SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Alexander Yakovlev
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THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
THE HARRIMAN CENTENNIAL

Michael I. Sovern
President, Columbia University

Nine years ago I was privileged to welcome many of you
to the first event of the W. Averell Harriman Institute for
Advanced Study of the Soviet Union.

And on that wonderful day we listened to a truly remark-
able array of speakers—Cyrus Vance, Marshall Shulman, and,
of course, Averell Harriman.

Today we gather, in a vastly changed world, to celebrate
the life and work of a great citizen of our planet who devoted
much of his long and unique career to the search for common
ground between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the intervening years the Harriman Institute has come
to fulfill our high expectations as a bridge of understanding
between once hostile worlds.

The Institute has steered clear of hard lines, soft lines or
party lines. It has carried out its pledge of fealty to uncompro-
mising honesty and quality. It is, we believe, an institute
worthy of the man for whom it is named.

It is fitting that the Harriman Lecture at this centennial
celebration should be delivered by one who has played an
extraordinary role in bringing about the rapprochement be-
tween the Soviet Union and the United States.

Indeed, as counselor to Mikhail Gorbachev, our illustrious
speaker has been a key actor in some of the most important
developments of our century.

I visited our honored guest with Seweryn Bialer in Moscow
two years ago, and I am very pleased to return his hospitality
today and extend a warm welcome from Alma Mater to our
own Alexander Yakovlev.

This moment in world history, symbolized by the presence
of Alexander Yakovlev, is one that Averell Harriman would
have relished. We wish he were here to witness and to affect the dramatic developments of the past several years. We miss him. But we take solace in the participation at this ceremony of his close partner, and Columbia’s good friend, whose wisdom and resolve continue to be a driving force in the important work of the Harriman Institute—Pamela Harriman.

We are also blessed by the presence of Governor Harriman’s daughters: his official hostess and superb right hand at the American Embassy in Moscow and at wartime conferences, Kathleen Harriman Mortimer; and Mary Harriman Fisk, the equally superb right hand of Dr. Shirley Carter Fisk, the late, distinguished associate dean of the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons.

We are joined as well by Averell Harriman’s grandson, David Mortimer, who is Vice President of the American Assembly here at Columbia; and by Pamela Harriman’s son, the author and Member of Parliament, Winston Churchill, and Minnie Churchill. Welcome to you all.

When Averell Harriman stood before us in this Rotunda and called forth the new Institute, he did so with the recognition that there was no greater threat to the future of America than ignorance of the Soviet Union, and no greater threat to the future of the world than continued hostility between the two superpowers.

As Governor Harriman said on that occasion: “To base a policy on ignorance and illusion is very dangerous. It should be based on knowledge and understanding.”

He believed that the creation of the Harriman Institute, absorbing the oldest Russian Institute in the country and developing new tools and approaches, would achieve that knowledge and understanding, and would signify a new dedication in America to advanced training and research in Soviet studies.

Averell Harriman was right. Through his farsighted generosity, we began to develop and train a generation of younger specialists, a future cadre of highly trained diplomats, scholars, political leaders, journalists and researchers with expert knowledge of the Soviet Union.

Today, many of them are on the job, representing our country, informing our people, generating new knowledge as full and objective as scholarship of integrity can achieve.

The work of the Harriman Institute has deepened a longstanding relationship. More than three decades ago, during the Columbia presidency of my illustrious predecessor, Dwight Eisenhower, Averell Harriman generously donated to the University what is today our Arden House campus. The beautiful Harriman home has accommodated hundreds of important symposia, including conferences on United States-Soviet relations in which Governor Harriman himself participated.

More recently, we received from the Gladys and Roland Harriman Foundation the nearby estate, Arden Homestead—and, of course, the Gladys and Roland Harriman Professorship in Soviet Economics, the first chair created expressly for the work of the Harriman Institute.

So I am quite certain that Averell Harriman would be pleased to celebrate his one-hundredth birthday beneath the umbrella of the Harriman Institute. And I know he would be pleased that we are celebrating in his home state, where he was such an outstanding Governor.

Averell Harriman was a man of his country as well as the world. His business expertise with Union Pacific and his public spirit prompted President Roosevelt to select him to help guide responses to the Depression from the Department of Commerce. Thirteen years later, President Truman would appoint him as Secretary of Commerce.

In war and peace, boom and bust, Averell Harriman was at the center of the action—as FDR’s Administrator of the National Recovery Administration, and then in the Office of Production Management, preparing America’s industrial machinery for the war.

But from the moment that President Roosevelt asked him to organize Lend Lease, Averell Harriman became the indispensable man of international service—as Presidential envoy for FDR’s trips to the Soviet Union with Prime Minister Churchill, as Ambassador to the Soviet Union, as Ambassador to Great Britain, as United States Representative in Europe (ad-
ministering the Marshall Plan), as U.S. Representative to NATO, as Chairman of the Mutual Security Administration, as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, as negotiator of the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, as Ambassador-at-Large to the Vietnam peace talks—and I am out of breath from just those few of the many missions Governor Harriman undertook in the interest of global peace and security.

Averell Harriman was born in this city on November 15, 1891. We at Columbia University in the City of New York remember him fondly and proudly exactly one hundred years later. And so will he be remembered in the coming century.

For Averell Harriman was a man for the ages, a great leader of purpose and vision. He had little interest in sound bites for the evening news, but an abiding passion for the pages of history. His sense of the future was profound, his commitment to principle unwavering. How we need him today!

INTRODUCTION

Robert Legvold

Director of the Harriman Institute

Universities cherish the opportunity to welcome home talented and triumphant sons and daughters, particularly those who have changed history. When the history they have changed is massive and momentous, the pleasure grows into a deep honor. We, indeed, are honored to have Alexander Nikolayevich Yakovlev back at Columbia after thirty-three years and on a day that is special to the Harriman Institute and our University: the one-hundredth anniversary of Governor Harriman’s birth.

Burke once said that “great men are the guideposts and landmarks in the state.” So are they history’s pilot. We might know that the grandiose reordering of time and space in our day was not the work of a single great man—although Mikhail Gorbachev deserves immense credit. Without Alexander Yakovlev the Gorbachev era might not have been; it certainly would not have been as it was. It is said he was perestroika’s theologian, while Mikhail Sergeyevich was its evangelist. “The time has come for truth,” he argued, “the time has come to speak of nobility, charity, honor, and conscience.” If the Soviet system was to be saved, a system in which he believed, if socialism was to be renewed, an outcome he wanted, they would have to free themselves from the petty, clumsy, deadening tyrannies of bureaucratised authoritarianism, would have to face the truth of their past, and would have to trust the creative energies of an untrammelled people.

For this he fought from the moment in mid-1985 when he assumed the portfolio in the Party apparatus for propaganda and culture. Once he became a full member of the Politburo in 1987, he emerged as the single most powerful intellectual partisan of economic and political reform.
Often, and by many people, his importance to the flourishing of glasnost and the fledgling development of democracy has been noted.

Less noted has been his role in the transformation of Soviet foreign policy. Our world is different beyond description because of the Soviet foreign policy revolution. Ask East Europeans. Ask the victims of superpower rivalry in the Third World. Ask us Americans. Alexander Yakovlev, together with Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze, changed more than the Soviet Union.

For him the link between the foreign policy revolution and perestroika was crucial: By altering the Soviet approach to the world outside, he told his Communist comrades at the Twenty-Eighth Party Congress, “We are also transforming the moral atmosphere at home.”—“Calmness, the elimination of fear, reducing the spiritual need to seek out the enemy, a realistic look at the world and at our own capabilities—all this helps to establish in society a spiritually healthy atmosphere.”

Son of peasant parents, born in a small village near Yaroslavl, six years after the Bolshevik Revolution. A war hero, by which is meant that as a twenty-year-old boy his body was badly torn apart by an enemy machine gun. Alexander Nikolayevich served most of his life in the apparatus of the Party, first in his home province of Yaroslavl and then by the 1960s in Moscow. This career was interrupted first in 1958, when he spent a year at Columbia University, along with three other students who were among the initial eighteen Soviet citizens to be part of the first U.S.-Soviet student exchange, and, a second time, from 1973 to 1983, when he was the Soviet ambassador to Canada, a period during which he evidently did a great deal of reading and thinking. As I noted earlier, he reached the pinnacle of power in 1987, first as a candidate, and then as a full, member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He later served on the Presidential Council. Today he is a State Counselor to the President of the Soviet Union and Co-Chairman of the Movement for Democratic Reform.

History in the Soviet Union has not turned out as Alexander Nikolayevich and the other architects of perestroika wanted or expected. He has come to tell us what the collapse of the Soviet experience means to him in the context of the long haul of nineteenth- and twentieth-century history. He has also come to tell us what he believes it should mean to us. The title of his lecture is “Social Alternatives in the Twentieth Century.”

Before I invite him to the podium, I want to acknowledge that but for the generosity of the Mary A.H. Rumsey Foundation, this wonderful event would not be happening.

Alexander Nikolayevich, welcome back!
SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Alexander Yakovlev

In the Soviet Union the name of Averell Harriman is justly synonymous first and foremost with the beginnings of a new phase of cooperation between our two countries. Cooperation during the years of World War II, when the Soviet Union and the United States together fought against Fascism, that most dangerous threat to democracy, and during the period that witnessed the first winds of detente after the Cuban missile crisis, which had opened our eyes to the intensity and depth of the nuclear abyss. Following hard on the steps of that crisis, we achieved the first strategic agreements banning nuclear tests in three environments. The groundwork for such cooperation is always a labor of both reason and conscience. I will not be mistaken if I say that in his work for the Roosevelt administration in the early 1930s, Averell Harriman always acted as though he clearly saw the advent of our era. He was one of those who through his honesty, insight and energy laid the way for common sense in international politics. A man of inner strength and dignity, he strived to do the maximum possible so that the world as a whole should live according to the laws of dignity and self-respect, responsibility and freedom. The memory of Averell Harriman and respect for him and his legacy are honored today not only in the United States of America. This is a very good and encouraging sign for all who believe that their mission is one of consolidating democracy, freedom, and civilization throughout the world.

I am honored to speak here today on the occasion of the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of this great man. I consider my lecture, which I have entitled “Social Alternatives in the Twentieth Century,” to be an accounting to my teachers at this University, and I must say that I have prepared for this occasion for a long time.

Breaking with the past is always difficult, incredibly difficult. And I do not believe the commonly-held assertion that mankind parts with his past lightly.

That assertion is a result of an inordinate self-confidence that has afflicted man and mankind. Good and Evil, that eternal and tortuous apple of discord, depend only on what we know about them. “Who convinced man,” exclaimed Michel de Montaigne back in the sixteenth century, “that the astounding motion of the firmament, that the eternal light streaming from the heavenly bodies majestically revolving over his head, that the menacing rumble of the boundless sea, that all of this has been created and has existed for so many centuries only for him, for his convenience, and to serve him? Is it not absurd that this insignificant and pitiful creature, who is not even able to manage his own affairs and who is prey to the blows of all random hazards, should proclaim himself lord and master of the universe, the smallest particle of which he is unable to comprehend, let alone rule? What is the basis for the superiority which he ascribes to himself, assuming that in this great universe only he and he alone can sing praises to his Creator and grasp the origins and order of the universe?” That was what the great philosopher de Montaigne thought; that is what we thought we are.

Man has turned out to be a foolish lord of the universe. In his arrogance he destroys it, and in so doing also ruins himself.

That is about nature. And what about knowledge? Who knows whether mankind is robbing itself by rejecting outright in its pride different views and theories of social development, particularly those that were revolutionary yesterday, but have become conservative and historically inappropriate today.
And here we seldom find the necessary degree of tolerance that engenders wisdom, or the salutary sense of self-respect that nourishes dignity.

Today the world is bidding farewell to communism, to a system of theoretical views and practical actions, which would be foolish to regret. The parting was inevitable, for insane practice had trampled into the mud the attractive social hypothesis that had always outstripped the possibilities of its implementation.

But would it not be a new act of madness to laugh at the "madness of the brave" and at their delusions, to laugh at those people who, like the first Christians, believed in justice, in the triumph of Good, in the possibility of implementing universal commandments which make man truly Man when they are followed? Yes, before our very eyes an onerous page of history is being turned: the Cold War in which there was no victor. The nuclear monster is also crawling away.

The victory of Reason is evident. But what is man feeling as he opens the windows and doors, so that the fresh air of history can bring him to another kind of life? Is he experiencing a sense of intellectual and moral insight, or the ability to see and understand the world and himself a great deal better than he did before? Is there a newly acquired wisdom that facilitates sympathy, empathy, and forgiveness? Are his spirits lifted and is he at peace? Or, on the contrary, is he filled with dark, destructive feelings of devastation, dissipation, hurt, and bitterness, which go hand in hand with vengeance and the smell of blood?

To paraphrase the great Russian poet Sergey Yesenin, I would say that "I am ashamed that I believed in myths. I am saddened I do not believe in them now." People will object that there are different kinds of myths. That is true. Classical myths still fire our imagination. Allusions to the enigmatic and menacing Greek gods still populate the artistic and intellectual creation of mankind.

But what about the communist ones? After all, did not the dreams of a better life, the romantic hopes of the first Christians, cast a spell over the consciousness of the insulted and the injured, over those people who had been scarred by life? Did not a hungry child dream of sweets, the homeless of gorgeous cities in the sun, those exhausted by endless labor of azure vales of repose, those who were victims of injustice of the kingdoms of equality and brotherhood?

But the point is not one of emotions as such, nor of the natural pain caused by unfulfilled hopes. The entire history of civilization is the history of a continuous parting with myths and dreams, of an ascent towards the courage of knowledge and realism. And pain is also natural when new things are being born.

But parting with the old does not necessarily mean choosing the new. Whether we like it or not, we in the Soviet Union once again are faced with the necessity of choice. Moreover, the choice is undetermined, for there can be no return to the past, and the future cannot be predicted for the time being. Historically, the emotional side of this choice is transient and fleeting, but today it is extremely important. Both hardened and enlightened souls seek for themselves different coves of Providence, and see their own possibilities differently.

It would be rash to forget that at one time "indignant reason" was one of the motives for choosing communism, since it was particularly sensitive to social ills and injustice. It seethed with overflowing insults, indignation, and protest. The vision of a beautiful paradise on earth was vague, hazy, and even primitive, and in and of itself could rouse few to choose revolution. Despair of real life, that is, being both disillusioned and outcast by real life, as well as a contempt born of weariness for the existing norms of life, institutions of power, and leaders—all that played a much more powerful role than beautiful dreams. At least that was the case in Russia.

For that reason it is useful to consider from all points of view not only the meaning and logic of these social alternatives with which the twentieth century has brought us together, but also the necessity of seeing and finding the
enlightening, ennobling, and elevating source of even the failed variants.

We lived for so long in the suffocating atmosphere of political, ideological, military, and every other kind of confrontation that many people genuinely have no notion of other principles and forms for organizing the world. For nearly three quarters of a century this confrontation determined not only the interrelations of two systems, but to a great extent their domestic structure, domestic life, and above all, self-identification. To the question "Who am I?" each side answered, with a finger pointed at the opposition, "I am not he. I am completely different." And that was true.

Such a confrontational mode of self-identification left us with a set of widely divergent oppositions: socialism—capitalism, totalitarianism—democracy, control—freedom, planned economy—market economy, collective—individual. And in the moral sphere—Good and Evil, which each side naturally understood in its own way and according to its own precepts.

First, the confrontation artificially narrowed the range of apparent alternatives—if not always in practice, then always ideologically. The impression was formed of two paths that took shape in October 1917 and since that time had grown further and further apart. "The final and decisive battle," as a result of which one system once and for all triumphs and buries the other—unless one of them resettles on other planets. The apocalyptic nature of either variant best illustrates the artificiality and the far-fetched senselessness that is presupposed as the basis of the original conception.

Second, this confrontational self-identification was far removed from reality. Even worse, it hindered our understanding of this reality. Now, with this confrontation behind us, we see its moral bankruptcy, political senselessness, and economic criminality. We are forced to admit that the system-defining attributes of a certain structure—any structure—as a matter of course are present in the other structure.

For reasons of inertia and psychological comfort both sides still continue to emphasize their differences, which of course remain in force. But today this is insufficient for self-identification. Soviet society today is agonizing over the most difficult question—"Who are we?"—and it is seeking the answers in its past, in world experience, and in the future. Western publications are also raising this question for Western society: Where is it going and what will it become when the situation is such that the former enemy, the polar opposite in terms of world view, has disappeared?

It is possible that these are the natural stages in the process of socialization of the individual, nations, and mankind as a whole. To first define yourself in contrast to someone else. Then to consider your own ego. And later to try to find a general common denominator. It is imperative to remember these particulars of self-understanding when we assess the social variants of civilization.

The twentieth century did not begin with the opposition of socialism and capitalism. It was not even aware of the choice it would very soon have to make.

I would term the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the period of European absolutism in world development. Two thousand years of European spiritual traditions and achievements determined the life of Europe and, to a great extent, world politics, science, and culture. The European model of industrial development yielded impressive fruits. Europe set the standards for domestic and foreign policy and the criteria for civilized life and technical progress. Europe not only set these standards, but it was also in a position to impose them on the world. Its system of colonial empires allowed Europe to dominate politically and economically; it took on the role of Christian missionary work; and it influenced global development through the expansion of culture, daily life, and thought.

Europe perceived itself to be the center and apex of development, while it looked at other parts of the globe as regions to raise up from varying degrees of barbarism to civilization, that is, to its own level. Both directly and indirectly, overtly and covertly, Europe employed the most
brutal and the most truly humane means to raise these regions to Good but also to Evil. This is neither to praise nor to condemn, but is merely a statement of fact.

True, at an earlier stage the development of the center had undergone decisive historical watersheds, the full significance of which has been understood only in our time.

The first such watershed was the Reformation and the Enlightenment, which in fact opened the way to modern Europe: the triumph of rationalist thinking and rationalist morality over religious and fundamentalist thinking; the acquisition of knowledge and the creation of science and education; the undermining of the moral, ideological, theoretical and political foundations of clericalism and absolute monarchy, which led to the birth of modern democracies; the breakup of natural economy in favor of trade economy; the transformation of a significant portion of the population from virtual draft animals into skilled workers and skilled managers, who required education, culture, and information on a massive scale.

Europe's mighty entry into the rest of the world, including its colonial entry, became the external manifestation of this process. Nevertheless, the primary consequences of this process for the time being were confined to Europe itself and were variously refracted in the life and history of European nations and peoples.

The second watershed, in my view, was the formation in the eighteenth century of a government such as the United States. In essence, all of the newest ideas to be found in European thought, culture, production, politics, religion, and world view—all of this was transported to the soil of an unprecedented historical experiment on a new site, and, moreover, in conditions in which social strata, conservatism and inertia did not have the opportunity to impede development. This was perestroika in nearly pure form, since it did not require the preliminary dismantling of obsolete and stagnant phenomena, nor was it faced with enormous resistance.

With the creation of the United States, European Christian culture, which had experienced the beneficial impact of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, and which was continuing to reap their fruits, set out on two separate courses of development. Europe proper experienced a struggle of the new with a deeply rooted, diversified and strong past. (Here there is a direct analogy with the conditions of today's perestroika in Soviet society.)

In America this development took place in relatively favorable conditions, since it was not so immobilized by inertia. But at the dawn of the twentieth century the world was by no means as compact and small as it is today. The New World remained far away on the other side of the ocean. The amassed potential remained to be revealed. And Europe continued to regard the United States, as the latter charged forward, with mixed feelings of paternalistic condescension, vague fears, foreboding, and hope.

Meanwhile, in Europe the theoretical, political, and social preconditions for the next and third watershed had already taken shape. The rapid modernization that took place in a society overburdened by outdated and obsolete structures, and by every possible sort of reactionarism, led to the crystallization of socialist thought and to the birth of the communist movement. The question was only when and where these preconditions would become political reality. That happened in Russia in October 1917 due to the confluence of a wide range of circumstances: an exhausting war that led to ruin; the degeneration of the autocracy and of its ability to rule; the barbaric methods of initial accumulation of capital; indifference to what was happening to an enormous part of the population; the aspiration of the emerging bourgeois class to do away with feudalism; the allure of the revolutionary parties' slogans.

This newly born system called socialism, developing in a country that just yesterday was still primarily feudal, proclaimed a full and absolute rejection of the society, culture, and civilization that had spawned it. It broke not only with democracy and with the economy of the free market, but also with Europe, with Christianity (to a greater extent than with other religions), and with America as part of Christian European bourgeois civilization. This maxi-
nalist rejection was born in the depths of that civilization, in its internal contradictions and the difficulties that impeded attempts to accelerate modernization.

Here there are many analogies with today's perestroika in the Soviet Union. Perestroika is encountering resistance not only from the opposing forces of the past, but also from the total rejection of everything that has been accomplished.

At each of the historical watersheds of European civilization, the past rose up angrily against the new. Even the United States had to endure a war for independence and then a civil war. There is no need here to go into details concerning the bloody history of the European states. But there had never been such a brutal and devastating clash, or so dangerous a clash, as the confrontation between socialism and capitalism, between East and West. Nuclear night—how much time did we have left? And why did we start arming on such an irrational scale, with irrational means and at irrational rates? Was it historical savagery or was it society's inability to control the interests and influence of its individual groups? Or perhaps because the two poles of confrontation after 1945, the Soviet Union and the United States, were sufficiently far removed geographically that war never seemed truly real? That's possible. However, the need to intimidate the opponent clearly did exist.

Fortunately, irrationality did not fully succeed in eradicating common sense.

After October 1917, two qualitatively different models of development took shape in European civilization. One was the American model. Its distinctive feature was the lack of extremism in internal, but particularly in external, conditions for the development of the country over a long period of time. In particular, geography had bequeathed a high degree of safety from external assault. The other model was the Euro-continental one, for which, on the other hand, what was characteristic was the extreme nature of conditions, both external and internal. The degree of these extreme characteristics in Western Europe was different than in the Soviet Union, where it was markedly more extremist.

The development of the United States, which of course was not without its own problems and crises, on the whole took a more natural path, if by natural we mean a truly accessible range of freedom for man and society. Roosevelt's New Deal marked a qualitative turning point, during and after which the United States in practice, although without admitting this ideologically, began to employ an increasing number of pragmatic measures and approaches of a socially reformist nature. I am merely stating fact and do not wish to evaluate this phenomenon. I believe that one could also make the observation that when faced with a sharp confrontation with the USSR, including one of an ideological nature, the United States Government found itself vulnerable to accusations from the right of "insinuating" socialism at home. In this connection, as I see it, they were unable to advance as far, as quickly, and as effectively in the resolution of many questions of a social and economic order, as they could have without confrontation. You should judge this for yourselves, however, as you should decide whether or not to move in this direction in general.

Western and Central Europe experienced the outbreak of Fascism, which was a response to the inability of the old orders to cope with the burden of problems and the necessity to accelerate modernization. After the defeat of Fascism, the social reform course of development became dominant in Europe. Extremism of external and internal conditions gradually disappeared.

In the Soviet Union, in my view, it was precisely that extreme nature of internal and external conditions, very often artificial, which predetermined, first, the establishment and consolidation of the Stalinist model of the system; second, the preservation of the Stalinist model when many in the USSR, including those in the ruling orders, realized the necessity of dismantling it gradually, and, ideally, of destroying it; third, the extreme nature of these conditions (now external conditions), and the gamble on the extreme nature of these conditions, doomed all of the pre-perestroika attempts at reform in socialist countries in-
cluding the Hungarian Revolt of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, the Khrushchev Thaw, and the Kosygin Reform.

We all remember the contradictions and paradoxes of disarmament. The threat of a nuclear apocalypse in some fantastic way coexisted with the growing awareness of the insanity of such an end for all mankind.

II.

The political revolution that began in the Soviet Union in 1985 fundamentally changed the vector of world development. Historical turning points intersect, while preserving the distinctive features of the fully developed variants. As a result, a civilized diversity is taking shape, which is an indispensable condition for a flourishing world society.

In the new political and moral climate, and given the new international conditions, the processes of interaction will take place more intensively and more rapidly. That is why I would venture to conclude that having traveled this long and agonizing path, and having subjected itself to very painful upheavals, European civilization in its own way is returning to itself, that is, to historical mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.

Centrifugal historical tendencies are being replaced by centripetal ones. By preserving and multiplying internal diversity, European civilization is also acquiring a new integrity, a new kind of unity. Today it embraces all of its experience: positive and negative, sad and tragic, ultranationalist and internationalist, European socialist, American liberal and Russian communist, the diversity of democracies and the universalism of totalitarianism.

The total system must absorb this experience, not piecemeal and not only in terms of conflict—it must be absorbed as a single historical whole. Let us not anticipate the results of incorporating this experience, since that is impossible. But it is a question of survival, whether we preserve and strengthen the conditions in which the trends toward decline and self-destruction of civilization are replaced by trends toward preservation and development. European Christian civilization merits such a fate. And most importantly, we very much need it and it can serve all of mankind.

The unique character of the twentieth century consists not only in how densely it has concentrated the genius and material progress of mankind—from steam to outer space, from electricity to informational systems, from the plow to genetic engineering. We are struck by something else as well—the sheer scale of the crimes that have been committed, the accumulated passion for self-destruction and mutual hatred. Mankind was feverishly preparing the wherewithal for a universal funeral.

In my opinion, not even this can lay claim to the role of the defining symbol of the century that is drawing to a close. I don’t know what adjective would be most appropriate here, but the essence of the century lies in the fact that it has inundated mankind with such an enormous amount of social information that man is unable to cope with it so far: current information, when news flies around the globe; the kind of information that has been amassed over years and decades in all areas of life, knowledge, and research; the kind of information that comes from the recesses of centuries, from discoveries and new interpretations of history, anthropology and many other sciences; and the kind of information we derive from attempts at forecasting, from efforts to link the history of this earth with cosmic events and processes.

Never before has mankind as a whole possessed the ability to see itself so fully and so totally, to see all the contradictions of its own real existence, to trace its own path in the past, and insofar as is possible, to comprehend the future. And perhaps only now, at the end of the twentieth century, has the question of social variants faced us in all of its complexity and depth.

To say “alternative” means no more than to recognize that development, in principle, can take different paths. The choice is important, since it represents a conscious act of man, of a people, of a country. But there are hardly sufficient grounds to term as “choice” that which occurs as a
result of violence or is undertaken because of harsh living conditions, paucity of knowledge and awareness, or because of limitations of historical and social world view.

What are the categories we should consider in making this choice?

The customary ideological categories promptly take us back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The dispute between socialism and capitalism inevitably turns off in that direction. If, for instance, the communist branch of development has turned out to be a dead end, then there is only one way out of that dead end—back, back to that highway from which we at one point had exited via revolutionary violence. Let us leave aside the irrational emotions such an assumption elicits. Before our eyes we have the experience of religions, struggle, enmity, and wars, which were separated by decades and even centuries.

But such a mechanical division into familiar categories conceals a more serious flaw. Explicitly or implicitly, consciously or not, it is based on the assumption that historical development is discrete, that at any moment in time choice in the true sense can interrupt and channel it in another direction. But all experience of such attempts in fact demonstrates the reverse, and that is why the picture of a linear and automatic return from the dead end is fundamentally incorrect.

The customary categories of politics lead us into a world of banalities. It is true that at present victory more often is won by democracy than totalitarianism, by the primacy of human rights than the interests of states, by common sense than ideological dogmatism, and so on. This state of affairs is encouraging and allows us to hope that these salutary changes will hold sway.

But today this is hardly an indicator of choice. In modern political thought democracy, nonviolence, human rights, freedom, initiative, enterprise, social protection of the weak, and justice—these are all axioms, at least in theory. Few would dispute that now.

But even in an optimal variant all this does not constitute social choice. The social alternative is not a question of the political pendulum: whether society will move to the right or to the left, toward democracy or away from it, toward extroversion or introversion. Indeed, all this is nothing more than the external aspects of these phenomena. Social alternative presupposes choice of the quality of social development, and by the same token, the qualities of the human potential being formed through the natural course of new social relations.


No, the new quality of society means elevating man through his morality. But here, too, we are faced with an objective "trap." One aspect of morality is derived from the categories of Good and Evil. But it is impossible to judge the twentieth century solely by this criterion. Not simply Evil, but the most terrible and deliberate crimes have been committed. But if we judge only by this criterion, can we say that the previous century was more moral and more pure? I would not venture to do so. More naive? Yes, absolutely. To a great extent more normative and more puritanical.

I believe the problem goes much deeper. On the historical field of time, man is still moving from savagery to civilization, from instinct to reason, from irrationality to responsibility. This determines the quality of development and the moral evaluation of social choice. And I believe that if we use these criteria to judge, the twentieth century on the whole has moved us forward. More than that, it is precisely now that we are making the most important breakthrough, as we alter the paradigm of world politics through our joint efforts. In different ways and with different results European civilization on the whole is taking a decisive step towards charting its course to escape the strongest and most dangerous sources of irrationalism.

I am referring to overcoming the conflict between East and West. Moreover, overcoming it not in the form of "victory" by one side, but through our joint interpretation of the results of the acquired experience.
One of the key questions for European civilization, which is, moreover, first and foremost a moral question, is the relationship between evolution and revolution in the choice of paths of development.

Advocates of revolution at all times and places have justified their choice of violence by saying that there were no other means to escape oppression, injustice, the inhumanity of the old orders, and to destroy the ossified fortress of reaction. On the other hand, advocates of evolution were repelled precisely by violence. Without denying the necessity of progress and while repudiating injustice, they nevertheless convincingly pointed out that revolutions swept away by the logic of violence often turned against themselves and devoured their own children. It is not an accident that we say that revolutions are prepared by romantics, carried out by fanatics, and that their fruits are reaped by scoundrels. A man of conscience can never rebuff such arguments, nor can he ignore them.

There is, however, one fundamental inaccuracy in this debate. What is revolution? Is it merely a plot conceived by a limited group of people? It is irrelevant whether they are acting out of the noblest or, on the contrary, the basest motives, or whether they are simply subject to conscientious delusions. Or is revolution something more than that, more than a plot? And then where is the line that distinguishes these phenomena?

As we know, history has no judges. Revolutions have had their sinners and their heroes. And there have been different kinds of revolutions: bloody, bloodless, and velvety. The consequences have also been very different and often contradictory. Some revolutions mark a movement forward, while others degenerate into counterrevolution.

Science is indifferent to subjective political preferences. Violent and bloody coups are abominable, but the choice of evolution, as experience has shown, is also not always humane or easy. Evolution by its very nature presupposes constant change, the struggle for existence and natural selection. All of this can make unbearably high and exacting demands on man and on society as a whole. Demands that are so high and exacting that there is no room left for morality. And he who chooses evolution must see the deferred dangers, must recognize their explosive nature and understand that life on credit still presupposes payment, only with interest.

Apparently the experience of European civilization, both its material and spiritual development, has led us to the threshold that requires a new synthesis, both in concepts and in the system of behavior. Civilization demands the accumulation of material and spiritual riches. But this is made more difficult in conditions of interrupted development, whether it is caused by external circumstances, revolutionary outbursts, or other upheavals. To avoid this interruption of development we need collectively to stop creating extreme external conditions, which is what we have jointly started to do in recent times.

One reason why perestroika is encountering such difficulty and why it is accompanied by instability in economic and public life is that the dying system had erected an incredibly solid fortress against any and all change. It is not a simple matter to destroy it. Moreover, so far only isolated breaches have been made in it, nothing more. It was not even possible to avoid the attempt at a military coup.

Nevertheless, the conclusion is obvious: evolutionary changes must become a way of life and the ability to carry out those evolutionary changes is the major criterion of morality in any system and of its viability from the point of view of economics, law, and the political order. Dangerous times and terrible ordeals lie ahead if in the future change will also have to force its way through the dense rock incrustation of conservative interests, ideological fundamentalism, bureaucratic inertia, and social indifference.

Perestroika will not succeed through free elections, or the transition to a market economy, or political pluralism. All this is nothing more than bricks, which will amount to nothing more than a disorganized heap, unless we build a society that stimulates change and that is ready to accept these changes.
The struggle for survival is the next barrier that must be crossed. The overwhelming majority of people in my country identify these words with something like the "law of the jungle" and are put on their guard. They do not yet understand that the endless shortages, lines, and bureaucracy are also a struggle for existence, only turned inside out, and one which ravages man morally.

But a civilized struggle for existence in a civilized society can mean only one thing: the necessity and the opportunity for each member of society to provide for himself and his family, to make his own honest contribution to the coffers of society as a whole, and to have the opportunity to realize his full potential.

In my country we created a dependent state in which any attempt on the part of the individual to stand on his own two feet was persecuted. In so doing, we deprived society of stimuli for development and we doomed it to squander human and material resources. Man's rejection of the struggle for existence, the desire to have the government become a philanthropic institution or a distribution office, leads to mass lumpenization in all social strata and groups. Chernobyl was born of lumpen engineers and lumpen administrators who had been weaned from independence and its essential companion—responsibility. The Stalinist model of socialism was also born of lumpen ideology. The lumpenization of society spawned incompetence and irresponsibility. It is precisely here, as I see it, that our democracy will face its most difficult ordeal. The democracy that is taking shape in my country now, despite all the adjustments for its youth, inexperience, weakness and other obvious and excusable things, nevertheless exhibits a most dangerous lack precisely of competence and responsibility. It is too easily vulnerable to pressure from various groups and primitive populism. It readily makes decisions that people like, but which have absolutely no material backing. So far it is incapable of making unpopular decisions, without which we cannot live through the morrow.

The most difficult social choice now and for the future lies precisely there. Will we learn to take the bitter pill ourselves, like adults, and to endure the inevitable pain? Or will we misbehave, like children, until somebody or something forces us to swallow the pill? When I say "will we learn how," I am referring not only to politicians, but also to an even greater degree to the entire system of political institutions, operative mechanisms and procedures and the stimuli that affect them.

As we look at the past, both of my country and of European civilization as a whole, we note with surprise that for at least the last two hundred to three hundred years, there were no major events about which there was not timely advance warning. There were no tragedies, upheavals, or risky ventures whose consequences, in principle, were not described before they commenced.

In particular, Stalinism and its consequences were predicted before October 1917, when only a few dozen people knew Stalin's name. It is not true that these warnings were not heard—they were—but there was no institutionalized capacity and institutionalized desire in place to forestall the catastrophic development of such events and crises. Just as there is no such mechanism today.

III.

In summing up the above, I would say that although we trace our heritage to the same common house of European Christian civilization, the will of circumstances and our own actions caused us to be scattered in different villages that were sometimes fiercely at odds with each other. But time once again is pulling these villages together. Ahead of us, however, lie two interconnected and difficult questions.

The first is that of new principles for modern self-identification of European Christian civilization, the search for the meaning of life for the future. The roots are clear and well known, but we particularly appreciated their significance and value when attempts were made to cut these roots, to hew them down forever, to eradicate the very memory of them. But what about the future?
Obviously such principles cannot be found in the sphere of "consumer society." Not only because of the obvious spiritual cost of such a model, but also because we can already see the limitations imposed by resources and ecological concerns. That is a separate subject, but I would like to say that I personally see the mission of a new civilization in the contribution it can make toward a rational and humane organization of life on this planet. Our perestroika will hardly be justified without such a contribution.

But there is also a second question, which concerns the world that is not directly a part of European Christian civilization. It goes without saying that in our time no one can dispute the significance of the unique and original quality of each people and culture and its right to such a unique existence. But that is not really what we are speaking about. Decades of heated ideological conflict between East and West produced a specific psychology that is not going to disappear tomorrow. It is a psychology based not only on itself, but also on several prolonged movements and trends in European thought.

To put the matter in a simplified and general formulation: Is social historical development constructed like a vector, with its rises and falls, its oscillations, fluctuations and deviations, with its breakthroughs and retreats, but nevertheless one which goes from point A to point B? Or are we dealing with a parallel development of differing cultures and civilizations, with models of social structure that interact, are in some respects similar, and that borrow from each other, but which nevertheless are different in terms of their fundamental basis?

If the first is true, then the entire world sooner or later must travel the path of the more progressive countries and more or less in the same forms and with the same results. That was the reasoning of Marxist-Leninists, and many advocates of Western democracy hold this view. On the whole, this represents a continuation of Eurocentrism in contemporary psychology and thought. If the second is true, then the picture of world development takes on a much more complex form. In particular, to a great extent we must reinterpret the actual category of "development" itself.

The notion of history as an inflexible vector forces us to transfer to world development everything that was said about evolution, but with a much longer train of attendant issues. In particular, should we wait for a given people to awake to development or is an artificial awakening of peoples morally permissible? How can we guarantee the peaceful course of modernization, especially in societies that are permeated through and through by traditionalism? Through what means can we control the course, the rate, and the expenses of development?

Our ability to approach these issues as researchers without the usual ideological stereotypes will determine how we choose between the social alternatives available to us as the twentieth century draws to a close.

The view of history as an all-consuming vector puts one on guard. In its more defined and complete form it is embodied in Marxism, and today it is clear that life cannot possibly fit into the linear scheme of "slave-holding, feudalism, capitalism, communism." It does not fit, even if you consider only the first three links of the chain that have already taken place. What also puts one on guard in the vector view of history is its missionary nature, since those who are in the vanguard, those in front, no matter who they may be, must experience a natural desire to take along with them those who lag behind. Otherwise, serious doubts may arise concerning one's own rightness and the correctness of the path one has chosen.

But the main thing that alarms me in the vector approach to development is the high degree of probability that it is leading us toward authoritarian forms of public life. Since motion from A to B is a given, then inevitably there will be those who lag behind. The leaders and the led, champions and losers. Not to mention the entire array of claimants to the roles of prophet, pioneer, and leader.

The problem of the leaders and the led also exists when we look at development as a historical community of different cultures. But in that case we see it in the context of
democratic intercourse and interaction. Or, more precisely, communications and cooperation between cultures. In this instance each person displays his best qualities and abilities. Each person has the same potential at the start. Each person, without loss of dignity or self-respect, can become a leader in one culture, and a follower or equal partner in another culture.

How we organize the new world order that has already begun to take shape depends a great deal on us. Will we direct this order, voluntarily or not, in the direction of authoritarianism, which in the beginning stages will preserve objectively the dominance of European culture, but will inevitably be followed by negation and suppression, which may for a long time and in an extremely negative way affect the rights and freedoms of man, societies, and nations? Or will we be able to turn toward a more genuine and less superficial democracy, which supposes and demands an objective psychological openness in regard to all social models and not a culturally predetermined assessment of the qualities and merits of each of them?

I am convinced that despite the enormous, indisputable, and invaluable contribution of European culture to world civilization, despite all its spiritual and material achievements, and despite its significance for the future, we are entering an era when the wealth of the world will increase through the efforts of all of us.

In a single and integral global system we will be faced with acute ecological problems and shortages of basic vital resources (water, air, fertile land), which will demand a global legal order and global programs. These conditions will force us once again to ascertain the capabilities of social systems for steadiness, stability, and existence in conditions of minimum or zero growth, while banking and relying on man and many other things as well.

Thus, the vector authoritarian approach leaves us with only two roles or two possibilities. If you win, there is one kind of self-awareness and one kind of self-appraisal. If you lose, there is another explosively dangerous kind of self-awareness and self-appraisal. Democracy immeasurably expands this range as it diverts it from a zero-sum game. The opportunity then arises to assess adequately the unique nature and self-appraisal of each man, of each people, and of each country.

We are accustomed to look for the sources of lack of alternatives in the harsh conditions of existence: poverty, backwardness, illness, hunger, economic crises, social upheavals, natural and manmade disasters, wars, civil conflicts, shortages of resources, means, technology. All of that is so.

But the specific nature of the twentieth century, particularly the second half, lies in the understanding that a historical lack of alternatives can emanate from man's inner world. Moreover, it proves to be the decisive factor, which is capable of canceling out any possibility of extricating ourselves from the crisis, if man himself does not see, cannot see, and cannot accept these possibilities.

Life itself today places us squarely before the key problem facing us as this century draws to a close. The question is a very tough one: Will society be able to wake up before the concentration of explosive problems reaches critical mass? I think, I am even sure, that this is the task not just of perestroika and not just of the Soviet Union. This is a global problem.

As I have already said, the United States began this process in optimally favorable conditions. Europe had the opportunity to extend this process in time, but in doing so endured violent upheavals. In the Soviet Union we are only beginning the phase of the Reformation, the historical transition from an authoritarian to a democratic social system and to a new cultural and psychological way of life. But we hardly have a century, or even a decade, in reserve.

IV.

In the final analysis the great historical debates and serious spiritual conflicts were resolved not by force of arms, and not by destroying one's opponent and his ideas,
but solely by man's ability to climb one step higher, to see and to understand yesterday's paradigm not as an absolute, but in its broader context, to rise up to a higher and more complex truth.

This difficult process is often spiritually and morally agonizing. It requires an enormous expenditure of time to bring to maturity objective conditions, human thought and spiritual state, and the moral and political readiness to act. Nevertheless, man has triumphed over the course of centuries, making the ascent to the world as we know it on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

What lies ahead for us all? A peaceful nonviolent era in which there will be no room for an arms race, the threat of self-destruction, and the shame of wars? We would like to believe that. An era of rights and dignity of the individual, the recognition in practice of the importance of each and every human life, and the provision for enhancement of the conditions of existence? We would like to hope so. An era of the triumph of common sense, of ecological and social responsibility instead of unbridled egoism? That is a question of physical survival.

But we are not the first to agonize over the eternal question of the meaning of life. We are not at all original here. We attempt to compensate our fears through wars, hatred, selfishness, and jealousy. But that does not make us any more sanguine.

Perhaps there is no refuge where man can rid himself of the foulishness of being. Perhaps. But that would mean that everything is in the hands of some demonic force.

But I do not believe in hopelessness. What is more, I cherish the hope that the twentieth century will bring an end to the era of man's alienation. To accomplish that mankind must find the strength to overcome himself, for otherwise everything will start all over again.