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The most often question for Sovietologists now is: is it really a process of democratization, what is occurring in the USSR, and if yes, what are its chances for survival: will it not interrupt, will the country not go backward? Almost always the undercurrent of these questions is: will Gorbachev hold his position in power? I cannot answer this question, like anybody else, including Gorbachev himself. But, studying the independent public life in the Soviet Union, I am sure, that the process of democratization cannot be reversed, even in the case of Gorbachev's downfall, because the Soviet society has changed dramatically since the beginning of 1980-ies, and these changes are in the direction to the democracy. I mean psychological and structural changes.

I explain my point of view.

The Soviet social-economic system appeared, as known, in result of revolution and civil war and was build in the years of Stalin's terror. In this system civil society was absent. Soviet so called public associations - ~~like~~ Komsomol, trade-unions and ~~other~~ public organizations, even Communist party,

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were not in reality voluntary public associations, but mechanisms for manipulation of masses from above, mechanisms for mobilization of people to implement the orders of leaders.

Such relationship between people and authorities could exist only on the base of ~~an~~ ideology of a siege fortress, where main role was unified point of view on any problem and intolerance to any other opinion: "who is not with us, is against us, is a traitor, is our enemy."

Under this role and under constant terror lived at least three generations of Soviet people. The psychology of siege fortress, intolerance became their own psychology.

Mass terror was stopped after Stalin's death in 1953, But intolerance to other way minded people ~~has been wide spread~~ ~~was a norm~~ continue to be a norm in the USSR.

Under such conditions there were not too many people throughout the country, who could overcome the common ideology.

The first such groups, acted openly, appeared in 1960-ies. The most known in the West independent movement in the USSR in that time was the human rights movement, which Moscow intellectuals were

involved. The most known human rights associations were Helsinki groups - in Moscow and then - in Ukraine, in Lithuania, in Georgia and in Armenia.

The principles of ^{Moscow} human rights activists were: respect ~~of~~ ^{for} human dignity, human rights and rules of law, ideological and political tolerance and pluralism.

Helsinki groups in non-Russian republics ^{first of all,} protested against Russification, defended national languages and cultures, demanded to respect rights of these republics.

At the same time, in 1960-ies - 1970-ies religious movements reberthed. - Evangelical Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Catholics and Russian Orthodoxes.

I counted up approximately a half of million people, actively participated in all these movements, - human rights, religious and national. It's not much for a huge country, and ^{response to} their ~~influence~~ efforts were limited because they haven't access to the press and mass media and were constantly persecuted. To the beginning of 1980-ies all these movements were crushed, and, seemed, not a trace remained. Perhaps, it wasn't so

When ~~after~~ since middle of 1980-ies the pressure from above has been weakened, people, who shared these ideas, began to appear as mushrooms from underground. We can see it first of all in the Soviet press. The articles of many journalists, scientists, writers and even people from the street, who writes letters to newspapers and magazines, demonstrate large spectrum of opinions, which are very far from communist ideology, and have clear ~~trend to~~ preferences to Christian and democratic values.

On the base of these ~~ideologi~~ psychological and ideological changes in the Soviet society appeared a new phenomena - numerous so called informal associations interests and aims ^{because} of informal associations reflect the full spectrum of interests and aims of ^{the Soviet} population in a huge ~~country~~ - from pop music and sport to ecological, economic, ^{religious, philosophical,} cultural, national and political problems.

How many informal associations are in the Soviet Union? - Data on this are contradictory, not only because that information until 1985 was collected by KGB only, but also because of difficulty to account phased namely on "informality" of ~~these associations~~

In December 1987 newsletter "Pravda" informed that in the USSR there are 30 thousand informal associations; in December 1985 ~~the same~~ "Pravda" gave other data - 60 thousands. But youth magazine "Smena" (~~The A generation~~) in 1985 suggested that in the USSR there are 160 thousands only youth ^{informal} associations.

But any way the account of ^{these} associations doesn't explain, how many people participate in them, because the numbers of participants in these associations are very ^{diverse} ~~various~~ - from 3-5 ^{participants} ~~thousands~~ to ~~hundreds~~ of thousands.

The discrepancies on the number of informals, according data of ^{various} Soviet sociologists, are from 4-5 millions ^{more than} to 40 millions. But

in any case is clear, that "informals" constitute the large part of Soviet population and the most active its part.

The appearance of numerous informal associations turned the Soviet population from ^{amorphous} ~~faceless~~ "masses" to the ^{structured} ~~civil~~ society, which didn't ^{exist} before in the USSR. Informal associations began to

appear in mass in the end of 70-ies - in the beginning of 80-ies, in Brezhnev's time. ~~They~~ ^{majority of them} were organized by teenagers of 14-17 years old. It was the first Soviet generation, which refused to live under roofs of siege fortress, they created their own culture, based on the rock music, and escaped in informal

associations from official ~~Communist~~ ideology. ~~Just because~~ this exodus was ^{so} mass, ~~it couldn't~~ ^{that such behavior} be punished seriously. Now this generation is older - 25-30 years old. But they remain informals, that became their way of life. And informal associations grow up together with them. In accordance with ~~analyses~~ ^{survey} of the Soviet sociologists in 1987, the most wide spread interest of to-day informals is to discuss political problems - 9.7% of surveyed informals belonged to ~~political~~ ^{political} associations, ~~with political interest~~ - every ten's. And the ~~pro~~ ^{pro} ~~pol~~ ^{pol} ~~itization~~ ^{itization} of informals ~~can~~ ~~can~~ is going on.

In the summer and fall 1988 the first political parties appeared in the Soviet Union. Yes, political parties, because it is only formally, that in the USSR preserves one-party system. Actually, Communist party is a single ruling party, but in the country there are at least three more political parties, which fight for the power with the ruling party. I mean Estonian people front, Latvian people front and Lithuanian movement for perestrojka, "Saucis". These organizations don't name themselves "parties", and ~~it is very smart~~ in to-day situation ~~the open challenge for~~ ~~to~~ ~~ruling~~ ~~party~~

would be too dangerous. But these organizations have all features of national political parties. ^{the first} They have serious political programmes: liberation their republics from subordination to Moscow. They demand sovereignty in economic, cultural, social and political areas and agree to ~~give~~ ^{give} for Moscow only foreign policy and defense, but - with consultation with all ~~the~~ republics.

The second, these organizations fight for their political aims by political methods; they nominated their candidates in the ~~Congress~~ ^{Congress} of People's Deputies, ^{of the USSR,} in some cases - against ~~the~~ candidates of Communist party. The third - and won this elections.

The ethnic staff of these parties is very homogeneous: ~~in~~ Estonian people front ^{consists} almost completely ^{from} Estonians, Latvian front - ^{from} Latvians, and "Saulis" - ^{from} Lithuanians, despite Estonians in Estonia consist only 60% of population, and Latvian in Latvia less than 50%. But social staff of Estonian and Latvian people fronts and "Saulis" is very various - from intellectual elite, ^{clerics} to workers and peasants. It means that ^{these} parties are ~~not simply~~ ^{national} political parties, ~~but national~~, and even all-national parties. The sizes of these parties confirm it: Latvian people front ~~is~~

These organizations have no formal membership. But 60 thousands people elected delegates on Estonian people Front Congress last October, and 300 thousands participated in meeting, which Estonian front called last September

- it means every üks Eesti Estonian.

The elections in last March in all three Baltic republics ~~were~~ ^{gave} full victory for candidates of ~~the~~ people fronts in Estonia and Latvia and for Saucis in Lithuania.

Last weekend these three organizations formed in Baltic association and appealed to the United Nations to support their secession from the Soviet Union. - This is their final aim.

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example, has ~~115 thousands~~ members
(~~numbers of Latvia's~~ ~~are~~ ~~population~~
~~is~~ ~~_____~~). The same proportion
to the whole nation is in ^{Latvian} Estonians
people front and in "Saudis".

So, for their small nations these orga-
nizations are ^{political} mass national parties.
The influence of these parties in their re-
publics ~~has~~ demonstrated ^{March} elections.
"Saudis" received 36 mandates from
42, which Lithuania has in the ^{Congress} ~~Senate~~
of people deputies of the USSR.

Other non-Russian republics don't
have such influential parties, but
in all republics the process of formation
of national parties began and is going on,
sooner or slower, but ~~on~~ ^{by} the same way
as in Baltic republics.

In Belorussia Organizational Committee
of people front was established in November
1988. In ^{of people front} January 89 there were 360 groups of
support with 10 thousands ^{members} ~~participants~~.
The first meeting of Belorussian people
front ^{in February} gathered 40 thousands parti-
pants.

In Armenia the majority of population
has been involved in movement for joining
to Armenia Karabakh area, which has
armenian population, but belongs to
Azerbaijan. Karabakh movement didn't

form in political party, but Karabakh Committee, which headed this movement, directed efforts of whole nation in this struggle. Since February ~~to December~~ 1988 ~~Karabakh Committee was the real power of Armenia.~~ Official authorities lost control ^{of} ~~under~~ situation and several months even didn't try to restore it, went to shadow. Karabakh Committee was the real power in Armenia since February to December, when all members of this Committee were arrested.

In the situation every-day meetings with hundreded thousands participants, and ~~general strikes, in republic~~ which became general in republic from time to time, ^{the} in this situation of common excitement Karabakh Committee maintained unbelievable order. Republican minister of internal affairs confirmed in TV interview, that official authorities nevermore could provide such ^{public} ideal order ~~it~~ even in quiet time: no murders, no fights, no carenies.

Karabakh Committee was formed ~~for~~ by distinguished ~~to~~ representatives of Armenian intellectuals - scientists, professors, ~~and~~ ~~some~~ writers and so on. They mediated successfully national passions of their country.

and provided peaceful character of Armenian movement. Several times Karabakh Committee ~~appeared~~^{sent} to the Soviet ~~authorities~~ Supreme Soviet with compromise proposals on Karabakh problem ~~decided~~. Gradually Karabakh problem was pushed aside ~~by fight for political~~^{in Armenian movement and went ahead} ~~problems of political~~ ~~sovereignty, social justice and national dignity~~ in a manner of Baltic republics. But also ~~entirely~~ peaceful and lawful Armenian movement was suppressed by military occupation of Armenia in ~~1988~~ ~~as~~ ~~demo~~ in the manner of Czechoslovakia in 1968; two hundred thousands soldiers with tanks ~~intervened~~^{were} in a small Armenia - twice more than in Afghanistan.

Occupation ^{of Armenia} wasn't breached even after ~~terrible~~ earthquake on December 7. Even more; all members of Karabakh Committee were arrested several days later and transferred to Moscow. ~~It~~ may be, for ~~like~~ ^{like} Czechoslovakian ~~leader~~ Alexander Neghbatians ~~at~~ ^{the} Dubchen in 1968. To this day ~~they~~ ^{Karabakh Committee members} are under arrest without any official accusation.

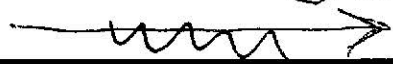
~~I began to describe the situation in the USSR from non-Russian republics, because the most dramatic events occur now not in Moscow, as it was during long time, but in Baltic Republics, in Armenia, Georgia,~~

~~Belorussia, Ukraina, Moldavia, Azerbaijan~~
~~Kazakhstan~~
on 50 on. This is important sign

In Georgia there are several active political associations. The difference between them - in degree of radicality of their demands. The most moderate one demands more rights for Georgia under Moscow ruling, the most radical - secession from the Soviet Union. These associations combine their efforts to organize ~~common~~ meetings in support of their demands, and gather thousands and tens thousands of supporters. Last such meeting in April ended tragically - it was broken by troops, and at least 20 people were killed. The leaders of political associations, who organized this meeting, were arrested.

In Ukraine and in Moldavia the most influential public associations demand the status for their native languages as State languages and improvement of ecological situations in their republics. More radical associations, which demand ^{SS} secession from the USSR, have no large ~~base~~ support, but they are very active and their influence is increasing.

The same processes are going in Moslems republics, but ~~even this process is~~ on the initial stage. - They demand State status for their native languages and more religious freedom.



in Uzbekistan the association "Berlik"
sprung up. "Berlik" it means "Mother
land". April 9 this year "Berlik's"
meeting gathered 20 thousands par-
ticipants. By that time "Berlik"
had 80 thousands members. "Berlik"
program includes; to provide the State
status for Uzbek language in Uzbekistan
to save Aral sea; to change the situation
in Uzbek agriculture, where cotton
is ~~a mono~~ one-crop; to prohibit
women's and children's labor on cotton
fields because it is dangerous for health.

in Kazakhstan, in Alma-Ata in
November of last year Alma-Ata'
People front was announced. This
association is not large, but very
influential. It was formed by Russian
and Kazakh's intelligentsia of
Kazakhstan.

in March in Kazakhstan the new
public group was established -
"Nevada". The chief of this group
is a leading Kazakh's writer

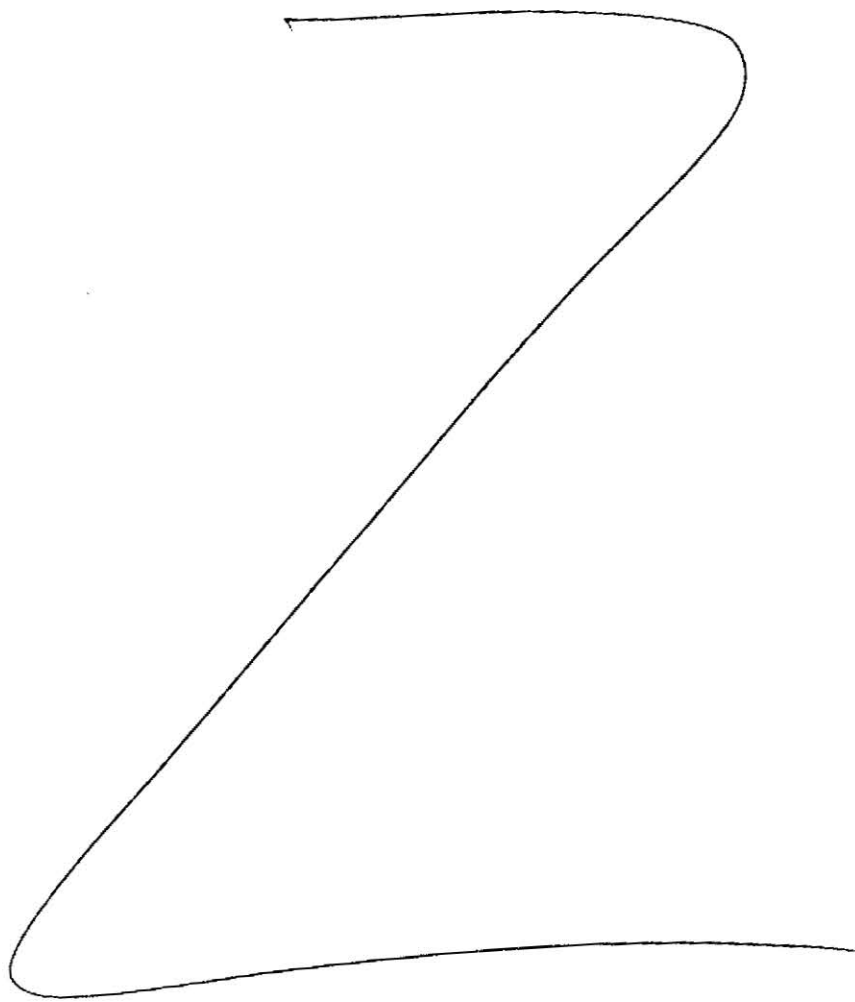
The group named itself "Nevada: Wh
Because in Nevada desert ~~the~~ in the
United States nuclear proving grou
is located. The same ^{Soviet} proving grou
is located in Northern Kazakhstan
near Semipalatinsk city. The aim
"Nevada" group is full prohibition
of nuclear explosions on the both
of these proving grounds.

These explosions carry out ~~o~~ und
ground. Theoretically they are not
dangerous for environment and po
pulation. But the Soviets don't pro
vide rule of safety, because ~~it~~ ^{it is}
is expensive and ~~not~~ ^{technically} ~~correct~~ ^{difficult}
radiation is liqved every time
when ~~the~~ they make explosion.
As a result the level of cancer
diseases and deaths ~~are~~ ^{is} very high
in Kazakhstan. For this reason the
"Nevada" group demands to cancel
immediately nuclear explosion
under Semipalatinsk and to beg
negotiations with the United
States to cancel ~~exp~~ in response

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~~and dangerous~~

They were sure that such ~~unusual~~
for Soviet people initiative ~~and~~
couldn't gather many supporters.
But in one month after declaration
of Nevada group 140 thousands
habitants of Kazakhstan joined
"Nevada" and this group ~~has been~~ is
now among the largest public
associations in the Soviet Union.



As you see, I began ~~to~~ to describe the situation in the USSR not from Moscow ~~as it was had been done during in previous years~~ but from non-Russian republics, because the most dramatic events occur now not in Moscow, as it ~~was had been~~ ^{was} in previous years, but in ~~Estonia, Balt~~ republics, on Caucasus, in Belorussia, in Ukraine, in Moldavia, in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. This is important sign, that the last multinational Empire in the modern world ~~is~~ ^{is} is in the beginning of ~~the~~ ^{its} end.

And finally - shortly - about situation in the Russian part of the Soviet Union here there are no informal ~~assessations~~ ^{assessations} with numerous participants. But it's no rare in large industrial cities, for example in Siberia, that a small initiative group ~~with~~ ^{with} with 10-12 activists - call meetings, which gather thousands participants, especially if a group acts under ecological slogans. Such cases took place in Nizhny Tagil, in ~~Ufa~~ Ufa, in Kazan, in Ryazan and many other cities, in which previously never were open ~~manifestations~~ ^{spontaneous} public manifestations ~~with~~ ^{with} without

even surviving of habitants of industrial cities, and it explains the appearance of spontaneous ecological movement on large support of informal groups with ecological demands.

~~But not only ecological problems~~

But informal associations in industrial cities ^{are worrying} ~~are~~ not only ecological problems they strongly ^{fight} ~~criticized~~ ^{againt} local party authorities. In summer 1988 the high wave of such meetings arised in connection with elections on XIX Party conference. In several areas first party secretaries lost their positions after meetings, when participants criticized them very strongly. It hapened, for example, in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on Far East ^{and in Astrakhan} and in Kuybyshev near Volga ^{local}-river. These meetings were organized by informal initiative groups, political clubs and so on.

Informals were very active on ^{March} ~~last~~ elections in the ^{Congress} ~~SOVIET~~ of People deputies. Their challenge ^{of informals} to ruling party was very successful in many cities, especially in Leningrad, ~~where~~ ^{where} namely informals agitated ^{here} against first party secretary and he wasn't elected, despite he was a single candidat in his ~~electoral~~ district.

In Moscow there were no large meetings and to this time there is no association which has mass support. But in Moscow there is full spectrum of ~~public~~ political associations; with the "Shovinskic and antisemitic" association "Memory" ("Память") on the right wing to the radical "Democratic Union" ("Демократический союз") on the left wing. DC come out against ~~leading~~ leading position of the Communist party, in favor of multiparty system, against state property as means of production and in favor of parliamentary system of the Western pattern.

Between "Память" and "DC" there are many others, may be ^{several} hundred more moderate associations:

"Memorial", Moscow people front, socialistic clubs, human rights associations, with a populist democratic and socialistic program.

"Tribune", which has an aim to be a constructive opposition to the Soviet leadership; the association of liberal writers, "L'Après", which is an opponent to the official Union of the Soviet writers; the Union of scientists, ~~and cinematographers~~ and a kind of a trade union ~~in the manner of the Union of cinematographers~~ and many many other associations.

The numbers of members in the majority of Moscow associations are from several dozens to several hundred, not more.

The largest Moscow public association is "Memorial". "Memorial" has no formal membership, and we know how many participants ~~are~~ join this association. "Memorial" 's meetings gather as many attendants as hall ^{I think} seats, ~~at least~~ ^{at least} "Memorial" has ~~thousands~~ ^{thousands} supporters, may be ~~there~~ ^{there} tens of thousands.

of cities, through the country. But these associations are not sections of Moscow "Memorial". They are independent and have no common main office.

So, Moscow lost the role of the center of public movement as it was in the 1960-ies and 1970-ies in human rights movement and in Jewish movement.

Perhaps high cultural level of Moscow public associations and their diversity provides high quality of the programs of the best Moscow associations. For that reason these programs sometimes use as a pattern for similar associations in Russian provincial cities and in some non-Russian republics. For example,

Alma-Ata people front accepted the program of Moscow people front. Several Memorial groups in provincial cities adopted some principles of Moscow Memorial. "Taurus" and "DC" have their sections in several cities, but

ship and activity.

Despite there is no ~~large~~ mass pub associations in Moscow, March elections showed, that Moscow prefers informal leaders much more than officials, and democratic candidates much more than conservatives. For example, it shows elections in the district, where TV observer Krutov, who was supported by "Танки" opposed Zaenabcaud, who had the program in behalf of handicapped people and other minorities, which need social support. In this district Zaenabcaud was elected, not Krutov. It is especially interesting, because Zaenabcaud is a Jew. May be for this reason "Танки" leadership decided to nominate their favorite Krutov in this district but they didn't win.

The other example, Сергей Сякелур, the activist of the

~~People from~~ Sergey Stankevich, was elec-
ed his clear result of these
The elections showed, that in is-
in the USSR
to-day situation even small informal
groups with 20-50 activists - could be
serious political counterparts
for ~~leading party and~~ authorities.

~~but~~ Several days ago I asked
by telephone my friend in Moscow
what is now the most stable
filling of Moscowites about
current situation in the country
And she answered: ^{our} The most
stable filling is a filling
of instability.

~~It was shown in many cities through
Nobody knows for the country
I do believe, that demo~~

~~For that reason~~ I do believe,
that ^{all signs are} these is the guarantee, that the
process of
democratization ~~couldn't be~~
wouldn't be ^{sway back or even} stop, because it shows
that ~~strong support of~~ ^{strong support of} democracy is going
from below, ~~then from above~~