

THE INEVITABILITY OF *PERESTROIKA*

By *Andrei Sakharov*

“The Inevitability of Perestroika” was the last comprehensive statement by Andrei Sakharov of his views on the major issues, the last in the series that began with his celebrated essay Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom.

Fifteen years have passed since Sakharov wrote this article, but it is a timely reminder of the Soviet Union’s situation in March 1988: the economy was in decline; there were serious shortages of consumer goods; corruption was pervasive and growing; reform was stalled by a swollen, obstructive, privileged bureaucracy; the legal system was wretched; Soviet troops were still fighting in Afghanistan although Gorbachev knew the war was lost; the Soviet army was overlarge and inefficient; and the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe was falling apart.

Sakharov details two ethnic conflicts - the struggle of the Crimean Tatars to return to their homeland and the attempt of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh to end their subordination to Azerbaijan. Like Gorbachev and many others, however, he underestimated the extent and force of the ethnic discontent, which broke up the Soviet Union in 1991.

It is clear that the economic and political reforms introduced by President Yeltsin and his lieutenants in 1991 were a response to - and not the cause of - the disintegration of the Soviet state and its economy. Certainly Russia and the Russians would be better off today if the reformers had avoided the errors and misdeeds of the past ten years, but I am convinced that Russia would be worse off had it stuck with Gorbachev’s program of “market socialism” and “guided democracy.” This does not diminish the credit due Gorbachev for his introduction of perestroika in 1986 and for his decision to recall Sakharov from exile in Gorky to become the voice of the loyal opposition in Moscow.

This article also refutes the common opinion that those who pressed for the radical liberalization of the Communist economic and political system anticipated an easy, swift transition to democracy and free enterprise. Sakharov recognized that “serious economic, psychological, and organizational difficulties and obstacles are inevitable.” He was, however, “convinced of the absolute historical necessity of perestroika. And like war - victory is a must!”

Sakharov’s article was originally published in Inogo ne dano [No Other Way], a collection of articles on perestroika by prominent Soviet liberals, edited by Yuri Afanasiev and published by Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1988. This is the first English translation of “Neizbezhnost perestroiki” [The Inevitability of Perestroika].

Edward Kline

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Our society has turned out to be seriously diseased. This did not come about suddenly; it was the result of a complex historical process. Its last stage has been called “the era of stagnation.” The symptoms of our disease are known, and to some degree we understand its causes and internal workings, though we are far from a complete understanding of all its facets.

The first cause was the absence of pluralism in the government, in the economy (except for the period of the New Economic Policy¹), and in ideology. The bureaucratization of the entire life of our country is closely connected with this. All the strands of administration have been concentrated in the hands of people who hold power because of their official position in the government or in the Communist Party, and who constitute a distinct bureaucratic caste. Bureaucracy is of course a necessary element of contemporary society, in fact, of any organized society. But several negative phenomena often appear in conjunction with its normal and often highly useful functioning: elitism; inflexibility, and an administrative command structure which strictly subordinates its middle ranks to the higher instances and completely disregards any democratic control from below, often with negative consequences. In the “anti-pluralistic” conditions of our country, these negative phenomena have acquired a qualitatively different and intractable character.

Stalin personified this new social force. This does not mean that the bureaucracy had an easy time under Stalin. In actual fact, his era saw the emergence of a one-man dictatorship, aggravated by Stalin’s cruelty and other negative traits. Nevertheless, although other factors contributed to his ascendancy, Stalin had received his mandate to govern from the bureaucracy. This new power first showed its teeth by liquidating NEP, which could have served as the basis for a pluralistic development of our society in combination with voluntary cooperatives in the countryside and the rational growth of state-owned industry on a healthy economic foundation. But this pattern was unacceptable for the new Soviet bureaucracy.

What came afterwards is well known: forcible collectivization, the impoverishment of the peasants for the sake of hasty industrialization, and mass famine, with the appalling isolation of the regions condemned to destruction and almost no assistance for those starving to death. (This was just the time when our export of grain to the West peaked.) Then came the Great Terror, which devoured not only the Revolution’s old guard and the military commanders but all the vital forces of our society, reaching its tragic apogee in 1937. And much more frightfulness followed.

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The reforms attempted by Khrushchev and his aides were opposed by the bureaucratic establishment, the *nomenklatura*, and accomplished little. The economic reforms of the 1960s accomplished even less. These

¹ The New Economic Policy (NEP) was adopted in 1921 in order to restore the Soviet economy after the Civil War by making concessions to private enterprise in agriculture, trade and industry. Stalin replaced NEP in 1928 with the first Five Year Plan, which called for rapid industrialization. (*Trans.*)

failures greatly influenced the psychological climate of the decades that followed. A further experiment with “*perestroika*” in the socialist camp was suppressed by tanks in 1968.

Nevertheless, after Khrushchev’s condemnation of Stalin’s crimes at the 20th Party Congress, the Soviet system rid itself of the extremes and excesses of the Stalin period and became more civilized, putting on a face that, if not entirely “human,” at least was not that of a man-eating tiger. More than that, this new era was in some sense psychologically comfortable for many people.

But it was also a period of stagnation, that led the country deeper and deeper down a blind alley. The possibility of expanding the economy by extensive means had been exhausted, and the system was incapable of growing by intensive means. As technical progress was not profitable for managers operating in a bureaucratic system, new technology was not applied nor was it even developed since bureaucratization also affected science. Many of our scientific and technical ideas have come from the West, often after a lag of years and even decades. For all practical purposes, our country has been dropping out of the scientific revolution and becoming its parasite.

Our productivity has fallen drastically. New construction is painfully slow. Mikhail Gorbachev’s recent statement sums it all up: there has been no growth of our gross national product during the last four five-year plans, and in the 1980s, it has even declined. Our agriculture is in a state of permanent crisis, resulting in poor nutrition of the population, limited selection in food stores, and the necessity of purchasing grain and other agricultural products abroad. Despite all this, the bureaucracy strenuously opposes all initiatives seeking to strengthen the independent activity of the lowest links of the economic system and the material interest of workers in the results of their labor.

A recognized example of this is the fate of Khudenko, one of the forerunners of *perestroika*, who was accused of violations of financial discipline and sent to die in a labor camp.²

Another aspect of our “era of the bureaucracy” is the moral degradation of society, which is itself closely linked to our economic deformities. Hypocrisy and lies flourish in the press, on radio and television, in schools, in the Communist Party youth organization (*Komsomol*), and in the family. Having been deceived so often by pretty words, people no longer believe in them. Our society is overcome by apathy. The stifling psychological atmosphere weighs especially on young people, alienating and corrupting them.

The bureaucracy is far from self-sacrificing. Concealing the realities behind demagogic slogans, our officials make a mockery of social justice in housing, in health care (most people, for example, have no possibility of getting up-to-date medicines), in the quality of education, and in people’s material needs in general. The

² From 1964 to 1972, Ivan Khudenko, an agronomist, was allowed to run a state farm in Kazakhstan with discretion to select his own staff and to decide their rate of pay. Productivity rose fourfold, workers’ earnings eightfold, and the farm’s income even more. At the instigation of the agricultural bureaucracy, a fabricated criminal case was brought against Khudenko and his experimental farm was liquidated. Khudenko was sentenced in 1973 to six years labor camp (where he died in 1974). He was “rehabilitated” in 1989. See Arkady Vaksberg, *The Soviet Mafia*, St. Martin’s Press, 1991, pp 164-165. (*Trans.*)

salaries of many workers, and especially those of teachers, doctors, and other rank-and-file intellectuals, have been artificially reduced, in effect imposing a hidden tax that weighs most heavily on the lowest paid. The great majority of pensions are shamefully inadequate. At the same time, elite groups enjoy enormous, unjust privileges.

A social portrait of the era of stagnation would be incomplete without remarking on the colossal growth of various forms of corruption. Mafioso groups have sprung up, entwined with local Party and government structures, and with connections, as a rule, to higher-ups. The Uzbekistan mafia is a prime example, with its multi-billion ruble embezzlements, its inflated reports of the cotton harvest, its systematic bribe-taking, and its exploitation of the cotton-pickers. Thousands of people, children in particular, have become victims of the uncontrolled and massive application of defoliants and other toxic chemicals. Those who protested have been subjected to cruel punishments in underground dungeons and psychiatric hospitals.

In the Stalinist era, the forced labor of millions of prisoners, perishing in the terrible *Gulag* system, played a substantial economic role, especially in developing the sparsely populated regions of the East and the North. Of course, this system was not only infinitely inhuman and criminal, it was also inefficient, a substantial element in the wasteful extensive economy of that period, not to mention the far-reaching consequences of the barbaric destruction of the country's human potential. In recent years the use of forced labor for economic purposes has declined dramatically, but between one and two million persons are still in labor camps or fulfilling compulsory labor assignments.

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Conditions of detention remain very grim. They fail to satisfy present-day standards and the demands of humanity. Prisoners suffer from unbearable labor, from inadequate food, from restricted visits (permitted extremely rarely, and then only with relatives), as well as from the whims of their keepers. Sentences are unbelievably long. In contrast to the Stalinist era, our prisons are now filled primarily with persons convicted of ordinary crimes, but it is important to bear in mind that our judicial and investigative systems are very primitive. (With the advent of *glasnost* in recent years, information about this has appeared in the press.) The ethical conduct and legal knowledge of our judges are often quite poor. They depend for support on the local authorities. Their decisions often lack any explanation. They repeat the arguments of biased investigators, which are sometimes based on coerced confessions obtained by third degree methods. Moreover, our most dangerous criminals appear to be immune to prosecution, and some occupy high posts. The police, the Ministry of Interior, the prosecutors and judges have turned out to be closely connected with this mafia in a number of cases.

The world of the camps is the very bottom of our society. Their horror, the lack of any prospect for a brighter future, reflect the social tragedy and moral sickness of our life, as do the media reports about the awful conditions in our orphanages and reformatories. A disproportionate number of prisoners are products of our orphanages, and they tend to receive very severe sentences. It seems that such deprived individuals should be treated with special leniency, but in fact, the contrary often turns out to be the case.

Former convicts also tend to receive unjustly harsh sentences. During the 1970s, I received hundreds of letters about these problems (and also about difficulties associated with emigration). Unfortunately, I was unable to help my correspondents.

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As regards the KGB, in the 1970s and 1980s that organization recovered the influence it had lost in the 1950s and 1960s. But I should also note that the role of the KGB is not entirely negative.

On one hand, the KGB conducted a ruthless campaign of repression against the dissident movement that appeared in our country toward the end of the 1960s (or somewhat earlier). Though relatively few in number, it laid the psychological and moral groundwork for the pluralistic development of our society. I especially admire individuals who dared to act in defense of *glasnost* [openness] and human rights, among them the editors of the celebrated *Chronicle of Current Events*. This typescript *samizdat* [self-published] periodical appeared for more than thirteen years (with one brief suspension). It informed the Soviet and international public about our unjust trials, psychiatric repressions, conditions in places of detention, and our country's problems regarding emigration, religious life, and minority nationalities. Other dissident groups were interested in particular issues, including some of the problems I have mentioned above.

Dissidents were harshly persecuted in the 1970s and 1980s, many of them spending long years in prisons, labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals. Some died in confinement, including Estonian scientist Juri Kukk, the remarkable Ukrainian poet Vasyly Stus, the Ukrainian teacher Oleksa Tykhy, and the worker and author Anatoly Marchenko. The misuse of psychiatry for political purposes was especially cruel and socially dangerous. (The danger was not reduced by the fact that many victims of psychiatric repression needed proper psychiatric assistance. It was in fact comparatively rare for a completely normal individual such as General Pyotr Grigorenko, one of the outstanding personalities of our time, to become the object of psychiatric abuse.) Justice requires me to note that the scale of political repressions during the era of stagnation was immensely reduced from the Stalinist era.

Did the KGB have links to the "Terrorist International," which appeared on the scene in the 1960s and 1970s, or to other destructive forces? This is an important question demanding a detailed and impartial investigation making use of *glasnost* and patterned on the US investigation of the CIA. I am convinced that our country needs to learn the full truth about our past and present, however difficult it may prove to be. There should not be any inaccessible corners of our life. (I am not, of course, suggesting the "outing" of our intelligence agents working abroad.)

On the positive side, the KGB, because of its elite status, was almost the only force untouched by corruption, and therefore a counterweight to the mafia. This ambiguity is reflected in the personal fate and position of Yuri Andropov, director of the KGB [1967-1982], who, becoming head of state, continued to fight corruption and crime, but took no other steps to overcome the negative phenomena of the era of stagnation.

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Examination of our international policies pursued during recent decades is also necessary. They too exhibited signs of stagnation, insufficient flexibility, and the absence of a truly fresh approach to today's unprecedented problems.

In some regions, the USSR's policies turned out objectively to support destructive forces, especially in the Near East, where compromise and a willingness to make concessions are required from Israel and from the Palestinians and the Arab states as well.

Policies regarding weapons and disarmament were insufficiently flexible and at times irrational. The deployment in the 1970s and 1980s of mid-range rockets in Europe is one example. Trust in the USSR - and consequently, international security - has steadily declined. The noisy, often artificially instigated, "fight for peace" changed nothing in this respect.

The USSR's involvement in Afghanistan has had especially serious, tragic significance. The introduction of Soviet armed forces met with strong national resistance, which the USSR countered with a cruel, multi-year war that has caused enormous suffering for the Afghan people. Somewhere between 600,000 and 1,000,000 Afghans have been killed. Hunger and disease are epidemic. More than 4,000,000 Afghans have become refugees, a quarter of the country's population. Many Russian soldiers have been killed or crippled. The waging of this unjust war has had devastating psychological and social effects within the USSR itself. The events in Afghanistan have become a major source of international tension and mistrust in the region and a threat to peace everywhere. The Afghan adventure embodies the whole danger and irrationality of a closed totalitarian society.³

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I have outlined the stagnation and dead end of the mid-1980s. Fortunately, persons came to the fore who recognized that it was impossible for us to continue in this way. The slogans of *perestroika* and its ideology are well known: economic reform, *glasnost*, democratization (in particular, new principles for picking our leaders), social justice, new political thinking, and the priority of the common human goals of survival and development over particular state, class, ethnic, departmental and private interests.

Is the program of *perestroika* realistic? This is a question that interests everyone today.

First of all, I want to emphasize that I am convinced of the absolute historical necessity of *perestroika*. And like war - victory is a must! But serious economic, psychological, and organizational difficulties and obstacles are inevitable. For many years, the people (and here I include the intelligentsia) have been schooled in

³ Soviet troops completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan in March 1989. (*Trans.*)

pretending to work, in hypocrisy, lies, and egoism, in adapting to a corrupt system. Have they preserved within themselves adequate moral force? If this force is insufficient, then our progress will be slow and contradictory, with backsliding and reverses. But I believe that among the people, and among the young especially, a vital fire burns beneath their outer shell. It must make itself known. This depends on us all. Moral and material motivation is needed for *perestroika*. Each of us must be interested in its success. However, the sense of a great common cause cannot be instilled by decree or conjured up by pep talks, and yet, without it, everything will remain up in the air. The people have to believe that they are being told the truth. This requires our leaders to speak only the truth and the whole truth, and always to back up their words with deeds.

Even in the most favorable circumstances, there will still be great difficulties. Already, the transition to enterprise self-sufficiency and self-financing, to new systems of supply, to cooperatives⁴, have cost many people part of their income, and some have even lost their jobs. And this is only the beginning of our difficult transition. It would be better, of course, if we can make fewer foolish mistakes and proceed in a more rational and responsible manner. The main obstacles to *perestroika* are the ossification of the bureaucratic administrative system, which has grown with time, and its millions of employees at all levels, who have no interest in an efficient, self-regulating system. This creates the danger that some of them will actively, or passively, through lack of understanding or ability, hinder *perestroika*, will pervert it, will ridicule it, or will represent its temporary difficulties as its final collapse. We will have to get through all of this.

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What more do I expect from *perestroika*?

First, *glasnost*. *Glasnost* ought to create a new moral climate in our country. We have made the most progress in this regard. There are now fewer and fewer forbidden themes. We are beginning to see our society as it was in the past, and as it is today. People should know the truth and be able to express their thoughts freely. Corrupting lies, silence, and hypocrisy should be banished from our life forever. Only an individual who feels himself free can display the initiative needed by our society.

A second, equally important foundation for society's moral health is social justice. I have already touched on the privileges of the elite, wages and pensions, social equality and certain other aspects of this broad, multi-faceted topic. Now I will discuss one concrete issue. Evidently, prices will have to be brought into line with the laws of economics, and that will require an increase in the cost of foodstuffs. Families with low per capita incomes should receive compensation for this. In my opinion a just solution would be to give to the least-well-off 30-40 percent of the population coupons for the gratis receipt of a part of their monthly diet. A significant portion of the government subsidies that are now used to keep food prices artificially low should be used to pay for these coupons. The remainder of the current subsidies should be spent on other

⁴ The so-called "cooperatives" of the late 1980s were in practice private businesses masked by a more ideologically acceptable label. (*Trans.*)

forms of compensation or returned to the state budget. If the annual subsidies total 60 billion rubles⁵ (I do not know the exact figure), then giving to one hundred million citizens coupons amounting to 50 percent of this sum would mean an average of 25 rubles per month per recipient, which should suffice to compensate them for the increase in food prices. The less- well-off citizens should also be compensated for increases in rent and certain other expenses. Giving only cash is not a good idea since many, especially young people who represent a significant number of those needing assistance, would spend it on clothes and other non-food items, and then go hungry. That is the reason for coupons. A combination of coupons and cash might in fact be best.

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Not being a specialist, I refrain from discussing important economic issues in depth and limit myself to a few remarks of an “outsider.” It is necessary to create an economic and legal environment, which encourages initiative, a flexible response to the economic situation, technical innovation, and excellent individual work without any impediments or restrictions imposed by ideological dogma.

We already have a law on state enterprises, a preliminary draft law on cooperatives, and a law on individual labor activity. These laws are very important and in principle open up qualitatively new political and economic opportunities, but the omissions and the contradictions with the fundamental spirit of the documents are striking. For instance, what does “control by a Party organization” mean in the case of a cooperative? The preamble of the draft law on cooperatives specifies the right to freely quit a cooperative, but for some reason, a collective farm’s General Assembly is granted the right to deny a member permission to withdraw. The law on cooperatives and the statute on collective farms should provide for the right of every member to unimpeded departure with appropriate compensation for his labor, with preservation of his seniority, and with the grant of a plot of the farm’s land if he so requests. A collective farmer is not a serf - a collective farm should be a completely voluntary association. Any violation of this principle is fraught with profound social, psychological and economic dangers and the consequences for society we are now witnessing. The further development of the role in the economy of family and collective contractors is important and there should be legal, economic and moral support for such initiatives. Good land should be assigned upon request to individual farmers on a long-term basis with the right of inheritance. This is the only way to guarantee the careful preservation of one of our society’s main resources - our fertile land. Small cooperatives should play an especially great role in this, passing through transitional organizational forms to collective contracts.

Maximum support is needed for individual enterprise, including creating the most favorable economic and juridical conditions for entrepreneurs and encouraging in them a long-term mindset. All regulations, as, for example, the decree on unearned income, which inhibit the growth of individual labor activity must be repealed. There is no reason to fear large personal incomes if their source is the person’s labor, initiative,

⁵ In 1988, the official rate of exchange was 0.6 rubles for \$1, although a ruble could be bought for 10-20 cents on the black market. It is not possible, however, to ascertain a meaningful figure for the purchasing power parity of the 1988 ruble against the dollar because of the Soviet system for fixing prices. (*Trans.*)

invention, skillful exploitation of market opportunities, or use of personal property. The principle that “everything is permitted that is not prohibited by a law” should be understood literally. Some especially useful sorts of individual enterprise - such as beekeeping - should be exempt from taxation.

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As I have mentioned, dissidents were subject to harsh persecution in the 1970s and 1980s. In the course of 1987 the majority of “prisoners of conscience” - persons imprisoned for their opinions or for nonviolent actions in support of their beliefs according to Amnesty International’s definition - were released. Some, including Anatoly Shcharansky, Yuri Orlov, my wife and myself, were released even earlier. However, about twenty persons sentenced under Article 70 of the RSFSR Criminal Code [Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda] remain in prison, labor camp, or internal exile, as well as some prisoners of conscience sentenced under other articles of the Criminal Code, or confined in psychiatric hospitals. All of them should be freed. This is critical for improving the moral atmosphere in our country and for overcoming “The Inertia of Fear” (title of a samizdat book).⁶ It is psychologically important that all prisoners of conscience should be rehabilitated, and not simply pardoned and quietly released. It is past time to end the practice of rehabilitating innocent people posthumously instead of during their lifetime. Furthermore, the 1987 demand that prisoners of conscience should formally request a pardon was clearly improper from a moral and legal standpoint. All articles of the Criminal Code which were used to prosecute persons for their opinions should be repealed. This includes the above-mentioned Article 70, which is almost a word-for-word copy of the notorious Article 58 in force during Stalin’s time. There is also Article 190¹ (Circulation of fabrications known to be false which defame the Soviet state and social system). Judges do not trouble themselves with seeking proof that the statements were “known to be false” or with analyzing the meaning of this phrase. In addition, there are Article 142 [Violations of laws on separation of church and state and of church and school] and Article 227 [Infringement of the person and the rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious ceremonies], which permit prosecution for religious practice. And, of course, the penal system should be made more humane and brought into line with international standards.

The complete abolition of the death penalty is also necessary. Beccaria, Hugo, Tolstoy and other writers and humanists of earlier times opened people’s eyes to the extreme psychological cruelty of capital punishment. Besides, errors in court proceedings are inevitable, and they cannot be corrected after a defendant has been executed. The abolition of capital punishment would be a step toward the humanization of our society. Unfortunately, many people are not convinced of this, and, appalled by certain crimes, continue to campaign for its retention. I hope that their opinion will not prevail.

Perestroika should promote the openness of our society as a fundamental prerequisite for the moral and economic health of our country and for international trust and security. The concept of “openness” should include: monitoring by society of key government decisions (repetition of a mistake such as the invasion of Afghanistan must be made impossible), freedom of opinion, freedom to receive and impart information,

and freedom to choose one's country of residence and one's domicile within that country. All these points are contained in one of the most important documents of our time, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, and also in the UN Covenants on Human Rights, ratified by the USSR and referred to in the Helsinki Final Act.

Freedom to choose one's country of residence implies the right to emigrate and the right to return. The right to emigrate cannot be reduced to the reunion of families, and therefore the demand for an invitation (*vyzov*) from a relative - and still worse, from a "close" relative - is completely illegitimate. (Many applications for emigration have been refused on grounds of an insufficiently close relationship with the *vyzov*'s sender, and without a *vyzov*, there can be no discussion at all of emigration). In its most liberal form, the right of emigration has great social, political and international significance, permitting all citizens to choose the social and economic system, which they believe best for themselves. The borders between countries would disappear in some sense, and this would serve as an important guarantee of peace. A person's decision to emigrate should not, however, have a final, fatal character. People should have the option to reconsider their decision and to correct mistakes. The right to return is an important adjunct to the right to emigrate.

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I will discuss the right to choose one's domicile within a country in connection with the Crimean Tatars. They are one of the two ethnic groups, which were the subject of my letter to Mikhail Gorbachev. What follows is based on that letter.

In May 1944, soon after the liberation of the Crimea, Stalin ordered the forcible deportation of hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tatars⁷ - mostly children, women, and the elderly, since the men were in the army. Their resettlement was carried out with great cruelty under the direction of Kabulov, a deputy of Beria who was tried and shot with him in 1953. The "resettlement of peoples" was one of Stalin's crimes, which were denounced in the 1950s. Almost all the resettled peoples were allowed to return to their native regions, with two or three exceptions. The Crimean Tatars were among the exceptions. Up until now, they have been unsuccessful in their efforts to return to their homeland. A Commission created by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet has failed to find a just solution. Crimean Tatars who have tried to return to the Crimea have met with discrimination at the local level in the form of refusal to register their residence or their acquisition of homes because of their nationality, together with provocative articles in the press.

The situation is now becoming more acute. Everyone still uses, especially unofficially, the argument that the Crimean Tatars collaborated with the Germans during the war. But holding an entire nation responsible for the acts of a few individuals is unjust. Tatar activists have been labeled extremists even though their entire

⁶ Published in English as: Valentin Turchin, *The Inertia of Fear and the Scientific Worldview*, Columbia University Press, 1981. (*Trans.*)

⁷ Descendants of the Mongol Golden Horde, the Crimean Tatars formed their own state, the Crimean Khanate, until it was annexed by Russia in 1783. They speak a Turkic language, distinct from the Volga Tatar language, and practice the Muslim religion. (*Trans.*)

movement has always used strictly legal means, completely excluding violence. And this despite the bulldozing and burning of Tatar homes in the Crimea, which have driven some of the Tatars to self-immolation. Tatar activists should in fact be co-opted to serve on the Commission. It would also be useful to conduct a referendum among the Crimean Tatars to find a way to resolve their problem (acceptable also other nationalities of the Soviet Union) and as well as to discover which Tatars want to return to the Crimea. Justice must be restored! I believe that there should be a government decision to organize the return to the Crimea of all Crimean Tatars who wish to live there, offering them priority for registration (*propiska*), favorable terms for the purchase of homes, special loans, and assistance with job placement. It might be a good idea to encourage voluntary resettlement of the Tatars mainly in one of the Crimea's steppe regions, and to create there an autonomous national area [*okrug*]. This compromise can serve as the basis for further progress toward a solution of the Crimean Tatar question that takes into account the interests of the Soviet Union as a whole. The Crimea's southern shore should probably come under the direct rule of the central government as a unique health resort for all Soviet people and as a world-class tourist attraction.

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Another acute ethnic conflict, which I have written about, involves the Nagorno Karabakh region. The Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous National *Oblast* [Region] was joined to the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1923. Today, about 75 percent of the *oblast's* population is Armenian, and the remaining 25 percent is made up of Azerbaijanis, Russians and Kurds. In 1923, the Armenian percentage was higher, almost 90 percent. Historically, the whole region of Nagorno Karabakh was part of Eastern Armenia. Stalin probably attached Nagorno Karabakh to Azerbaijan at the time because of domestic and international considerations. It was against the wishes of Karabakh's population, and in recent years, it has been a source of continual ethnic friction. Until recently, there were frequent acts of ethnic discrimination against Armenians, constraints on Armenian culture, and dictatorial rule.

The Armenian population was hoping that *perestroika* would bring a constitutional resolution of the question of Nagorno Karabakh. On February 20, 1988, the *oblast* Soviet of Peoples Deputies voted to petition the Supreme Soviets of Azerbaijan, Armenia, and the USSR for a transfer of Nagorno Karabakh to the Armenian SSR. Earlier, similar initiatives were passed by four of Karabakh's five *raion* [district] Soviets of Peoples Deputies, and these initiatives of the *oblast* and *raion* Soviets were supported by numerous peaceful demonstrations and meetings in Nagorno Karabakh itself and in Armenia. New democratic opportunities opened up by *perestroika* doubtless played a role in all this. Further developments, however, have brought a turn for the worse. Instead of a normal constitutional review of the February petition by an organ of the Soviet government, maneuvering began, accompanied by attempts at persuasion, directed primarily toward the Armenians. Simultaneously reports appeared in the media, which described events in an incomplete, one-sided manner. The lawful requests of the Armenians were called "extremist," and their rejection seemed foreordained. Unfortunately, this was not the first occasion when *glasnost* was suppressed just when it was most needed. This naturally provoked a reaction. In Erevan, Nagorno Karabakh and other places, there were new demonstrations, strikes and meetings. These were, nevertheless, lawful and peaceful in character.

In late February in Azerbaijan, events occurred of an entirely different sort - tragic and bloody, reminiscent of the terrible genocide of Armenians in 1915. Again, the murder of women and children, monstrous atrocities, violence, and insults. I suspect that the events in Azerbaijan, like the 1986 disorders in Alma Ata, were provoked and possibly organized by the local anti-*perestroika* mafia as a rearguard battle.

On March 23, in a postscript to my letter to Gorbachev I added: "It seems to me necessary, in conformity with the USSR Constitution, for the Soviets of Armenia and Azerbaijan to review the petition of the Nagorno Karabakh *Oblast* Soviet. In the event of disagreement, the USSR Supreme Soviet should arbitrate and decide the dispute. In these difficult days, I appeal to the peoples of Azerbaijan and Armenia to renounce all violence." On the very same day, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet published its Resolution, which, with no reference to the decisions of the Nagorno Karabakh Soviet, denied any possibility of revising the USSR's internal borders under pressure or in the face of heightened tension as this would be an action with unforeseeable and extremely dangerous consequences. In my opinion, extremely dangerous consequences for the process of *perestroika* can result precisely from ignoring the democratic expression of a people's will and from the decision of an organ of the Soviet state giving in to blackmail by anti-*perestroika* forces. It is not accidental that the crimes of Sumgait⁸ were committed when there were signs of indecision in the central government's position. I hope that the March 23 Resolution will not be the last word of the USSR Supreme Soviet and its Presidium on this problem.

With the advent of *perestroika*, many serious but hidden problems -social, economic, moral, cultural, and, unfortunately, ethnic - have come to light. They have become *perestroika* touchstone for - its potential to overcome opposition and the burden of the past. People's faith in *perestroika* largely depends on whether deeds will correspond to words. Among the key problems are: the return of the Crimean Tatars to their homeland and the union of Artsakh [the traditional Armenian name for Nagorno Karabakh] with Armenia. We must not postpone for decades the just and inevitable solutions of these problems and leave zones of continuing tension in our country.

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I will proceed now to questions of peace and disarmament, which have been at the center of my public statements since my 1968 essay *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* published in *samizdat* and in the West. The *glasnost* era has allowed me to present my views directly to the Soviet audience. In February 1987, I took part in the Moscow Forum for the Survival of Mankind. In particular, I spoke about the negative influence on international security and stability that would result from giving priority to development of an anti-missile system with space-based elements. Such a system could be built technically, but it would be extremely vulnerable and not very effective. Besides, a potential adversary could rather easily penetrate it by simpler and cheaper means than would be required for installing the anti-missile system itself. Nevertheless, an adversary would be obliged to adopt a number of measures in response, raising the

⁸ A city in Azerbaijan where an anti-Armenian pogrom occurred in February 1988.

threshold for strategic stability based on “guaranteed mutual destruction” and thereby complicating the disarmament process.

At the Forum, I also recommended abandoning the “package principle,” which tied the possibility of agreement on disarmament to conclusion of an agreement on SDI [Reagan’s program to develop an anti-missile defense]. This is a very important element of my thinking: the need to conclude agreements on midrange missiles and a fifty percent reduction of strategic weapons independent of the US position on SDI or any other condition. The opportunity for a more than fifty percent reduction of strategic weapons will depend, in my opinion, on a series of additional strategic military and political considerations, in particular, the actions of the parties with respect to anti-missile defense. As is known, soon after the Forum the USSR announced that it was abandoning the package with respect to midrange missiles, and in Washington in December 1987, Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan signed a treaty on midrange and short-range missiles. This truly historic agreement provides for the destruction of a whole class of nuclear weapons and establishes unprecedented measures for treaty verification. I hope that it opens the way for further progress.

It is generally agreed that the next step should be a fifty percent reduction of strategic weapons. The parties have shown their will to reach such an agreement and have significantly modified their positions in order to find common ground. It is very important to follow this through to completion, overcoming the difficulties remaining with respect to verification and other matters.

Neither side in the foreseeable future can fully renounce exploratory work in fields, which might lead to significant new weapons. Compromise solutions are needed. Evidently, for now, the most useful thing that can be done is to conclude an agreement on the openness of scientific research. An important proposal was made at the meeting of Soviet and American scientists in Vilnius by Wolfgang Panofsky, the head of the U.S. delegation. Scientific and design work on devices that could potentially be used as new weapons should be conducted openly if their parameters exceed specified limits. Other countries should be informed of work in progress, and in case of need, it should be possible to visit scientific laboratories. Thus, for instance, work on laser devices should be conducted openly if the parameters of the beam are such that the devices could be used in a space-based SDI system or for attacking targets on earth from space. Panofsky in Vilnius was speaking specifically about SDI, but his proposal has broader significance.

It is vital to establish a balance in conventional weapons, in part, because this is a prerequisite for deep cuts in nuclear weapons. Experts have been arguing about how to achieve this for many years because they lack sufficient information, and because of the objective complications and ambiguity of the matter.

Another important task is the reduction in numbers of conventional weapons, combined with changes in their composition that will assure each party that the opposing side is pursuing purely defensive ends. But accomplishing this is extremely difficult from a technical point of view, all the more so in a world torn by mutual suspicion and regional conflicts.

One prerequisite for building trust is ending the war in Afghanistan. The removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, which is to begin on May 15, 1988, according to a Soviet government announcement, should be implemented without any preliminary conditions. Simultaneous negotiations should begin for agreement to end all foreign supply of weapons to the warring parties, to facilitate the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran, and to grant asylum in the USSR to all Afghans who wish it. It will probably be advisable to use UN forces to establish order in the country. In all likelihood, economic and medical humanitarian assistance will be needed from the international community.

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It seems to me that it would be a good idea to establish a corridor 100-125 miles wide in Europe separating the armed forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and free of all weapons, conventional as well as nuclear. This would greatly reduce the possibility of a sudden massive, offensive by either party and would strengthen trust.

Taking a broader view, I believe it is practical and necessary for the USSR to consider a courageous step of extraordinary significance for people everywhere - a unilateral reduction of service in the Soviet army, navy and air force to approximately half its present length, resulting in a unilateral reduction of the armed forces, to be combined with a proportional, one-time reduction of all kinds of weapons. (The reduction of the officer corps should probably be smaller.) Naturally, such a decision can be made only after a complete review of all its possible consequences, including its effect on the military security of the USSR and other countries of the socialist commonwealth, as well as its social and demographic implications. It's also necessary to forecast international developments, including possible difficulties. But what weighs on the other side of the scales must also be taken into account! The proposed initiative would immediately and fundamentally change the whole international situation. It would open the way for all kinds of major disarmament, for balanced reductions of conventional and nuclear weapons, including the complete destruction of existing nuclear weapons. It would strengthen international trust. It would promote the resolution of regional conflicts on all continents. Disarmament will free up substantial material resources needed for *perestroika* in the USSR, for solving social, ecological and other universal problems worldwide, for the struggle against hunger and disease, and for overcoming inequality in developing countries around the globe.

The domestic social consequences of reducing the term of military service will be significant. It will facilitate young people's return to productive work and study. It will improve personal relations in the army - the basis for *dedovshchina* [hazing of draftees during their first year of service] will disappear. Reduction of the term of service is completely practical, since draftees today are much better prepared than the recruits of the 1930s; many are already familiar with tractors, automobiles, radios, etc. They can learn their military specialties in much less time.

To retreat from the brink of global catastrophe, to preserve civilization and life itself on our planet, are necessary priorities for the current stage of world history. I am convinced that this can come about only as a

result of profound geopolitical, social, economic and ideological changes leading toward convergence of the capitalist and socialist systems, an open society, and greater equality for all races and peoples, not only juridically, but also economically, culturally and socially.

March 25, 1988

Translated by Edward Kline