the Soviet Union in samizdat. They can be characterized as liberal-human rights activist, social-democratic, and patriarchal-isolationist.

The liberal-human rights activist direction is most completely and fully presented [missing line].

In his own words:

Narrator: My ideal is an open pluralistic society with an unconditional respect for fundamental human rights, a society with a mixed economy, implementing scientifically-controlled progress... such a society should arise as the result of a peaceful "convergence" of the socialist and capitalist systems, and... this would be the way to save the world from a nuclear disaster.

[Crossed out paragraphs]

L.A.: The understanding of the need to democratize Soviet society for it to successfully develop is the point of common ground for the liberal-human rights activists and social-democrats. The social-democrats stated their reform program at the end of 1985 in an anonymous document, called the "Movement for Social [missing line]."

Narrator: Just like the liberal-human rights activists, social-democrats seek freedom of speech and the release of all political prisoners; they would like to see the end of persecution of people for their political and religious beliefs; and they would like to have constitutional

conditions for the creation of political organizations that would provide an alternative to the CPSU.

In the economic sphere, the liberals and social-democrats urge us to follow objective economic laws of production, distribution and exchange, which require payment for labor in accordance with its actual quality and quantity. They also support fostering private enterprise in the service sphere and manufacturing of goods for the population, while keeping heavy industry and transportation in the hands of the state; Soviet citizens should be able to rent state lands and agricultural equipment to produce food; the cultivation of private as well as community gardens should be encouraged; conditions ought to be created for the development of private trade.

L.A.: However, there is an important distinction between the social-democratic and liberal-activist routes. It consists of how they view the ultimate goal of Soviet society. For liberals, the goal is to erase the differences between the world of free enterprise, the Soviet bloc, and developing countries. They believe that in order to serve the common good these three currently separated worlds should be united into a single humanity, a single peaceful family based on cooperation and mutual assistance. Social democrats see the world as divided into “capitalist” and “socialist” and believe that to become united, the world would have to become entirely socialist. In their view, the main goal of democratization in the USSR and the improvement of the Soviet economy is not to reconcile with the West and the Third World, but to secure the Soviet Union’s role as leader of the socialist camp and to recruit developing countries to the path of socialism [missing line].

Finally, the third direction of independent public opinion in Soviet society is patriarchal-isolationist. Its program is defined in Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s “Letter to Soviet Leaders.” Here is a summary of this document.

Narrator: Solzhenitsyn considers the two main dangers to be the possibility of war with China and environmental pollution and the depletion of natural resources due to excessive industrialization and urbanization. He considers both of these dangers to be the result of blind adherence to ideas imported from the West: the dogma of unlimited scientific-technological progress, and especially the Marxist dogma, which, according to Solzhenitsyn, is the embodiment of the antireligious spiritual impoverishment of the West. Solzhenitsyn urges us to abandon the ideological rivalry with China and the West, to abandon accelerated industrial development for the sake of environmental conservation in our country; to abandon international expansion and focus on internal problems; not to sell off our national resources – gas, timber, etc.; and, relying on Russian patriotism, to direct our efforts to the development of the Russian North East. In the political sphere, he believes it is necessary to recognize freedom of the press and freedom of religion, and to tolerate dissent. He suggests maintaining the one-party system, while strengthening the role of the Soviets, and believes that the authoritarian regime can be preserved as long as it adheres to law and order.

L.A.: Gorbachev defines “perestroika” as the “acceleration of socio-economic development.” Not only this general formula, but the specific measures in the socio-economic sphere are measures taken from the arsenal of liberals and social-democrats. Of course, for now we can judge this more from Gorbachev’s speeches than measures implemented, but history is always slow when it comes to creation rather than destruction.

Narrator: In foreign policy, the disarmament proposals coincide with the aspirations of all three groups. But this policy has the same old goals – to strengthen the USSR’s influence even in those parts of the world where the Soviet Union has no other interests except bringing the entire world into the socialist camp through violence and deceit, not by the attractive nature of socialism. The continuation of anti-Western propaganda may please the isolationists, but it hinders the disarmament negotiations, and, consequently, keeps attention directed to foreign policy and distracts from the internal problems of the country.

L.A.: Gorbachev’s course – both in domestic policy and in foreign policy – is based on ideas developed by independent social thought over the course of the last 30 years. However, this course is eclectic; like a rustic patchwork quilt, it combines ideas and goals of various groups that are not always compatible.

Is this the search process, inevitable at the beginning stages of “perestroika,” or the result of a collision of opinions and preferences in the highest echelons of power and society? In any case, with or without the leadership’s will, eventually development will proceed in one of these directions, pushing aside the rest. Time will tell which of these directions will define the country’s future.

[Translated by Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive]