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A/Sov Prod -

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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Fritz Ennelt -

Vladimir Bulandzky dropped
by a few days ago. He
later sent this to me.
Some good points herein.

Walt Ryznar

Feb. 20, 1987

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Dear Walter,

Enclosed is a copy of a draft I have prepared for a collective letter. Please keep it for yourself, as I can not distribute it before the signers made their corrections.

So far we have got 3-4 signatures, but I am confident we will have a dozen by the end of next week.

Of course, this letter gives only a hint of what real criteria of the Soviet "changes" must be. A more elaborate document is needed. Why don't you have a good conference on the subject? I mean a conference of some intelligent people, not of idiots who would agree about fundamental issues and buy any of the Gorbachev's promises.

Best wishes.

Vladimir

Recent avalanche of news from Moscow have left many good people, East and West, thoroughly confused, if not bewildered. Even some of our more experienced compatriots appear to be torn between hopes and fears: Is it really the turning point in our history we all were praying for, an end of oppression, misery and international piracy? Or, is it, once again, a short-lived "thaw", a tactical retreat before next offensive, as Lenin defined it in 1921?

Indeed, a number of the most prominent human rights activists were released from jails, labor camps and internal exile to our great joy. While welcoming this gesture, however, we could not fail to notice that the pattern of this selective mercy was well-calculated to produce a maximal public impression with minimal concessions. If Soviet leaders really changed their attitude to the problem of human rights, as they say, and decided to abandon repressions as a form of thought control in the Soviet Union, why did not they simply grant an amnesty to all prisoners of conscience at once, instead of resolving the most publicised cases one by one in a duration of a year?

Why don't we hear, then, a clear condemnation of psychiatric repressions - the most notorious repressive method used in the Soviet Union? Why don't we see a progress in the problem of emigration which even late "reactionary" Brezhnev could tolerate? Recently adopted law regulating emigration is, actually, more restrictive than the practice of 1970s.

It is unquestionably an improvement that the present leadership has recognized the need for radical economic reforms. One would like to hope that empty shelves and long lines will cease to be a main feature of the Soviet life. Yet, apart from talks and promises, no serious signs of a reform are in evidence. The most widely publicised new law regulating "individual labor activity" does little more than legalizes a wide-spread practice of moonlighting which exists in the Soviet Union since 1960s. One can hardly expect this "reform" to encourage involvement in this activity because it simply introduces more state control.

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We can only welcome the expressed desire of the Soviet leaders to end the war in Afghanistan, where our young compatriots are forced to slaughter civilian population. But the way Soviet government suggests to "settle" the problem makes one to question their true intentions. If they really want to end the war, why don't they simply withdraw their troops (and their collaborationists) from Afghanistan without any pre-conditions and lengthy time-tables? If they want to leave behind a stable government, why don't they allow free and fair elections under a strict international supervision, (like it was done in Zimbabwe and El Salvador). But, if neither solution satisfies them, what do they want, then? Just to be seen as leaving?

Perhaps, the most confusing impression is created by the new Soviet policy of "glasnost", openness, and of "cultural thaw". Indeed, it must be bewildering to read in "Pravda" the same criticism of the Soviet reality which only few years ago would have been branded "an anti-Soviet slander", and rewarded accordingly. Actually, the very word "glasnost" has been banned, and some of us were even persecuted for demanding it. But, this new policy is just called "glasnost", while in reality it simply makes usual propagandistic homebrew more palatable by adding a few droplets of truth into it. New leaders were smart enough to appreciate that half-truth serves their interests much better than the old undiluted lie, to which most people have developed immunity anyway. Besides, the true facts usually reached Soviet public through foreign broadcasts, books, samizdat and rumours. So, the time has come when it became senseless to maintain huge and costly propaganda machinery, ^{which does not work.} New policy of "half-glasnost" helped them to regain attention of the Soviet public, while, at the same time, helping to improve their image abroad.

~~Reality~~, "glasnost" is supposed to be a public debate, to which everyone, irrespective of one's viewpoint, could contribute without a fear of repressions. "Glasnost" is meant to be a public guarantee against abuse of power, a process by which public opinion is formed independently

of the government. What we have got ^{instead} is the old party monopoly on truth,
even though the "truth of the day" is ordered to be critical of the regime
itself. And, what if this order is changed tomorrow, where will be our
guarantee? Glasnost as we understand it would probably be better served
by providing people with Xerox machines at every corner than by mounting
official criticism of the Soviet life. If Soviet leaders really want to
gain some public trust, they must tolerate at least some publica-
tions independent of the party control.

We were delighted that such prominent Russian writers as Gumilev and
Nabokov were "posthumously rehabilitated", and their books at last will
be available officially to the Soviet readers. A long line of other less
fortunate deceased still awaits their turn, perhaps, at the next "cultu-
ral thaw". This privilege is, of course, reserved exclusively for the
dead who will not say or do anything unexpected. That, probably, explains
a keen interest of the Soviet authorities in the dead bodies of famous
musicians, writers and artists who happened to die in emigration, and
whom the authorities desperately try to repatriate post-mortem against
their explicit last wishes (like Shalyapin and Tarkovsky).

This macabre farce of the body-snatchers can hardly be called a
"cultural thaw". The tragedy of Russian culture is that a present-day
writer, artist, musician or a film-maker must either die, or become dead
spiritually, serving as a link in the chain of the party propaganda,
in order to gain recognition in his country. We have heard that some
prominent cultural figures in Russian emigration were recently approached
by the Soviet officials with a proposal to come "home" like prodigal
sons, and the past will be "forgotten". What Soviet authorities fail to
comprehend is that emigration was not a result of some tragic misunder-
standing, but a consequence of a profound disagreement with a regime which
cannot tolerate freedom to create. One can forget the past, but now can
anyone "forget" omnipresent party control, especially after tasting the
air of freedom? Lenin's Order will hardly make up for it.

No, it is not a concern for Russian culture that prompted Soviet officials to flirt with some emigrant writers and artists, but, once again, an unhealthy interest in dead bodies, obedient and wordless, or, should we say, a need for the dead souls. After all, nobody prevents them from publishing our books and records, showing our films and plays, displaying our works of art. Why did not they start with it, instead of promising their unwanted "forgiveness"? All they need to do is just to step aside and allow Soviet viewers, listeners and readers to choose for themselves. Then, and only then, can we have an honest dialogue with the authorities, not a shady back-door negotiations.

So, why is this sudden and undue excitement? Why are so many people eager to confuse efficiency with pragmatism, shrewdness with good will, calculations with decency? We are so used to a paranoic restrictiveness of the Soviet regime that a slightest deviation is perceived as a revolution endangering its very foundations. But, let us imagine that Gorbachev's most daring suggestion to date is accepted, making elections within the party more free. This great leap forward will bring us just a bit closer to what the blacks have in South Africa. Our "whites" -at-last will have free elections for themselves, being only 7% of the population.

We tend to forget that Soviet regime of today is excessively restrictive and unnecessary oppressive. It can afford a much more substantial "retreat" for a short time, without irreversibly changing its nature. It can abandon repressions, allow emigration, withdraw from Afghanistan, or even publish "Gulag Archipelago". It can become as "free" and "capitalist" as Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia or China, but only for a much shorter period than these countries. Unlike Hungary and Poland, it does not live in a shadow of a Big Brother who can always come to the rescue. Unlike China it has a host of small brothers to look after. The question, therefore, is not how far the current "thaw" in Moscow will go, but for how long?

Undoubtedly, Soviet leaders are aware of this problem and have no intention to go further than a skillful public relations campaign. For,

if they were serious about "radically changing" Soviet system, they would have to start with a revision of the ruling ideology, without which no long-lasting fundamental changes are possible, or ever occurred, in the Soviet Union. Ideology is precisely that hard core of the Soviet system which does not allow the country to deviate too far, too long. Unless its ultimate goal and its main tenets are challenged, the long-term strategy remains predetermined, leaving the leaders only some tactical problems to handle. They can launch a spell of "cold", or a spell of "thaw", but they can have no "summer". They can live in peace neither with their people, nor with their neighbors, as long as the very possibility of a "peace with the class enemy" is denied by the ruling doctrine. How can they have a real "peaceful coexistence" with the "bourgeois" world if their task is to "bury" it? How can they have a ^{genuine} ~~real~~ "detente" if "detente in no way rescinds, or can rescind, the laws of the class struggle"? As a result, we have neither war, nor peace, but a "struggle for peace", in which Soviet support of all "forces of socialism, progress and national liberation" is a must.

Equally impossible is an internal "peaceful coexistence". As long as this "historic struggle of the two worlds" is raging, people cannot be left to pursue their personal aspirations, but become conscripted into a nation-wide army of ideological warriors. It is a permanent state of total mobilization, under which neither position of neutrality, nor a status of a conscientious objector are recognized: "Those who are not with us, are against us". Even a civilian defector is legally equated to a soldier deserting to the enemy lines in time of war (article 64, part 3 of the Penal Code). A desire to emigrate is ^{viewed} ~~treated~~ as a high treason, while those who are allowed to travel to a foreign country are carefully selected among the most trusted, like scouts.

Artificially created division into "them" and "us" penetrates all spheres of the Soviet life, leaving nothing in the "opposite world" to

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identify oneself with. Soviet people are not supposed to be just ordinary members of the human family. They have "socialist justice", "socialist democracy", "socialist culture", "socialist sport", and now even "socialist glasnost" which must be different from their counterparts in the "bourgeois" world. The country is governed through an elaborate network of party cells, instructors, educators and propagandists who are obliged to instill the main ideological concepts into the minds of everyone, from pre-school age onwards. So, whether it is a spell of "cold", or a spell of "thaw", "irreconcilable hostility of the class enemies" and "constant plots of the imperialist warmongers" remains the theme of indoctrination. And how else can history be explained to students? How else a party functionary can justify his existence?

There is no sense in trying to cure the symptoms while leaving the disease to flourish. If they want to be taken seriously, Soviet leaders would have to reject the basic fallacy of the Marxist dogma, to stop their one-sided "historic struggle" and to allow the people to be just ordinary human beings. Then, returning to the words their initial, "human" meaning, (as opposed to the "class-oriented" one), they would be able to have just democracy, culture, justice and glasnost. All the leaders have to do is to accept a peace between "classes" instead of "struggle for peace"; they have to disarm themselves ideologically instead of a tireless disarmament campaign.

If they really want to start a new page of our history, they should stop exploitation of the painful memories of the World War II for the propaganda purposes, close down vicious "Military Patriotic Education Program" obligatory in every Soviet school, (comparable only to the Hitler Youth training), and prevent further militarisation of the Soviet society. Instead, they should restore historical truth about the crimes committed by the Soviet regime. How can they hope to encourage "individual labor activity", particularly in agriculture, if "collectivization" and murder of some 10 million peasants still is not condemned by the

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ruling party? Or, speaking of "glasnost", how can Soviet leaders expect anyone to take it seriously, if occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 still is not condemned as an international crime? After all, "Prague spring" was just a period of "glasnost" in Czechoslovakia.

Those are only two examples taken at random, but they show that national reconciliation cannot be achieved by releasing from jails a few dozen of prisoners who should not be there in the first place. Soviet Union is a gravely sick country. This sickness is so serious that even the leaders had to break with a 70-year-old tradition of silence, because they need a trust of Soviet population, as well as that of the world. But, first, they must learn to trust both and to accept their judgement. They must ^{accept} their liability in the international court in the Hague, and in the Human Rights Council at Strasbourg, where an injured party can claim damages. They must give the people their right to administer justice in a court of jury. They must become equal among equals, not a shining model of the bright future.

Above all, they must learn to respect public opinion enough not to try their usual tricks of disinformation and tactics of manipulation. Even a fool can see now that if 70 years of rule by "the most progressive teaching" has ruined one of the richest countries on the globe, this "teaching" must be wrong. If all leaders since Lenin failed to put it right, as Gorbachev admits now, then, perhaps, the time has come to try something different? And, if the current leadership is as pragmatic as many seem to believe, why don't they do so? After all, was it not Lenin himself who said that only practice can be the ultimate judge of a theory? Or, was it Stalin, the most pragmatic of them all.