

## The International Sakharov Conference -- Panel 2

A Harvard University Conference celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Andrei Sakharov's 1968 essay *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom* was held on October 24-25, 2008, at the Norton's Woods Conference Center, Cambridge, Mass. The Conference was organized by the Davis Center's Sakharov Program on Human Rights, the Physics Department, and the Andrei Sakharov Foundation (USA).

### Panel 2 -- Sakharov's 1988 Essay, *The Inevitability of Perestroika*<sup>1</sup>

The panelists and their topics were:

**Marietta Chudakova** – The Russian Intelligentsia: Then and Now

**Alexei Pankin** – The Russian Media: Then and Now

**William Taubman** – The Inevitability of Perestroika?

**William Green Miller** – Sakharov's Contribution to Perestroika.

**Marietta Omarovna Chudakova** – *A respected literary specialist, Chudakova has published 300 books and articles on 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian literature. She is chair of the Bulgakov Foundation, a member of the Moscow Writer's Union, and a member of the European Academy. She was a member (1994-2000) of Boris Yeltsin's Presidential Council and Clemency Commission.*

Possibly the most decisive factor of Gorbachev's *perestroika* was his reliance on the *intelligentsia*. His very first step in that direction was *glasnost* and his fostering of expanding freedom of the press. This was enough to gain the broad support of all those who wielded the written and the spoken word, all those who were yearning for the freedom that was filling the vacuum of mass media. It was precisely **the word** of the *intelligentsia* that stood in the way of the Party bureaucrats who were plotting to get rid of Gorbachev soon after he was elected General Secretary. The *nomenklatura* was unable to compete with the *intelligentsia* in the mass media. Thanks to that, Gorbachev won time for *perestroika*. The gains exceeded his expectations, although he did not use the profits wisely. But that is an altogether different matter.

The *intelligentsia* that entered the era of *perestroika* was thoroughly Soviet in its essence. In other words, the *intelligentsia* operated on the premise of Soviet power being eternally everlasting. One might say that in this there was no argument between the *intelligentsia* and

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<sup>1</sup> The transcript has been slightly edited to enhance readability and clarity.

Soviet ideology. (Getting ahead of ourselves, we can say that this explains how the metaphor of a “thaw” turned out to be both important and wrong for the assessment of the *perestroika*.)

The concept of the eternal nature of Soviet power could be seen in the public discourse of the time. In the early texts addressed to foreign audiences, to the domestic *samizdat* reader, and to the higher echelons of power, the necessary mimicry was intertwined with the convictions of the author, unbeknownst to him or to his reader. Sakharov’s *Reflections...* is one of the earliest and most vivid examples: “We have demonstrated the vitality of the socialist course, which has done a great deal for the people materially, culturally, and socially, and like no other system, has glorified the moral significance of labor.”<sup>2</sup>

These texts were addressed to power – with hope of improving it. These hopes were justified by the arrival of Gorbachev. But they also slowed down the realization that there was no room for reform in Soviet power.

The era of the Thaw shaped the generation of the 1960s. They became the mainstay of *perestroika*’s leader, so the role of the literati, journalists, scholars, and the technical *intelligentsia* turned out to be very sizable.

Western observers and the new generation find the period of the Thaw, in contrast to the time preceding Stalin’s death, remarkably difficult to comprehend. Because the authorities were unable to offer anything tangible while intuitively understanding what had to be avoided, they began taking many reverse steps and actions immediately following the Twentieth Party Congress. These steps, however illogical, served the purpose of self-preservation. The Thaw planted the seeds of that new hypocrisy whose fruit poisoned the next fifty years of life in the country (and having been unexpectedly easily resuscitated today, continues to poison it). This hypocrisy officially proclaimed what could not be reconciled by common sense: “there are still some communists who fail or do not wish to understand that the cult of personality cannot be interpreted as a phenomenon inherent to the nature of Soviet society, that the mistakes and flaws it caused have not and could not change the socialist nature of Soviet power, our general party line, or its staunch faithfulness to Marxist-Leninist principles” (Central Committee circular letter to Party organizations following the XX Party Congress; July 16, 1956, Top secret).

The coming of Gorbachev renewed hopes. Many felt the breath of a second Thaw. And this is where the trap of history awaited them – grabbing at the fallacious analogy, sated by it, they have failed to feel the wind of a new period of history. The perception was of a Thaw continually being refrozen by the authorities (how appropriate the term proved to be!), and it influenced mightily the perception of the processes to follow. It prevented a clear

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<sup>2</sup> *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom*, Norton, 1968, p. 73.

understanding that *Perestroika* was a precursor and the beginning of a new era. It was seen for its entire duration as simply another Thaw – or a crack in the window temporarily left ajar.

A December 31, 1986, entry in the diary of Alexander Chudakov points to the thread that connects us to the past: “Recent events breathe hope into us for the first time since 1967. An entire generation has grown up in the stagnant Brezhnev times and matured with no hope at all. And we, too... Is it possible that in our declining years, there will again be something like the 1960s?”

“Recent events” were the return of Andrei Sakharov from his internal exile in Gorky. It was this particular event that became for me and Alexander Chudakov, as well as for many, but not all, a pivotal one in evaluating developments of that time as heralding a new era.

For many members of the *intelligentsia* who had played a significant role in the years of the Thaw everything fell into place – the demand for “More socialism!” and Gorbachev’s confession that he read Lenin every day and would never renege on his grandfather’s choice in favor of the kolkhoz. Most important for them was the realization of their long-time desire to be members of a team -- “superintendants of *perestroika*” was the new name for people of the 1960s who proudly claimed that they were members of “Gorbachev’s team.” They could finally “labor hand in hand with the people and in accord with higher law” (Pasternak). It seemed that any moment all that Khrushchev had failed to bring to completion would now be completed, and socialism would gain a human face.

After Gorbachev they were unable to break out of the ideological limits they had set for themselves -- no further than Lenin and October, the self-evident importance of justice, etc. They became opponents of Yeltsin, and in my opinion, this opposition proved destructive for our country. Some opposed Yeltsin because he had gone too far, others because he did not dare go far enough.

The generation of *intelligentsia* that reached maturity in the 1970s and also took part in *perestroika* had its own subdivisions.

In the early 1970s, after the crushing of the Prague Spring, an often repeated aphorism was: “There are three qualities that cannot coexist in a person: intelligence, integrity, and membership in the Party.” By that time there were no exceptions from this rule: no one joined the Party ranks who did not comply with this definition. Not one thinking person would any longer join the party with a naïve hope of reforming it from within, as in the times of the Thaw. It could *only* be out of career considerations, at times a benign one – out of a desire to do something useful and important. The same desire today moves a few decent

young men in provincial cities to join the United Russia party – “Otherwise they won’t let you do anything,” as they put it.

As to the generation of the 1960s, in the 1970s it was being expelled from the party – Bulat Okudzhava, a World War II veteran, was expelled in 1972, Len Karpinskii – in 1975.

The Thaw was long gone, but the cultural inertia continued to function. Once in a while, up to the early 1980s, you might come across an act of resistance on some particular matter that had the generation of the 1960s looming behind it.

The *intelligentsia* of the 1970s also included those for whom any cooperation with the power was out. This was a fairly broad milieu that stoked the boilers and operated the elevators. During *perestroika* their advanced degrees in the humanities were suddenly in demand, and they were emerging from the shadows, contemplating publishing Vassili Rozanov...

At this very time, other outsiders were getting ready to conquer the humanities departments of American universities – which let us add, they deservedly did conquer. One of them demanded: “Tell me Marietta, aren’t you scared when the journal *Novy mir* floods the heads of two million subscribers with the works of Sergei Bulgakov?” Another person somberly followed up on this without his usual irony: “Nobody knows what a person stuffed with Sergei Bulgakov’s writing might be capable of!” Such was the opinion of a refined and learned intellectual, alienated from the masses of his fellow citizens with whom he was supposed to build a civic society in a space that was fairly well cleared of the debris and trash of the Soviet era.

In 1987-1990 an incredible amount of work was done to acquaint our multi-million reading audience with the facts of the *gulag* and with the true role of Stalin in Russian history. Let us not forget the curtain of silence that concealed this history in the Brezhnev years -- the generation of Putin was brought up not on Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, but on Vadim Kozhevnikov’s *The Shield and the Sword*, with its glorification of the KGB. (The film based on Kozhevnikov’s book inspired the high school student Vladimir Putin to apply to the KGB.)

The amount and quality of work done by the *intelligentsia* to overcome the curtain of silence was great. However, in some ten years it turned out that the work had not been sufficient. The country happily accepted the Stalin anthem as the anthem of Russia, and half or more of its citizens regard Stalin as a positive figure.

Why did this happen? It is quite likely that the Soviet *intelligentsia* was weakened as a result of having been cut off from its own past, from its own strong philosophical tradition, as well

as from Western thought. This gap affected its performance for at least half of the Yeltsin era. All *perestroika* philosophizing on historical themes was marked by a lack of intellectual depth. The public's demand for such depth has been manipulated by the charlatans of "Eurasianism," quasi-Masonic teachings, and other such shams who have flooded the Russian book market with their publications for the past ten years.

Can we blame *intelligentsia* for the reanimation of Stalin and of the whole Soviet epoch in today's Russia? To a considerable degree – yes. A specialist's interest in reading an article written by another specialist largely depends on the author's credentials. Trust is the foundation of the relationship between writers and the reading public. In the 1990s this trust was significantly reduced. Why? Because the sharp change in the substance and style of articles written before 1985 and those written after 1985 by the same author did not reflect any struggle in the soul of the writer, any spiritual drama.

Trust is not something ephemeral, nor is it abstract. It is a very specific, real thing. Trust is an important political and even economic question; it is what makes social bonding possible. Trust for this bank, but not that. Trust for this publishing house, but not that. Because the first one is known for its reliability and integrity; it won't publish books below its standards. Trust for a particular statesman or government is of the same nature.

It is hard to trust an author whose seriousness of personal or spiritual experience you doubt. A person who has not thought through his own life in a systematic, unsparing manner can hardly offer serious guidance for the future of a whole country. It is not just a question of moral incompetence – a lecture on morals is not my intention. Most likely, it is intellectual incompetence. Thorough and honest self-reflection would help in developing an ideology which would respond to the public needs. Such reflection, contrary to common wisdom, would not disable the *intelligentsia*'s will to action; on the contrary, it would raise its self-confidence and empower it. (The *intelligentsia*'s extremely low self-esteem can be explained by the fact that it has been victimized by its own complexes.)

The *intelligentsia* of the 70s and 80s appeared quite strange for millions of newspaper and magazine readers – as if all intellectuals had been born in 1985. Their updated bios began in Gorbachev's years. What they had been doing in their Party and Komsomol posts (a lot of their actions had, in fact, been constructive) – all that had been wiped off, erased as a poor mark from their school record. Here is the origin of the offensive label - “varnishers.”

Nobody paid attention to this during the years when social enthusiasm was at its peak. But in 1991-1992, they did start paying attention when the inevitable reforms began to be put into effect. The reforms had been tragically delayed by Gorbachev, which made their unavoidable pain more severe than necessary. By suppressing some information from their

life stories, including the history of their spiritual and moral development, the *intelligentsia* undermined the trust of the majority of Russians in a large and vital group in our society. The distrust has been growing to this day.

Events that do not become the subject of thought do not become experience -- they remain just something that happened. Terrifying facts of twentieth century Russian history were piling up on the pages of books published in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But the life experience of former members of the Communist Party was unraveling and melting away. For many joining the Party had been an ambivalent act from the very start, and certainly for the majority of intellectuals who joined after the mid-1960s. During the late 1980s and up to August 1991 they were turning in their Party cards with relief, and they forgot about their Party membership as quickly as they could – in the house of a suicide, people do not mention the rope he used to hang himself. But this silence only intensified the ambiguity of our social climate.

In the 1990s, the problems with their biographies discredited the *intelligentsia* in the eyes of the public. Their complete biographies, including the story of their parents, who died in the abyss of Terror and turned out to have been “good and honest Communists” after the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, their own Party membership which allowed them to temporarily accomplish something positive under the Soviet regime and, when they lost their jobs, to remain in the Central Committee’s *nomenclatura* system – now spoke against them. Because it looked like duplicity: “Why are you blaming and cursing the Party now? -- you used to hold all sorts of high Party posts!” And they never spoke out; they never explained clearly that their complex intellectual development had its own significance and value. (As was so brilliantly done by Andrei Sakharov.)

What about the professional human rights advocates? What about the dissidents? What was their role in the social developments of that time? Here confusion prevailed: “Why aren’t they returning?” It was known from history as well as the recent experience of the Soviet Union’s former satellites in Central Europe that political emigrants usually return to their reviving countries. It did not happen to Russia, with very unfortunate results. Moreover, many brilliant people left the country during *perestroika*. The claim that “They never wanted freedom -- they wanted only the freedom to leave the country!” began to sound louder. Due to their political immaturity and economic hardship, Russians were not able to grasp Sakharov’s idea that freedom of movement, including the freedom to leave a country, is a crucial condition for democracy.

In 1919 Mikhail Bulgakov finished his first published article with the words: “We, who belong to an unsuccessful generation, dying as pitiful bankrupts, should tell our children: ‘Always pay a fair price and always remember the social revolution!’” He thought that they

would have to pay even if his White Army won the Civil War. But the White Army lost, and the cost rose sharply. It took from 1956 to the 1990s for the Russian public to realize what exactly we have been paying for. Such slow thinking caused new confusion. It turned out that understanding the role of February 1917 and October 1917 in what happened later, clouded minds and pushed into the background the specific character of the Stalin era, a classic totalitarian period that lasted for thirty years. To make it short, they finally figured out Lenin's role -- and fell in love with Stalin all over again. That's how it goes -- tails up, heads down; heads up, tails down. There are more than a few, who revere both Lenin and Stalin since "are your new ones any better?"

Our electorate, (formerly called the "the people") in the Soviet time, that is, for dozens of years, believed in their own way in the written word -- first of all in newspapers and, of course, in books as well. In our post-Soviet time a two-step metamorphosis took place. At first, people believed what was written in the post-Soviet newspapers and were flabbergasted to learn that the Soviet papers have been lying to them. Then they gradually stopped believing our current newspapers because they became disillusioned, as we have tried to show above, in the "superintendants of *perestroika*." Now, they think that the post-Soviet newspapers have deceived them about Soviet times, which in retrospect seem to them to have been really pretty good.

The *intelligentsia* were important for a time during the early period of Russia's revival, because the *intelligentsia* at least understood such concepts as honor, reputation, and love for your country as love for a free country. But now, the idea that a good reputation is essential, that one must be honest and not take bribes, is enough to make many people in Russia laugh.

The devaluation of fundamental, generally recognized values in public life lowered the *intelligentsia* in the eyes of the Russian public. In addition, the most authoritative public intellectuals carelessly and prematurely began to stress the priority of private life over public responsibility. In Soviet times, a man would risk his life to save a tractor. People were officially encouraged to do such things. A famous Soviet slogan was: "The public is higher than the private." But in post-Soviet times any selflessness is questioned. For liberal intellectuals to support such a total reversal of moral values was, I believe, a serious mistake.

Of course, it was crucial to insist on the importance of private life and the value of a human life per se, since they still are considered worthless in Russia. Human life is not something that should be sacrificed to the state for insufficient reason -- it makes no sense to risk your life to save a tractor. But without selflessness, without giving thought to society's needs, without the idea of patriotism, very little good can be accomplished. I subscribe to President Kennedy's words "Ask not what your country can do for you; rather, ask what you can do for your country."

I believe that all the concepts and values needed for the full development of our nation are now slowly coming back to life in Russia.

*Translated by Tatiana Yankelevich and Lydia Voronina*

### **Dr. Richard Wilson**

We'll continue with Alexei Pankin. Dr. Pankin received his Ph.D. in history from the Moscow Institute for International Relations. In the 1980s, he was working for the Institute of the USA and Canada of the USSR Academy of Sciences and was very involved with questions pertaining to *perestroika*. He will talk about the Russian media.

*Alexei Pankin – A graduate of the Moscow Institute of International Relations, Pankin worked for the Institute of the USA and Canada from 1979 to 1988. He has headed programs on media development for USAID and the Open Society Institute, and currently is a frequent contributor to the Russian and international press.*

Thank you very much. I'd like to start with a personal reminiscence. When Gorbachev came to power, I was working at Georgy Arbatov's Institute of the USA and Canada. This Institute became a rather important and influential think-tank for Gorbachev's reforms. I happened to have been a member of a small, more or less *ad hoc* group, which was tasked to improve the international image of the Soviet Union. The individuals in our group were in their late 20s or early 30s; they included Igor Malashenko, the future founder of the first private national television network NTV; Andrei Kortunov, who is president of the New Eurasia Foundation; and Andrei Melville, who is now the Vice Rector of MGIMO (Moscow State Institute for International Relations). Our papers containing suggestions for improving the image of the Soviet Union took the form of memos to the Central Committee of the Soviet Union. We submitted them first to Arbatov, who edited them, sometimes heavily, sometimes lightly, and from him they would be routed directly to Gorbachev. I'm proud to say that much of the new thinking that was later sponsored by Gorbachev was born in our memos to the Central Committee.

In late 1985 or early 1986, when we wrote a memo on measures to further improve the international image of the Soviet Union, our point number three or four -- not at the beginning, so as not to shock the memo's readers, and not at the end, since few people read to the end -- was a proposal to release Academician Sakharov from his exile in Gorky. I know that this memo was edited only lightly, and it did reach Gorbachev. Several months later, Andrei Sakharov was released from exile. I do not attribute this

directly to our memo because there was a lot of pressure from the West, and, in the corridors of power, there was discussion whether to release him, how to do this, etc. Nonetheless, I believe we were the first members of the Soviet establishment to have put a proposal for Sakharov's release on paper in proper bureaucratic language. It's important to understand that once something is put on paper, put in a language that is understood by the bosses, it becomes a matter of official discussion. I would say that we were definitely the first in the Soviet establishment to put this idea in proper, readable bureaucratese.

This brings me to the topic of my presentation: Andrei Sakharov's essay on "The Inevitability of *Perestroika*." You have to understand we were worlds apart. He was in exile, he was persecuted; he suffered through several hunger strikes; he was practically an "enemy of the people". We were definitely part of the Soviet establishment, the elite, because anyone who worked at the Institute of the USA and Canada and was selected to write memos to the Central Committee was part of the elite. Despite this world of difference in our standing, our ideas were very much like Sakharov's ideas. And I assure you that we weren't eunuchs. When we had to write our memos, we not only thought about making good PR for the Soviet Union; we were also thinking that this was our chance to do something good. Since we had the opportunity, we all felt a kind of moral obligation to do something for Sakharov, who was of course a moral authority to us. And the fact that Sakharov and our group - two opposite poles of Soviet society - were more or less thinking alike and acting alike is the best confirmation of the title of Andrei Sakharov's essay, "The Inevitability of *Perestroika*." It means Sakharov wanted *perestroika*, Gorbachev wanted *perestroika*, we wanted *perestroika*, everybody was thinking along the same lines.

Now, as to the essay itself. It was published in a collection of essays, entitled *Inogo ne dano* (No Other Way). I probably still have it, even with a dedication from one of its star authors, Dmitri Furman. As I was preparing for this talk, I re-read not just Andrei Sakharov's essay, but other essays, too, from this book. What struck me – perhaps with the wisdom of hindsight – is how far Sakharov's essay, as well as the essays of Tatyana Zaslavskaya, Dmitry Furman, and perhaps one or two more, stand out from the others in this volume.

Andrei Sakharov's essay is very specific, very concrete, very well-structured. It basically says, "This is what I feel should be the nation's agenda. Here's what should be done to implement it. And here's how it should be done. In other words, it's very practical – something that you can take and argue with implementers.

The bulk of the other essays basically lack substance. They are general lamentations how hard and unfair life is, and how hard we must work to achieve democracy because

democracy will solve all our problems. Some of the essays are brilliant stylistically, others are dull, but they all boil down to lamentation and absence of practical ideas.

I think Sakharov's essay marks the watershed of *glasnost* – the end of its first period and the beginning of its second period. The first period was a time when the important thing was to establish the right to speak one's mind freely. This had been achieved by 1988 or early 1989. When freedom to speak your mind had been established, you had to have something to speak about. It turned out that very few people really had anything to speak about except general lamentations. There was a singular absence of practical ideas, the situation not only on the “democratic” side but also on the “reactionary” side. During the last years of *perestroika*, which should have been the years of practical decisions, they were simply shouting past each other. Democrats accused reactionaries of encroaching on freedoms; and reactionaries or Communists were accusing democrats of encroaching on the principle of socialism. But all this was a substitute for serious thinking or real action. If people didn't do anything, didn't know what to do, they had to do something, so they passed the time by shouting at each other.

That was reflected in the media. At the time, I was deputy editor-in-chief of *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn* (the English-language edition was titled *International Affairs*), which was Shevardnadze's pet project. (I was even interviewed for the job by Shevardnadze.) It was an instrument for bringing *glasnost* to foreign policy and international affairs. I was also part of the informal group that shaped the policies of a magazine, very popular in those times, *Dvadsaty vek i mir* (Twentieth Century and Peace).

I remember very well that from the end of 1985 through 1988 the circulation of both *International Affairs* and *Twentieth Century and Peace* grew quickly. In 1989, the circulation reached a plateau, and during the 1990s it dropped dramatically. That reflects, what I've just mentioned: at some stage, people began to get used to freedom of speech, and now they wanted something of substance. Since there was nothing of substance, people began to lose their faith in the press. That was evident.

Since I've been asked to say something about the situation of the media now as well at the time of *perestroika*, I'll do my best to cover the evolution of the press in a few catch phrases.

The *glasnost* of the Gorbachev era is probably best described as an “anti-Communist revolution” funded by the Communist government. Really, the press had complete freedom, and didn't have to think about how to make money. The media were all funded by the central government's budget, and benefited from the planned economy.

I would call the next period, the Yeltsin period, “oligarchic pluralism.” I suppose this period was best described by what Yegor Yakovlev, the legendary editor of the weekly *Moscow News* said of himself and his policies: “We all, during the *perestroika* years, fought for and promoted the values of the market economy. But we had no idea what a market economy means and particularly what it means for ourselves.” Basically, what it meant, was that overnight, from 1991 to 1992, the media was left without any kind of funding – there was no money on the market. Even if there were money to be had, they didn’t know how to earn it or budget it, because publishing is a business, and you have to have some kind of skills. When overnight, the country turned from a planned, government-funded economy to a market economy, you were almost bound to go bankrupt. So at that time, what our press editors did, they just used their Soviet-era skills in raising funds from various sources, primarily oligarchs. If you watch the period between 1991-1993, with the struggle between a democratic president and a “red-brown” Supreme Soviet, you would see that the positions of the media were strictly tied to who gave them funding. Those who were funded by the Supreme Soviet were for the Supreme Soviet, and those who got their funding from presidential sources were all pro-democratic and denounced their adversaries.

So I think that the drama of this conflict to a large extent could be attributed to the media fighting for sources of funding. And later, the media was just bought up by the oligarchs, and the press became closely tied to the positions of the oligarchs. The oligarchs wanted money from the state budget and so the media promoted causes that would open ways for the oligarchs to get favorable conditions for privatization, etc. etc.

And then the next period came -- the rule of Putin -- which I call “The Prelude to Independence”. Why a prelude? Two reasons. First of all there was an economic boom and a boom in the advertising market starting soon after the financial crisis of 1998. The advertising market was growing at the rate of over 20 percent a year, which produced very good conditions with a lot of money on the market for the media. So the press did not have to go and beg for money; they at last got a chance to earn it. The economic boom gave opportunities for the media to at last become well-structured and transparent. It helped that Putin, unlike Yeltsin, insisted that companies pay taxes. Once you begin paying taxes, you become transparent, and once you become transparent, you become a proper business. So that’s point one -- the boom produced the pre-conditions for the media as a healthy, consumerist, responsible business.

Part two is that the media communication environment changed dramatically. By the end of 2009, there will be more internet users in Russia than there are in Germany, not in per capita terms but in raw numbers, so the internet has penetrated Russia, and that creates a

completely different communication environment with enormous freedom of choice. Telecom is also one of the fastest growing industries in Russia, so that now in all big cities, you have lots of cable stations – hundreds – which will bombard you with all sorts of information.

So now, all the structural preconditions for the media to finally become independent are there, but it is offset by the paranoia of the current government which insists on controlling the media, primarily television, very tightly. But government officials also realize that there are problems with this, because television is simply losing viewers. The only thing that matters for our television governors is news, and the news is so biased that educated people, capable of critical thinking, have stopped watching it and are turning to the internet and cable. So there's a strong, practical impetus to start thinking about what to do with television.

So, I think I've covered the evolution of Russian media from *perestroika* to today in just 15 minutes.

### **Richard Wilson**

William Taubman will now talk about *perestroika* – was it inevitable?

**William Taubman** – *Bertrand Snell Professor of Political Science at Amherst College. He is serving as President of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies for the year 2009. Taubman wrote the Pulitzer Prize winning biography Khrushchev: The Man and His Era (Norton, 2003) and other books on Soviet topics. He is currently working on a biography of Mikhail Gorbachev.*

I was given the honor of speaking to you mainly because I am writing a biography of Gorbachev. But I have to tell you that despite this effort, although I've read a fair amount about his whole life and career in order to figure out how to structure my book, I've only written chapters so far up through 1978, beginning with his birth in 1931. And it is in writing the chapters that I do the detailed research. So I'm not really equipped to talk either about Gorbachev and *perestroika*, or especially about Gorbachev's relations with Sakharov, let alone about Sakharov himself.

What I have chosen to do is to take my cue from the title of our panel which is "Andrei Sakharov's 1988 Essay, 'The Inevitability of *Perestroika*': The End of the Soviet Union and the Rise of Russia." And my main aim is to point to what seems to me to be a kind of paradox, or irony, which is visible in that juxtaposition in the two parts of our title.

I would put forward, perhaps for further discussion, the very conviction that perestroika was inevitable partly accounts for some of its key trouble, because that conviction may have blinded both Sakharov and Gorbachev to how difficult -- perhaps even impossible -- it would be for perestroika to succeed.

Before I try to make more of this argument, one other thing I noticed that supports this thesis is the date of Sakharov's essay March 25, 1988. At the end of my remarks, I'll return to that and point out that this is almost exactly the moment when a turning point, a key turning point, occurred in the history of perestroika, which began its downward trajectory -- although some very positive moments, some very high hopes still lay in the future.

Let's take the phrase, "the inevitability of perestroika". There are two words that I think we have to pause on, and they are not "of" and "the." The two words are "inevitability" and "perestroika". What do we mean by "perestroika"? Do we have in mind the reformist aims with which Gorbachev began in 1985? Or do we have in mind as well the transformation going far beyond those initial reforms over which he presided before the Soviet Union collapsed?

But I'm more interested in the notion of inevitability, because I can think of several things it might mean in this context. One is that perestroika was bound to be attempted. The second thing is that it was bound to succeed. A third was that it was bound to be attempted and had a good chance to succeed, although not necessarily that it would.

I'm not exactly sure which of these three things Sakharov had in mind. Or even Gorbachev as yet. But in retrospect, I think all three of them may be questionable. And I say "in retrospect" because at the time it was harder to tell. Was perestroika "bound" to be tried? I don't think so. If Gorbachev himself had been hit by a truck in Stravropol in 1978 I don't think perestroika would have been tried in the form that it was. There were others around him in the leadership who wanted some kind of reform, but no one was prepared to go as far and as fast as he was, except for perhaps Yakovlev and Shevardnadze, who were only by his side because he had put them there.

Was it bound to succeed? Well, we'd have to then define what "succeed" means, and that would take us back to whether we're talking about reform or transformation. But the whole notion "bound to succeed" seems far too optimistic.

Was it bound to be tried and have a good chance to succeed? Well, even that, I'm not sure about in retrospect. In fact, the formulation that appeals most to me, in retrospect, is that

it was *not* bound to be tried but once it was attempted, it was bound to run into grave difficulties. That sounds fairly dramatic and perhaps you won't agree with me, and maybe I won't agree with myself after thinking about it, but it provides some basis for discussion.

I'll take first Sakharov's notion, then Gorbachev's. I don't really know enough about Sakharov to characterize his thought much beyond the text that I had before me as I prepared my talk. Going by the essay "The Inevitability of Perestroika," Sakharov had very high hopes indeed, excessively high hopes. There are two things in the text that lead me to this conclusion. One is the way he analyzes the past -- the way he analyzes Stalinism and its nature. If you read this text, he says things like "Stalin personified a new social force, the bureaucracy." He says, "One-man dictatorship was aggravated by the cruelty and other negative traits," of Stalin. But his mandate to govern came from "the bureaucracy". At one point, he refers to "our era of bureaucracy."

I was just now talking to Joshua Rubenstein, who is writing a biography of Trotsky. I wanted to try out on him the idea that this sounded a bit like Trotsky's notion of Stalinism, which also went too far in reducing it to bureaucracy. Stalinism was much more -- and less -- than that. It had a lot to do with Stalin's character. And it had to do, if you want to understand where it came from and how it managed to operate, with a certain Russian susceptibility to both violent revolution of a Leninist kind and to Stalinist rule, the same susceptibility -- although this is a vast oversimplification -- that posed problems for perestroika when Gorbachev and his colleagues tried to change things.

The other thing in Sakharov's essay that struck me as I read it was the section where he talks about what he expects from perestroika. "Glasnost ought to create". . . "a new moral climate in our country" and "social justice." "Prices will have to be brought in line with the laws of economics and that will require an increase in the cost of foodstuffs. It is necessary to create an economic and legal environment which encourages initiative, a flexible response," etc. etc. "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 labor." These are ideas which, however desirable, do not appear in retrospect to be inevitably bound to succeed.

What about Gorbachev? I have no time left to talk about his aims and the limit of his vision, strategy, and tactics, the possibilities and obstacles for his approach. The analysis of those things is further complicated by the fact that they changed over time. It does seem to me, however, that he shared a lot with Sakharov. Gorbachev came to believe that there was a need for many of the same changes that Sakharov endorsed, although Gorbachev may not have held that view at the start of perestroika.

I think the big difference between them -- some of you may differ with me on this -- had to do with the pace and tactics of change. Gorbachev wanted to go slower, in part to avoid the fate of Khrushchev, who was ousted eventually by forces opposed to reform. I'd love to know whether Gorbachev and Sakharov ever had a candid discussion about their differences in strategy and tactics -- if they did, I imagine Gorbachev claimed that he was more realistic than Sakharov was about the obstacles to perestroika and the need therefore to go slow. But in the end, Gorbachev wasn't entirely realistic, either.

Finally, back to March 25, 1988, the date of Sakharov's essay. Nina Andreyevna's famous article, "I Cannot Give Up My Principles," criticizing perestroika was published in *Sovietskaya Rossiya* on March 13, 1988. According to Anatoly Chernyaev's diary, the Politburo was meeting on March 24th-25th, thrashing through what Nina Andreyeva meant, and who was or wasn't responsible for what she had allegedly written.

I see this as a turning point in the history of perestroika. Great moments still lay ahead. The high hopes associated with the 19th Party Conference in 1988 and the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989. But when you look back, I think it's fair to say that the episode of Andreyeva's article was the first burst of the kind of resistance to perestroika which would eventually culminate in the coup of August 1991. And that failed coup led very directly to the final collapse of the Soviet Union, which Gorbachev certainly didn't want and, as we heard earlier, Sakharov may not have wanted, either.

### **Richard Wilson**

Thank you very much. I just wanted to mention that during the Forum for a Nuclear-Free World and the Survival of Mankind in 1987, everyone was limited to five-minute interventions. Andrei Sakharov spoke three times. He devoted his second talk to why no one should build an anti-ballistic missile system, and I followed up on this point in my own talk.

Let me introduce Bill Miller, who was in the U.S. Foreign Service and has also spent time on Capitol Hill. I first met Bill Miller in 1991, when a group of us went to the Caucasus, to try and understand what was going on in Nagorno-Karabakh. I met him since in Ukraine, when he was ambassador there. He's also been trying to get an understanding with Iran, which is currently a priority issue.

Ambassador Miller is going to talk to us about Soviet-American Relations in the years 1985 to 1993, and Sakharov's impact on them.

**William Green Miller** -- *Ambassador Miller spent fourteen years on Capitol Hill, where he was staff director for three Senate Committees, including the Select Committee on Intelligence. He was president of the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations (1986-1992), Ambassador to Ukraine (1993-98), and is currently Senior Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington.*

I'll stray from that subject with your permission. Every age has its heroes. Certainly, Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov was and is a hero of our time. His actions, his courage, his principled work in the face of the most fearful opposition are an example to all of us.

Many of us here knew him. Some were very close colleagues in the battles -- Yuri Orlov, Pavel Litvinov, many others. His example, for them, for all of us, for me in particular, is an emblem of the best in the human spirit. So I welcome this opportunity to consider the great value of his actions for the present and future generations.

I first became aware of Sakharov when I read the *New York Times* on July 22, 1968. There was a big picture of a giant missile, an SS-9, I think, and there, for all the world to read, was this absolutely extraordinary human achievement -- Sakharov's great essay on *Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*, published by Harrison Salisbury.

At that time, I was a staff aide on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, working for John Sherman Cooper, who was a senior and highly respected member of the bi-partisan Senate led by Mike Mansfield, William Fulbright, the Kennedys, Stuart Symington, Jacob Javits, Charles Percy, Mac Mathias, Frank Church, George Aiken -- you'll remember many of these names.

This was the time when efforts were being made to limit anti-ballistic missiles and to stop the arms race, based on the premise that existing and likely future technology would not give either side of the Cold War, either side of the Iron Curtain, an advantage.

American scientists, many of whom are here today, -- I can see Carl Kaysen seated in the front row -- particularly physicists and chemists, but political scientists as well, who had worked on nuclear weapons, had begun to engage in our nation's debate on nuclear weapons. We have already forgotten regrettably much that we learned then.

All of the former presidential science advisors had come to the conclusion, for example, that it was time for them individually and as a group to go public, to engage in public education about the realities of the nuclear arms race. The names are well known to everyone here. James Conant. George Kistiakowsky. Jerome Wiesner. Donald Hornig. Jack Ruina. Richard Garwin. Wolfgang Panofsky. Sydney Drell. Herbert York. George Rathjens. Paul Doty. Hans Bethe. Among many others. These scientists engaged in public

policy debate with scholarly responsibility, and educated the Senate, the press, and the nation about the arms race.

I underline this because the impact of Soviet scientists on American scientists had a very electric effect on our politics in an amazingly short time. I'd like to read why Sakharov wrote the 1968 essay. He explains it himself, and it's worth listening to:

“On December 3, 1966, I found an envelope in my mailbox, containing two sheets of onion-skin paper [very typical for samizdat]. The first sheet was an anonymous report on the arrest and confinement in a psychiatric hospital of Viktor Kuznetsov, an artist who had helped draft a modern constitution for our country, which the authors hoped would spark discussion about the introduction of democracy. The second sheet [Sakharov says] announced a silent demonstration on December 5, Constitution Day. I decided to attend. In Pushkin Square, I found a few dozen people standing around the statue. At six o'clock, half of those present, myself included, removed our hats and stood in silence. The other half, I later realized, were KGB. After a minute or so, we put our hats back on. I walked over to the monument and read the inscription aloud [and this was very typical of Andrei Sakharov, as it is of Elena Bonner. Poetry means a lot to them].

I shall be loved and the people will long remember  
That my lyre was tuned to goodness,  
That in this cruel age I celebrated freedom  
And asked mercy for the fallen.<sup>3</sup>

After that, I left the square with the others.”<sup>4</sup>

“By the beginning of 1968 I felt a growing compulsion to speak out. I was influenced by my life experience, and a feeling of personal responsibility, reinforced by the part I had played in the development of the hydrogen bomb, the special knowledge I gained about thermonuclear warfare, my bitter struggle to ban nuclear testing, and my familiarity with the Soviet system. My readings and discussions with fellow scientists had acquainted me with the notions of an open society, convergence and world government. I hoped that these notions might ease the tragic crisis of our age.”<sup>5</sup>

So Sakharov gave his reasons. Most scientists and intellectuals in my country were well aware of Sakharov's work on the H-bomb. The 1968 essay on intellectual freedom was a document laying out ideas that were similar to the thinking of many scientists and intellectuals in the United States. I gave the Sakharov essay to Senator Cooper, and we

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Pushkin, “Unto myself I reared a monument,” 1836.

<sup>4</sup> Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs*, Alfred Knopf, 1990, p. 273.

had many discussions about it. The essay became a part of our thinking, and Senator Cooper proselytized his colleagues, including Bill Fullbright, if you can imagine talking about Sakharov with an Arkansas drawl. I recall that moment with great pleasure. It had a deep impact. It gave confidence, in a direct way, that both sides were thinking about the same danger, and that both sides desperately wanted to find a way out.

This was the time when Georgi Arbatov, the director of the USA and Canada Institute, first appeared in the Senate. I was there, when he came to visit Senator Cooper. It was the first of many, many visits. And the impact of Arbatov's Institute and the Institute of World Economics and International Relations (IMEMO) over that period was a deep one. The direct contact with Soviet officials and intellectuals had an effect of educating the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and even the Armed Services Committees of both houses. At the time, the Soviet Embassy was very active in sending people to the Hill to talk about these kinds of issues. As a result, I would say that both sides learned a lot about each other, and of course, about the language, vocabulary, concepts and negotiating patterns of arms control.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaties were results of the thinking evident in Sakharov's 1968 essay. The structure of thought and logic contained in the essay gave our government leaders confidence that the other side was thinking in the same way about our arms control agreements. It is a marvelous example of the convergence of thinking on the part of intellectuals on both sides, in Moscow and Washington.

The pattern of policy change that took place was very important, and very different from that of other periods of the cold war. Those who had conceived and developed nuclear weapons led the way, convinced as they were that the nuclear arms race had to be halted and reversed if worldwide catastrophe was to be averted.

The military then followed suit on the basis of conclusions made concerning the utility of available and prospective technology. They were convinced by their scientist advisors that technological superiority could not be achieved by either side, and therefore, there were other means of stability: conventional forces and other kinds of weaponry.

In the end, the political leadership finally felt confident enough to follow the guidance of the scientists and to base a new stability on a power balance achieved by diplomacy and the belief that conventional ideas of stability could lead to rapprochement.

Just over 20 years ago, in the book *Inogo ne dano* (No Other Way), edited by Yuri

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 281

Afanasiev, Andrei Sakharov contributed his major article, “The Inevitability of Perestroika,” which captured the thinking of the perestroika group that shaped events in the turbulent years at the end of the Soviet Union.

I was living in Moscow at the time, so I was very directly affected by this kind of intellectual thought. There is little doubt that Sakharov believed that radical action was required to avert the extreme dangers that he and so many other thoughtful leaders believed that we faced. In Sakharov’s words:

“To retreat from the brink of global catastrophe, and so to preserve civilization and life itself on our planet, is a necessary priority 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 towards convergence of the capitalist and socialist systems, an open society, and greater equality for all races and peoples, not only juridical, but also economic, cultural, and social.”<sup>6</sup>

The “Inevitability of Perestroika” described the issues faced by the Soviet Union. And what a heavy time it was. All of the major issues that faced the Soviet Union, indeed all of mankind, were being openly debated, and new directions were being charted. Just consider the issues. Chernobyl; The arms race; Reductions of forces; Environmental degradation; Lake Baikal; The Aral Sea; Global warming; Ozone holes; Tokamak; Fusion reactions; The future of the Communist Party; The Interregional Group; Ethnic conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh Separatist movements in the Baltics and Ukraine; The explosion of newspapers and journals expressing a full spectrum of views; Rock music -- *Chyornye Koffee*, *Quartet Sekret*, *Time Machine*, and all those other, booming rock bands; Very different kinds of films and books; A huge influx of foreigners and new technologies.

I refer to Tatyana Zaslavskaya’s brilliant, prophetic essay called “The Novosibirsk Report”<sup>7</sup> which expressed the view that the new Soviet man could “no longer live like this,” to use the title of a very important perestroika film. But perestroika was necessary because the Soviet man -- and woman -- was educated, was able to travel inside the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries, and had prospered enough so that Stalinist methods of forced order and repression were no longer viable. And there had to be, as she said, *perestroika*, *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya*, if the Soviet Union was to survive.

Sakharov’s 1988 essay on the “Inevitability of Perestroika” was a detailed analysis of the state of Soviet society and world conditions, and an outline of what needed to be done.

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<sup>6</sup> Yuri Afanasiev, editor, *Inogo ne dano* (No Other Way), Progress, Moscow, 1988, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> Tatiana Zaslavakaya, *A Voice of Reform*, M.E. Sharpe, 1989. First published in *Survey*, No. 1, 1984.

Being keenly aware that words have meanings and implications and consequences, particularly when used in times of crisis and danger, Sakharov warned, and I quote, “With the advent of perestroika, many serious but hidden problems, social, economic, moral, and unfortunately, ethnic, have come to light. They have become perestroika’s touchstone, or 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.”<sup>8</sup>

Sakharov and all the perestroika group saw that the challenge was, in essence, to build a new way of thinking, as Gorbachev repeated over and over again, and to build a new society based on the highest values of mankind and on the experience of dreams and visions gone awry.

I remember well the charged moment when Gorbachev and Sakharov met for the first time, after the return from exile in Gorky. I was a participant in the February 1987 Forum for a Nuclear-Free World and the Survival of Mankind, as it was titled. Shortly after the Forum, there was a meeting in the Kremlin, and I was in a small group talking with Sakharov when Gorbachev came up to Sakharov to meet and speak with him. It was an absolutely extraordinary moment. Two great leaders. Two pinnacles of power, of very different kinds. One of the world of the mind, the other of the world of political power. Both kinds of power affected the destiny of the world, and both men knew that their respective roles were crucially important to the outcome of issues in play.

It was a *mano a mano* moment, just like the bullfighter facing the bull. I have tried to capture the power of that moment, and with your permission, I’ll read one way of expressing it. I called this poem “Mikhail Gorbachev Meets Andrei Sakharov”.

They had never met.  
They faced each other for the first time,  
Looking deep into each other’s eyes  
Without fear, without deference, searching--  
Searching, each other’s thoughts for an answer,  
For certainty, for proof of a new formula of power.

Mikhail Gorbachev, First Secretary of the Party of Power,  
Gorbachev, extends his hand in welcome;  
Gorbachev, absolute ruler of half of the world,  
Greets his former prisoner, Andrei Sakharov,  
Now a free man.  
Here, here in the innermost chambers of the Kremlin,

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<sup>8</sup> *Inogo ne dano*, p. 132.

The last of a long line of czars and commissars,  
Leaders of glory and bloody, tragic history,  
Among the ancient frescoes and glowing icons,  
Standing on the same ground, eye to eye,  
Says, in a steady voice, all can hear: [and we heard it]  
“Academician Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, Comrade,  
Let us openly work together to rebuild our society.”

By order of the Central Committee of the Party,  
Distinguished physicist, Andrei Sakharov, now free,  
Released from long exile in Gorky,  
Confident in himself, arms folded on his chest,  
Once again an honored hero.  
Stands erect, with friends in a columned hall  
Of blood red, burnished gold, and green malachite,  
In the Kremlin, the center of Moscow and the Empire.  
Sakharov, who found the key  
Releasing the dreaded, long-locked power of creation,  
A power to nurture or cinder the green earth,  
Now the champion of reason, justice and peace,  
Nods to Mikhail Gorbachev with firm understanding,  
And with profound dignity, embraces the thought:  
To construct, together, a new governing equation.<sup>9</sup>

It was a magic moment. And for several years, as we all know, they worked together, arguing all along the way, to try and create a *perestroika*, a reconstruction of their society. Sakharov was active in all of the debates that took place in the Supreme Soviet, in the Interregional Group of People’s Deputies, of which he was a leader, and all the great movements, and in the Memorial Society filling in the white spots of history.

It was a time of great creative force, based on the issues that affected not only Russia but the world. This was the time of the great unfinished speech. You may recall that Gorbachev told Sakharov, “Time’s up! Don’t you respect the Congress?” Sakharov answers, “Yes, but I respect the country and the people more. My mandate extends beyond the bounds of this Congress.”

If you have read the unfinished speech, you know that it concerned power. It was directed directly at Gorbachev, saying, “You are the power of *perestroika*. You have a responsibility to be elected by the people. You have said all power comes from the

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<sup>9</sup> William Green Miller, *A Wreath of Friends*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, The Amate Press, Oxford, 2007, p. 52.

soviets. Why are you deviating from this path of *demokratizatsia*?" This was the turning point that Bill Taubman spoke of. A very dramatic moment. It wasn't very long thereafter that Sakharov died.

We have his memory, and his example. We also know that his effort and his personal example shaped the outcome. He laid out a path for us to follow.

Thank you.

### **Richard Wilson**

Thank you very much. Any questions? Yuri Orlov has a comment.

### **Yuri Orlov**

I'm very positive about Gorbachev, but to concentrate only on Gorbachev during the transition from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation and the newly independent states is not correct. Yeltsin played a crucial role in the transition. Yeltsin was consistently supporting freedom of the press. Gorbachev wasn't.

In 1989, Yeltsin travelled to the United States, noted, and publicly stated: "I see the capitalist system can be better for the population than the socialist system." To my recollection, Gorbachev did not know what *perestroika* meant for the economy, what to do about the economy, and he didn't, in fact, do anything about the economy at that time.

Another point. Immediately after *glasnost* was declared, in the regions, especially in the coal mines, but in other industries as well, very quickly one after another, strike committees were organized by local workers. It was the beginning of a very powerful workers' movement. It was that movement to which Sakharov appealed to begin a general strike in 1989. Yeltsin, if I remember correctly, supported this idea at that time. Sakharov and Yeltsin were working together as members of the Interregional Group of Deputies in the Congress of People's Deputies.

As for *glasnost*, it was a term developed by the dissidents already 20 years before Gorbachev. Almost in every main document of the dissidents, the very word "*glasnost*" was there.

### **Anton Burkov**

I have a question for Alexei Pankin. My name is Anton Burkov and I'm here as a human rights lawyer working with NGOs in the Urals. Since the 1990s, our NGO was working with the mass media extensively. We set up a special news agency to spread the human rights message, and we did it pretty well in the 1990s, and the beginning of this century, using the different interests of the local government, regional government and federal government. Various newspapers and TV channels were picking up our messages.

But today the situation is very different and very complicated. It's almost impossible to get our message across. Now, media may publish something about consumers' rights, but that's as close as they'll come to human rights. Only one news agency is publishing our press releases, it's Kasparov's [tochka.ru](http://tochka.ru) which is very limited, of course.

How do you see our future in this situation? Is our only hope the Internet?

### **Alexei Pankin**

Well, I have to say that my main occupation is that I'm editor of a magazine for executives in the publishing business, so I have a very professional attitude to this question. Since I don't know the business model of your agency, it's difficult for me to say why people are not taking your messages. It could be that they are not interested or feel that their audience will not be interested.. It could be that they have no money. As I have observed the development of the media, I think any kind of message that editors, especially at a local or regional level, feel will be of use or interest to their readers somehow gets into newspapers. It's another thing how editors interpret the interest of their audiences.

And here I remind you of what the great Russian poet Pushkin said: "If freedom of speech is introduced in Russia, the first author who will be published will be Barkov." Barkov was a very popular pornographic writer of the time. I think Pushkin was right. Now that there is freedom of speech, now that the media is becoming a market-oriented institution, the level of journalism and what people want from journalists has really sunk very low. But this is not unique to Russia. As you are living here, you probably noticed that even the serious papers are getting less and less serious. I'm afraid it's an international trend.

### **Comment**

Just a brief comment, because I know it's time for lunch. But since Alexei mentioned

*Inogo ne Dano*, we should also recall that Vitaly Ginzburg, a distinguished physicist and colleague of Andrei Sakharov, contributed a very important article, which laments the bureaucratization of science during the Soviet period.<sup>10</sup>

### **William Miller**

I'd like to answer Yuri Orlov's comment about Yeltsin and Gorbachev. As I remember it, in the time when I was there, the interplay between them began with the Interregional Group. And the Interregional Group was a democratic necessity to air views and proposals that the party of power opposed, or at least had a different take on. The turning point, I think, was when Gorbachev turned off microphone on Sakharov. That was such a symbolic moment. There was silence. And Gorbachev didn't listen. It was the stilling of a great, powerful voice of reason.

Yeltsin picked up some of the thoughts of Sakharov. And the influence of Sakharov on Yeltsin, I believe, was a benign one. It brought out the best in Yeltsin, and mitigated the worst. But the tragedy, of course, was Gorbachev's turning off of the microphone.

### **Richard Wilson**

I would like to make a comment from the chair about one of the things I know about. The new head of Belarus, nuclear physicist Stanislav Shushkevich, invited Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk to come to Minsk in December 1991 to start the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It was always Sakharov's idea that the Soviet Union should come apart, and come back together voluntarily. I talked with Shushkevich just a couple of weeks after that. He was hoping that all the countries of the former Soviet Union would come together. Of course, that didn't succeed. I think one thing he tried and got passed at the time was that a visa valid for any one of the CIS states would be valid for all of them. That has gone by the wayside.

My second comment is that Bill Miller is a little too optimistic about whether American and Russian generals understood the issues of a nuclear war. Bill and I were both in General Yazov's office in the Soviet Union, in 1991. And one of General Yazov's statements I remember very clearly (these were interpreters' words of course) "The Chernobyl accident taught those of us in the Russian army who did not already know it, that a nuclear war could not be won." Because if something not intended to explode made that much mess, a nuclear war would destroy

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<sup>10</sup> Vitaly Ginzburg, "Against Bureaucracy, 'Playing It Safe,' and Incompetence" in Yuri Afanasiev, editor, *Inogo Ne Dano* (No Other Way), Progress, Moscow, 1988, pp. 135-153.

the planet. I interpreted from this, that many people in Russia's army did not realize that before.

### **William Miller**

I remember that moment very well, and one element of the meeting was Elena Bonner facing down General Yazov, as only she could do. But I have more faith in generals, partially because there's no other way. You have to deal with the military. They are part of our society and life.

I had a very interesting talk with the head of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Missile Army in Kalininske at the bottom of command-and-control silo number 110, if I remember correctly. This general was a Ukrainian. He had been, of course, a major figure in the Soviet Missile Army. He had been in Cuba. He had also been part of the Prague Spring alert. He told me, "This has to stop. We have to get rid of these weapons. The scientists are right. Sakharov was right."

This conversation was held underground, 30 meters down, in front of a command-and-control panel and two lieutenants with two keys. So generals can understand. They have a crucial role to play, and in this case, I think they have played it.