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~~MR. MURRAY~~

Dr. Coles,
Extract attached.
David Marshall.

The Prime Minister would like to see a copy of Mr. George Urban's interview with Zinoviev in the current issue of "Encounter".

Could you please let me have one.

A.S.C.

Prime Minister.

A.S.C. 12/4

April
9 March 1984

George Urban

Portrait of a Dissenter as a Soviet Man

A Conversation with Alexander Zinoviev

1. Truth & the "Inside Dopester"



his wit or fertile his historical imagination, the Soviet system will for ever remain a closed book to him. To understand it and deal with it, you suggest, one has to be "part" of the Soviet system. Only "from inside" will it yield the necessary clues to truthful analysis.

ZINOVIEV: The terms of reference appropriate for the understanding of Western society are inadequate when it comes to analysing other types of society. A scholar using a Western conceptual framework may find it very difficult to make sense of Indian society in the 12th century, or Chinese society 500 years B.C. Soviet society, I contend, is basically different from Western society. Trying to understand it with any chance of success presupposes a specific conceptual framework, fresh mental models, and a new vocabulary. In other words, it postulates an entirely new theory and methodology.

Let me make this clear by giving you some examples. Take the word "party." On the face of it, the Communist Party of the

Soviet Union is a "party." So is the Social Democratic Party in Germany or the Conservative Party in Britain. Yet the two are fundamentally different phenomena. The CPSU is not a "party," in any Western sense of the word. It is not a political phenomenon. It is the motor and overseer of the ruling system. Nor can we say that the Soviet system is a "political" phenomenon.

—Not a political phenomenon?

ZINOVIEV: No. Communist society is not a political phenomenon, because "politics", as that word is understood outside the Soviet Union, does not exist there. Politics, for a simple definition, may be described as a web of contentious relationships between largely independent actors for a slice of power or the whole of state power. The Communist Parties of Western Europe are political parties, at least while they are in opposition. It is also true to say that the relations of the USSR with the outside world are political relations. But once a Communist Party takes power, its political character is dissipated and the party assumes a social character. It restructures the whole of society, eliminating the very notion of any struggle for power or any possibility of independent forces arising (or surviving) to conduct such a struggle.

Now, it is for me axiomatic that for any scientific understanding of social phenomena to be possible you have to place yourself inside the society you are investigating. You have to identify with the conditions obtaining in it and adopt its terms of reference. What is more, you have to go back to its smallest unit and deduce your conclusions from what you have found there. A self-contained feudal estate or a capitalist unit of production is the only true nucleus for understanding feudal or capitalist society. The same goes for the Soviet system. You must understand its basic unit—the autonomous "collective", which may be a working group in a university, a farming community, a school or whatever—before you can say anything useful about the Soviet system. And that, as I say, requires inside knowledge, a new set of conceptual tools, and a new vocabulary.

—I am a little unhappy about the idea that you have to possess "inside knowledge" in order to understand Soviet reality. It is a claim which has been made in too many bad causes to be acceptable without further explanation. Nazi ideologists claimed that the special spirituality that made the German people ripe for a National-Socialist renewal was inaccessible to the minds of non-Germans. Similar claims were made by the Italian Fascists and a great many other prophets and defenders of the alleged uniqueness of this-or-that social order or "national psyche."

Nor does your emphasis on "inside knowledge" quite accord with your claim that you are seeking a strictly scientific understanding of Soviet society. A chemist or physicist who claimed that his theory could only be understood and tested by dark-haired males, 179 centimetres tall, born in the village of Cuckfield in the year 1947 would be given short shrift by his colleagues.

ZINOVIEV: Your analogies do not stand. Communism is a new type of society, because it has fundamentally changed the character of social relations. Fascism and Nazism did not do that. Those were political régimes of a certain kind, but not new types of societies. It is therefore perfectly possible for, say, a British capitalist scholar to understand the nature of Italian Fascism without any special empathy; but he cannot, as long as he remains an outsider, understand Communist society.

—But you have said that "political" society requires several independent actors vying with one another for political power. Now, in Hitler's National-Socialist society, or in Italy under Mussolini, there were no such independent actors. The Nazi and to a lesser degree the Fascist Parties were the motors and overseers of everything that went on in the state, exactly as the Communist Party is in the Soviet Union. No opposition was tolerated.

Why, then, do you say that Nazism and Fascism were "political régimes" rather than societies comparable in many ways to Soviet Communism? What you appear to be clearly implying is the orthodox Soviet position: that Capitalism, Nazism, and

Fascism belong, so to speak, to the same species, whereas Communism does not. The view in the West is, of course, the opposite. Many believe that Communist society, Nazi society, and Fascist society have much more in common with one another, precisely because they are One-Party totalitarian systems, than any of them has with, say, British parliamentary democracy or the French republic.

ZINOVIEV: Fascism was a "political" phenomenon, even though it was a single-party phenomenon, because it did not involve the structural overhaul of society. It did not lead to a fundamental reorganisation of social relations despite the egalitarian, anti-aristocratic tendencies which were undeniably present in both the German and Italian variety. . . .

— . . . an old Soviet cliché! (If I may interrupt you for a moment) . . .

ZINOVIEV: Every society, whether ancient or modern, can only be understood within its own terms of reference. Our tools of analysis which are appropriate for the comprehension of ancient Egypt are not appropriate for the comprehension of feudal society in, shall we say, France in the 13th century. That is all I am saying.

Soviet society, too, demands a specific approach and a specific language, because it has brought about a qualitative transformation in the whole of society. I base my insistence on the need to understand Soviet society from within on certain post-Kantian and post-Hegelian ideas which stress the importance of identifying with the objects of your observation before comparing them with other phenomena or imposing value-judgments on them.

—No doubt you are thinking of Dilthey and his notion of "Verstehen" . . .

ZINOVIEV: Yes, among others. We must first understand from within the basic cell of Soviet society—the autonomous com-

ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV (b. 1922) is one of the Soviet Union's leading philosophers and the author of many specialised works in the field of mathematical logic, several of them translated into Western languages. He held research appointments in the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and for fourteen years was a member of the Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Moscow, where from 1970-78 he was Professor of Logic and Methodology of Science.

In 1977, after publication (in Russian) in the West of his celebrated satire "The Yawning Heights", Professor Zinoviev was deprived of all his appointments and expelled from the Communist Party. A decree revoking his Soviet citizenship for "behaviour damaging to Soviet prestige" was signed by President Brezhnev in 1978 while Professor Zinoviev was attending a Philosophy Congress in West Germany. Condemned to permanent exile from the Soviet Union, he now lives in Munich.

AMONG HIS BOOKS published in Russian by L'Age d'Homme in Lausanne are: "Notes of a Nightwatchman", "In the Antechamber of Paradise", "Without Illusions" (all 1979), and "The Yellow House" (1980); two volumes of essays, broadcasts, etc., "We and the West" (1981) and "Neither Freedom nor Equality nor Brotherhood" (1983); a volume of poems, "Home, My Foreign Country" (1982); "Homo Sovieticus" (1982); and "The Flight of our Youth"

(1983), a memoir of his life under Stalin. English translations of "The Yawning Heights" and "The Radiant Future" were published in 1979 and 1981 by Bodley Head (London) and Random House (New York); "The Reality of Communism" was brought out this year by Victor Gollancz in London and Schocken Books, New York, in a translation by Charles Janson.

ONE OF THE EARLIEST discussions of his work to be published in the West—Helen von Saachno's "News from Nowhere in Ibsansk", which reviewed the Russian edition of "The Yawning Heights", appeared in the May 1977 issue of ENCOUNTER. This was followed by her interview with Professor Zinoviev in February 1979; by a "samizdat" review of "The Yawning Heights" by Raisa Lert, who lives in Moscow and was associated with Roy Medvedev's journal, "Twentieth Century"; and by Judy Dempsey's conversation with him in February 1979. An extract from "The Radiant Future" appeared in the April 1981 issue.

GEORGE URBAN'S recent contributions to ENCOUNTER include conversations with Jeanne Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), Daniel Bell (February 1983), W. Averell Harriman (November 1981), Zbigniew Brzezinski (May 1981), Leszek Kolakowski (January 1981), and Milovan Djilas (December 1979).

munity, or collective. Having done that, we must try to identify the laws that govern its interaction with other cells. We do, of course, start with those most easily identified and then proceed only gradually to the more complicated ones. The essential rule to remember is that we must not be side-tracked into premature comparisons. We must anchor our thinking in the basic characteristics of the Soviet system as self-contained, immanent phenomena. Having done that, we can at a later stage make historical comparisons with Fascist Italy, or whatever.

—I take your point. But why do you contend that a competent scholar in France or the USA cannot summon sufficient intellectual or imaginative power to get within the skin of the Soviet system? One of the very best histories of English literature was written by two Frenchmen (Legouis and Cazamian). Is it reasonable to claim that scholars like George Kennan, Merle Fainsod, Leonard Schapiro and Ronald Hingley have shown themselves incapable of making the intellectual-imaginative leap?

ZINOVIEV: The Soviet system is *sui generis*. It is extremely difficult to understand, even for people who have been born and bred in it. Please bear in mind that the time-lag between physical or social phenomena and the scientific understanding of these phenomena can be unconscionably long. People existed for millions of years without understanding the nature of gravitation. Newtonian mechanics are a very recent discovery, and Einstein's relativity theory is even more recent. Capitalist society had existed for many centuries, but it was only in the 19th century that social science began to decipher the structure and describe the regularities of capitalist society. Communist society is very young indeed. Its whole history spans a mere 66 years. It is, therefore, difficult to take it in from the outside. Moreover, Western scholars approach it with their own educational background, their own values and mental models. All of this makes for distortions and incomprehension.

Consider, by contrast, my own fitness to comprehend Soviet reality. I was born in the Soviet system a few years after the October Revolution. I went to Soviet schools and universities and served in the Red Air Force during the War. I spent 30 years of my life studying Soviet society, designing my own logic and method to make that study profitable. I am probably the only man in the world who has developed his own sociological framework for the comprehension of Soviet society based on the experience of having lived in that society, met people at every rung of the social ladder—for several years I worked in a factory—and watched their mobility horizontally and vertically.

—And how would you summarise your theory?

ZINOVIEV: I do not claim that I have produced a complete and testable theory. I have merely laid the foundations of what might, in perhaps two or three centuries, be an overall scientific theory with a descriptive and prescriptive potential. An outline of my theory is given in my book *The Reality of Communism*.

NO DOUBT YOU WILL, nevertheless, want to give me some skeletal indication of your hypothesis as we go along. Let me, in the meantime, underline my unease at hearing you say that in order to comprehend and deal with Soviet society you have to be a part of it. I'm reminded of the absurd criminological argument that no judge who has not himself committed murder has the right to pass sentence on a murderer, because he cannot possibly identify with the psychological predicaments that turn a law-abiding citizen to homicide. A rough and ready analogy, you may well say; but it makes my point.

ZINOVIEV: Communist society is an empirical fact. Scientific investigation requires that we observe empirical facts for what they are. In Soviet society these can only be experienced from within.

—You are saying that they are not accessible to Western scholarship . . . that Western scholars cannot, because of the remoteness of their point of observation, write authentically about Soviet society.

ZINOVIEV: Perhaps they can—but so far they have not done so. Take, for example, the favourite Western reading of Soviet society, which comes direct from Solzhenitsyn—namely that the Soviet people regard the Party and Government as an alien system which they hate and are anxious to overthrow. It just does not correspond to the facts.

—Is Solzhenitsyn, in your view, entirely wrong in saying what he does . . . and what many Western observers have also been saying quite independently from and well before him?

ZINOVIEV: Of course he is.

—What, then, are the real facts, as you see them, about the Soviet people's attitude to the Communist system? Do they support the system as one of their own choosing?

ZINOVIEV: It is not for me to make political judgments of that sort. Certainly, the system is accepted. My job as a scientist is to describe the system and make sense of it. If you want to find out how the Soviet people really relate to the Party and Government, you have to examine the structure of Soviet society; and that is what I have done.

I describe and analyse the empirical facts as I find them. Take a primary social group, a cell, for your starting point; and let your particular example be a scientific institute. You'll find that this primary group is itself an extremely complicated phenomenon. It'll have a director, assisted by a deputy director, and a group of senior collaborators. The institute will be divided into, let's say, five departments. Each of these will fall into several sub-groups, each with its own leader, staff, Party secretary and other functionaries. Furthermore, you will find that numbers will put certain restrictions on the effectiveness of each group. If your whole staff runs to one hundred, you will probably need ten groups to make the division of work, control, and leadership manageable. If several major groups cooperate for the attainment of some social or productive achievement, you will find that control retreats to

small cabals within each group; and eventually a hierarchy of élites will come into existence, with specific characteristics and laws governing their relationship. These laws are tricky to determine, but they exist.

WHAT YOU ARE IMPLYING. *I think, is that, far from Solzhenitsyn being right, the structure of Soviet society is in reality in substantial harmony with the wishes and mentality of the Soviet people.*

ZINOVIEV: No. It is not a question of people's wishes but of social laws. The structures and correlations I observe do not depend on the human characteristics of the participants. The correlations I establish have the force of natural laws. They apply to every people and to any number of people—everywhere.

—*You mean all Communist societies of the Soviet type?*

ZINOVIEV: Yes, they apply wherever private property has been abolished and both industry and agriculture have been nationalised. Wherever these conditions really obtain, social structures identical with those we find in the USSR will inevitably come into being.

—*A universal law?*

ZINOVIEV: Yes—all laws of Communist society are universal laws, wherever Communism is reality.

—*Are you comfortable with so Stalinoid an assertion?*

ZINOVIEV: I am and have always been an anti-Stalinist. You know that. But I make this statement not as a Stalinist or anti-Stalinist, but as a scientist relying for my conclusions on empirical evidence.

—*Whatever its scientific truth, I'm a little wary of your "universal law", because Stalin's tyranny over East-Central Europe and his claim to the leadership of the world Communist movement were based on the assertion that the Soviet model of Communism was a universal model for Socialist/Communist societies. This entitles us to handle your "law" with a measure of caution.*

ZINOVIEV: The laws of Communism as expressed in Soviet society are universal laws, but their application and the results springing from them may vary. If you compare Communism as it is actually practised in the Ukraine, Georgia, and Russia you will find great differences. Indeed, Georgian Communism is more distant from the Muscovite variety than, shall we say, Polish Communism; and it stands to reason that the differences are explained by climate, national history, and other characteristics peculiar to a nation or a region. But if you disregard the accretions and consider Communist society in its pure, if you like, laboratory condition, the laws of Communism will be seen to be valid at all times and everywhere. This does not invalidate the fact that life for the ordinary man is much better in Georgia

than in Russia, or that a Hungarian is substantially better off in terms of housing, food supplies, culture and so on, than his opposite number in Czechoslovakia. But if you compare the organisation of a factory in Georgia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Russia, you will find that they are structurally identical and that the social relations they generate are identical too.

YOU SEEM TO BE STRESSING the importance of an abstraction: that under laboratory conditions Communism would assume identical forms wherever it was applied. To most of us, however, this abstraction is not very important, because we know well enough that, as long as society is made up of human beings (rather than robots or genetically engineered hominids), laboratory conditions will never be obtained. The human element will always intrude—diluting, corrupting, and rendering ridiculous any "pure" form of Communism. Even Mao's abhorrently pure form of social engineering, the "Cultural Revolution", did not escape that fate.

Personally I would put the emphasis on what you have said about Hungary, where food is plentiful, housing is (by Communist standards) in tolerable supply, culture is freer than in any other Communist country, and even some foreign travel is permitted. But these gains are due not, as you suggest, to national characteristics being imposed on Communist social structures (though Magyar know-how and sophistication do play a role)—but to the Hungarians' quiet determination to amend the Soviet book, revise the Soviet "laws", and indeed turn their backs on both without openly saying so. And as my concern, and I take it your concern, is the welfare and happiness of the maximum number of men and women, and not the realisation of an abstract form of seamless Communism, I applaud the Hungarian experiment because it seems to me to be proof that the key to the success of Communism is—the abandonment of Communism.

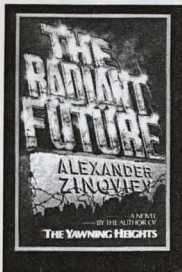
ZINOVIEV: Naturally, if you take human society in the round, you have to take into account and allow for an almost infinite number of complications. But I am not concerned with the legacy of history, with culture or religion. As a logician and sociologist I describe, in abstract form, certain phenomena I have found to exist in Communist society. I describe Communism in its ideal state. I do not dispute that its realisation can be different in different countries. But my business is to construct a model, and for that to be possible I have to proceed step by step. In The Reality of Communism I attempt to describe my method.

I contend that any analysis of the Soviet system has to begin with generalisations. I posit certain general laws, and posit them in a language and logical order peculiar to my method. Having established these, I refine them by taking on board empirical evidence, so that I end up by obtaining a more or less complete picture of how Soviet society works—a painstakingly slow procedure.

Now, Western students of the Soviet Union, especially those hostile to the Soviet system, are in a hurry. They are ready with instant analyses and judgments. They variously allege that the Soviet system is "totalitarian" in the sense of Nazi Germany;

that it is "unstable"; that it will fall prey to its inner contradictions, and so on. But these are opinions based on guesswork, incomplete knowledge or straightforward incomprehension. They reflect the needs of journalism and political propaganda. They do not accord with the reality as it appears to the eyes of a competent scholar. Mine is a scientific method which seeks to ferret out facts, not pass value judgments.

2. The Very Model of a Model Methodology



ALL THIS RAISES a very large question which we cannot tackle in this conversation: whether social science is a "science", and whether any scholarship dealing with human beings can be or should be "value-free." Without stumbling into that particular jungle, let me say that many of your readers will doubtless regard your scientific neutrality towards the Soviet system as a tacit vindication of that system—on the not unreasonable argument that any value-free

investigation of a system which has caused the violent death of millions, and the occupation and suppression of half the European continent, is a typical case of la trahison des clercs—and thus, in reality, not value-free at all. One might as well, they would argue, make a "systems-analysis" of the Nazi concentration camps—their social structure, hierarchical organisation, their links with other organs of the National-Socialist system, etc.—without spilling ink on the unpleasant (and "value-heavy") fact that the camps were there to gas, burn, starve, shoot, hang, and otherwise exterminate human beings.

I respect your insistence on the integrity and neutrality of "science." Nevertheless your dispassionate approach to a topic so heavy with suffering puts me slightly on my guard. In 1984 can one say "Soviet" without muttering "Gulag" in the same breath?

ZINOVIEV: You are not the first to make this sort of accusation. But your criticism betrays a certain philistinism and is unjustified. The charges against me are usually couched in this form. In my scientific work I describe Soviet society as a normal phenomenon. My critics say (exactly as you have just said) that this implies approval of the Soviet system. But the inference is nonsensical. The concept of "norm" carries no value-judgment. It is totally neutral. It stands for "a standard for measure"

— . . . it does, in a general sense. But it also stands for "rule for proper conduct" in ethics, and in axiology for "standard for judging value". . .

ZINOVIEV: But as I have clearly ruled out ethics and axiology from my investigations, we need not waste time on secondary meanings. "Norm" in science is a neutral notion. When I say that Soviet society is a normal phenomenon, all I'm saying is that, given the nature of Communist society, Soviet society is a normal society; it is, after 66 years, in perfect harmony with the pure model of Communist society. Would my critics have raised their eyebrows if I had said: "a poison snake with its fangs intact in the South Asian jungle is a normal phenomenon"? Clearly they would not. A poison snake in the streets of London would be an abnormal phenomenon, but not in India. Yet my statement about Soviet society is of the same sort. I discuss all this in more detail in *The Reality of Communism*, so I will explain it no further.

—Does "normal" Communist society, then, require mass violence by the state as a normal condition of its existence?

ZINOVIEV: I am not concerned with the chaotic origins of Soviet society or the peculiarly Russian conditions between the two World Wars which coloured the emergence of Soviet society. I describe the structure of Soviet society as it is—not its accretions.

—If mass violence is an accretion, it is one that matters to ordinary human beings more than any other feature of Soviet society. However this may be, your comments on the alleged ineptitude of Western students of the Soviet Union nettles me. Take one of the most reliable (and respected) studies of the day-to-day workings of Soviet society, Merle Fainsod's "Smolensk under Soviet Rule." Here is a painstaking analysis of the Soviet system based on a mass of Soviet documents and written by an American scholar deeply versed in the culture of the Soviet Union and the Russian language. Would you say that Fainsod's picture of the Soviet system is inadequate or misleading?

ZINOVIEV: Factology is not enough. It is one thing to be versed in facts; it is another to discern social laws. Facts exist in abundance. The task of science is not to collect facts but to interpret them. In Newton's day everybody knew about apples falling, and everybody knew that there was some force keeping the planets moving about the sun and the moon in motion around the earth. But the force itself was invisible. Newton, however, could see behind these seemingly unrelated facts and showed that it was one and the same force—universal gravitation—that causes them all to happen. In trying to understand Soviet society, too, you have to start with a hypothesis and turn it into a scientific theory with a predictive potential as firm as Newton's law of mechanics.

Now, I ask you, how do the works of American Sovietologists measure up to these requirements? Can you show me a single Western book that has been able to predict any development in Soviet society—even the most primitive? People in the West who concern themselves with the Soviet Union are not scientists in the proper sense of the word, and therefore understand nothing.

—This is a sweeping statement. I don't want to argue with you on

a point where your knowledge is extensive, but I do know that even the most dedicated quantifiers and model-builders among Western social scientists would hesitate to claim that any "law" concerning the behaviour of human beings could have the predictive force of Newton's law of gravitation.

ZINOVIEV: In principle it can. I am concerned with the pure model of Communist society. The Western interpretations of Soviet reality are based on personal impressions, historical analogies, moral predilections, and other non-scientific factors. I reject these.

YOU HAVE INTIMATED that the Western interpretation of Soviet society as "totalitarian" occupies a prominent place on your blacklist. Yet this is a notion that people like George Kennan, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carl J. Friedrich, Hannah Arendt, Karl Deusch (to name but a few) have spent a long time thinking and writing about. And none had any doubt that Soviet society was "totalitarian." Were they all in error?

ZINOVIEV: Error is a strong word. They may not have been in error by their own standards; but I do not accept those standards. My theory leads me to a mathematical model of Communist society. Admittedly it will take hundreds of specially trained researchers to substantiate it over a long period of time, and even when it is completed, the gap between abstract truth and concrete application may well be a large one. Nevertheless, the laws emerging from my theory have the force of the laws of physics. They are objective universal laws.

—There appears to me to be an interesting contradiction in what you are saying. First you insist that Soviet society can only be understood from within. At the same time you claim that Soviet society is governed by testable universal laws. Doesn't your second claim make nonsense of the first? For what sort of a testable universal law is it that is accessible only to a group of privileged observers—those who, like yourself, have been born and nurtured in the Soviet system?

ZINOVIEV: I do not say that you have to have any special intuition to unearth the clues to Soviet reality, but I do say that you cannot get a handle on empirical evidence unless you are part and parcel of Soviet society.

—But isn't the net effect the same? It means that non-Soviet scholars are, by definition, debarred from understanding Soviet society. Would a Western scholar be able to understand it if he adopted your methodology but worked from outside the Soviet system?

ZINOVIEV: My theory requires that the point of observation must be within Soviet society.

—Western scholars, then, have to take your theory on trust?

ZINOVIEV: No, my method is open to them, but whether they use that or some other method, they will have to take, for their

starting point, a disinterested, empirical view of Soviet reality with the eyes of an insider. I have no dogmatic views about this. Experience will tell whether it is or is not possible. So far, I can see no indication that any Western scholar would be inclined to undergo a methodological sea-change. The methods they now use, if indeed they use any, are deplorable. Their judgments are chaotic.

Let me give you one example. Before the Second World War, Hitler's leadership had studied the facts. They understood the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union better than the Soviet leadership itself. The Germans had the most excellent information services and thorough evaluation: they knew everything about Soviet industrial capacity; they knew the number of tanks and guns and aircraft we had and could produce; the nature of our supply system; the state of our railways and roads; the readiness of our units in the Red Army and Air Force; the size of our food reserves, and so on. Yet, when it came to estimating our military potential and our ability to resist, Hitler and his lieutenants made some very fundamental mistakes which cost them the War.

HOW WOULD YOU define those mistakes?

ZINOVIEV: Well, they knew facts, but facts, as I said a moment ago, are not enough. They had no method for understanding and correlating the facts they had.

—Do you mean they failed to allow for certain intangibles such as the "spirit of resistance" of the Russian people when attacked by an aggressor?

ZINOVIEV: Not at all. They failed to work out a scientific method whereby the facts about Russia's military and industrial potential could be correlated with a host of other factors and integrated in an overall formula. That could have given the Germans a reliable picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system. They didn't do it. The Western countries, even Western Intelligence, make the same mistakes in our own time.

Missing Person

Missing



The Kremlin's list of Soviet leaders does not include Georgi Malenkov who was party and government leader for one week in March, 1953, and looked as if he would succeed Stalin, but lost overall control of the Communist party in a power struggle with Nikita Khrushchev.

Malenkov was banished to the provinces in 1957, but is now living out his last years as an old-age pensioner in Moscow. He was 82 last month.

Official Soviet leaders since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution have been:

V. LADIMIR ILYICH LENIN (1917-1924)

JOSEF STALIN (1924-1953)

NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV (1953-1964)

LEONID BREZHNEV (1964-1982)

YURI ANDROPOV (1982-1984)

REUTER

Soon after my expulsion from the Soviet Union, three Western gentlemen came to see me. "Zinoviev", they said, "we have read your books and articles, and we admire your insights. We want you to give us your formula for the destruction of the Soviet system."

Well, I told them: "I don't object to being used by you. Anybody and everybody can use me. I'm politically indifferent. I could work for the Soviet authorities, and I could equally work for you. I'm a scientist, a university professor. I have spent thirty years investigating Soviet society; I have obtained results. My sole ambition is that these results should be known in the world as 'Zinoviev results' and my theory as 'Zinoviev's theory of the Soviet system.' You can use my theory in any way you like but, believe me, I don't want to destroy the Soviet system any more than I do the West. Now, if you want to know my theory, give me ten or fifteen gifted students. Arrange for them to spend three years under my guidance and make it possible that, in due course, these students can pass on their knowledge to further groups of young scholars. One of these will eventually work out a computer-model of the Soviet citizen and perhaps even of Soviet society."

None of this pleased my three interlocutors. "How long will all this take?" they asked. "About five years", I replied. This was far too long for them. They were in a hurry. They wanted me to produce a magic formula—at once. So they packed their bags and left. They failed to understand, as the Nazis had failed to understand before them, that obtaining a reliable formula requires a long, painstaking, scientific effort.

THIS IS A REMARKABLE STORY. Your "scientific" neutralism is in line with the thinking of the wartime German missile experts. Some of them chose to go to the USA to continue their work, while others went to the Soviet Union to do the same. That the Soviet Union was as unfree a society as Hitler's had been did not bother them. Their sole interest was to construct bigger and better missiles.

But, to return to the Nazis' faulty assessment of the Soviet Union, Hitler was not alone in underestimating Soviet staying-power. In Britain and the USA, too, there were fears (many of them openly expressed) that the Soviet Union would prove no match for Hitler's superbly equipped and led forces. Nor were these fears unreasonable, seeing that the mighty USSR could barely, and then only at enormous cost, impose its will on tiny Finland in the 1939-40 Winter Campaign. But when Stalin eventually turned the tables on Germany, his successes were ascribed to Russian patriotism, his personal leadership, and US and British war supplies. Nobody, except Western Communists and other admirers of the Soviet system, said that Hitler or the West had underestimated the strength of Soviet society.

ZINOVIEV: Patriotism cuts both ways—it can carry a negative or positive charge. By the same token, the size of the Soviet war machine could have assumed negative as well as positive roles. Everything depends on a large number of non-military variables which flow from the nature of the Soviet system and are

not easily understood and quantified. Hitler had no formula for their incorporation in his assessments of Soviet power. That is why he miscalculated. Today, Western Sovietologists make the same mistakes. Lacking an adequate method, they are incapable of forming a reliable estimate of the USSR's overall military potential.

BUT LET US, PLEASE, stay with my example for a moment. Western historians say that the USSR won the War for three main reasons. First, Hitler alienated a friendly Russian and Ukrainian population. When the German troops arrived in the Ukraine (so runs the argument) they were greeted as liberators. It was the general beastliness of Nazi policies towards the Slavs, and the particular brutality of the German occupation authorities on Soviet territory, that eventually stifened Soviet resistance. Would you accept that?

ZINOVIEV: No, this factor played no role at all.

—The second factor is said to have been Stalin's appeal to Russian patriotism and nationalism; his enlistment of the spiritual power of the Orthodox Church; his evocations of Russia's great military feats in the past and the restoration of military ranks and insignia.

And the third factor is said to have been the massive contribution which the USA and Britain made to the Soviet war effort in the form of trucks, tanks, guns, aircraft, raw materials and other supplies.

Would you allow that these factors played a part?

ZINOVIEV: No—all these explanations are extremely wide of the mark to the extent that they are not nonsensical. The historical process during the War was extremely complicated. Hitler made mistakes, Stalin made mistakes, Roosevelt made mistakes, and Churchill made mistakes. But, confining ourselves to the Soviet-German war, the mistakes made by those two sides broadly speaking cancelled out each other. What mattered (to repeat) was Hitler's misreading of the character and overall potential of the Soviet system. The tragedy is that Western observers and Western governments are now repeating Hitler's errors.

Recently I was invited to attend a conference on the nature of Soviet power. One of my co-participants was a distinguished Western military specialist. He knew every Soviet general's name in the higher echelons of the armed forces. He knew their functions, their departmental jealousies, the equipment of the various Red Army units, their peace-time and mobilisation strengths—he knew everything. The only thing he could not compute out of all this impressive information was the one thing that mattered: the overall power of the Soviet Union.

I assured him that if he lived in the Soviet Union he would find that most Soviet scholars were unable to name the members of the Politburo, much less the Central Committee. Yet they'd have a very precise idea of what the system was about. Why? Because they would understand that individuals did not matter in the Soviet system. What matters is the system itself, and that can be understood only through scientific study.

Western Sovietologists have written volumes about the question of succession in the Soviet leadership. Yet, in the months preceding Khrushchev's dismissal they were unable to detect the slightest tremor in the Soviet landscape. Nor could they tell us anything useful about Brezhnev's succession. They widely tipped Chernenko as the most likely successor. The hallmark of science is its ability to predict. Western Sovietology is the work of charlatans.

—Have you been able to predict the behaviour of the Soviet system?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, I have. I cannot make mathematically precise predictions, but I can predict certain tendencies.

—For example?

ZINOVIEV: Let us suppose that the NATO countries or the USA alone occupy Iran or intervene in certain African countries. I can, by using my mathematical model of the Soviet Union as a

world power, forecast the kind of countermeasures the Kremlin will take, such as moving into Pakistan, activating the Soviet-Syrian treaty, stepping up the pressure on South Africa, and so on.

MAy I SAY THAT SYSTEMS-ANALYSTS have a wonderful way of predicting the obvious. "How will the US Federal Government allocate certain funds set aside for welfare programmes in disadvantaged areas?"—this was the subject of an expensive team-research project in my time at the University of Southern California. Two years and several hundred thousand dollars later, the research team came up with the astounding forecast that the Federal Government would build schools in black neighbourhoods where schools were in short supply, and hospitals in areas where medical care was insufficient! When the Federal Government did, eventually, announce its plan to build schools and hospitals where these were most needed, my systems-analyst colleagues had a knowing smile on their faces: "We told you so . . ."

Your forecast strikes me as being of the same sort. Any junior foreign-service officer in Britain or France failing to forecast the

Tweedledum, Tweedledee, & Cleopatra's Nose



THE succession of Konstantin Chernenko to Mr Andropov put paid to the speculations about the possible prospects of any significant internal reform. Chernenko, the protégé of Brezhnev, is similarly disinclined to tinker with the Soviet system.

In his role as spokesman on ideology Chernenko expressed his basic attitude to the problem of economic reform in a speech (at the June 1983 Party plenum) in which he stressed that:

"there exist truths which are not subject to revision, problems that were solved long ago and without further ramifications . . ."

His zeal included even music as a target of his censure, castigating "musical ensembles whose repertoires are of a dubious nature" causing "ideological and aesthetic harm" to the Soviet people.

This does not leave much room for the hopes so widely expressed in the Western Press on Andropov's assumption of power about the latter's "liberalism" and "sophistication" as allegedly manifested in

the devotion to English whisky and all that Western jazz. . . .

Mr Chernenko is going to cling to his familiar ways, even though he might make some cosmetic economic changes in the face of the same intractable problems which confronted his predecessor (low productivity, falling rate of growth, agricultural backwardness, inefficient system of incentives due to the absence of market mechanisms, corruption and social immobility).

THE SIMPLE CONTRAST between Soviet "conservatives" and "reformers", just like the contrast between "hawks" and "doves" so beloved by Western commentators, is of course quite misleading.

There are no "liberals", "reformers" or "doves" in the present Politburo. The fact that Chernenko was chosen does not indicate that either Romanov or Gorbachev would have been inclined to challenge the Party apparatus of which Chernenko is a spokesman. Nor has Mr Chernenko any chance in his Brezhnevian comeback to stop the generational change in the Soviet élite.

THE GENERAL INCLINATION in the West is to see a silver lining on the occasion of each and every Soviet succession, hoping for a change in the basic Soviet policy. Hope springs eternal in Western breasts at the funeral of each successive Soviet leader, in spite of the lessons of the 66 years of Soviet history which testify to the continuity of Soviet foreign policy.

The nomination of Chernenko may perhaps slightly dampen such euphoric hopes, which were invariably expressed on such

occasions. Stalin was considered a "moderate" in contrast to the "flaming revolutionary" Trotsky; Malenkov and Beria were presented as "liberals." Khrushchev was supposed to be compelled to turn inwards because of "de-Stalinisation." Brezhnev was "pragmatic", promoting "détente" (until Afghanistan and Poland). Andropov was a "closet liberal" (in spite of his role in Hungary in 1956 and his mental prisons for Soviet dissidents). Now it is the turn of Chernenko: one can already hear the usual chorus of Western commentators discovering the hitherto unknown liberal virtues of the "new" man.

IN THE PAST the record of Kremlinologists was not very impressive: no one thought of Stalin as a successor to Lenin, or of Khrushchev as a successor to Stalin. The ousting of Khrushchev in 1964 was predicted only in the astrological yearbook, "Old Moore's Almanac." With Andropov and Chernenko the forecasting record is a bit better, but the political significance of it is less exciting.

IN the administrative greyness of Soviet officialdom the victory of a bureaucratic Tweedledum over a bureaucratic Tweedledee is now less significant than in the past.

All the present Soviet Cleopatras have, so to say, very similar noses.

Leopold Labedz

Editor, Survey Magazine
in the DAILY TELEGRAPH (London)

kind of Soviet moves you have predicted would have his chances of promotion seriously jeopardised.

ZINOVIEV: You make it sound all too simple. Building a mathematical model is a highly skilled and complicated business. I could teach you my method if we had a couple of years at our disposal—

—Are you implying that I'd be a slow or a fast learner?

ZINOVIEV: At two years you'd have to be a fast one.

—Could we, on the strength of your method, for example, understand French society before the French Revolution—or after?

ZINOVIEV: You could use my scientific method for devising a theory about French society. But my own theory does not apply to French society. It applies to Communist society only.

—Will it, then, explain Chinese Communist society?

ZINOVIEV: No, it will not. Chinese society is not a purely Communist society. Soviet society is the classical pattern. Some of my theorems will, of course, cover China, Hungary, Romania and the other East European countries, but in general my theory applies to Soviet society only.

—But would you not agree that ten years of the Maoist Cultural Revolution brought China closer to the egalitarian Communist model than anything that has happened in the Soviet Union in its 66 years of history?

ZINOVIEV: I don't know Chinese society, so I will not talk about it. But there is yet another reason why my theory cannot be applied to China. According to my theory, every social system has limitations of scale. If the size of a system outstrips those limitations, two things can happen: it will either develop its own sub-systems of viable size and thus survive; or it will not, in which case it will destroy itself. I can prove with the certainty of a mathematical theorem that China cannot become an effective world power precisely because it has too large a population. A society of 1,000 million people is too unmanageable and unwieldy.

—What would you say is the optimal size for a society to be effective?

ZINOVIEV: About 200 million is enough. China could become a great state if it killed off at least half its population. There are certain hard, testable mathematical correlations which give us the upper (and lower) limits of an effective society. There are, of course, many other mathematical correlations too, which I could teach you if you chose to become my student for a while. For example the calculus of the system's decision-making ability, of its stability, the parameters of risk-taking by the leadership, and so on. Unfortunately, some weaknesses remain in my theory so that I cannot adequately explain everything I'd like to explain.

—Did you predict the Soviet move into Afghanistan on the strength of your computations?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, I did, in a talk to the American Club in Munich.

—Why was the world not alerted to your prediction?

ZINOVIEV: That I cannot tell you.

WHAT YOU HAVE, THEN, GIVEN US is a theory that is (1) essentially accessible to Soviet residents only; (2) specific to the Soviet type of Communist society; and (3) specific to the size of Communist society that happens to be the size of existing Soviet society. All this puts me on my guard—especially as your claim to be "scientific" has an old ring of 19th-century scientism about it.

You have, as a Soviet man, observed Soviet society with enormous empathy—and wit—for 30 odd years, and written about it in great detail with mordant humour and great sophistication. I would have thought that was your great contribution to the debate about Soviet society—not some mathematical model specific to the Soviet Union, to Soviet men, and in the last analysis, perhaps only to one Soviet man: yourself.

ZINOVIEV: You are absolutely wrong there. Mine is a rigorous theory based on first-hand experience; and I feel I have the right to speak in terms of my theory because it concerns the life and death of mankind. The Soviet Union has become a very serious enemy of the Western world and we have to spend time, energy, and money to perfect our understanding of that enemy. It may well be that the uses of my theory will be limited to one single occasion. That would not upset me in the slightest.

The Soviet Union resembles in most of its features a mechanical system. Most facts about Soviet society can be counted and fed into a computer. When the danger of war arises, we are, on the strength of my theory, in the fortunate position of being able to "take the measure" of the Soviet system in the literal sense. Suppose the next war were to be a nuclear war: it is of fundamental importance for us to know whether the Soviet or the Western system has the greater capacity for survival.

—And you can tell us which. . . .

ZINOVIEV: It can be done. Oh yes, it can. Our contemporary computers are not equal to the task, but as soon as we have one that can digest several hundred variables—it will be done.

—How do you quantify morale, dedication, the force of nationalism?

ZINOVIEV: It is difficult, but it can be done.

3. Of Russian Pride & Ethnic Prejudice

The Reality of Communism



ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV
with *André Gide*

TAKE A PRACTICAL example. General Sir John Hackett, in his well-known book "The Third World War", predicts that, after a limited nuclear exchange and a stalemated conventional war in Central Europe, the Soviet Union will break up into its constituent parts under the impact of national separatism. Now, how would you quantify the Ukrainian, or Lithuanian, or Uzbek wish for national independence?

ZINOVIEV: This is a ridiculous scenario. General Hackett wants the Soviet Union to disintegrate, and he predicts events in accordance with his own wish.

—Are you saying that the spirit of national independence does not exist in the non-Russian parts of the USSR?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, I am.

—That it does not exist at all?

ZINOVIEV: It exists, but it is too weak to matter. You have to see things as they really are. With the sole exception of the small Baltic republics, which (especially Estonia and Latvia) are in fact German by tradition and culture, the other non-Russian nations and nationalities are net beneficiaries of the Russian connection. Offer an ordinary Ukrainian or Azerbaijani the possibility of secession from the Soviet Union—he will refuse it! You will, of course, always find tiny minorities of nationalists and dissidents who think otherwise, but the vast majority will have nothing to do with national independence. It would cost them too dear.

—You sound like a Habsburg defender of the status quo in, shall we say, 1914.

ZINOVIEV: Not at all. I speak of a status quo which is genuinely accepted. Take the Azerbaijani. Many of them live in Moscow and Leningrad, holding down privileged positions, occupying sumptuous homes, sending their children to privileged schools, and so on. They "live off the land" of the Russians. For them Russia is a colony.

—Is the Russification of the non-Russian republics, of which so much has been written, also a myth in your view?

ZINOVIEV: Absolutely. The non-Russian republics have not been "Russified" in the old imperial sense of the word. On the contrary: one of the most significant features of the October Revolution was the colonisation of Russia and the Russian nation. The Bolsheviks were afraid of the submerged masses of the Russian people. They found it more convenient to uproot

groups of Ukrainians, Tatars, Georgians, and so on, and base their rule on these much more manipulable *déraciné* minorities. Even today when this anti-Russian trend is being reversed, in Moscow, Leningrad, and the other major Russian cities you will find that at least half the senior élite in the Party, Government, and public administration are not Russians. If you look at the list of Soviet writers, generals, or academicians rather few of the names will be Russian. The rest will be typical names of Ukrainians and so on.

Until not so many years ago the Russian people were the underdogs of the Soviet empire, as indeed they had been underdogs under the Czars too. They were peasants bound to the villages, tilling the land, supplying the armed forces with cannon-fodder and, generally speaking, performing the lowly, menial tasks at servitors' rates. The result is that the great majority of people running our country and setting the tone of its culture—whether in literature, music, jurisprudence or science—come from non-Russian ethnic stock. After the Revolution some three million of the Russian intelligentsia were slaughtered. Then, with the 1928–32 Collectivisation campaign, about 15 million Russian peasants—the basic stock of our nation—perished. It is only now that the Russian people are being slowly emancipated and allowed to compete for the more influential posts. But, until quite recently, the Governments of Russia were not Russian Governments. There have, in fact, been no Russian Governments in Russia (or the Soviet Union) since Peter the Great. Our Czars since Peter were, to say the very least, Germanised by marriage.

It is, then, safe to conclude that every minority nation or nationality has been enjoying a privileged position in comparison with the Russian people—that they have regarded Russia as their colony. For example, every nation and nationality has its Academy of Sciences. There is no Russian Academy of Sciences.

—This is true of the Communist Party too. All Republics have their own Communist Parties, but there is no Russian Communist Party.

ZINOVIEV: Yes, perfectly true.

—But then knowledgeable scholars like Leonard Schapiro have argued that this is because the dominant organisation, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, is in fact the Russian Communist Party.

ZINOVIEV: This is quite untrue. The CPSU has never been a Russian phenomenon.

Today in the Soviet Academy of Sciences only about 10% of the Academicians are Russian, whereas Russians make up half the total Soviet population. The same goes for the Central Committee, the KGB, the Army, and so on. Right through the Soviet élite, the Russian people is badly under-represented. So is its culture in the Soviet Union as a whole.

THIS CERTAINLY RUNS COUNTER to almost all the written and spoken evidence I have seen on the subject. For ten years under Brezhnev all members of the Secretariat of the

Portrait of a Dissenter as a Soviet Man

Central Committee were Russian, even though Russians account for only about 60% of the Party's membership. Volumes have been written about the Russification of the Central Asian Republics, the Baltic States, the Ukraine. I will not review the evidence, for it is too well known. Would you say it is all nonsensical?

ZINOVIEV: Indeed I would, and I do. These republics have not been "Russified" in any meaningful sense of the word.

—Is the reverse, then, the case?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, it is. If you go to the Soviet Union with certain *a priori* conceptions in mind, you will always find evidence to endorse them.

—But isn't it also true that if you come from the Soviet system with a certain mathematical model in mind, you will always find facts to endorse that?

ZINOVIEV: If your *a priori* conception is that national conflicts will destroy the Soviet system, you will come back with a thick file of "evidence" showing that those conflicts actually exist. Some Western scholars believe that alcoholism will be the death of the Soviet Union. One nonsense is as good as another.

—But you will surely allow that linguistic Russification exists?

ZINOVIEV: Absolutely not. All Soviet citizens are indeed taught Russian. But this cannot be called "Russification." You may have been misled by a recent demonstration in Georgia which is now widely quoted as showing that there is widespread resentment among Georgians of the Russian language and of the Russian people. But this is not true. It is now established that only some of those demonstrators had any command of the Georgian language. All Georgians, however, speak Russian—and so they should, in their own interest. For when a Georgian goes to Moscow to sell his produce, or speculate on the black market, or publish his book, he needs Russian, not Georgian. Georgia is a small republic. Russian is the *lingua franca* of the Soviet Union.

—As you seem to be speaking with the authentic voice of imperialism, let me point out that in British India too—where the English language was genuinely accepted both as *lingua franca* among Indian tribes and nationalities, and as a passport to education, professional advancement, and business success—it was widely argued by the British that good public administration and India's own economic interests were better served within the British Empire than they would be outside it. Yet, when the chips were down, the British-educated Indian intelligentsia preferred independence to economic advantage and good administration, and caused the British to leave.

What I am saying is that no matter how persuasive the economic or cultural self-interests of your Georgians may be, you cannot expect them not to want to assert their national independence just because, on sober calculation, they might be economically better off under Russian rule, going to Russian schools, etc., than they would be under their own. Nations do

not act so rationally—as we well know from the disintegration of the colonial empires after the War.

ZINOVIEV: But your assertions about Russification are absurd. The Russian language is generally accepted in the Soviet Union—

—So was (and is) English in India. . . .

ZINOVIEV:—but the adoption of Russian is not Russification. I can confidently assert that the opposite is closer to the mark. Take the Ukraine, which I know well (I was a frequent visitor there as an examiner of doctoral candidates). All educated Ukrainians speak Russian; they also speak Ukrainian. Russians have not colonised the Ukraine. Indeed, it is virtually impossible for a Russian to get a job in the Ukraine, whereas in Russia about 60% of leading posts are held by Ukrainians. There was a time when 70% of Soviet academicians were Jews, whereas Jews account for only about 1% of the Soviet population. When I was suggested for election to the Academy as a Russian, the Academy's official line was that in principle more Russians should now be admitted. I was closely questioned by an interview board as to whether I was a Jew or a Russian. I am, as you know, a Russian, but despite the Academy's official line, a Jew was elected. And I'm inclined to ascribe this to what I have already told you: the Soviet leaders are at heart afraid of the Russian people. They are more at home with uprooted minorities.

HOW, THEN, DO YOU EXPLAIN Stalin's Great-Russian chauvinism which earned him Lenin's memorable warning in 1922? Lenin feared, you will remember, that the Constitution of the Union would not protect the non-Russians "from invasion of their rights by this typical Russian man, the chauvinist, whose basic nature is that of a scoundrel and repressor, the classical type of Russian bureaucrat. . . ."

ZINOVIEV: In the first place, Stalin was neither Russian nor did he become "a typical Russian man." Secondly, Lenin was a sick man at the time and uttered much that was nonsensical. In any case, his warning had a specific meaning in the context of the early 1920s which it does not have for us. It is useless to compare like with unlike.

—What about Stalin's famous tribute, at a victory celebration on 24 May 1945, to the "Russian people" without whose endurance the USSR might have lost the war?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, Stalin proposed that memorable toast. It was a typical instance of his inspired ideological opportunism. It was a memorable occasion for me, too, because it prompted me to write a satirical poem (now reprinted in my book *The Radiant Future*) which got me into prison. But whatever Stalin said in praise of the Russian people in 1945, it was not long before the repression of the Russian nation was resumed. Once again, the camps were filled with Russian officers, soldiers, intellectuals, and colonial status was clamped down on the Russian people.

There is a tendency, too, in the Soviet Union for the small nations and minority groups to spread the word around that they are being hard done by—that there is “prejudice” against them because they are Georgians, or Azerbaidzhanis, or Jew.. But this is a myth. Let me tell you a story.

Two Soviet Jews meet in a street in Moscow. “Well, how’s life treating you?”, the first asks his friend.

“N-n-n-not . . . t-t-too . . . w-w-well”, says the second with a heavy stutter.

“But why? What’s happened?”

“I . . . I . . . I’ve . . . app-app-applied . . . f-f-f-for a j-j-j-job . . . as TV ann-ann-ann-ann-announcer on Sov-Sov-Soviet TV and . . . I . . . I . . . I’ve b-b-b-been . . . re-re-refused be-be-be-because I . . . am . . . a-a-a . . . J-J-Jew.”

—Are you saying that all prejudice and all anti-Semitism is of this imaginary character?

ZINOVIEV: No. The Soviet Union is a very large country. Here and there spots of prejudice exist—against Muslims, Armenians, Jews, what-have-you, but anti-Jewism (which we should keep separate from anti-Semitism) is largely a phenomenon of the last two or three decades and has grown parallel with the slow but increasing emancipation of the Russian people. As their ability to compete for jobs has grown, so has the feeling that the Jewish grip on the more worthwhile types of employment is out of proportion with the number of Soviet Jews. Before the Second World War, Jews were privileged people in our country, and they are in some respects still privileged people today: they can emigrate if they want to badly enough, whereas a Russian or Tadjik cannot.

SURELY I DON’T HAVE TO REMIND YOU OF THE HISTORY OF Russian pogroms; Stalin’s anti-Semitism; the “Doctors’ Plot”; the real thrust of the “Anti-Zionist” campaigns, the penalties of Jewish emigration, and the discrimination and personal animus the ordinary Soviet Jew has to pocket from the ordinary Russian or Ukrainian every day of his life. The mere fact that his internal passport classifies him as a Jew by “nationality” tells much of the story.

ZINOVIEV: The Russian people have never been anti-Semitic. In fact, in many ways they always preferred Jewish people to their own kind. Whenever Russians had a chance to elect a man as a leader of some group or director of some enterprise and had a choice between a Russian and a Jew, they would elect a Jew. This was an old Russian tradition, the reason being that the Russian people were not much inclined to rule. The Jews were, and they were very good at it because they were competent, had will-power and brains. Since the Second World War the emancipation of Russians has advanced apace, and the predominance of Jews has come to be resented. Hence the talk about Russian anti-Semitism. But, as I say, before the War virtually all the professional chairs in Moscow, Leningrad, and the major provincial cities were held by Jewish scholars, and the Academy too was an almost exclusively Jewish preserve. In those days, however, the number of worthwhile academic

appointments ran to no more than a few dozen, whereas today these and the parallel posts in industrial research and development are counted in their tens of thousand. There just aren’t enough qualified Jews to compete with 100 million Russians.

—Do you, then, clearly ascribe anti-Semitism to this growing competition for well-endowed appointments and prestige?

ZINOVIEV: No. This is not only a Jewish question. The “Mafias” come into it, for the Russian people are faced with a number of what one might call “mafias” which they naturally dislike. The Armenians have a mafia-like group-loyalty wherever they may live; so have the Tatars; so have the Georgians; and so have the Jews. The October Revolution in a sense legitimised these with its emphasis on the equality of all peoples and cultures. The only nation which was not allowed to proclaim its special cohesion and individuality was the Russian people. As soon as the Russian nation tried to speak with its own distinctive voice, up went the cry of “nationalism”, “chauvinism”, even “fascism.” Part of today’s anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union is due to the mafia-like character of the special cohesion and transnational ties of the Soviet Jews. They, like the Armenians and other minority nationalities, enjoy special privileges which are denied to Russians. This breeds anti-Jewish feeling, which I personally abominate.

—Would you say that the US emphasis on Jewish emigration as an element of American economic policy has helped or harmed Soviet Jewry?

ZINOVIEV: It has added to anti-Semitism and, one must say, made things more difficult for that great majority of Jews who cannot, or do not want to, emigrate. If the Americans, and American Jewish interests, supported the claims of dissident Tatars, Armenians, Ukrainians and Russians with a fraction of the urgency with which they have supported Jewish emigration, the situation of Soviet Jews might be very different.



Functionaries come and go, but the Apparatus remains. . . .

DO YOU THINK the Soviet leaders would quietly allow Soviet Jews to leave if no American pressure were applied? Wouldn't they be losing a convenient domestic psychological scapegoat as well as a useful bargaining counter vis-à-vis the USA?

ZINOVIEV: I cannot confidently answer that question. What I can say is that our Jews should be allowed to emigrate if they want to, if only because the great usefulness of Soviet Jews as carriers of learning, culture, and expertise is now exhausted. The Soviet Union has enough doctors, scientists, and teachers to be able to do without the specifically Jewish contribution. But if emigration were not to prove possible, perhaps our Jews ought to be given a chance to relocate themselves more evenly throughout the Soviet Union and cease to form compact minorities. This would perhaps ameliorate the odious phenomenon of anti-Semitism.

—“Full assimilation” . . . despite the German experience?

ZINOVIEV: That is a difficult subject on which I'm not competent to talk. Suffice it to say that, in the Soviet Union, the importance of national exclusiveness is happily on the decline. I call myself a Russian, and I am—as you have noticed—deeply concerned with the well-being and culture of the Russian people, because it has been for centuries a badly underprivileged people. But at the same time I am equally conscious that I have, as a “Russian”, not a drop of Slavic blood in my veins. So I cannot be a Russian racist. My ancestors came to Russia from Sweden and Finland, adopted Russian as their language, and were Christianised as “Russians.” I do not, therefore, hold that the perpetuation of nationally or racially pure groups, whether Jewish or Swedish or whatever, is a great moral imperative, or for that matter historically possible or desirable. Many of our Jews regard themselves as more Russian than the Russians. I have no quarrel with that sentiment.

—One of Marx's more spectacular failures was the failure to foresee the significance of race and nationalism. Aren't you committing, as one nurtured on Marxism, the same “ethnic” error? Aren't you, in fact, contradicting yourself, arguing as you are for the emancipation of the Russian nation while at the same time downplaying the importance of national homogeneity?

ZINOVIEV: No. There is no contradiction. I do not seek national homogeneity. My preoccupation with the future of the Russian nation is a profound concern for the welfare and culture of the Russian people as human beings who entered the 20th century with a specific background and history. It is not racial. Think of that perhaps greatest of names in Russian literature, Pushkin, who came on his maternal side from Abyssinian stock and was so dark-skinned that he could be taken for an African. Or think of Dostoevsky, with his Polish ancestry. There are no pure races today in the civilised world—nor, I would suggest, should there be any. My suggestion, therefore, that our own Jewish population, having brilliantly performed its cultural mission, may now usefully dilute its identity by voluntary emigration and assimilation is no more anti-Semitic than my concern for a racially mixed Russian nation is anti-Russian.

4. Confessions of a Child of the Revolution



ALL IN ALL—to return to our main theme—you regard the Russian people as the victims rather than the beneficiaries of the Soviet system?

ZINOVIEV: Not in every respect, and not throughout the régime's 66 years of history. Before the Revolution 80%, if not 90%, of the Russian population were peasants living at subsistence level at the bottom of the social pyramid. They lived miserable lives, only an iota above the level of serfs. The Revolution did produce changes. Take my own family, who were peasants. As a result of the collectivisation of agriculture my parents lost everything they had. But my elder brother eventually rose to be the rank of colonel; three of my other brothers qualified as engineers; and I became a professor at Moscow University. At the same time millions of Russian peasants were given a formal education and some became professional men and women.

—But surely you moved to these positions over the dead bodies of those many millions of peasants who had been systematically starved in the 1929–32 period?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, if you want to put it that way. I would simply say that the collectivisation of agriculture created many new opportunities. The whole life of the country was radically changed.

—But that is not very different from saying that the gassing of Jews and gypsies in Auschwitz was a radical piece of social engineering which “created many new opportunities” . . .

ZINOVIEV: The collectivisation of agriculture was an essential phase of the Bolshevik Revolution. Without it our country would have disintegrated. The Russian revolution began in 1861 and climaxed in 1917. It happened; and its only possible aftermath was collectivisation.

—So even now, speaking as a dissident on West European soil, you approve of the collectivisation with its fifteen million victims?

ZINOVIEV: Of course I do. I approve of it completely.

—Despite the awesome sacrifices?

ZINOVIEV: Despite the sacrifices. Collectivisation gave industry many millions of workers. And industry meant opportunity.

—Is “gave” the right verb, I wonder? Weren't they being starved into leaving their villages or made to do so by brute force?

ZINOVIEV: They were not "forced" to go into industry. Of course, the kulaks were liquidated. But it was quite possible for ordinary peasants to stay on the land. Life in the big cities, however, offered irresistible temptations. Country life was primitive and boring. My family lived on the land. We had a large and comfortable house. In Moscow the ten of us had to make do with a single room of ten square metres—one square metre per head. Can you imagine?! Yet, we preferred life in Moscow.

—But surely, if your parents' land had not been taken away from them they would not have left your village. Their move was a response to an act of arbitrary expropriation.

ZINOVIEV: I don't know. It was certainly not any lack of food that made them leave. They moved because better opportunities beckoned in Moscow. Historians now tell us that the exodus from the villages was due to starvation and other pressures. Some may have left for those reasons, but the majority left in search of a better life—a collective life within Soviet institutions.

—But collective life, if that is what they were after, could be had on the land too. Some of us in the West have been under the impression that it was collective life they were running away from.

ZINOVIEV: Ah, but at that time collective life had not been properly organised in the countryside. Now it is—but in the 1920s and early 1930s agricultural collectivisation was a halfway house between the old system and the new. But, quite apart from that, in the towns people could visit libraries, go to cinemas, learn languages, meet one another. There was variety, entertainment, and culture to be had—and better wages. Don't forget that the Revolution was a great cultural revolution too. The enormous tragedies you have mentioned were accompanied by improved life-chances.

—All in all, you seem to be approving of Lenin's dictum that a generation had to be sacrificed. . . .

ZINOVIEV: I don't approve or disapprove. I take a scientific position which is neutral. What happened, happened. My job is to deal with consequential reality as it is now, not to pass judgment.

—But you are passing judgment, for when you say that the Soviet system would have disintegrated if collectivisation had not been set in train, you are in fact upholding "the Soviet system" as worth saving even at the cost of fifteen million lives.

ZINOVIEV: Every bit of progress exacts a price and carries certain consequences. Some of these are positive, others negative. I was, as you know, an anti-Stalinist. I was arrested and imprisoned under Stalin because of my opposition to Stalin. Yet, as a scientist I can, and do, make a point of explaining why the Russian people supported Stalin. I was an

anti-Stalinist; yet I must tell you that it was in Stalin's prison that I had a bed of my own for the first time in my life, three meals a day, and decent clothing. Before that I was permanently hungry. After my release I was hungry again.

Think of the dreadful paradox: an anti-Stalinist who must nevertheless insist that Stalin's time was a great epoch in human history! And I was not alone in feeling that. My mother, who hated Stalin and all his works, kept a picture of Stalin in her Bible right up to her death. Millions of Russians did likewise.

—A hangover from Czarist times . . . Stalin replacing The-Little-Father-of-all-Russians?

ZINOVIEV: I don't know about that. Stalin represented the dynamism of life. He stood for the ordinary people's power. When he died, the people's power died with him. Without the Revolution my own family would have stayed stuck in the village as peasants. As it was, they had the chance to participate in the people's power.

—Would you consider your officer's commission in the Air Force another beneficial aspect of the "dynamism of life" under Stalin?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, I would. Stalin purged the Red Army. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the trials of Tukhachevsky and his colleagues (and Tukhachevsky himself was certainly a very able soldier), the purge did away with the old class of ill-educated and undermotivated officers and made way for a completely new intake. I was one of the latter—a young lieutenant infinitely (I can assure you) more competent than the officer I replaced when he was arrested.

—Military historians tell us that if Tukhachevsky and the other generals had not been shot, Stalin's 1940 Winter Campaign against Finland wouldn't have fared so miserably.

ZINOVIEV: That is nonsense. I can tell you something else: if Stalin had not purged the Red Army, the Soviet Union would have suffered defeat in its war with Hitler. Our country was saved by the Red Army's new and superior leadership and the spirit and competence of the new officer class.

—"Life has become better, life has become gay." Who would ever have thought one would meet, fifty years on, a Soviet dissident ready to support Stalin's famous boast?

ZINOVIEV: Well, life was extraordinarily fascinating, even if it was hard. I knew many people who realised that they were about to be shot—yet they praised Stalin. Stalin was a symbol of hope and vigour. A relative of mine, who knew that he was due to start a long prison sentence in a year's time, was (as people often were under Stalin) suddenly appointed to run a large factory. He grabbed the opportunity because, for him, the challenge of that single glorious year was worth more than a thousand years spent in uneventful living. "I know they will kill me—but this year is going to be my year", he said. He was filled with the consciousness of making history.

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—Would you have felt the same, and acted as he did?

ZINOVIEV: Oh yes, and I still feel the same today. Forty years now separate me from my wartime experiences as an officer of the Soviet Air Force. I would willingly exchange those forty years for one week of my earlier life as a fighter-pilot.

I am a child of the Revolution—you must always remember that—I'm a product of the Revolution. I went to school in the 1930s and I was brought up on the romanticism of the Revolution. For me the Revolution and everything that went with it make up the whole sense of life. This does not mean, however, that I support the present Soviet régime. No, I'm a man of the 1920s and 1930s.

YOU ARE, PROFESSOR ZINOVIEV, a typical Soviet Man, even though you are a dissident—Homo Sovieticus, to quote the title of your recent book. . . .

ZINOVIEV: Absolutely. I am a Soviet Man. I spent 60 odd years of my life in Soviet society, and always did my best to serve it: I was, I believe, a good soldier, a good Air Force officer, a good professor, and a good and hard-working member of my collective. From that point of view I am Soviet Man *par excellence*.

—Yet your merciless exposure of the psychology of Soviet Man and Soviet society earned you your expulsion. I must, therefore, assume that in some important respects you are not Soviet Man after all.

ZINOVIEV: Oh, but I am. That does not mean that I do not criticise the system. Throughout the Soviet Union the system is always being criticised at all levels—but these criticisms come from within the system. They do not question its legitimacy.

People in the West tend to think that Soviet society is, in effect, a vast concentration camp. That just isn't true. Some of my satirical writings were first given in Russia as public lectures. For example, I delivered a chapter from *The Yawning Heights*—on leadership, of all things—as a lecture at the Military Academy. I had 200 generals in the audience, and they applauded. You can't do that in a concentration camp.

I regard the existence of the Soviet system as a natural fact. My problem is how to live within that given society.

—Suppose your post as a professor at Moscow University were made available to you again, and your unorthodoxies were quietly forgiven. Would you return to the Soviet Union?

ZINOVIEV: I'd return at once. But please understand: I was (as I've now repeatedly said) bitterly opposed to Stalin and Stalinism; yet that environment was my whole life. I fought for the Soviet society of which Stalin was the leader, and I fought for it willingly. At the same time I was so thoroughly alienated from Stalin himself that I was planning to assassinate him.

—You were?

ZINOVIEV: Oh, yes. Yet, whenever I was ordered by my superiors to put my life on the line for Stalin, I did so without hesitation.

SUPPOSE YOU DID GO BACK TO THE USSR TO rejoin your "collective", but fell foul of the system again and were confined to a psychiatric institution. Would you consider yourself to be a psychologically normal person wrongly declared to be abnormal or insane?

ZINOVIEV: No, I would not. I would be abnormal.

—Ah, but we must not be caught again on the horns of the "normality" dilemma. You could be considered to be "abnormal" only in the sense in which anyone who wants to reform Soviet society is declared to be "abnormal" by the Soviet authorities. But surely you would not accept that standard. You would feel that you were perfectly normal and it was the system that was abnormal, would you not?

ZINOVIEV: But don't you see: I would be abnormal in a system in which the norm is to accept the system as it is. I'd be deviant from it.

—But would you, in your heart of hearts, regard yourself as psychologically ill?

ZINOVIEV: I would recognise the fact that from the system's point of view I was abnormal. And as there can be no other point of view within the Soviet system, I would accept and live with the fact that I was deviant.

—You are echoing Nikita Khrushchev. "A crime", Khrushchev said, "is a deviation from generally recognised standards of behaviour, frequently called mental disorder. The mental state of people who start calling for opposition to Communism is clearly not normal." I hate to labour this point, but for us it is the "abnormality" which made you write "Yawning Heights" and your other famous satires of Soviet society that guarantees your normality. We admire your wit and courage, because you wrote these satires despite the pressures of the Soviet environment and it is that environment we regard as sick. Can I induce you to say, in plain language, that you really feel the same as we do? For otherwise I'd have to assume that you cannot differentiate between yourself and the subject of your study.

ZINOVIEV: Soviet society is both the subject of my study and my natural habitat. My books and their author are abnormal phenomena in the context of Soviet life.

—But would you regard yourself as ill, and therefore rightly confined?

ZINOVIEV: In the given and only possible context, yes, I would.

—But we are now talking in the West, in Scotland, a long way away from that context. You are here precisely because you rejected that context.

ZINOVIEV: Your question has no meaning outside the context of Soviet society—therefore I cannot give you an answer outside the context of the Soviet system. Scotland is not the Soviet Union.

—An independent morality—one outside the system—does not, then, exist for you?

ZINOVIEV: It does not once you find yourself living in the system. "Morality" depends on the total impact of your environment. The poor cannot be very "moral." Nor can Soviet Man, in your sense of the word.

—A time-honoured Leninist principle?

ZINOVIEV: Simply a description of Soviet reality which is an immoral reality when seen from outside. Western morality does not belong to the Soviet system.

I'M BEGINNING TO WILT under the pressure of your dialectic. You hated Stalin, yet you loved him. You were ready to kill him, yet you were also ready to die for him. Andrei Amalrik once said to me that the whole of Soviet society is psychologically abnormal. I can see what he meant.

ZINOVIEV: I'm describing a very normal Soviet phenomenon. I fought for Stalin when my duties as an officer so demanded. I was ready to sacrifice my life for Stalin, for my military superiors and my comrades. When you have the privilege of being an officer in the Air Force, you want to be a good officer.

—There is, I suppose, a sense in which a young man—keen, vigorous and anxious to take on whatever may come his way—enjoys being a good soldier no matter what political leadership he may serve under. To be fully stretched in a fine corps of young men is an ambition we have all probably had. I suppose it was that sort of ambition that motivated you under Stalin.

ZINOVIEV: Yes, it was.

—Did you ever ask yourself whether it was Russia you were fighting for, or for Communism as represented by Stalin?

ZINOVIEV: No. It was my duty to do as I was being ordered. The Germans were my enemies. It was my job to fight them, and I enjoyed fighting them.

—Would you agree that you have, in that case, no moral grounds for condemning the great majority of German soldiers who fought for Hitler arguing exactly what you have just put to me: that in war you obey orders, and you obey them willingly because your first duty is to your country, your superiors, and your comrades—no matter whether you approve or disapprove of your leaders?

ZINOVIEV: The two are not comparable. In any case, as soon as the War was over I began to criticise the Soviet system, and developed the sharpest criticism yet seen in the Soviet Union.

But you must understand that my strictures came from within the system. The Soviet system was my home; my family; my life. Good or bad, I was part of it. It was beyond my power to change it. I have a daughter. She may be good or bad,

brilliant or stupid—but do I love her less if she is stupid or disappoints my expectations? Of course I don't.

—Clearly, then, you don't want to see the Soviet system overthrown.

ZINOVIEV: That is not my concern. At the same time, I can see the grave danger that the Soviet system represents for the Western world, and I want to help in averting that danger. I am a Russian first and foremost, and I want to see the Russian people happy and prosperous. That requires the disintegration of the Soviet empire. I know that.

—You want to see the empire destroyed but not the Communist system.

ZINOVIEV: As I want the Russian people to attain independence as a sovereign state, I must logically hope for the destruction of the Soviet empire. The Communist system is another matter.

—Would your Russia incorporate the Ukraine?

ZINOVIEV: No, I would allow the Ukrainians to take care of their own problems in whatever framework they wished.

My sole concern is the future of the Russian people. I write my books as a Russian writer for Russian readers. I should like my contemporaries to read my books. I want the Russian people to be educated, cultured, and self-confident so that they can share the treasures of world culture and contribute to them. I want to lift the Russians out of their centuries-old backwardness and subjection. It is impossible for the Russian people to attain any of these things within the Soviet empire.

—You said "the system is another matter." Are you suggesting that the Communist system would survive even if the Soviet empire were destroyed or fell apart for internal reasons?

ZINOVIEV: Yes, my forecast is that the system would survive. I am sure that the Communist system has a future. More than that, I feel confident that the Communist system will eventually embrace the whole of mankind. But the Soviet empire will perish.

WOULD YOU, IN FACT, want to see the Soviet empire defeated in war as a step towards the liberation of the Russian people and an independent Russian nation-state?

ZINOVIEV: It is not a matter of what I would want to happen. But I am as certain as anyone can be that in a Third World War both the Soviet Union and the USA would, in their different ways, suffer defeat. The Soviet Union would inevitably fall apart into a number of small and medium-size states; and I am convinced that this would be beneficial not only to the peoples concerned, but to the rest of mankind.

The Soviet empire in its present form is highly dangerous to the West. I keep coming back to this theme because the Western countries seem to underestimate the staying power of the Soviet system. As a war-making machine, the USSR

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compares very favourably with the Western world, because it is an empire in a state of permanent mobilisation. It can destroy Western Europe. It can destroy the USA—even though it, too, will be destroyed in the process.

—*You seem to be talking as though a Third World War were inevitable.*

ZINOVIEV: I'm sure that it is inevitable.

—*Within a time-frame of, shall we say, ten years?*

ZINOVIEV: I cannot predict the time-frame, but one thing I can say: the Soviet Union will be the initiator of any future World War. I use the word "initiator" advisedly. I'm not saying the USSR will start the war "cold", as it were—but it will cause it to happen by stirring up trouble in one place, supporting anti-Western resentment in another, and so on. The policies the Soviet Union has been pursuing in Angola, Ethiopia,

Afghanistan, and more recently in Central America, are stations on the road to war. At the time of the Iranian crisis the Kremlin had an incomparable chance to hammer the West from a position of strength. It missed that chance.

Now it will need at least five years to concentrate its various advantages over the West at a point of maximum Western vulnerability. The rapid rearmament of the USA and the growing Western consciousness of the reality of the Soviet threat may, of course, throw the Kremlin's calculations out of gear. But let me at once tell you: the Soviet government can wait. If the correlation of forces does not suit the Soviet book in, let us say, five years from now, the Soviet leaders will bide their time until some crisis in the Western world provides the necessary opening. The Soviet empire is not an *ad hoc* aggressor. Its expansionism springs from the nature of its philosophy and is not susceptible to change—tactical delays, yes; permanent change, no.

A concluding part of this conversation will be published in the May issue.

To Norman Nicholson, Rising Seventy-one

As you avowedly have served your time
under the edged, striding shadow of Long Willie,
so we, soft-footed sidesmen
in the working nave of your plenty,
continually must check our données
—images, diction, ways of seeing—
against the definitive, northern tang.
So, should a line find us about the beck
and it's fizzing like ginger pop,
we can smirk but need to look further,
to the name on the bottle . . .
most times yours, of course.
And we'll have done it once more—
echoed, overheard, slipped
in the living scree of that voice—
and be at the bottom again,
rubbing ruefully, looking up.
But at least have stumbled on reality—
what's more, recognised it as such—
giving it Wigan, unearthed Normandy.

Normandy. Cartographers try to con us
it's over there, over "I girt beck."
They can ship their la di da somewhere else.
Because here's where it simmers,
the map behind the map. And starts at Millom;
that sea lion brandishing the thrilling rest
on the prodigious tip of its nose.
If you didn't invent it, you logged it between you
—you and that canny off-comer Wainwright—
he walking compasses, you words.

Whatever—it's done now, the work, the welding:
paraded solid on umpteen shelves.
As for your pet ambition, to see Halley's Comet—
here's hoping you'll notch up sight of it yet
and when it scalds your eye it sees you
—like Magritte's eagle in "The Domain Of Arnheim"—
spliced into the very rock: what else but Black Combe—
indestructible, snowy sideburns and all.

Geoffrey Holloway