

Retrospectives at the Gorbachev Foundation

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One of the greatest politicians of the twentieth century, Charles de Gaulle, said after analyzing the results of May 1968 events in Paris that we live during an epoch when everybody wants changes, but usually without realizing precisely what kind. This need for changes and transformations is felt, expressed, and brought to reality by leaders: either reformists or revolutionaries. Mikhail Sergeevich, you, without a doubt, are an outstanding leader of the twentieth century who has changed the face and course of events in the contemporary world. Even your enemies and people hostile to you, who take advantage of every possibility to curse you, admit that.

I would like to ask you a question: What do you consider yourself to be? Reformist or revolutionary?

Now, ten years later, after everything that took place and happened, are you happy about everything you started in April of 1985?

The term *perestroika* is accepted and interpreted now in a different way. And the first person who should be glad and happy with this difference of ideas and expression will be you, Mikhail Sergeevich. The best definition I ever heard of the meaning and essence of *perestroika* was the one given by an intelligent man whom I met by accident two years ago. In my opinion, his description was surprisingly precise and bright: "Gorbachev took the muzzle off the country, that's all about it." And I would like to add that he took the collar off as well.

We definitely underestimate everything that happened in April 1985. It's only now that everybody became brave, courageous, and far-sighted. Look, for example, how resolute Boris Yeltsin became—look how he dismantled the Soviet Union, promised everyone as much sovereignty as one would be able to swallow; look how he attacked the Parliament with tanks, look at the kind of slaughter he made in Chechnya. And where would he be and what would he do now if Gorbachev had not started *perestroika* in 1985? Almost for sure, he would still be the secretary of Party Committee of Sverdlovsk oblast or if he were promoted he would have become one of the secretaries of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In connection with this, I would like to ask you, Mikhail Sergeevich: now that your name is constantly pronounced and tied to the name of Yeltsin, and it is said that Yeltsin finished what Gorbachev began, to what extent is it true, if it is true at all?

Mikhail S. Gorbachev

The easiest question: Were the reforms necessary? Common people just say: "Mikhail Sergeevich, you initiated the reforms. We trusted you. Just perhaps, were they not necessary? We live a lot worse than before." This is a human, true-life question.

I'll answer sincerely: to me, a person dedicated to active policy during forty years, the question is clear.

I knew our system from within, and I—as a person—realized the necessity of changes long ago. The higher I was climbing along the *nomenklatura* hierarchy, the career ladder, the stronger this conviction

became. When I was young, I faced many problems, but then I thought that I was simply unable to understand and solve many of them, that there were many people, institutions, and organizations that could solve them.

Then I began to form part of these organizations myself—first at the regional level as a member of the Central Committee, the first secretary of the enormous territory with everything there was in it. And I realized that there are limits to what I could do even having the power, that I was bound hand and foot by the system itself. I used to think then that the system could

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be improved by making the necessary changes in staff, that the new generation of people would blow away the old *nomenklatura*. During that decade—I have noticed it myself—the flow of new people was very limited, everything was done under the slogan of stabilization of cadres, stabilization of the institutions,

stabilization of the political system. But this stability gradually led to stagnation of the staff and the system itself with far-reaching consequences.

The system whose backbone was a fossilized staff ceased to accept the demands of the life. I repeat that I was still thinking that the problem consisted mainly in the lack of staff and the need of new people.

This belief stimulated my activity and made me sure that it was possible to give some oxygen to the system itself. That's how *perestroika* began when I became the head of the party and the state—and under those conditions it was the same thing. That was the beginning of my reforms.

So, today I am convinced, sure, positive: the reforms were necessary. Their necessity was objective. We felt it very keenly since the middle of the 1970s. Other people felt it earlier. I mean the period of reforms made by Khrushchev and Kosygin. There were other intents, including the dissident activities. Finally, there were discussions and critical opinions in the ideological field whose outcome usually favored the system. The system defended itself by all its means and methods. But I would like to add that reforms were not invented by people who took power in 1985 and who suddenly became “enlightened.” We were prepared by the same life and the growing understanding that the country needed reforms.

The same impulses came from outside. The Hungarian events [of 1956] took place a long time ago. Then they were considered as the intents of imperialist forces to impede the process of building socialism in Eastern Europe, to undermine the influence of the Soviet Union, to split “the new Soviet Empire.” That's how we perceived and evaluated them; I, myself, believed and considered it to be true. By the way, even now I would be able to produce a lot of documents from abroad proving that it was not a children's game, that this kind of policy existed and was followed by the West.

Well, that “signal” could have been interpreted in that way. How can we estimate the Prague Spring, the demonstration of the Czech people in favor of socialism “with a human face”? Was it an intent to answer to the demands of a global, scientific-technological revolution? Was it not clear

that the cultural level of contemporary society demanded a new understanding of the human being and society itself?

Here we have to remember the beginning of the wave of reaction, the cruelest persecution and repression of different trends of thought: in general, any search at all. That was what marked the stagnation and complication of all our internal contradictions. Under the conditions of that system of power we were deaf to signals that came from inside and outside of the country, we were not able to understand them the way we should. And what is more important, we were not able to adopt, politically and intellectually, the new concepts, new policy. This had not happened. I can only add that under that system the country was also losing its economic power, which it used to have due to its natural and human resources, due to the rates of growth. From the beginning of the 1970s we lost even that advantage. We realized that we were losing out from the historical point of view. And the reform-minded people said that there was only one way out—modernization, democratization. We understood that without them the country would not be able to reach new horizons. Then we still were—in our actions and thought—within the framework of the existing system.

So, the understanding of the necessities of reforms was nurtured, I would say, suffered by the society. And reformers' task consisted not so much in inventing new models and obligating society to stick to them as in removing the restrictions and brakes, ridding society of lack of liberty, and giving it a possibility to further develop within the framework of the common civilization process. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union and Russia were excluded from this common civilization process as the result of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Thus, I am answering your first question and the questions of the participants of this meeting. I am sure that reforms were of vital necessity, as they are necessary now. Another matter is what came out of them. But this is another question that must also be answered.

In connection with this, I would like to discuss a popular thesis that has become today almost a cliché—"Gorbachev and his mission." Yes, Gorbachev and other thinking representatives of the government elite of that time realized the need for

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reforms of the system. Yes, we thought that it would perish otherwise, and we undertook the task of saving it. Yes, we planned to give the system some oxygen via reforms, and thought that it would work due to it. Naïve? But, let's remember, today's young and not-so-young clever men, what you were saying on the eve of the Nineteenth Party Conference in 1988 in the book *Inogo ne dano* [There Is No Other Way]: we are for "socialism with a human face, democracy, democratically renovated society." All the most zealous, the most convinced democrats, especially those who revile perestroika today and call it *katastroika*—are the authors of this book. Maybe some of them are even present here. I don't reproach them. I just want to say that we were like this, that the reality was like this. We are children of those times when

reforms started. We represented everything that was carried out. That is why I want to stress once again that nobody “threw” perestroika at us, it was born in the system, party and society where we lived. That’s the first point.

Now the second one. Why is it so important to state now that reforms were necessary? This is not only the question of the historical truth. No. Today, the movements of the revanchist trend gather strength; they say that reforms are invented, implemented by force the same way as the Bolshevik model itself was implemented some time ago; the only thing we have to do is to return to the starting point, and the system will work again. Yes, there are restorers and common people unhappy with the present situation, who could give a certain support to these political speculators. This question is not only a historical one; this question directly affects our present political life.

People ask: Well, the reforms were necessary, you started them, but do

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—Mikhail Gorbachev

President Yeltsin’s present reforms and political course continue the same reforms? This question was asked in all the conference halls in Novgorod: by students, workers, businessmen, and in private conversations.

In connection with this, I would like to definitely state: the present political course has absolutely, or almost absolutely, nothing to do with perestroika, with political perestroika in all its main aspects. We stood for reforms of the Union state, for its preservation—for preservation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. We realized that the object to be reformed—the Soviet Union—was complex, a very complicated one. Its economy, distorted by the heavy branches of industry, is the most militarized in the world. Dominated by only one form of property and a certain mentality of the population, the country can be reformed and transformed only little by little. And, therefore, it is necessary to gradually accumulate the potential of reforms and transformations. The present course put its stakes on “shock therapy,” to introduce by force a new, alien model. This new model was defeated not so much because of any particular mistakes, but because of the culture and mentality of the people. It was rejected by the people. This is the reason for its defeat. And not because of any steps taken before. No! Every attempt to bring profound capitalism to Russia has failed and will fail again. This is absolutely obvious.

Now, the third point. You remember our first slogan that became the banner of perestroika: “More democracy, more socialism!” It is necessary to bind democracy and socialism together. This is the everlasting talk of all Bolsheviks, from Lenin to us, to Gorbachev, to today’s leaders—to bind. We realized then that the totalitarian regime neglected, restricted to its limits, and suppressed democracy, rejected pluralism of opinions, different trends of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of elections, and so forth.

These were our leading and most important moment and motive. We realized it especially well when forces of resistance started to work. We understood then that we would follow Khrushchev’s fate. We felt this as early as the autumn of 1986. And then there was the July 1987 Plenum whose theme was a radical reform, economic reform. So, if today we analyze what’s going on in our country, I can affirm that it’s not only a

recoil from the achievements of democracy and perestroika, but that it is a curtailment of democracy, and slippage toward authoritarianism and dictatorship.

I could continue my arguments and explain the meaning of the “new political thinking”—which became the keystone of perestroika’s external policy, and which produced enormous changes in the world—and compare it to the present external policy of Russia. Being brief, I can’t agree with those who want to bind perestroika with the political course of the present government. I can’t accept it; I reject it.

The present policy knocked the country out of the course of gradual changes. Its main purpose is to destroy the Union as the fundamental cause that led the country to tragic consequences.

The following opinion, of great political, and not only theoretical, importance is widely accepted today:

“Well, what else could we expect from these reforms if they were carried out by politicians who, perhaps, had some experience, but mainly at the provincial level. They knew that there was something wrong with the country; they are no fools, in general terms; they even may have thought about the well-being of their country. But, alas, the task was too big for them. They had not offered us any concepts, had not given us any plan of action, etc.”

I must say that I have always struggled against this particular kind of attitude. These arguments are too academic, too scholarly. I must declare that there was a concept of perestroika. It has been an open policy—open to changes, to experience, and impulses—based on this experience that has already taken place during the course of reforms.

So, we developed our concept. As I told, it was our beginning. But very soon we arrived at an understanding of the necessity to represent democracy in certain institutions: *glasnost*, freedom, and democratic elections. It was a new stage. We were not hiding anything from the people, we submitted all the proposals first to the Politburo or to the Council of Ministers, then to the plenum, and later on, to the party conference; we respected our people and realized that we bore the responsibility for all the promises we made: you will know everything we propose.

There was a concept of perestroika. But we were required to submit the “menu,” the “train timetable,” and this is quite another matter. I don’t want everything to look like a rose garden. We have also made great mistakes. In my opinion, one of our greatest mistakes consisted of spending too much time on trying to understand the real processes that took place in the sphere of nationalities relations. At this first stage we still reacted as in the old days, and those who reproach Gorbachev with lack of determination must know that I regret the determination shown during the Kazakhstan events of 1986.¹ Frankly speaking, we forced them to accept the first secretary of Russian origin, which produced a negative reaction of the population. You

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can read about my actions in my memoirs. I acted in such a way that in forty minutes all Kazakhs, poor things, were running to hide in their homes. Only later I realized that it was not a correct way of doing things, and that we could not live by a double standard.

Precisely in those years I adopted my credo—as a democrat, as a person who rejected any experiments with people, bloodshed and any methods of achieving political and social goals by force. My credo was formed precisely in those dramatic times. And all further attempts to shed blood in order to obligate Gorbachev to take a certain decision failed. If you wish, I could explain the details of any event. I am ready. But right now I don't want to waste time on details.

So, there was a concept. It was developing, enriching itself, and gradually we came to a different understanding, different reading of

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socialism. You may have paid attention to the fact that at those times Gorbachev used more and more frequently the term “socialist choice” instead of “socialism,” “socialist idea” instead of “socialism.” Yes, even now, I consider myself to be the follower of the socialist idea just as some of you consider yourselves to be followers of the liberal idea, and others of the conservative one.

Well, go ahead. This is the meaning of a real pluralism, free society where each person swears allegiance to his party, chooses his party, religion, etc. This is the meaning of a truly democratic society.

I think that we've done a lot for the great success of our choice and our policy. We came close to signing the new Union Treaty, to adopting the anti-crisis policy supported by all republics, the new program of the CPSU that was to reform the party on a democratic basis. But precisely at this moment we became unable to control the situation anymore. The putsch of August 1991 blocked our way. Therefore, I overestimated my possibilities concerning cadres.

I believed that nothing would jeopardize the signature of the new Union Treaty that had to serve as a basis for reforms. I thought that the problem was solved and that we had won a difficult battle. The same goes for the anti-crisis program and party reform.

In my opinion, I made two mistakes. The first one, concerning cadres. I had to get rid of the people who—it was obvious even then—would never accept the reforms. The June session of the USSR Supreme Soviet gave enough reasons for that, but I considered that the incident was settled, that the treaty would be signed, and that nobody would prevent us from doing so.

The second one. I think that we underestimated what happened in Russia later on. First, splashes of national conflicts took place only in remote provinces, and broke against this monolith, a precise and clear position of Russia in favor of reforms and preservation of the Soviet Union. But this only continued until the people, who decided to take advantage of Russia's situation and role to achieve a greater, unlimited power, began to govern.

By that time, we overlooked many details in small business, in the agrarian sector, in reform of the pricing system, we were unable to regulate

the markets. This provoked an increasing discontent among the population, as the reforms had not brought any visible results. The situation was used to their advantage by politicians of a certain tendency who at that moment occupied the highest levels of political power in Russia. That was the battle we also lost.

By the way, I must say that at that time many Communists had not understood that either. To some extent they even formed alliances with those groups of power, whether they liked it or not. To be more precise, there were no political or organizational alliances. But there were similar positions—when, for example, at the most critical moment the newly formed Communist Party of Russia began to attack and to belittle the Union center, the party center. Those two tendencies seemed to close up. This formed a very complex situation that did not give us the possibility to achieve a normal outcome of the putsch, but still allowed us to reach a new Union Treaty after it.

The position of Russia and the Russian government played a decisive role in that matter. But even in that situation I counted on the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR. And once again I overestimated it, for the democratic, and freely elected Supreme Soviet, bound by the results of the 17 March referendum, still voted for disintegration of the Union and the legalization of the Belovezhsky Forest agreements.² When someone tells me “you bear responsibility for the disintegration of the Union,” I answer: to certain extent—yes, for I was at the head of the government.

And finally, about today: I am for free elections, for saving democracy. If we don't save democracy, if we don't conduct free elections, we will have to undergo many severe trials.

Alexander Panarin

In my opinion, you, Mikhail Sergeevich, as most of us, are a person at the borderline of cultures, a person who belongs to several traditions at the same time. As the general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU you, without a doubt, belonged to the Left, inclusive, the radical Left, tradition. This tradition has its merits, but, in my opinion, it also has two defects. First of all, this tradition is fraught with utopianism. As a rule, a Left radical often substitutes the real for the desirable. A Left radical constantly dreams of new world order, new world, wonderland of the whole mankind, communism, etc. This deceit, this certitude of the possibility to revise, to change all restrictions that the human being has to respect during his life, for during hundreds of thousands of years of his existence he was unable to abolish any of them, is typical for Left scatology: the end of prehistoric times, a kind of line after which it is possible to abolish all restrictions. I mean by that an analogy with Bolshevism: Bolsheviks believed in world revolution, and laughed at concerns of “bourgeois” mentality with state boundaries, integrity of Russia, etc. According to them, the global proletarian revolution automatically will solve all these problems. I am not sure if the pressure of this tradition played any role in your concept of the new world order and new way of thinking.

The second Left radical tradition—and I, by no means, suspect you of following it—is linked to the clearly political meaning of patriotism: I am a patriot of my country as long as I consider it to be the most progressive and advanced country in the world, the vanguard of the whole mankind. If I have

any doubts about its progress, then I am entitled to curse it as backward, hopeless, etc. I repeat that I, by no means, impute to Mikhail Sergeevich these points of view, but I would like to stress that an objective pressure of left radical tradition may have a certain influence even in these matters.

Mikhail Sergeevich is a man of an absolutely unique destiny as while being general secretary he also became president of the USSR. President, in my opinion, is a completely different structure from the objective point of view. It's a conservative structure in its essence. President is a guardian of

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the state. President is not ashamed of being the “provincial” leader who does not serve progress, but the people, his people. I would say that such a conservative sense of belonging to the motherland is one of the structures that form the mentality of the current president.

It seems to me that today's reformer has the responsibility of being conservative. I mean by that the same model that triumphed in

the West at the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, the neoconservative one. In the West, neoconservatives reformed the economy, the social sphere, and the political structures, and still remained conservatives in one very important aspect—they defended basic values of their civilization from any Eastern totalitarian temptations and from pressures of a superpower hostile to them. They were statesmen and patriots who did not consider “patriotism” to be a swear word in contrast with leftist liberal capitulation and utopianism.

I think that the same model must work in our country—a combination of reformist temper with conservative wisdom, sort of conservative deep root. If this does not happen, the alternative will be terrifying. An unexpected result of perestroika was not an entry into the “European family,” but the crushing defeat of our country in the Third World War. The defeat or capitulation act was not signed, but the real defeat was felt by all of us. Could it be followed, as a reaction to the humiliation of the nation, by the emergence of a powerful national-imperialist party that would come to power under the badge of statehood and give us such an authoritarian regime that would exceed everything we have seen so far?

Grigory Pomerants

I think that it will be more interesting to talk about Yeltsin's mistakes when he sends in his resignation, which under present conditions would be quite wise and noble from his part. But now, in the presence of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, it is more interesting to talk about his mistakes. It does not mean that there were only mistakes. Mikhail Sergeevich was right when he said today that he removed the brakes. Or, as I used to say in those years, Mikhail Sergeevich was the man who opened the locks.

But, unfortunately, in some cases the destructive forces were also set free. From my point of view, one of the most serious and perhaps most fatal mistakes was the inaction of the central power during the Sumgait events.³ It did not last one day. The pogrom was well-prepared and lasted the whole three days. The *pogromschiks* were allowed to kill, mutilate, rape, and sack. Without a doubt, the central power was aware of that. And it did nothing.

What is more, it made no effort to investigate this very well prepared pogrom, to find out who sent those boys to kill, and to punish the organizers. Some of the gunners were captured, but they were only convicted for hooliganism. This attitude of the government had tremendous consequences.

If there were times when I could not sleep at night, it was precisely after receiving each new piece of information about the Sumgait events. After that I was able to endure calmly any other event. I perceived them as a logical effect of violent elements set free. When a definition that I will quote right now came to my mind, a couple of months later I came across Maximilian Voloshin's article that virtually coincided with my ideas. That's why I'll simply quote its main idea. In 1920 Voloshin wrote: "Vodka is a bad thing. But I prefer a monopoly of bureaucracy over vodka to *samogon* [moonshine] in every village. Murder is also a bad thing. But I prefer a monopoly of state murder to home-grown murders in every village." This virtually coincided with the ideas I arrived at while I analyzed the events over and over. After Sumgait, the home-grown murders started to brew in every village. Since then it became clear that audacity wins, and the most daring began to seize everything they could. This happened in criminal activity as well as in the political sphere.

From my point of view, the Soviet Union morally died the day the powers-that-be authorized pogroms. When the Russian Empire got part of the Kingdom of Poland, it immediately stopped pogroms, and there were no pogroms at all during approximately one hundred years on a territory where a new wave of pogroms had previously taken place every few years. And the rebirth of pogroms marked the end of the tsarist regime. And when pogroms started in the Soviet Union, it marked the end of that, too.

Boris Slavin

The fundamental question is: Was it possible to reform the old socialism and to transform it into socialism with a human face? In my opinion, yes. First of all, in Khrushchev times, socialism had already lost its totalitarian character. It was an authoritarian regime with democratic elements. In Brezhnev times, some authoritarian tendencies became stronger, but the totalitarian regime did not revive. In Gorbachev times, a certain transition to democracy took place. Creation of socialism with a human face became possible. Frankly speaking, I don't see any other alternative to this ideal in the world. I said once: the only possible alternative would be a religious idea promising, if one may put it that way, a socialism with a human face at the other side of existence. But nobody who would be able to convince us of this truth has ever returned from there.

So, is it possible or impossible to reform an authoritarian regime? In my opinion, it is possible. The necessity for such a reform forced its way in times of the New Economic Policy [NEP], the thaw, Prague Spring, and during the events at Tiananmen Square in China where students were not demanding capitalism, but a real democratic socialism. We don't have any perspective of liberal socialism, not even of Hayek-type socialism [sic]. Even Keynesian style capitalism will not be accepted by our people. We can advance only along the path of democracy, on one hand, and socialism, on the other. Without that we may only expect either chaos and mutual hostility or dictatorship in our country. Russia has no other option. Socialism forms part of people's mentality that rejects the world of mercantilism and profit. As we can observe today, in our country capitalism is equivalent to

economic degradation. I would like to ask a question: Why has this reform not taken place? Zbigniew Brzezinski gave me the following explanation: "because we tricked you." We forced you to transfer all your resources to the non-military sector. You were not able to handle both of them: the military and the non-military sector. You lost, and we won. According to him, we will also transform socialism. When I told him about the possibility of evolution toward a democratic socialism, about the advantages of a socialism with human face, he told me: "Where have you seen it? It does not exist in real life." However, Brzezinski obviously overestimates the external factor.

I asked you, Mikhail Sergeevich, what, in your opinion, was your main mistake? You have just answered this question focusing your attention on the problem with cadres and on a number of other unessential issues. In my opinion, this is not where a real problem lies. The root of the problem lies in inconsistency of reforms: while the superstructure has been reformed, the technological basis has not been changed, the economy has almost been untouched. When you proclaimed, for the first time, an idea of returning to Lenin, in particular Lenin in the last period of his life, Lenin of the NEP times, you had to hold out there. Today, China is a proof that the ideas of the NEP—modernized, of course, with regard for the latest trends in development—are viable. They are up to the ideal that you proclaimed in your theory of democratic socialism. However, when you laid the economy aside and started to decidedly reform the

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political sphere, you gave birth to an unsolvable contradiction. A conflict, which was neither realized nor understood by the people, came into existence. A great liberty in political and ideological spheres was not supported by any achievements in the economic sphere. Even a minimum success in this field

would have produced great progress: the social basis of perestroika would have immediately been extended. To be objective, I have to mention that at first perestroika turned out to be a success. When you put forward an idea of speeding up scientific-technological progress, it was received with enthusiasm by many people. It was a period of economic growth.

But soon you abandoned that very important aspect of perestroika. Why? Perhaps, because it demanded too much time. It is virtually impossible to transform the economy along the path of scientific-technological progress during a year or two. You seemed to strive for quicker results, and this was your main mistake, in my opinion. People who got freedom, but who did not get any bread, first became disappointed in perestroika, and then turned away from it. That's why when you were "overthrown" you did not enjoy any support from the party of perestroika. It simply ceased to exist. The people were silent then, as they are silent now, when the new change in political situation is expected. Why? Because they are robbed by the new government, deprived of material incentives; they despise the "new Russians" who profit at their expense. Any reform should improve, and not worsen, the life of the people.

Sergei Kurginyan (author and chief, Experimental Creative Center)

Mikhail Sergeevich, here we heard some phrases about academicians and bureaucrats. I would like to stress that you were not surrounded by bureaucrats, but by academicians—and frankly speaking, mainly *nomenklatura* academicians. But I don't see some of them here. Mikhail Sergeevich, where are the academicians who were the most loyal to you? Maybe they were not allowed here? Maybe you have not invited them? I don't know. . . .

Gorbachev

Invitations are not of my concern in general—

Kurginyan

Really? Since when?

Gorbachev

I would like to clarify: my reaction was to the situation when bureaucrats treated the politicians with such scorn that I decided to answer in such a way—“to pick up the glove.” Let's consider this matter settled.

Kurginyan

We ask if it was necessary to reform society. Of course, it was necessary. The question is how. And here we had to make a fundamental choice: either we, in the philosophical sense of the word, modernize Russia, take the path toward modernization, or we choose any alternative policy. And the whole question consists of the fact that when you said, “There is no other way” you really meant “There is no other way but modernization.” As soon as modernization began, the Soviet Union started to fall apart, and the corresponding lags, which ended up suffocating the reforms, began to form.

You spoke about the police state. But every time we deal with the police state and its reform we, obviously, ask ourselves a question: do we deal with reform or political provocation?

To carry out classical modernization reform by means of democracy in almost unmodernized Russia, turning what is almost impossible into completely impossible, could have been done only with one aim: to achieve, in the final stage, precisely a fascist result. And we head directly toward it.

It is impossible to separate the beginning from the end because, due to the fact that from the very beginning you chose the policy of modernization, all the rest was the question of technique, and at the end we will see fascism. Only opposing modernization, taking the course of alternative, non-modernization development, could we withstand fascism. It is important to separate fascism and communism, which are usually perceived as a single whole. And this way of perceiving it was created by an academician loyal to perestroika, a member of the Politburo.

The second question, Mikhail Sergeevich, is: Who would support reforms? Masses in general with their active creative work? Excuse me, it's an abstraction. Unfortunately, the majority of Russia's population would not support these real, advanced, post-industrial reforms in 1985. Only 10 to 25 percent of the population supported the reforms that could lead to postindustrial society. These 25 percent were enough to suppress the

reactionary opposition, but they were not enough to achieve an extensive political democracy in a country that was not ready for it and where this democracy, naturally, turned out to be quite the opposite.

The option was—and is—very simple: in the social sphere the stake is either on post-industrial classes, on a modern industrial class and, in the political sphere, their enlightened dictatorship—which was supposed to carry out the reforms in Russia with a gradual transition toward democracy—or complete disorganization.

As soon as political democracy became a priority it became necessary to count on additional social classes to hold back the elitist reactionary groups. It became essential to add another 30 percent to the original 25 percent. The

“... You opened Pandora’s box because in search of support you put in action forces—including mafiya—that later took hold of perestroika and formed a criminal system.”

question was: where to find them? And then you opened Pandora’s box because in search of support you put in action forces—including *mafiya*—that later took hold of perestroika and formed a criminal system. Everybody is looking for extremes nowadays. As this makes me sick, I would like to state that I don’t want to shirk

my responsibility, as I consider myself among those who are responsible for perestroika reforms. All of us remember the decisive moment when, after the Twenty-seventh Party Congress, the question was put point-blank: either a postindustrial authoritarianism or pseudo-market democracy. And then the liberal nomenklatura, who considered themselves a progressive force, reactionarily suffocated the progress. Threatened with pure reaction, but forming, as a matter of fact, an alliance with it, fearful of postindustrialism as there was no place for them in it, they began to build a wild capitalism. It was just the right system for them.

Finally, the last point. The abstract concept of national renaissance was not enough to carry out reforms. “Nation” is a concept of modernization. Appellation to it demanded modernization, and modernization led to a deadlock. The people of Russia and the people of the Union are not nations. The attempt to organize a national renaissance, especially with an unsolved, Russian question—and perestroika was carried out under the slogan of ostracizing everything that had to do with the “Russian idea”—led to a neglect of all processes that was disastrous for all the people of our disintegrated, due to aforementioned reasons, Union.

My last observation: There are politicians who after a hard blow are knocked out. And there are others who are knocked down. There are politicians who after a hard blow start to fade away. And there are others who constantly analyze why they received this blow. From where? From which direction?

Gorbachev

The main point is to get your own blow.

Kurginyan

I consider that you, Mikhail Sergeevich, should analyze better, a lot better and more strictly, from where, how, and why you received the blow that led you to be knocked down. If this is a matter of politics, it is

necessary to revise everything from a lot more radical a point of view. You should be tougher with yourself. Besides, I am convinced that a real, and not a confederative, Union has not yet come to its end.

Gorbachev

We are still at the point where the processes have not really turned around, but are just developing. That's why today I would not give up on any phenomenon, any tendency in general. On the contrary, I would focus my attention on the basis of a broad approach. And not for the sake of a fluid phrase. I would also like to respond to a previous statement about the freedom of choice. The idea expressed here stated that it was impossible to reform a totalitarian system. It is supposed to be unreformable. But the locks were open in the very sense of democracy, freedom, and where the people were ready for them, these ideas had positive consequences, and where there was no ground for them, they had negative consequences. Everything goes around it.

Unfortunately, such arguments have a certain academic taste. I have just finished a book titled *Dialogues*. My co-author is Zdenek Mlynar. This name must be familiar to you. He is Raisa's and my friend, one of our closest friends during our whole life. We even got married and celebrated our weddings the same day at the university. However, we are still married, and he is divorced. But I don't blame him. Later on he also managed to solve seriously his family problem. We published together a book titled *Dialogues on Perestroika, Prague Spring and Socialism*. We published it in Czechoslovakia [sic], we are publishing it now here, in Russia, and we will also publish it in Italy. We have also discussed the theme of freedom of choice in this book. I reacted sympathetically to Mlynar's arguments. Our arguments were very close to what we discuss today. By the way, I was always well disposed towards the intelligentsia, I consider myself to be an integral part of it. In my opinion, this discussion takes place in my own circle.

So, is it possible to agree with the argument that the freedom of choice under conditions of totalitarian regime will always mean the choice of lack of freedom? Professor Zdenek Mlynar, who is interested in this problem, drove me into a corner with this question. My answer is: this issue is real determinism covered in moss, it is even worse than a Marxist concept. Marx, while defending a historical determinism, at least recognized the enormous role of the subjective factor; not to mention Lenin who clearly overestimated the role of subjective factor, which translated into the Bolshevik model, into violation of reality and real life.

Without any pretense of theoretical research—although, perhaps, some day I'll engage in it with great pleasure—I would like to point out and stress the following observation. The principle of freedom of choice was an important basic component of the policy of perestroika, the policy of the new political thinking. This principle was proposed to everybody, and I am still true to it. On the other hand, if this problem is examined from the political point of view, both the will and the actions will be paralyzed. If it is impossible to reach freedom of choice under conditions of a totalitarian regime, then in the end it will translate into a paralysis of the social energy of the society. By the way, there were signs of this phenomenon, and we could notice them. In my opinion, if it becomes clear that the society has to be reformed, then it is necessary to create preconditions for freedom of

choice in this society, and if this idea becomes a point of view of the authorities, of the government, then the situation changes drastically. For, in this case, whatever can be developed is pushed on the initiative of the masses, and meets understanding and an adequate reaction from the reform-oriented government. That's the first point.

The second, and the most important point, I insist on. It is possible to exercise the freedom of choice, but not within the limits of revolution, not as a single, simultaneous act. It is necessary to take consecutive, well-calculated steps toward democracy, toward information; it is necessary to

“So, it is possible to reform a totalitarian regime, but only on the basis of an evolutionary, gradual approach, considering the freedom of choice as a sequence of choices put into practice one by one in agreement with consolidated results.”

include people into a process of governing the country by way of institutions, by way of democracy. It can be achieved at the business management level, by having a freely elected *soviet*, and by increasing the role of public organizations.

A real result can only be achieved in the course of a long process, as a result of evolution. That's why I once said: “I repudiate revolution.” This kind of statement

is not easy for a general secretary. I survived this. Of course, it was not easy. You must remember that I told it openly. It was published by our press, it was broadcast. It meant a comprehension of the fact that it is possible to achieve profound, cardinal, truly revolutionary changes by means of real reforms—gradually, step by step.

So, it is possible to reform a totalitarian regime, but only on the basis of an evolutionary, gradual approach considering the freedom of choice as a sequence of choices put into practice one by one in agreement with consolidated results.

I may be mistaken, but, in my opinion, such a conception is optimistic and politically possible. It reflects the faith of our people. Otherwise, you will find yourself among those whom our people consider cattle. Otherwise, there will be shooting down of the Parliament. Otherwise, everything is permitted in Russia, the country of barbarians. What else can you expect from them?

If you take the right to democratic reforms away from society, you will join the ranks of supporters of the aforementioned ideas whether you like it or not. That's why I insist on my position, and now, more than ever, I am convinced that it is correct.

If we really believe that a human being is the most valuable part of society, then we must admit that without law, without consolidation of democratic procedures and rules, it will not be achieved. Otherwise, there will always be unlawful eruption. This brings to mind my last visit to Novgorod. What are the demands of entrepreneurs? Give us the rules of the game. It is impossible to act and accomplish any plans without them. But the rules of the game demand a political solution. They say, change the rules of the game, as they repress and make impossible small- and medium-sized business. It's a question of democracy, and also a human, a real human, problem. Take any other sphere and you will see: if the freedom is not accompanied by the creation of state of law, democratic institutions,

elaboration of democratic rules, then freedom will destroy itself. Then I really feel sorry for the man who you glorify and who, according to you, is indifferent to politics.

Politics, as everything that happens to us, is born out of life itself, and not due to the appearance of some genetic code that gives birth to politicians who must occupy their place. No. Politics attracts people from different circles and backgrounds. It is vitally important the same way as the freedom of the man is important. Without this we will not succeed in achieving the mature society we strive for.

Leonid Polyakov

In my opinion, analysis that could offer a psycho-analytical method does not exist yet. Among all possible opinions on perestroika, on this decade-long process, the most important by far is the one that takes into account changes that occurred in people—the transformation of people into individuals. In its essence mainly lies psycho-analytical work started by Sigmund Freud. It seemed to me that Mikhail Sergeevich treated us as patients while we worked with him. Now, we come back to him again, and he also returns to us; in my opinion, it is a very symbolical moment of encounter of a patient with his doctor, with his psycho-analyst.

Mikhail Sergeevich had an incredible way of working with us. He applied to us a method used by Freud during the years of his professional practice. At first, Mikhail Sergeevich applied a classical method of physio-therapeutical influence whose purpose was to “accelerate.” It’s really a classical method. Freud also began by influence on functional dynamic systems of the human being. Then he worked with hypnosis. We know perfectly well what hypnosis is, and we had plenty of examples of such hypnosis from the Twenty-sixth Party Congress to the expulsion of Yeltsin. And then the most fantastic and unpredictable miracle happened: Mikhail Sergeevich discovered himself, without any help—I don’t know if he secretly read Freud and worked with his books—the most surprising way of conquering that absolutely impenetrable system, that crowd, a really totalitarian, essentially lonely, but at the same time, publicly exposed crowd, mainly by means of free associations which received an ancient Russian name of

“What are the demands of entrepreneurs? Give us the rules of the game. It is impossible to act and accomplish any plans without them.”

—Mikhail Gorbachev

glasnost. By the way, [19th century social critic Nikolai] Chernishevsky could not stand this word: you must remember that Chernishevsky considered it to be a euphemism, an escape from honesty, from “freedom of speech.”

This man discovered in us secret resources unknown even to ourselves. Mikhail Sergeevich has mentioned today his evolution from socialism to a socialist idea. I remember my enthusiasm after reading his article “The Socialist Idea and Revolutionary Perestroika”—I have just re-read it and discovered the most staggering quotation. Only a psychoanalyst could write this. “The people,” wrote Mikhail Sergeevich, “instinctively possessed this socialist ideal.” I was really astounded by this reference to the instinct.

Of course, the method of free associations, even at a personal level, is always directed to "I." It is directed toward the elements that in human beings balance their destructive energy and bring it into harmony with what's called "super ego." Here we can notice again this brilliant intuition of the psychoanalyst, and this occasion gives us a good opportunity to remember it. We walked together. We changed together.

To finish my, perhaps, rather renegade speech, I would like to add the following. In my opinion, today Mikhail Sergeevich comes back to us, returns to the intelligentsia, and intelligentsia gladly goes back to the person who cured it once. In my opinion, the symbolism of this return is a testimony of the following fact. Once we managed to dismantle the Soviet Union with extremely little bloodshed compared to what could have happened; returning to Gorbachev, the intelligentsia, in fact, commits the act of political suicide. This *rapprochement* of intelligentsia to Gorbachev can mean only that we must become the real "self" of the nation—intellectuals, who don't need any healers from outside. If we would like to solve our complexes and problems, we will find our own psychoanalyst.

Alexander Buzgalin (economist, and a founder of the "Marxist Platform" of the CPSU)

I would like to discuss the lessons of perestroika. Lesson one: it seems to me that we finally understood that it is impossible to achieve any serious, qualitative changes in economics, social and political spheres from the top without a serious support from the bottom; otherwise these reforms could only lead to a change of forms of power of the governing elite. Look at what we have actually got. The forms changed quite radically, but the power still belongs to nomenklatura—quite a narrow circle of bureaucrats in addition to a then-underground, but now legal, business—as it used to be in old days. Many forms have been changed, but economic and political power still belongs to the same, estranged from most of us, group of society. It seems to me that perestroika's tragedy consists precisely in the fact that it was conducted from above, and not from below. This should serve as a lesson to

"Look at what we have actually got. The forms changed quite radically, but the power still belongs to the nomenklatura. . . . Even now if we carry out reforms without serious public support we will only change forms of power held by the nomenklatura group."

—Alexander Buzgalin

us: Even now if we carry out reforms without a serious public support we will only change forms of power held by the nomenklatura group.

The second lesson that seems to me fundamentally important: Such reforms will unavoidably result in intensification of conflicts and struggle within and among these elite groups and to instability of the society. We can feel it even now. There is

a terrible, bloody crush on a little space of ideas and practice of reforms in our country, and it will become even more bloody in the future, even though there will be little difference between the programs of our leaders.

Look who our statesmen and supporters of a powerful Russia are: everyone from [Russian Federation Communist Party leader Gennady] Zyuganov to Yeltsin. Look at the supporters of the market in all its forms:

the same people again, from Zyuganov up to [nationalist politician Alexander] Barkashov. Whatever blend of politicians you get: sometimes Zyuganov, [nationalist-communist Working Moscow leader Viktor] Anpilov and [former Russian Prime Minister Yegor] Gaidar oppose the war in Chechnya and speak against [ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir] Zhirinovskiy, Barkashov, Yeltsin and [communist-oriented Russian All-People's Union leader Sergei] Baburin; sometimes it's the other way around. Why? Because the little space of power became too overcrowded as a result of the nomenklatura model of "reforms."

The third lesson: Along with negative results, perestroika has also brought invaluable positive experience that we still do not completely

understand: the experience of truly democratic movements of the people. They lost for they were very weak and did not have any, or very little, support from the top; nevertheless they existed: local self-administration, industrial self-administration, people's fronts, all of them existed. But nomenklatura was afraid of all these movements,

"The following fact is ridiculous and terrible at the same time: the fence that surrounds the new House of Government cost twelve million dollars; an enormous oil and gas industrial complex privatized in Siberia was sold for the same amount of money."

and as a result the nouveaux riches, plus a new, cynical, and very greedy group of new nomenklatura men came to power.

We must analyze these steps of perestroika and use them as a recipe for today's life, although it is very difficult, but necessary to obtain good results. The experience of self-government, democratic movement of the people, and glasnost, which is now actively curtailed, struggle against privileges. The following fact is ridiculous and terrible at the same time: the fence that surrounds the new House of Government cost twelve million dollars; an enormous oil and gas industrial complex privatized in Siberia was sold for the same amount of money. Our ex-minister of finance, Boris Fyodorov, who is hardly a Communist, insists that the market value of Yeltsin's dachas is roughly a billion dollars. However, if our slogan is to struggle against privileges, then we must isolate ourselves from the elite as a whole. None of them, neither "Communists" nor "liberals," will ever support this slogan. It is not a coincidence they "forgot" about it.

The fourth lesson of perestroika consists in the fact that it is impossible, and will never be possible, to build in Russia an "enlightened" authoritarian or totalitarian regime. Our bureaucratic past proves that if a genuine sustainable democracy does not win, the "enlightened" authoritarians will lose their heads very quickly and very cynical, angry, and active bearers of bloody and not "enlightened" authoritarian reforms will occupy their place. Unfortunately, it is precisely this process that has already begun. That's why all our hopes to bring to power a "good tsar" are only dreams.

Vladimir Lukin (chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee, State Duma)

I understand that we have gathered here in order to take a course in political science given by Gorbachev. I am not quite willing to contribute to this act. However, I would like to make some comments about several opinions expressed here. For example, one thesis states that instead of

democracy we achieved an elitist society. In my opinion, it's a very naïve way of looking at the problem. I have never seen any society other than the elitist one. The problem is what kind of elite do we have? How do they appear, how do they work, what are their rules of the game? In my beloved America they work like a clock; that's why they have a very stable elite. I did not use the word "beloved" by accident. Vladimir Volfovich Zhirinovskiy says that I am a CIA agent.

Gorbachev

Now it appears that we both work for the same organization. Govoryukhin asked me the following question: "I heard that the CIA ordered you to organize perestroika?"

Lukin

Mikhail Sergeevich, we have just to find out where their cashier office is. Would you know?

So, the question is about an elitist society. Of course, our society is elitist. But the distinguishing feature of our society is that it is criminal-elitist. It's a criminal-bureaucratic-elitist society. Our main concern should be what to do in order to eliminate the criminal part of this elitism and decrease the level of such a rigid bureaucratic tradition, and not how to achieve a non-elitist society.

Anyway, in my opinion, those who think—though, I don't even know if such a possibility ever existed; Mikhail Sergeevich should know it better—that the best way to transform Russia is by means of reforms carried out by a reform-oriented government that, in a very subtle way, resembles a combination of Alexander II and Alexander III, are correct. Alexander II's reforms were proposed from the bottom, they started with liberation of serfs

"The distinguishing feature of our society is that it is criminal-elitist. It's a criminal-bureaucratic-elitist society. Our main concern should be what to do in order to eliminate the criminal part of this elitism and decrease the level of such a rigid bureaucratic tradition, and not how to achieve a non-elitist society."

and land reform, and little by little they came to the top. Liberals appeared anyway, the old leaders, and these old leaders produced the young ones. But this process took half a century, even more.

Mikhail Sergeevich has every reason to say that he believes in people and so on. But besides faith it is necessary to prepare the people technologically and psychologically to engage in

democratic practices that come from the top. And what do we have now? People did not get their "happiness" once, they did not get it twice, and now they just don't give a damn about democracy. They don't vote at all. I am afraid they are not going to vote in the future either. Especially after what had happened and what's going on now. And if they decide to vote, they do it only as a protest vote. It's a very serious problem.

The second point: A very important lesson is closely associated with a problem of brutality in politics. A naturally brutal person is not good for Russia as he would bring the country to tragic results. A person who is not brutal at all is also a problem, for brutality in such a country as Russia, and

especially the Soviet Union, has always been necessary. Brutality was the only possible reaction to such events as nationalistic slaughter in the Soviet Union. I would call it a Russian type of brutality. Although it does not seem to be a right time to talk about it, Chechnya is a symptom and a consequence of a three-year leniency, a purposeful and aimed leniency. This problem is now more urgent than ever before. And I would like to see some cruelty in people who naturally loathe it.

Stephen Cohen (professor, Princeton University)

I would like to ask Mikhail Sergeevich two questions, but the American way—without making a speech. . . . You said at the beginning of this conference that you were surprised by the fact that the Supreme Soviet voted for disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. But you have not answered this question—at least, not in full. That's why I would like to ask you why they voted in such a way. It was a turning point.

The second question will sound, perhaps, a little bit rude, especially here. But as a historian I believe that future historians, perhaps, will have a very negative opinion about the attitude of Russian intelligentsia between 1990 and 1994-95, they will consider them to be as whimsical as they used to be during the Revolution. What is your opinion?

Gorbachev

I would like to answer the question of Professor Cohen, who is an old acquaintance of mine. I have been thinking about this phenomenon. What happened to us? At the moment when the new project of the Union Treaty was already submitted to the supreme soviets—and not only in Russia, but also in Ukraine, Byelorussia, and seven or eight other republics, when I had already sent my 3 December appeal personally to each deputy—what did it mean to vote “yes” and support the Belovezhsky Forest Agreement? I believed that it was impossible to overcome that barrier. And in my reaction to the Belovezhsky Agreement, as you may remember, I said that three men, even if they are the leaders of the three Slavic republics who gathered together, cannot “close down” the Soviet Union. It would be the same as to “close down” America, even with all the power, legality, and trust. That's my first point.

Now, the second: If you read the documents, you will understand the contents of this “Commonwealth”: common economic area and coordination of economic, money and price, and social policy; common defense, united armed forces, common and coordinated exterior policy, open borders, etc. I don't remember this. In my mind, it never happened. I proposed my six points at the Alma-Ata meeting. Whatever they had in writing had only one meaning: common defense, preservation of the army, common economics, preservation of public sector industries, open borders—move as you please, common cultural area. In my opinion, this spoiled everything. They supposed that the agreement would consolidate and protect the Soviet Union from disintegration. The new Union Treaty united only seven or eight republics—if Ukraine joined. I believe that people did not grasp, did not understand that it was a smoke-screen under whose cover the country was being dismantled. They believed that the country would be preserved. That's how they understood the Belovezhsky Agreement. I don't see any other explanation.

Vladimir Menshov (film director)

It turns out that our society is very easily manipulated, too easily. The most serious crime of the former government consists precisely in the fact that our people cannot think independently.

One of the best and latest examples of such childishness, to put it mildly, of our public conscience is the example of the cult of Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin. If we make a little effort to analyze and compare some facts, then his personality will become completely clear to us. Take, for example, his deadly struggle against privileges: a theatrical entrance in a public hospital, his rides on the old Moskvich car. Try to re-read the "Confession on an Assessed Theme": it is really disgusting to a person with a normally developed sense of truth; every line is false. But the people did not see it,

"Even you, Mikhail Sergeevich, don't hide your devotion to the ideas of socialism, and, in my opinion, that does you credit."

they did not want to see it! I have even lost some friends due to discussions about Boris Nikolaevich and processes that take place in our country.

Here we discuss the problems of perestroika mainly on a political, ideological, even

intellectual level. In one interview, [Gen. Dmitriy] Volkogonov, the former deputy chief political instructor of the whole Soviet army and nowadays, a turncoat anti-Communist, hit on target in calling himself an "ideological escapist." We could see a lot of such "ideological escapist" during these past ten years. Even you, Mikhail Sergeevich, don't hide your devotion to the ideas of socialism, and, in my opinion, that does you credit. One of your closest comrades-in-arms during the initial stages of perestroika, one of her architects, confesses now that he became a convinced anti-Communist a long time ago, that he initiated perestroika only to put Russia on the only possible high road of the development of mankind—capitalism. It would be interesting to know what he thought about you when you spoke to him about socialism with a human face? He even readily nodded in agreement.

My question, Mikhail Sergeevich: what were your disappointments as a human being during these past ten years?

Gorbachev

Your opinions were so hotheaded that it is impossible not to answer them. I would like to remind you of the question that Stanislav Sergeevich Govoryukhin asked me here: "I heard that the CIA gave you the task to start perestroika?"

Tolstykh

No, what he said was: "I heard that you are the CIA agent and that you carried perestroika out as a task."

Gorbachev

I'll try to answer this question using Ilf and Petrov's notebook. A man was accused of using an official car to go to a *banya*. To justify himself he said that he has not been to a banya for two years. This is my first answer—it is difficult to give another one.

The second answer—about collaborators, fellows, friends, traitors, etc. I can refer to classics again. In this case to the words of Iosif Stalin who said:

“Comrade Polikarpov, I don’t have any other writers for you.” We lived a real situation. I began my activity as general secretary when, among the members of the Politburo, there were people like [former USSR Council of Ministers chairman Nikolai] Tikhonov, [longtime Moscow Communist Party chief Viktor] Grishin, [Leningrad Communist Party chief and Politburo member Grigory] Romanov. It was a “good” company. Nothing you can do about it. It was like this. Books picture the human life in one light, but the reality is quite different.

On this topic I would like to say the following. As far as I can remember, there were a lot of attempts to conquer Everest, but only 126 climbers succeeded in doing it. Thirty percent of those who reached the peak perished, most of them during the descent. I have also been at this political Everest. I have reached the peak, stayed there, and then went down. That’s how I feel.

I would like to tell you a secret. Raisa Maximovna and myself decided to write a book, which will be called *Dialogues*, dedicated to this personal subject: what happened to us and to those who were close to us during those years. My wife has a lot of notes on this human subject. I have political portraits. We must forget about books dedicated to perestroika and to write this one. I don’t know if we’ll manage to do it. Perhaps I won’t be able to go deep into the theme because it is inexhaustible. But I hope to see side-by-side, exactly as I do now, philosophers and politicians. I hope that, by now, you’ve come to understand Gorbachev and the sort of claims one can lay on those who, during the course of perestroika, as the situation was changing, were also shifting their positions. The team that initiated reforms also changed according to the situation. Some left and took other choices. It’s their right. If one aspires to the right to be called a democrat, he has to respect the right to choose of another human being. I don’t see in this anything to reprehend. Life put us on opposite sides of the barricade, or at least, different “compartments” of this barricade and sometimes, perhaps on different sides. That’s how it was.

The only thing that I cannot forgive is betrayal and human unscrupulousness, dishonor. I could never forgive them.

Allow me to conclude this with the answer to your question. I have never permitted myself to be rude to my political opponents, in spite of everything I had to go through during the last three or four years, when I was under fire from exactly the same extreme positions against which I fought when I was general secretary and president. This fire still goes on. They take advantage of the fact that Gorbachev is open to criticism and that it is possible to direct all filthy words against him, everything you want. It is even encouraged in every possible way. But they were not able, and nobody will ever be able, to bring me to my knees.

Scum exists, I know that. I suffered a lot because of them. Human unscrupulousness is the most sore subject for me. On the other hand, I still meet with people with whom I grew apart because of political reasons. For example, I respect [former hardline Politburo opponent Yegor] Ligachev’s position. In what sense? I don’t share his position; we grew apart at a certain stage. As he says, everything was all right until 1988, and then we grew apart. Yes, we did. But I respect this person for his open position. I also respect him for being able to openly express his opinion. I can get along with everybody; it is perfectly normal. This is a human society and it’s impossible

to live in this society if you don't respect a person only because his political opinions and convictions are different from yours.

I would like to stress once more that the only thing I cannot forgive is the unscrupulousness and dishonor in human relations, especially on the part of those whom I trusted a lot. This is precisely part of the drama, my drama as a human being and not only as a politician.

Viktor Miller

I believe that the first result, with perestroika still in progress, was the formation of a revolutionary situation. Approximately by 1989 we could notice all symptoms of a revolutionary situation: crisis of power, increase in political activity of the population, changes in the economic situation of the people. This situation came to an end in August 1991 when the "collapse of power" took place, in other words, "a factual revolution on the streets" described by [anti-Bolshevik sociologist and subsequent Harvard Professor] Pitirim Sorokin, although from a socialist idea point of view it was, without a doubt, a counter-evolutionary coup. I would like to stress especially this fact, as we often hear about disastrous effects of December, ignoring real results of August 1991.

Meanwhile, starting with August we live the situation of "revolution as a process," with all its characteristic features, with elements of civil war, with lack of economic and political stability, with uncertainty of tomorrow. More than anything, I believe that forces are so polarized—which is unavoidable in revolutionary years—that there is a real possibility of a new collapse of power, a new "revolution as an event" with consequences, naturally, difficult to foretell, as is everything else that happens during revolution. What will it depend on? I don't think that it will depend on any objective factor; the decisive role will be played by a subjective factor, and to be more precise, who will be at the birthplace of the new power at the moment of downfall of the old one.

Gorbachev

I think that one important topic has been touched upon. And my reply has a purpose—to stimulate further talks precisely on this theme, this subject. I believe it is important not only to understand what will happen to us, but also, what's happening to us now. I mean by that a rather widespread opinion, according to which it is necessary to have an iron-hand political regime to carry out reforms.

I also believe that without a strong power, without a stable political regime it is difficult to provide successful reforms. But what do we mean by a tough and stable political regime? If this is a democratic regime where the law rules, where independent courts triumph, where executive and judicial powers really work, where the population controls the government through democratic institutions—this is, in my opinion, a true strong power. It lies where the dictatorship of law rules, which works equally for me, a common citizen, as for the president. It is even more compulsory for the president, because the president has to serve as an example by complying with the law. If that's what you mean by a strong power, then I agree with you.

But if this dictatorship has no limits, if by strong power you mean what we see now, if the war in Chechnya begins and its population is exterminated without any approval either of the Federation Council or the Duma, if four declarations of the State Duma remain like a voice in the

wilderness, then I would not call it a strong power, but quite the opposite. It is not even authoritarianism. Here I am thinking of another one of our colleagues who, from the very beginning of perestroika became attached to the authoritarian power. I have to say that if the question is about a strong democratic power, I am for it. If the question is about limitless power, about authoritarianism, and more so, about dictatorship, then I believe that we must reject it.

One more thought. Even in the future we will not be able to rule out the possibility of revolutionary situations and some sort of collisions where we will have to use force. I cannot rule out the possibility of such situations. But if we want to achieve our long-term goals, it is useless to count on force. This idea refers also to internal policy of the countries—look, for example, at Latin America. How many dictatorial regimes have these countries endured? But real reforms for the better took place only when rapid democratic processes began in those countries.

Take, for example, international conflicts. How many times have people tried to solve them by force?

Nothing came out of it. The American military adventure in Vietnam collapsed, our intervention in Afghanistan failed; all the attempts to solve problems in Nicaragua, Namibia, Angola and Cambodia by force ended up in a mess; look at the conflicts in the Middle East. Everything was, and is, solved by political methods. Politics has unlimited possibilities. We, on

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the contrary, instead of using our imagination, possibilities, and experience, always resort to a stick. This is our tradition, and I am against it.

I visited Hollywood, where I took part in a presentation of the organization “Green Cross.” Many prominent American intellectuals, members of this well-known Hollywood organization, were present there. At the table I spoke to Ted Turner, Jane Fonda, Arnold Schwarzenegger and his wife Maria, Barbra Streisand, and distinguished film director Stephen Spielberg. There it had occurred to them to make a film about the Crusades. This idea has something in common with a public apology of the Pope for the atrocities committed during the Crusades, repentance in that stage. I understand only this way of putting a question. This is my philosophy. This is my credo. Quite another matter is how to turn it into political reality. Every conflict and every country has its own version. Every conflict, even if it resembles the others, has its own biography, its own history, and its own solution.

I believe that with regard to the problems of violence, use of force, stake on force in politics, we have to adopt a clear position. I don’t consider myself a nervous person, but I have gone through many trials when I took part in solving all those international entanglements, including Afghanistan. You will be able to read about this in my memoirs, especially when all records of my conversations and other documents will be published. Now we hear more than enough gossip and speculation, but there are documents that

reflect the president's activities concerning all these matters. They will be published as soon as the laws of this country will permit their publication, and everything will be sorted out.

Now, for example, I am often blamed for the Baku events. What happened there? In January, Armenian pogroms began. Eighty or ninety persons were killed. Thousands, hundreds of thousands fled from the city. They even crossed the Caspian Sea to reach Turkmenistan. We appealed to the government of Azerbaijan and they assured us that they would solve the problem with their own forces. But they did not manage to do it. The situation reaches the point when the possibility of explosion in the republic becomes almost imminent. I sent [Yevgēny] Primakov and [Andrei N.] Girenko there. One of them is the member of the Presidential Council, the other one is the member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU. I told them to find out on the spot what is happening there. They

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—Mikhail Gorbachev

arrive in Baku, the telephone rings: “The situation is the following: the activity of the Supreme Soviet is paralyzed, extremist forces don't give them even an opportunity to assemble to make decisions. In front of the building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan there is a hanging rope, the power is overthrown in eighteen districts. Two

hundred kilometers of the state border are destroyed.”

Under these circumstances and within a framework of my plenary powers I officially issue a decree about the state of emergency. We bring troops. What else? We sure did put the situation under control. Perhaps we averted more bloodshed, though we added some dozens of victims. As a matter of fact, I believe that it was a price we paid for our lagging behind, our delay in politics. Anyhow, there are situations when it is necessary to use force, to bring troops.

The same could be told about the events in Alma-Ata. Nevertheless, we must not forget about the negative effects of the use of force.

Raisa Gorbachev

There was another question: about the path proposed by Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov.

Gorbachev

Now, about Andropov. You will read in my memoirs about the place that this man occupied in my life. A very important place. But I believe that there is an “Andropov phenomenon,” even an Andropov myth. Of course, he was a unique human being. He did not resemble any previous leaders. He was a wise and sympathetic man. But, in spite of all this, I don't think that he would go for radical reforms, for profound and serious transformations. He would not go for them. Perhaps, because of the fact that the fifteen years he served as the chief of KGB obligated him to make decisions that always limited him. Not to mention the fact that I don't miss at all chasing people

at the movies, banyas, dragging them to their places of work, to their enterprises, introducing discipline by these means and by these methods.

I believe that the myth about Andropov has remained and this myth rejects the inertia, sloth, facelessness; in general, everything related to the last twenty years, especially, the last years. At this political scenario the arrival of Yuri Vladimirovich, whom, I repeat once more, I deeply respected as a human being, was really a great event. I don't want to go deep into this question now. I hope that my memoirs will be published very soon and you will be able to read about this. We were really relatively close, and discussed many questions during many years. We always enjoyed mutual understanding. If we had not been so close, because of everything I told him while being still in Stavropol, Gorbachev's path would have been cut, and not only the political one, if instead of him I would have talked to another person. He could spend three hours with Raisa Maximovna talking about students and problems of education in our universities, but his most important quality was that he was a good listener. And this tells a lot. In general, I speak about this man with love and respect because I knew him well. But I still doubt that he would have chosen the path of reforms, the path of deep democratic transformations of our country.

Stanislav Govoryukhin (film director, writer, and State Duma deputy)

I don't recognize Mikhail Sergeevich today. Once I happened to attend one of his meetings with students. I said then that I bow to him in admiration. But at those times, quoting his own simile, he had not yet descended Everest. He behaved very diplomatically, avoiding direct answers. But today, I repeat, I don't recognize him. This means only one thing: that he descended the mountain safely, without hurting himself. Being a mountain climber myself I can corroborate that the most difficult part is the descent from the peak, when the victory has already been gained. When you reach the valley, you can see, analyze your path from a distance, understand where you made a mistake, under which circumstances you behaved correctly. Today's answers are quite revealing. Bearing in mind that you were getting ready for this conference beforehand, we could assume that your answers were prepared to a great extent. I would like to ask Mikhail Sergeevich the following question.

Taking into account today's situation, could you support Yeltsin? I ask you not to answer this question right away because I would like to explain my own opinions concerning this matter. I have always thought that no animal is more terrible than this man. I have never hesitated to point this out. At the very beginning, when foreign journalists loved to say: "You must agree that there is no alternative other than Yeltsin," I used to answer: "Let's go to the window." I came to the window and saw a man carrying a string-bag. Then I said: "Look at him. This is the alternative to Yeltsin. Let's approach him and ask him a question. I am sure that he has never been a member of Politburo; it is quite possible that he even does not drink. Then he can't be any worse."

As a matter of fact, when at the meetings somebody asks me if there is an alternative to Yeltsin, I always answer: "Yes, there is. Anyone of you is an alternative to Yeltsin. Anyone, because you can't be worse. You can't think of anything worse than that." For me, Yeltsin has always been some kind of collective image. As well as Gaidar. For me, he is not just Gaidar. For me, he is a collective image similar to those portrayed in "Gaidar and

His Team” and “Dom Kino” from where, by the way, they were bombarding the Russian Supreme Soviet building. Fortunately, I look at you and realize that most of you were not present at this mess where the president was obligated to act against the Parliament.

A new situation has arisen now. You must have noticed those who used to kiss up to Yeltsin, especially those who belong to the creative intelligentsia. This fact is, by the way, quite surprising because the Russian intelligentsia, due to its nature, has always opposed the government. Always. Even the Communist, Stalin, or Khrushchev governments. True, it has always been a gossiping, spiritual opposition, but still an opposition. And now we have the most insignificant government of all, not even the government, but the most

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insignificant power, and, suddenly, our intelligentsia fails not only to oppose them, but even begins to love them with all their heart. They loved this power so much, but now they urgently start to sell it right in front of our eyes. This very fact makes us suspect that there is some-

thing not clean here. I understand that they are traitors by their nature, by their spirit. First of all, they are surely wrong. They bury Yeltsin too soon. Nobody dies from alcoholism. Perhaps his rating among the population is even increasing after the Chechen incident. They bury him soon, too soon. But this very desire to dissociate from him as soon as possible, to sell him, makes us suspect too many things.

My suspicions are the following. I believe that only a person close to Yeltsin or who forms part of his entourage, who belongs to the same Gaidar team, but determined, merciless, sober, even apparently charismatic, could be more terrible than Yeltsin himself. He will roll up his sleeves to force changes in Russia. And we will all be in trouble, very deep trouble.

That’s why I repeat my question: could you, Mikhail Sergeevich, under present conditions, defend Yeltsin or give him any kind of support? In general, what is your attitude toward him?

Gorbachev

I still have the same attitude toward the idea of socialism. I am its advocate, and it forms part of my profound convictions. I am sure that we will not be able to create a future humane democratic society without concepts embraced by the idea of socialism. This idea is as deep-rooted as the idea of Christianity, as liberal idea.

Our foundation’s motto is “New Civilization.” This motto does not contain an element of sheer rejection, but a rejection with elements that rest upon the synthesis of what we should take into the future. I don’t believe that the only choice of the twenty-first century is between capitalism and socialism. In my opinion, there will be a change of development paradigms, and the society, civilization itself, will choose their landmarks. This choice is gradually carried out with regard for a dramatic experience of the twentieth century, with regard for global challenges. It is accomplished on the basis of synthesis of political culture that civilization has at its disposal.

Every country will choose its own way to accomplish this process taking into account realities, mentality, culture and experience of the historical development of the country. Such an approach should be based on respect for a national identity of the people, their culture, and traditions. Taking into account this point of view, Marxism put forward not only the idea of socialist formation. It is not enough to have a purely formational approach to socialism. Neither in the future nor now. We won't be able to do without cultural wealth, which is contained and embraced by socialist idea. Those of us who are true to the socialist idea should not feel ourselves defeated.

I would like to emphasize that the liberal idea was not able to meet the challenges of contemporary development: it turned out to be unable to do that. Our world is in the state of spiritual crisis, revision, reevaluation of many ideas. A universal "cauldron" has been formed where we will have to find answers to problems that arise at the borderline between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. I am discussing this point in general, but I would be able to continue with this theme.

When I said that a "process has already started"—and it is always quoted with a grin—this phrase had quite a definite sense, and I would like to stress that it was a positive one. Even if our ego is too high, there is no serious politician or person of common sense who would believe that his intentions, even the most noble and honest ones, are capable of determining the course or development of history. History has its own course and logic that human beings are able or not able to foretell, it may or may not coincide with what people and politicians want or intend to do. The real process of life is a lot more rich and complex than any most perfect idea or predestination.

By the way, this is the reason why a politician should never justify or repent himself—never and to nobody, provided that he is a serious politician and not an intriguer, not a adventurist. He may explain his plans, intentions, and goals. Looking back, he may acknowledge some mistakes, admit some miscalculations, but by no means should he justify himself. It makes no sense and smells of hypocrisy. Because it is known beforehand that nothing happens or turns out as it was intended to, were it Peter I, Bismarck, Lenin, de Gaulle, or somebody else. Nobody has ever managed to surpass or "outwit" Mother History whose results after all turn out to be more unexpected, more amusing, or more terrifying than all our plans and intentions. I hope that nobody believes that I give these arguments to justify myself.

Only a decade has passed since the beginning of perestroika. Only. You must agree that it's a short time for history. I clearly see and realize that many things did not happen or turn out as they were intended to. But I cannot agree with the opinion that "we were defeated in the Third World War." We averted it while putting an end to the Cold War. We have not

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used as a political bargain either the reunification of Germany or the question of acceptance into the European Union.

If there were persons who intended to “bury” the Soviet Union as a great power, I was not among them. That’s why I immediately condemned the Belovezhsky Forest collusion—and I cannot give any other name to this dirty three-way plot—in the most unambiguous manner. Govoryukhin

“Those of us who are true to the socialist idea should not feel ourselves defeated.”

reproached me while I was still the president of the USSR with the fact that I did not order the arrest of the participants of Belovezhsky Forest meeting as soon as I found out about it. So I asked him: “Would you have personally supported me

then?” Being an honest and decent man, he answered: “No, I would not have supported you then!” The problem is that we all become wise after the event. However, I realized that such an order under the conditions of post-putsch excitement and euphoria could spark a civil war. Unfortunately, policy is not as easy as many people believe.

Wishing to put an end to the Cold War—and I have never concealed this intention—I could not even think about the possibility of replacing it with a “hot war.” That’s why a year ago in a public discussion with Henry Kissinger that took place at Menden, Germany—[Foreign Minister] Hans-Dietrich Genscher also participated in it—I categorically opposed the plans to extend the zone of NATO influence up to the borders of Russia. I said then that we did not put an end to the Cold War and destroy the Berlin wall only to build a new wall—at the very borders of Russia. I still do not consider wise or far-sighted the NATO policy of the present Russian administration. Not only must we reorient our policy, renouncing our “superpower” ambitions, but also our Western partners. This is a position that I have strictly adhered to.

Today, after the event, they reproach me with not supporting the “500 Days” plan. It was not because I wanted to delay economic reforms. I was worried about their extremist “shock” tendency. Many people seem to realize now that it is impossible to use hit-and-run attacks on an economy. It does not bring any good. It only leads to polarization of the society between rich and poor, to the decay and collapse of industry. The ones to justify themselves should be those who acted by the principle.

Nevertheless, no matter how contradictory and complex the present situation in Russia is, I am far from believing that we find ourselves on the verge of disintegration and collapse of the country. Policy and politicians have a number of possibilities and methods to avert a disastrous development of the events. It is not easy to subdue, destroy, or raze Russia to the ground. I definitely don’t agree with a popular opinion that Russia is not compatible with democracy, that it is doomed to dictatorship or a despotic regime. It is necessary to change policies and politicians who went bankrupt, who led the country to its present miserable state. And this can only be achieved by democratic means, through free elections.

Now the question about the party nomenklatura: was I aware of its power and its strength? Have I taken this into account?

I believe that it is impossible to demand that a person who launches a number of reforms, especially profound reforms whose effects are often seen a lot later, calculates everything to the last detail. I understood this problem. By the way, I am the product of this very nomenklatura and its anti-product

at the same time—its “grave-digger.” If, according to our Marxist logic, capitalism gives birth to its own grave-digger, the proletariat, then the party nomenklatura also gave birth to many people with a clear conscience and high morals who finally arrived at conclusions that turned them into reformists.

I realized the power of the party nomenklatura: it is the backbone of the regime; it's impossible to change anything without changing and reforming the party itself and its cadres. You must remember that I said in Leningrad: “All of you will have a chance to undertake perestroika.” It was an invitation to take part in reforms: join the reforms, think about your role, about your changes, think about them!

You remember how we proclaimed: learn to live under democratic conditions and prove that you have the right to manage this or that area at this or that level of the society as the result of victory gained at free elections. It was also an appeal to the nomenklatura. I knew that among them there were many talented and capable people who worried about their country, decent people. If I had not been sure about this, I would have never begun these reforms.

Finally, you reminded me about “organizational games.” It seems like a reproach for something that can only be called thoughtlessness.

I believe that's not the question. If you remember the motto “more democracy, more socialism,” which I mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, then you will understand that the question of glasnost arose precisely due to the fact that it was necessary to put under control all processes that were taking place in our society. It was necessary to give people an opportunity to control the government, those whom they voted for. It was necessary to pull people out of apathy, raise their civic conscience, try to gradually influence their conduct. Even that paradoxical Congress of People's Deputies, which even today is regarded as a farce, played an important role. I must confess that many of these things were deliberately planned and implemented to wake up the public conscience of our people. Our enterprises also demanded autonomy provided that we began to speak about “self-financing, self-ruling, and self-compensation.” The following new logic comes into effect: if I have to live according to the results of my activities, then I must have a right to choose those who will govern me and the right to change them. Through all these methods: free elections, elements of democracy in economy, glasnost, the Congress of People's Deputies, choice of representatives of the intelligentsia—the thinking, active part of society.

The most important task was to raise a sense of propriety in the individual—confidence in his right to make decisions. All these were links, elements of an approach aimed at shaking the society, waking it up, pulling it out of social apathy and indifference.

Of course, many elements of these methods were naïve, utopian, and not tied up by the system. I can criticize them now. But then, at the beginning of the road, it had to be done. It was an impulse needed to wake up ideas and political energy.

In my opinion, this strategy came true in many aspects, but our decisive step was made when the nomenklatura realized that democracy was changing their positions, was obligating them to prove the right to govern the country to the people; so they began to hold back democratic processes.

Then, an idea of political reform was born. I am convinced that we had to learn from Khrushchev's fate. Because even after we introduced new, fresh forces into new structures as a result of free elections, the party nomenklatura set themselves an aim to remove the chairman of the Supreme Soviet and later on, the president, through the Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet, and to remove the general secretary, who wanted to end their privileges, through party plenums.

Allow me to tell you that you oversimplify the significance of events, that you are under the influence of a common stereotype. You are not really familiar with the system we lived in that constantly reminds us about itself with gun shots and bursts of machine guns. I am quite familiar with it. Some belittled the reforms from the Left; others, from the Right. That's why I frequently had a feeling that I was moving sometimes to the Right, sometimes to the Left. In fact, these were necessary manoeuvres aimed at conservation of democratic choice, democratic trends directed at leading the vessel of perestroika into calm and safe waters until the moment and stage when all the attempts to hold back a process of transformation will be doomed to failure.

What about the idea that would reunite the society, the country? I see the

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search for answers to this question in reunification, synthesis of both ideas—an idea of democracy and idea of patriotism. That's what we really need.

Could I support Yeltsin today? Now? You know that as early as January of last year, while

reflecting on the bloody events of October 1993, I said that it was a reprisal, a bombardment not only of the Parliament, but of the whole country. That's why it marks a limit. People will never forgive it. Any decent government, which has some conscience and decency left, would have resigned even under conditions of drama on a smaller scale. That only means that the present government does not have either the first, second, or third left. It just seems to be afraid of losing power. Nevertheless, I said then that if the president told the truth in his appeal to the Federation Council—and what he said meant a 180 degree turn—I would sign under 80 percent of what has been said. And I said it in public. But soon I realized, and became convinced by the fact, that this was just the usual kind of manoeuvre, a fraud, and my vain hope that the president finally began to see and understand the problems clearly disappeared. No. Nothing that the government has promised and signed in the Agreement on Social Concord⁴ has been done. It was the same kind of fraud as the Belovezhsky Forest Agreement, according to which in words we were preserving the country but, in reality it was aimed at dismantling the Soviet Union under this cover.

That's why I cannot support the president now. And I also warn that this regime is dangerous. It threatens with dictatorship. It has to be changed. But it has to be changed—and this once again confirms my alternative—within a legal framework, i.e., through free elections. The regime could hold on for another year, or two or three. But it will rot, and this is the most frightening fact. This putrefaction will be very difficult to avoid. Why? Because during that time we will lose our achievements in science, destroy our culture, destroy our scientific-technological basis. And then we will deal with a

defeat of strategic character. And we will be hanging around the backyard of civilization and common world process for a long time.

That's why I cannot support President Yeltsin: it is dangerous for Russia. Today the president could do us a last favor: resign or call free elections because he realizes that he is losing support. According to the general public opinion polls, at the end of December 1994, 13 percent trusted the president to a certain degree; 16 percent trusted and distrusted him at the same time; and 65 percent distrusted him. Under these conditions the president cannot count on success of reforms. Now we face a number of the most serious structural reforms. It is a very difficult stage. [Russian presidential economic adviser and Soviet "500 Days" plan co-author Yevgeny] Yasin and some other representatives of the government, who have not yet lost the sense of reality, responsibility, and conscience, openly warn about this. Not to mention the opposition. It is impossible to secure success under the conditions of such a gap between the government and the people. This gap has to be eliminated.

If the president, realizing these facts, would have offered extraordinary elections, some of the people, I believe, would have forgiven him. Let him decide if he has to participate in those elections or not. If he

"I don't have an answer to the vital question that troubles us today—how to save democracy in Russia."

gains a new support, then he will really have a chance. By the way, he has never been elected in Russia, he was only elected in the RSFSR, which was only one of the republics that formed the USSR, when there still existed a powerful central censorship. These two situations are quite different as there were many representatives of Russia in the Union center. It only means that Yeltsin had other rivals.

I have to say that I don't have an answer to the vital question that troubles us today—how to save democracy in Russia. That's the most important question. And if we solve this problem, we will overcome everything and it will all come right at the end, and we will see a strong, effective government close to its people, who will support it.

Notes

1. Gorbachev is referring to the Alma-Ata riots that occurred when Moscow imposed an ethnic Russian, Gennady Kolbin, to replace the ethnic Kazakh, Dinmukhamed Kunayev, as first secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party.

2. Belovezhsky Forest was the site of the meeting between Belarusian Supreme Soviet Chairman Stanislau Shushkevich, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, where it was unexpectedly decided to abolish the USSR and create the Commonwealth of Independent States. Gorbachev learned of the agreement post facto and lamented that U.S. President George Bush was telephoned by the three republic leaders before he was notified.

3. Sumgait was the site in the Caucasus where the bloody Armenian-Azeri struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh began in 1988. The central press at the time still managed to suppress most accounts of the bloodshed, and long-time dissident Sergei Grigoryants became the main source of information through his magazine *Glasnost*, despite the Soviet authorities' attempts to shut it down.

4. The Agreement on Social Concord was signed between the Russian

government and major political parties, notably those of the irreconcilable opposition, providing informal guidelines for political battles and stipulating that both sides refrain from violence and excessively inflammatory statements against each other. The government agreed, for example, to stop using the term “Red-Brown” to describe its irreconcilable opposition.