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1. The Fixed Addiction to Utopia

RBANZ'You said in the first part of our conversation that Revolution must be "the last resort"? Would, then, the Soviet people have been justified to rise against the tyranny of Stalin?

DJILASZ Absolutely. From the moral point of view, a revolution to put down the monster Stalin would have been right and proper. Can you think of a more moral cause. with the sole exception of putting down the genocidal Hitler? --Why, then, was there no organised opposition? Professor Sidney Hook, who has given this question probably more thought than any man alive, put it poignantly (in his book "Marxism and Beyond"):

tiHitleris domestic regime was not as oppressive to the majority of his subjects as Stalin's was to the great mass of Soviet peasants and workers. Yet there were plots against Hitler and at least one failed effort. But there is no objective MILOVAN DJILAS was, until his fall from power in 1954, Vice-President of Yugoslavia, President of the Federal Parliament, and a Member of the Politburo and Central Committee. He was imprisoned under the Monarchy (1933-36), and under Tito (1956-61 and 1962-66). His publications include "The New Class" (1957), "Conversations with Stalin" (1962), "The Unperfect Society" (1969), "Tito; The Story From the Inside" (1981) and "Rise and Fall" (1985). He has published three volumes of autobiography, "Land without Justice" (1958), "M memoir of a evolutionary" (1973), and "Wartime" (1977). Milovan Djilas lives as a freelance writer-uncensored, but occasionally harassed by the police-in Belgrade. The first part of this conversation appeared in the September-October ENCOUNTER.

Between Revolution and Counter-Revolution

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Djilas on Gorbachov (11) _

MILOVAN DJILAS f9) GEORGE URBAN in Conversation

evidence of any movement directed against Stalin. . . .

Why no opposition despite the century-old traditions of revolutionary opposition to despotism?" i

DJILASI A good question, and I cannot provide a good answer. Stalin's despotism didn't coincide with the frustration and stagnation of the whole of Soviet society. The rapid pace of industrialisation, the cultural revolution and the spirit of dedication which had been inherited from Lenin. gave the Stalinist system a certain dynamism and coherence which would have made a revolution against Stalin impossible. The _ letter you quoted from Pravda (23 July 1987) is a fair sample of the spirit of the 1930s. Vasily Grossman's masterly novel Life and Fate gives an almost Tolstoyesque account of the same phenomenon. Although an uneven book, it nevertheless catches those moments in Soviet history when the duality of Soviet life was at its most conspicuous: Stalin's Terror and the concentration camps on the one hand; and, on the other, an undoubtedly inspired and heroic national effort, first to industrialise backward Russia, and then to protect it during the War.

' Vasily Grossman, Life and Fate (1985). See also, the review article by Andrei Navrosov, "The View from Vnukovo" in ENCOUNTER (December 1986).

GEORGE URBAN'S contributions to ENCOUNTER include conversations with Vladimir Bukovsky (November 1987, January 1988), Alain Besancon (May and June 1987), Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Roslow (April 1983), Daniel Bell (February 1983), W.

Averell Harriman (November 1981), and Zbigniew Brzezinski (May 1981). His previous conversation with Milovan Djilas was published in the December 1979 issue of EX-COUNTER. "Djilas on Gorbachov" is available as a pamphlet (No. 18), L120 (\$3.50). "Can the Soviet System Survive Reform?", a collection of conversations with George Urban, will be published this autumn by John Spiers Ltd.

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--Would the Romanian people, on your showing, be morally : justified to rise against the rule of the Ceauesescu clan?

DJILAS: Absolutely. Ceauesescu's is a terrible and shameful dictatorship. It is heaping indignity upon the whole people; in an even tolerably just world it should not be allowed to exist.

-You said that revolutions almost never achieve what they set out to achieve.

DJtLAS: Not quite. What I do say is that Communism as a system has shown itself to be completely unsuccessful, even though in some countries it may have accelerated the pace of popular education, industrialisation and modernisation. It is, therefore, wrong to make a revolution if a Communist system is going to be its direct or indirect result. In other instances it may not be morally wrong to make a revolution, but it is always wrong in terms of the suffering caused. The sacrifices are always too high when set against the achievements.

However, because the real world is what it is, revolutions, alike wars, will go on occurring. There is hardly a nation that hasn't its roots in a revolutionary past. The price of the Soviet seizure of power, of the Civil War and of the Revolutionary Terror was extremely high; so was that of the Yugoslav Revolution, although it was proportionately "cheaper" than the October Revolution. I cannot see how either could have been avoided.

At the back of it all is Man's, and especially Communist Man's, indefatigable preoccupation with utopia. Reflect on the resurfacing of utopia in Gorbachov's rhetoric. If you look at his (or Rzhkov's) articulations you will find the outlines of yet another "New Jerusalem" emerging: a "socialist" society supported by the gleaming electronic technology of the nuclear age.

-It'll be really new, though. The glamour of science has always been part of the dream of "scientific socialism". But earlier varieties had to make do with tractors, steel mills, canals, and hydroelectric stations.

DJILAS: Yes, but what is remarkable is that the new rulers of the Soviet Union, turning over (as they say they are) a new page in their planning methods and economic philosophy, should maintain this slavish addiction to utopianism. They realise that Stalinism, the "command economy", and the conservative bureaucracy have made the system a permanent loser vis-à-vis the variously mixed economies of the world. Yet here they are, investing their energies in yet another grand design that will prove illusory-in the fallacy of thinking that one can apply high technology and modern science to a monolithic political system and make it work as though it were a free and self-correcting mechanism.

-But isn't Gorbachov taking the system to the very borders of the market economy and building (or trying to build) a great many suspiciously un-monolithic features into it?

Djilas on Gorbachov (II) .

gadgets and the scientifiction thinking can be harnessed to the old "socialist" wagon--as though. "existing socialism" were a jet fighter with a Mach 2 capability.

ox'r GORBACHOV sooner or later have to admit that

KJS/ maintaining a social system based on Karl Marx's

analysis makes no more sense than claiming that

19th-century Darwinism should be our lodestar in zoology and biology in the year 2000?

It is a point often made by Sidney Hook- and quite recently by Deng Xiaoping's people in China. Hu Yaobang observed in November 1986:

"Marx never saw a light bulb, Engels never saw an airplane." .

Hence we cannot take their theories entirely on trust. The Soviets appear to be coming to similar conclusions. Last year Alexander Yakovlev admitted:

"Not even 70 Marxes could have foreseen in detail the future of the new society. . . ."

DJILASZ Perhaps in his heart of hearts Gorbachov realises that the Marxist conception of socialism is a museum piece. We don't know. What we do know is that he behaves as though he believes in the basic soundness of the Soviet system and its reformability through technology, renewed dedication, and the introduction of certain selective freedoms.

I sometimes wonder whether Gorbachov is reacting to Paul Milyukov's observation that, while in Western Europe technological revolutions always led to more democracy, they had the opposite effect in Russia. Certainly Gorbachov wants more "democratism" in the wake of the new technology, and if he comes anywhere close to succeeding, he will have broken the spell Milyukov remarked upon. But this is something for the distant future.

I am ready to believe that Gorbachov will impart a certain elan to the Soviet Party, and that some of his reforms will make the system marginally more efficient. But I doubt whether he will achieve a fully-fledged "restructuring" under existing conditions of "socialism". We have seen how very difficult it is in Yugoslavia, under our muchadvertised but totally inadequate "self-management system", to get private enterprise going and to lift the economy out of the trough it has occupied for most of the three last decades. We have not succeeded because we have not mounted the necessary political reforms.

It is self-evident to me that you cannot mitigate the effects of the disease of Communism as a whole by excising or diluting some of its elements. And from this follows what is, to my mind, another iron law of Communism: every economic crisis of Communist society is, in fact, a political crisis--A crisis of the system, would you say. . . ?

DJILAS: Yes, this is the present crisis in the Soviet Union.

DJILASZ He is. but his error is to imagine that the gleaming It is, in reality, not about a sluggish economy, nor about a

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my population. nor even about a corrupt civil service; but about the political system tha't is responsible for the growth and luxuriance of these characteristics.

the introduction of the self-management system to an unwilling Tito. Several decades later, Gorbachov, and the Bulgarian: as well, are following in your footsteps, ignoring the bitter lesson: of the Yugoslav experiment.

THESE ARE strong word: from a man who first suggested

DttLAS: This is so and the reason is, as I say, the Communist obsession with utopia. But it is a utopia with a difference. If the Cortimunist utopia were of the purely airy-fairy kind, it would not have survived or given the world too much to think about.

But Communist utopias combine the vision of a classless society. human fulfillment and eternal peace with cunning tactics and violent strategy, and a seemingly scientific, problem-solving vocabulary that lends their utopian imaginings a certain plausibility. The violence is i'eal--the "coming age of peace and plenty" is not. ,

This is undoubtedly a shrewd combination. Who would disapprove of freedom, equality, fraternity and peace? Who would be against Plato's benign "totalitarianism" with which the Communist vision has a certain 'affinity? The problem is that the Communist utopia cannot be put into practice without changing the nature of Man, and that requires violence.

Communism is Utopia in Power; it is the institutionalisation of violence. No economic reform, no "restructuring". no temporary freedom of discussion can change that.

-You were, yourself, not reluctant to utter utopian forecasts '72 your days as a Communist leader. as you ruefully admit in "Rise and Fall" (1985). In 1948, you declared in the Comintern journal that in ten years Yugoslavia would catch up with Great Britain in per capita production.

DttL/ts: That's why I want to see these words put on the mantelpiece of every free and intelligent person: "You must oppose Communism." It is the duty of those of us who come from the Communist movement and are familiar with the nature of the animal, to make this truth clear and relevant again to the thinking of people captivated by the new Utopianism of Gorbachov. Our efforts will not have been wasted if we can persuade the West to remain strong, and to learn the art of dealing with the political crisis of the Soviet system within its own terms of reference.

-That's where the West has been most deficient. The Soviet leaders have always had the hereticks traditional advantage of being able to worship both at their own altars and at ours.

DttLAS: Yes, and that's why it is of such great importance that Western politicians, journalists and other opinion-makers should now take the trouble to learn what exactly it is that has made the various Communist systems founder, and how the Dengs and Gorbachovs are trying to make their leaking vessels seaworthy. The struggle in the world is not about the level of armaments; it is about political advantage and victory in the international political arena. The West is poor-and what is distressing-increasingly poor at playing this game.

The advent of Gorbachov has brought with it a tremendous increase in the political sophistication and effectiveness of expressing traditional Soviet hostility to the Western democracies. Look at Gorbachov's speech to Soviet diplomats. his words to American teachers of Russian, to Western writers and intellectuals. Hardly a day passes without some nerve centre of the Western world being addressed, over the heads of Western governments, by the new Soviet leadership. The West is not paying back in kind except through its broadcasting stations, and these have their hands so stringently tied that their effectiveness, at least in the Soviet Union, is open to doubt. I can see no experts of Soviet affairs directing American or British or French foreign policy, while I can see Soviet experts of US and West European affairs. The Yakovlevs, the Dobrynins, the Falins-shaping the political and

psychological policies of the Kremlin. and to signal effect. Sooner or later Gorbachov's successes will have to induce Western governments to rethink the way in which they deal with Moscow. Why haven't Mrs Thatcher and President Mitterrand ensured that people of the calibre of Hugh Seton-Watson or Leonard Schapiro (both now late and lamented), Robert Conquest or Alain Besançon represent their countries as emissaries in Moscow or Peking?

THE OFFICIAL WESTERN conception of the USSR still rests on the assumption that the Soviet Union is a country rather than a cause. If it is a country, one deals with it on grounds of power and uses a combination of power and diplomacy to keep it at bay. If it is a cause, or a cause and a country, we don't quite know how to deal with it. The age of faith is, allegedly, behind us. We are rather shame-faced about fighting ideological battles-and also very bad at it. We have, in fact, almost completely surrendered the political field of engagement to the Soviet Union. i

DJtLAS: And yet, it would be so easy to show up the hollowness of the Communist utopias. Look at the way Mao's various utopias collapsed: the "Great Leap Forward" movement, the "Hundred Flowers" period, the Cultural Revolution. What is left of them? Poverty. starvation and abysmal backwardness which Deng's "pragmatism" is now trying to put right. Look at Khrushchev's 1961 Party programme which predicted that the Soviet Union would overtake the USA in per capita production by the year 1980, that all rents and transportation would be free! What is left of all that? A ramshackle Soviet economy and a primitive agriculture which Gorbachov is attempting to rescue as best he can. The Soviet share of world trade is a mere 4% . and Soviet foreign aid is no larger than that of Holland.

Look at the demise of the Yugoslav experiment which forced no less a person than Branko Mikulic, the Prime Minister, to admit in Politika (17 August 1987) that the "self-

the country is responsible for his country's economic
collapse. It has a foreign debt of \$23 billion;
inflation is running at an annual rate of over 150%; our loss-
making firms are now being allowed to go bankrupt, mauling
thousands of workers unemployed; and there are serious
strikes in the country.

Every variety of Communism that has been put to the
test has ended in economic bankruptcy. That Mikhail Gorbachev's
remedies for the Soviet system sound like nothing
so much as the nostrums of Margaret Thatcher, contains
one message to the world about the failed utopia of Marx-
ism-Leninism. Another lesson, on the doubtful blessings
of central planning and nationalisation, should be addressed
to the West European Left. If Soviet leaders are now being
forced to embark on the "privatisation" of the economy, can
the West European Left cogently insist that socialism must
mean more collective ownership?

Your castigation of the utopian element in Communism has,
it seems to me, certain weaknesses. If Communism is a univer-
sal ideology, which it is, I cannot see how it could do without
a coherent package of long-term goals as a magnet to attract
followers. No one in the Communist movement would expect
a classless society and universal plenty to be attained easily, or
perhaps to be attained at all. But a level-headed Communist
would probably argue (as, for example, Leszek Kolakowski
did in his early Marxist phase) that the utopian element is an es-
sential part of all radical thinking. Without it, no revolutionary
movement could take off or keep flying, Melvin J. Lasky - no
supporter of utopia: or revolutions - wrote a big book about
those radical thinkers who believed that "the noble dream and
the great deed have no real effective life without each other."²
One need not be a Communist to believe this to be true. All
idealists: of whatever political colour would subscribe to it.
Djilas: Idealism is one thing; the institutionalised mendacity
with which your ideals are turned upside down and the whole
of reality is redefined, is quite another. If you went down the
list of all the things Communist leaders have offered in their
various speeches and programmes, and wrote them down
in one column on a sheet of paper under the heading of
"Pledges", and then made up a second column under the
heading of "Facts", you would merely have to write "the con-
trary" after each of the pledges to get the second column
right. i

² Utopia and Revolution (1976). p. X.

Djilas on Gorbachov (II)

For example: the Communists offered a classless society
but produced a privilege-ridden society and a class of mono-
polistic power-holders. They promised scientific efficiency
but produced dismal backwardness and inefficiency. They
promised economic plenty but created conditions that would
shame some Third-World republics. They promised peace
and the elimination of the conflict of interests among "social-
ist" countries but produced the Sino-Soviet conflict, war be-
tween Viet Nam and Cambodia, the occupation of Hungary
and Czechoslovakia and the diabolisation of Yugoslavia.
They repudiated, with Marx, the "cult of the personality" but
produced in Mao, Stalin, Kim Il Sung, Ceausescu, and other
tyrants, the most monstrous cults of the personality history
has known. I could go on. You would, I should imagine,
agree that these crass repudiations of the Communist power-
holders' solemn pledges rob their utopia of any virtue it may
have possessed - if indeed it did possess any - in the first
place.

THE FACTS THAT are now coming to light about the Soviet
system confirm, point by point, what Western critics
have been saying about it - and have been derided for
saying - for the last 40 years.

I noticed with some amusement that a Yugoslav Communist,
disillusioned by the performance of his Party, returned his
Party card and decided to sue the Party on grounds not very
different from the examples you have just given. He said he

had joined the Party and had been paying his membership fees for a great many years on the understanding that the Party would give him socialism-cheap housing, free health care; a decent standard of living, an inflation-free economy, full employment, and so on. But as the Party could supply none of these elements of the socialism he had joined it for, there was a breach of contract and he wanted his money back. The man had a nerve-but also a great deal of natural justice on his side.

DJILASI Yes. Communism is not only the kind of science-lined utopia we know about; it is a utopia that can only exist as utopia. Communism (or "socialism") as a realistic blueprint for running human society is nonsense and dangerous nonsense at that. 70 years of Communist history make it incumbent upon us to record this simple conclusion as a fact and a warning.

-The history of ideas is replete with utopias of one kind or another. Those that were put into practice usually caused

(eh We have little reason to

. stl . n asked to meet a group of Leftist stu-
-, vl.0.1 University. The unrest on American cam-
. _ m, ,4de high. The students assured me that within
. " i ",5 me USA would be "soualist . American socml-
. four lth): said, would of course be different_tt would be a
jxhoped kind of socialism. without censorship. without
repression. without a bankrupt economy, and so on. This put
me on my guard.

"I don't really believe that the USA will be socialist by
1972". I said. "In any case, I very much hope that it will not
be." 7

"How can you say that'l, the students asked.

"Because", I answered, "a socialist America would bethe
greatest calamity for the future of mankind. America is a rich
and advanced country, and it has the means and the skills to
build what would appear to be a working model of tsocialism'.
If it didja socialist USA would send a false message to the
test of the world that there is such a thing as good and work-
able socialism. whereas there isn't."

2. I f Gorbachov F alls

OWEVER you and I

may see the long-term

chances of a socialist

utopia, Gorbachov seems to

be determined to bring it about

through modernisation, high

technology and the motivation

of his human resources. Given

the enormous natural wealth of the Soviet Union and a long-

suffering population, it would be extraordinary if he failed

completely. We have to assume that, short of a sudden palace

revolution (which is by no means impossible), Gorbachov

will make some slow and painful progress. Is it in our interest

that he should?

DJILAS: Before I answer your question, let me say that Gor-
bachov has so far tackled only the foothills of the mountain
range he has to climb. There has been much scrmonising. cri-
ticism, encouragement and some limited legislation-none
of which has yet begun to bite. His difficulties will begin in
three or four years from now when decentralisation, privat-
isation and self-management will confront him with the pain-
ful fact that none of these reforms can be made really effec-
tive without revamping the political profile of Soviet society.
That is the expen'ence we have had in Yugoslavia and that is
what the Hungarian Communists, too, are now discovering to
their dismay. Up will go the demand for political pluralism.

-To welleschooled Marxists this should not come as a sur-
prise. Some of Gorbachov's economic advisors are already

rge Urban & Milovan Djilas

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saying that "social relations" will have to be brought into har-
mony with "production relations". In plain language this
means: you cannot have a free and productive-economy with-
out political pluralism.

DJILAS: Yes. and this is going to cause trouble, because while
members of the Soviet apparat may well be forced, lured or
cajoled into supporting reforms for a more productive eco-
nomy, they cannot be lured or cajoled into underwriting the
dissolution of the Party and the destruction of their own jobs
and security. Economic reform without political pluralisation
will bankrupt the system. Political pluralisation, on the other
hand. would end the system. Gorbachov and his successors
will no doubt choose the former. The Soviet system is econo-
mically bankrupt-perhaps after perestroika it will be slightly
less bankrupt. But I cannot see how they could subscribe to
political pluralism without giving up their title to rule.

-What you are saying again is that Gorbachov is a transitory
phenomenon. . . .

Dnms: Yes, I am. He may well be ousted from power when

the full implications of his reforms dawn upon the hatdliners.

Or he may, seeing the opposition. relinquish power as he once hinted that he might. The setbacks he suffered in the Yeltsin affair and on Armenia are tips of the iceberg. Gorbachov could become a great figure in history if he had the good fortune to be toppled tight now-or if, as I say. he gave up in despair. Now he is seen as a man of clear vision. a man of critical spirit, a man unafraid of the Soviet past, a man of un-Soviet language, a man who has seen what's wrong with the system and has tn'ed to do something radical about it. A ' few years from now his zeal will drown in the mite of Russian life and the unredeemable contradictions of the Soviet system. Today is Gorbachov's finest hour; whatever comes next will be an anticlimax.

That brings me to your question. A greatly strengthened Soviet system would, of course, not be in the interests of world freedom. But that strengthening of the system is, in my judgment, not going to happen overnight, if it is going to happen at all.

-Aren't we writing off the power and elasticity of the system as it is in too cavalier a manner? I would have thought a conservative but unblinkered man of the apparat could make a good case for sticking out against Gorbachev.

"We lifted, under Stalin, a backward Asiatic economy into the 20th century (he would argue). Yes, we were using repression. Yes, we herded manpower reserves from the villages to the factories. Yes, we kept the standard of living low-but look at our results! We have won a terrible war, we have an empire, we are a superpower equal in strength to the USA. Our system-whether feared or admired-is spreading in the world, and the Russian nation is enjoying its long-delayed rendezvous with History. Why risk all that with your reforms? If we need reforms, as we undoubtedly do, why not proceed slowly and keep them strictly within the confines of the system? The One-Party state and the

command economy have a lot of life left in them. They are our way of doing things."

DJILA52 That kind of thinking might have made sense-if you were willing to pay the price-in the 1930s. In the 1990s, modernisation means educating and employing highly skilled manpower in small and self-managed units. The post-Industrial revolution is based on knowledge, individual initiative and a high sense of personal responsibility. None of these things can be attained by central control, much less repression. The methods, therefore, that helped the Soviet Union to "take off" as an industrialised power cannot succeed in turning it, into a post-Industrial power.

For example, the use of the Eomputer-to point to the most obvious obstacle to conservatism of the sort you _ have depicted-militates against any form of censorship and promotes, by its very nature, the dissemination of information. Not only that, but the whole social base of socialism, Soviet style.(and, in fact, any contemporary style), has begun to vanish. The traditional working class is dwindling, and has already dwindled to the extent that in Germany and Britain, for example, it can no longer hope to secure the election of socialist governments even if the whole working class voted socialist, which it never does. SOViet society, if it is to enter the post-Industrial age, is bound to follow suit. The state of the proletariat is destined to wither because there will not be enough proletarians left to sustain even that, false, sense of legitimacy which the Soviet state bestowed on itself through Marx and Lenin. ,

Gorbachov's conservative Soviet opponents do not, therefore, have a strong case. That doesn't mean to say that they may not get the better of him in the short run; but because the reforms of Gorbachov will have to be carried out sooner or later, with or without Gorbachov, the conservative/Stalinist argument is bound to be a loser-unless, of course, the Soviet apparat decides that modernisation is not for them and that I they'd rather face the dangers of stagnation than the risks of perestroika.

sion almost as self-n'ghteous and, indeed, arrogant about the virtues of their system as the Soviet establishment is about its own? We had it self-evident that Soviet society should want what we want-that it should want to follow our curve of development from the supremacy of the Church or the aristocracy or an absolute monarch, to enlightenment, pluralism, liberalism, democracy and participation. But what if the Russian psyche is different? What if the Russian apparat and the people, too, should genuinely feel that the Soviet system, good or bad, is their way of doing things and that they don't want to be taught democracy by foreigners? We find it almost unimaginable that this should be so. Yet there are signs on every page of Soviet (as well, of course, as Russian) history that Paternalism, respect for Authority, even Regimentation are well-accepted features of Russian life and political culture. They express the ethos of the majority. Can democrats quarrel with that?

SREN'T DEMOCRATS of the West-European liberal persuasion
Djilas on Gorbachov (II)

DJILAS: This is a tricky question. It could be turned around to read in a manner many Russians would regard as offensive, and indeed some have done so. It could be made to read:

"Democracy is for the culturally superior' nations of the West. The Russians are used to serfdom of one kind or another. The Soviet system, or perhaps some improved variety of the Soviet system, suits them rather well. No need to worry too much about their freedom, for they don't seem to be unduly agitated by the lack of it."

I do not deny that Russian reactions are, for whatever historical and cultural reasons, different from French or British reactions. But given time and political self-education, I don't think the differences are here to stay. You are, of course, right to suggest that the indiscriminate projection of Western values on to other cultures is a sign of Western conceit and

parochialism and is politically dangerous. The Americans have been the worst offenders.

-But there are, surely, lessons to be learnt from the observable facts. Gorbachov's reforms are proceeding only very slowly and in the teeth of both bureaucratic and popular opposition; popular "extra-mural" organisations such as "Pamyat" are in hot pursuit of Russian national traditions rather than civicfreedom,- the intellectual: who stand up for human rights are a small group and are looked upon with incomprehension, if not hostility, by the generalpublic.

An American historian once told me that although he distrusted national stereotypes, he felt there was a sense in which the French in the Napoleonic period had a real liking, as a nation, for military service. Would it be too far-fetched to _ suggest, he asked, that the Russian people have developed, in the second half of the 20th century, a high degree of tolerance for an all-providing, egalitarian nanny-state?

DnLAS: Every leadership in the Soviet Union, and indeed all Russian governments under the Czars, was aware and afraid of the "dark Russian'masses". Chaos and anarchy are never far beneath the surface of Russian tranquillity. If the purpose of your questioning is to show that it would be more difficult to install democracy in Moscow than, shall we say, in Prague ---I would agree because we cannot close our eyes to the facts of history. But if you question the suitability and ripeness of the Russian people to share the benefits-and n'sks_of liberal democracy, then I cannot agree with you. The Russians are endowed with the same human characteristics as any Italian or Swede. They do not enjoy the knout any more than you and I do, and we are doing ourselves, and them, no good by harping on the theme of uOh, but the Russians are different. . . ." That is the easy and irresponsible way out of a difficult, but challenging, skein of problems.

-Gorbachov is now trying to educate the Russian people in the ways of freedom and tolerance. He is doing it, in true Russian fashion, from above. Some think he is doing it too slowly, others that he is reckless and going too fast.

DJILASZ He is going at the tight speed in my opinion. It is the speed I would take if I were in his position. His problems are immense. A few days ago I read an article by one of the

s, in tch the paint was made that freedom. the Soviet press was launched 3,, — — "ed kind of fault-finding rnissxon, and that it "mtg too many "anti-heroes". ThisI it was argued, was 'rong. The "duty" of the press was not to indulge in dramatic feats of criticism but to remove the woodworm from Sovxet society. Soviet journalists (it said) tnuist concentrate on creat- ing a sane moral climate and the right conditions for a more productive economy.

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-Similar views were expressed by a number of conservative speakers at the 19th Party Conference-Y. V. Bondarev of the RSFSR Writers' Union, for example, who observed that a nihilistic, "immoralpress cannot teach morality to others". DJILASI These are typical manifestations of the limits of "openness". The idea that the press has a "duty" is clearly a remnant of Stalin and Lenin. At the same time, the media do enjoy some, as yet undefined, freedom which certainly ex! tends to everything classified as 'inegative", but not to the social order as a whole. Gorbachovis freedom, while'ilaudable for what it is. is a guided freedom, based on the assumption that there is (as he often says) such a thing as "socialist moral- ity't which the freedom he is unleashing must promote. This is most unsatisfactory. The whole point about morality is that it can be neither a "socialist" nor a "capitalist" nor a Buddhist morality. It can, by the very nature of the concept, only be Morality without any kind of a coefficient.

-Again, you have come a long way from believing with Lenin that morality is what is good for the revolution and the pro- Ietariat.

DnLAs: I have. The same goes for Gorbachov's notion of democracy and "democratisation". You either have demo- cracy which means rule by the people and therefore unres- tricted pluralism, or no democracy. Under Gorbachov's tran- sitional system there is a kind of guided democracy which is too guided to satisfy the real reformers and too democratic to satisfy the conservatives. He is on slippery ground.

HE CONFUSION is genuine and gives us a fascinating pic- ture of what happens to a prisoner who, having spent years behind bars, is suddenly told that he is free but must now look after himself. Such men are known to have col- lapsed under the strain-or asked to be taken back into the reassuring community of prison life.

To match your quotation from "Pravda", I have one from "Izvestia" in which the complaint is made that the average reader does not know what to make of really free journalism. Our people, the article says, are accustomed to thinking that whatever a journalist writes in his paper is inspired by Author- ity. Now we are told that this is no longer so, that he may very well represent neither Gorbachov, nor the Politburo, nor even the local Soviet-but only himself. How can people understand

3 Konuomolskaya Pravda. 21 April 1988.

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this? Whom does a journalist represent if he represents no one but himself? I found this article an incomparable introduction to the hazards of liberty; it would take the pen of a Dostoevsky to depict its full impact on the souls of people unprepared for V it.

DJILAS: This exemplifies one of the most baneful aspects of the heritage of totalitarianism. It isnit true that the Soviet public have been ill-informed about what goes on in Soviet society. The truth is different and more depressing. The Soviet people have never felt free to say "Here is :vhat I know-and here is what I conclude from that knowledge". No. they put their information aside and wait to hear what Authority expects them to believe.

-We saw a wondetful example of this in March 1988. Nina

Andreyeva's by now celebrated attack on the Gorbachov reforms appeared in "Sovietskaya Rossiya" on 13 March 1988; the counter-blast from "Pravda" did not come out until 5 April 1988. There was a three-week vacuum in the central direction of public opinion. The man in the street did not know which way to salute. Glasnost was placing too heavy a burden on him. Here is how one Ruslan Kozlov saw his, and the country's, dilemma: - '

iii I am ashamed to admit it today, but on 13 March I took the Win Andreyevaisl anti-restructuring stance to be the official viewpoint shared by the countryis political leadership. . . . I was not the only person who thought that way. . . . What happened during those Ithree weeks of stagnation'? Was there perhaps a succession of party and Komsomol meetings which angrily rebuked those committed to restoring the old iorderi in which servility and misrepresentation prevailed? No. Quite the reverse-in Lenin-grad, for instance, conferences were organised which were clearly in support of N. Andreyevais article. One was even shown on television. . . .' The situation is undoubtedly much easier for us now-the iPravdaI article convincingly and concretely guaranteed the Party leadershipIs loyalty to the course of expanding glasnost and democratisa-tion. . . ."3

DJILASZ Yes, the successful, or near-successful brainwashing of the Soviet public is one of those otherwise not very numerous features of the Orwellian nightmare that has actually come true. I do not envy Gorbachov his job.

-It is increasingly clear that the Gorbachov reforms require the complete transformation. of Soviet thinking and manners in individuals as much as in institutions. Peresttoika is assuming more and more the characteristics of moral-rearmament, or, if you like, of a Reformation of the Martin Luther type, if we look upon Stalinist Moscow as the impure Papacy. Gorbachov's unceasing calls to the individual citizen to "re-structure himself", and his campaign against what one might call State indulgences (i.e. corruption), point to an analogy. DJILASZ If that is so, Gorbachov might do worse than begin with the rehabiilitation_resurrection he cannot guarantee-

at those who have been cruelly wronged by an erring POPC-
He really must have the Red Army generals of the 1938 show
trials politically rehabilitated. He must rehabilitate Bukharin
(he has partially done this already) and all the other Old
Bolsheviks Above all. he must see to it that Trotsky is re-
stored to his rightful place in the Soviet pantheon as an his-
toric revolutionary leader. organiser, and tribune. This is not
to say that one Bolshevik faction or another would have done
much better; it is the theory that is grievously mistaken, and
the ruinous practice follows suit. But no history should be
tampered with, distorted, censored.

-How should or would all that affect the client states in East
and Central Europe?

DJILAS: It would and should have its repercussions. How-
ever. as I said earlier, these should not lead to revolutionary
upheavals if Gorbachov's plans are not thwarted.

-Should it mean, for example, the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy
and . Pd! Maleter, a: Hungarian dissident-and indeed the
Hungarian nation-increasingly demand?

DnLAS: It should, it absolutely should. Now that Janos Kadar
has retired from the exercise of real power and the members
of the new Hungarian leadership have no personal responsi-
bility for the suppression of the Unp'sing, the way should be
open for the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy and the 400 :people
hanged by the Kadar authorities in the 1957-59 period. Kadar
was personally responsible for the deception that led to Imre
Nagy's arrest, and he must have acquiesced in his execution.

-Khrushchev, of course, always protested, while supporting
the executions, that the execution of Imre Nagy and his associ-
ates was something the Hungarians had ordered-and said so,
for example, to Ambassador Micunovic.

Dnuts: Imre Nagy and his friends were put to death on
Moscow's orders and Kadar is co-responsible because he
failed to intervene. Mind you, Kadar was a Soviet puppet
at the time. He had come to power at the point of Soviet
bayonets and with Soviet gunst He had, nevertheless, enough
influence as one of Khrushchev's favourite comrades to save
the lives of Nagy and his associates if he had really wanted to.
Nagy's execution was, incidentally, one of Khrushchev's
great mistakes-a product of the Soviet leadership's fresh
suspicions of Tito. But Kadar made a miraculous recovery;
the former Quisling apparently had a change of heart and
was, for two decades, generally seen in Hungary as the guar-
antor of the country's relative freedom and economic well-
being. He was highly esteemed in Yugoslavia too, and the
general view was that he was a patriotic Hungarian more than
a Communist.

by Communist standards. Arrested and tortured under
deosi, he was instrumental in securing a confession
from L&szlo Rajk on the understanding that Rajk's life would
B UT THE SHARP turns in his career are exceptional even
Djilas on Gorbachov (11)

be spared. It wasn't. A minister in Imre Nagy's 1956 revolu-
tionary government, he betrayed Nagy, deserted the Revolu-
tion and returned as head of a Quisling government. Having
settled accounts with the I 956 revolutionaries with great brutal-
ity, he proceeded to seek national reconciliation by his "lib-
eral" policies. in his old age he has been spared the need to
make yet another volte-face because, in March 1988, he was re-
moved from power. I should not like to be privy to Jdnos
Kdddr's conscience.

DJILAS: The careers of Nagy and Kadar are typiEal of the laws
of feudal society. If a feudal baron rebels against his King, or
some provincial governor against the Sultan. he is put down
as Imre Nagy was. If he falls in line. he is rewarded and some-
times given a measure of freedomas Kadar was-provided
that the King'srule is not endangered. If he becomes a hin-
drance or a nuisance, he is retired. The Soviet empire is en-
tirely of that nature. We have had plenty of experience of it
and should have no illusions about it.

3. End ofim Empire;

Rebirth of the Russian Nation

SUPPOSE COMMUNIST societies as we have known - them gradually faded away under the pressure of modernisation or were brought down under less peaceful conditions-what sort of new "governing themes" would the Russian, Polish, Romanian and the other Central and East European nations be most likely to embrace?

DJILASZ You are assuming that societies need "governing themes". I'm not so sure, but I can't see what you are driving at. You are asking: what is going to replace the utopian element, for example, in Russian thinking? Well, the new governing theme will have to be something more deeply rooted in the popular psyche than the egalitarian creed of Communism; and my candidate for that theme is a profound form of patriotism (not Nationalism) based on the loving care of national culture and especially language.

This theme is, in fact, already forming under the surface in every Communist country. In Yugoslavia, for example, people like the distinguished poet Matija Beckovic (who happens to be a close personal friend) connect their fundamental criticism of the Communist system to a rediscovery of the national past. Dobrica Cosic, an excellent Serbian writer, has written a four-volume novel about the role of the Serb nation in the First World War. . . . Solzhenitsyn is trying to retrieve the Russian past in his own spectacular way, so is Valentin Rasputin. So are, each in their own way, the Armenians, Kazakhs, Estonians, Latvians and Ukrainians. A second

meme will be the solidarity of human beings with their fellow men and women-the better off with the poor, and nation with nation. This will not be "socialism", much less doctrine socialism. It will focus on the precariousness and preciousness of life on this planet, for no one has yet hit upon a wondrous philosophy than the maintenance of life in all its forms. Religious leaders, philosophers and ideologues have all sought to give us a variety of answers to our quest for the meaning of life. yet their nostrums tend to inflict more suffering than they manage to relieve. After the horrendous trials of Communism and Nazism, perhaps we ought to be content with the simple truth that the purpose and meaning of life is life-life loyally rooted in a nation, and conducted with a maximum sense of solidarity towards our fellow creatures, whether walking on two legs or four.

-Wouldn't you have condemned all this in your earlier life as feeble "bourgeois humanitarianism"?

DJILAS: Yes. I would-but we do learn from our mistakes and history. don't we? What I'm now suggesting is neither a bourgeois nor an anti-bourgeois philosophy, but a humane answer to human problems.

-What we have here is a philosophy of life which is patriotic without being nationalistic, socially responsible without being socialist, and respectful of human rights and those of all creation without calling itself Christian. I can hear some critics murmuring that it smacks too much of a general "do-goodism" to attract robust nations such as the Russians, Poles or Serbs.

DJILAS: I don't think that's fair. If and when it comes to the post-Communist dispensation, every people or nation will have to find its own ideology" based on the reality of the Washington D.C.

On 15 APRIL 1986, when U.S. bombers gave a permanent headache to Libyans Moammar Gadhafi, Bill Casey brought a group of non-CIA economists in to see the President. As bombs fell on Tripoli, statistics about the Soviet economy rained on Ronald Reagan.

"What does all this mean?" he asked as the hour long presentation ended.

IT MEANT. the outside consultants explained, that the conventional wisdom about the Soviet Union's strength was wrong. Instead of steadily growing, production had been stagnant for years.

This meant further that the new leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, would soon be faced with an internal crisis. He would have to shake up the economic system radically to force new growth, or accept a reduction in what was becoming an unsustainable level of military spending. Soviet economic weakness could profoundly affect arms talks and help this nice man

nation. It would then be up to each to decide what collective personality it would want to assume. In Yugoslavia. for example, the Slovenes would undoubtedly want to pick up their old ties with Central Europe, the Serbs might (or might not) want to emphasise their own strong ties with West European culture, and so on.

-Are you, in fact, assuming the disintegration of Yugoslavia? If Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Macedonians are all to be free to cultivate and celebrate their own national identity. . . .

DJILAS: . . . which they absolutely must be. . . .

- . . . , then Yugoslavia is most unlikely to survive as a single state? ,

DJILAS: The assertion of national identity should not necessarily mean hostility among these nations. They may very

well decide to maintain the present structures, or replace them with new ones. They will. however, fully assume their national personalities, as some of them are already doing. -In the Soviet Union, then, you would envisage the emergence of strong Ukranian, Estonian, Latvian, Uzbek,- and Armen. ian calls for national "ideologies". Would that hot mean separatism at the end of the day? '

DJILASZ Yes, it would, and it is, as we have seen, already under way, though not as noticeably as in Yugoslavia. But it would also mean the emancipation of the Russian nation from the present (and often unwillingly borne) burdens of empire. i-We are now talking about the break-up of the Soviet Union, aren't we?

the maintenance of the empire from Afghanistan to Cuba. The President wanted to know what the effect of this new interpretation would be on his policy planners.

"Theytll say, Help this nice man!", replied one of the economists. Mr Reagan nodded: "I know, the Genscher line." He was referring to the "Ostpolitik" urgings of West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who is eager to finance the revival of Moscowls trade.

THAT WAS JUST 1W0 YEARS AGO, when Mr Reagan resided over an administration split between Defense- IA- NS C hard-liners and the accommodationists at State.

UNFORwNA'rELY, THE uGtantsc'ruatz LINE" has taken hold in the Reagan administration; all the hard-liners have been routed. Secretary of State George Shultz has just agreed to link START to "star wars", a huge concession. Although both superpowers have sold the worldis media on the seeming impossibility of a START treaty at the summit, the fix is in for a rush to sign in Moscow.

The Russians are exploiting Mr Reaganls yearning for a blaze of glory. The West is failing to exploit the urgency of the Russians' need to catch their breath.

William Safire

in the NEW YORK TIMES

JU " Djilas on Gorbachov (11)

DJILAS: We are talking about the natural expiry of an unnatural and tyrannical regime which is bound to come. as surely as the British and French Empires had to face their demise when the time was ripe. The Russian people would benefit the most. They would gain a free and more prosperous life and yet remain, undoubtedly, a great nation. -

You see. the Communist system has forced the Russian people into a state of sulking introspection which seeks outlets in xenophobia, petulant demonstrations of national superiority-or, at the opposite end, maudlin admissions of national inferiority. I firmly believe that a reduced but self-confident. opened-up democratic Russian state would induce much less brooding in the Russian people and make them a happier race, to the extent that Russians can be happy. Imagine what it would mean for free men and women everywhere to see this last bastion of universal unfreedom go the way of all tyrannies!

--Gorbachov and the Politburo must have conducted a very Moscow

FROM THE FIRST days of reconstruction and glasnost", voices began to be raised, at first as masked hints and then more clearly, at the perceived danger in "open discussions". They saw in it nothing more nor less than the undermining of the foundations of Socialism and the loss of principles" and the "gains of the epoch". . . . Of course, everyone is entitled to his opinion. And in this the need arises to speak about it, without beating about the bush.

I will begin with the things familiar to me, the things I have learnt in the course of my life. Once I happened to have a particular conversation with my countrymen. I went to my ail (encampment) to attend the funeral of the last of my father's sisters. At the funeral repast a conversation began over a cup of tea. As usual, it was about this and that, about Czars and Wise Men, including Stalin. And then one of the old men told us an interesting fable, an anecdote of a didactic nature.

"STALIN gathered his close comrades-in-arms and said: You rack your brains over the question of how to rule the people so that all of them, the whole lot to the last one under the sun, will look into my eyes. If I blink-everyone will blink, if I open my eyes-everyone will open his eyes, so that I will be a living god to all of them, because it was said long ago: The Czar is not a god, but none the less he is not less important than God. I am going to teach you now how to treat the people. '

So HE ORDERED a chicken to be brought to him. He plucked that chicken alive in full view of all of them, down to the last feather, to the red flesh, so to speak. Only the This is an excerpt from an article by CHINGIZ AYTMATOV recently published in "Sovietskaya Kirgiziya" (May 1988), entitled "Are The Foundations Undermined?"

A Fable about Stalin

thorough assessment of the world "correlation of forces" before embarking on perestroika. They must have come to the unsurprising conclusion that the West was not threatening to make war on them and that it was, therefore, safe to launch the reform movement. As the Soviet Union is preoccupied with putting its house in order and diverting, or hoping to divert, resources from the military, is it your judgment that the West need not fear Soviet expansionism as long, at least. as the reform-movement lasts?

DJILASZ Yes, indeed. If "restructuring" is to be seriously pursued. which it is, the Soviet Union will have neither the will nor the energy to embark on expansionist policies. But the West, and the Americans in particular, always misunderstood V

the nature of the Soviet threat. It has never been just. or even predominantly, a military threat, though it has been that too. The threat has always been political and psychological, and it is on that front that the Western world is in urgent need of rearming itself. I keep coming back to this point because comb was left on the head of the former feathered creature. Wow you watch', he said, and released the plucked chicken. The chicken should have run away-in any direction. But the chicken would not go anywhere. It could not endure the sun, and it was cold in the shade. So the poor creature clung to Stalin's boots. The leader threw a handful of grain to the chicken, and it followed him everywhere; otherwise it would perish of hunger, that was clear.

"This is the way to rule the people, Stalin said in a didactic tone."

THEN A HUSH DESCENDED, I remember. That was an old man's fable, nothing else. But the people present were frankly delighted with it, flicking their tongues and snapping their fingers, obviously finding in this some striking analogies for themselves. Just imagine what can happen in life. . . . And what foresight Stalin had! What a thing he thought up! He was a Padishah over all the Shahs, that you cannot deny. And that chicken_clever, wasn't it? . . . However, one of the people in our group made a remark which gave an impetus to the further conversation, whose nature was far from anecdotal.

"ALL THIS IS TRUE, though it is put as a fable", one of them said, shaking his head. "They started dispossessing us Kulaks-so that we would resemble that chicken. What other purpose was there for breaking our wings? . . . " Struck by pestilence and drought, persecuted and dispossessed, people were moving en masse from Kazakhstan. They were trying to sell little children and young girls for a crust of bread, as they knew that they would perish in that hell anyway. Whole graveyards appeared on the sides of the roads. All this suddenly came to the mind of the people gathered there, prompted by the remark. And Stalin was the main protagonist in all those disasters_as if he were the troublemaker rather than the leader of the greatest revolutionary party, which had declared the happiness of working people as its goal. . . .

Chingiz Ayzmatov

it can never be stressed enough Gorbachov and his friends are able propagandists. Note how brilliantly they have turned the "Zero- -option" affair to their advantage. If I were the President of the USA. I would continue to worry about the propaganda fall-out of my summit-conferences with Gorbachov.

_When you say that the Soviet bloc expects no military threat from the West, or NATO from the East, are you putting, tacitly at least, an equation mark between the two alliances?

DJILASI In one sense only. The Kremlin's inclination, indeed its ability, to be warlike in the foreseeable future is limited by the likely behaviour of Moscow's client states in Eastern Europe. America's inclination to be warlike is limited by the likely behaviour of its Allies in Western Europe. The Russians will not risk aggression because they realise that they could not count on the Poles, Czechs, East Germans and Hungarians, except as sources of destabilisation. The Americans, on the other hand, will avoid taking risks, partly because they are, as a liberal democracy, extremely unwarlike. and also because they would not be able to carry the West European countries with them except in a dramatically clear-cut case of Soviet aggression on West European soil. This is very disheartening because it betrays a lack of moral fibre, a loss of global purpose and a creeping sense of neutralism in once-powerful West Europe; but it is a fact of life in 1988.

--For one reason or another, peace is, then, assured and we can expect Gorbachov's "revolution-within-the-revolution" to go ahead?

Dnus: Yes, I think we probably can, but the political struggle goes on: and it is with that in mind that the whole question of Arms Control has to be considered.

Arms Control is about political control; it is about the decoupling of Europe from America and especially the neutralisation of Germany. An INF-free Western Europe facing a conventionally superior Kremlin will mean a weaker Europe
George Urban & Milovan Djilas 31

and a stronger USSR. It is, as I say, the political dimension of this weakening that the West should worry about. It is possible to redress an imbalance in nuclear arms. But the perception that the Soviet system has changed into something other than what it is, and is no longer a threat to the liberal democracies, is much more difficult to erase once it has got hold of the Western imagination. Mikhail Gorbachov is doing his best that it should.

democracies-that German politicians should lift their sights above the next Lander elections, American Presidents above their ratings in next week's polls, and Frenchmen above their willingness to flog to the bones of the last German Grenadier?

! RE you succeeds that democracies should cease to be

DJILAS: In a sense, yes, I am. We cannot, of course, fine-tune what is not fine-tunable; but the West should be able to co-ordinate enough of its interests to prevent NATO from degenerating into a suicide pact.

You must remember one thing: the Soviet Union is now talking to us from a position of great and openly admitted weakness. It is reaping the rewards of 70 years of economic mismanagement and the squandering of its human resources. It is trying under Gorbachev, to shed its siege- mentality but cannot do so as long as it feels itself to be under Western pressure in terms of space defence arms technology and the post-Industrial revolution. It wants the West to take the pressure off the Soviet system.

It is for the West to say Yes or No to that request. We should, in my considered opinion, not accede to it unless the Soviet state and the Communist Party provide a whole string of political guarantees, of the most tangible and enforceable kind, that international civil war, which they declared on the rest of the world in 1917, has ceased to be their objective. Seventy years after the Bolshevik Revolution it's not we who are the supplicants_it is the Kremlin.

Q I988 by George Urban and Milovan DjilaJ
Places, Everyone
Our hero strolls into his oftice.
He is late.
His red-faced boss follows him
and makes sarcastic remarks:
"It was good of you to grace us
with your presence-
we aren t lnconvenlenc1ng you_are we?"
The hero smiles hugely, turns,
and with a mighty swipe
rids his desk of invoices, orders,
telephones blotters papertrays,
executive toy and name- plaque
He retrieves his Chicago Cubs Baseball Cap
and, without a word. retires.
That's the show biz version.
The version on Monroe Street
is a smidgen more pedestrian.
If we take the scene up from "are we?"
Joe Employee sits down at his desk.
humbly checks his appointment diary,
sees three clients, dictates nine letters,
attends a strategy meeting,
and hopes his misdemeanour
doesnit ruin his chances of promotion.
Repeat this sentence for forty years.
Print THE END in capitals.
julie O,Callaghan