

## Appendix One Letter to Brezhnev

Much-esteemed Leonid Ilyich!

These questions have been prompted by the campaign against A. D. Sakharov.

1. Our scientists have received approximately only one thirtieth of the Nobel prizes in the basic sciences. We have both remarkable researchers and remarkable results, but you must realistically evaluate the situation as a whole. The gap with respect to the number and quality of discoveries has not been decreasing. Do you not think that this means our nation is intellectually lagging dangerously behind other developed nations?

2. It is a historical fact that a new scientific and industrial revolution has begun and continues intensively in the West, and that our state philosophy was long at odds with all principal directions of modern thought: the theory of relativity, quantum theory, genetics, cybernetics. Today it is preferred not to recall these failures. However, the scientific revolution is still far from over, and the exact sciences continue to invade fields of knowledge that our ideology still considers "scientific-Marxist philosophy," not subject to revision. Attempts at objective analysis in these fields are considered an encroachment upon

the state. On the whole, such ideological intolerance limits our capacities for complex thought and unbiased evaluation of experience. Do you not think that because of this our intellectual lag will continue even in the future?

This does not mean there should be no state ideology whatsoever. I am deeply convinced that both the people and the state should profess certain moral principles drawn up long ago in human experience: love for one's native land, and human conscience. Ethics common to all humanity, they were created and preached by the best representatives of generations. There is yet another principle whose importance we must understand if we wish to be stopped at the brink of the final cataclysm of history. It consists in this, namely, that the fanatic adherence to principles betrays the principles themselves; that in human relations, any principle is bound to have a certain indeterminacy of interpretation and permit significant freedom of choice.

But our ideology has an entirely different character. It calls itself "scientific," which is dangerous for any ideology because scientific truth can undergo radical changes. It is harmful even for the science that the ideology is striving to preserve. As for the state, by supporting such an ideology with all its resources, it finds itself in a very foolish position.

Does it not follow that the repressive apparatus of the state must be detached from this ideology; that from kindergarten to the Academy of Sciences we must be released from *compulsory* education in, and from obedience to, principles which are so unreliable from both the scientific point of view and even the point of view of historical experience?

3. We need not renounce our own path of evolution, at the foundation of which lies the condemnation of private ownership. But we should recognize that there exist yet other, parallel paths, which have their own virtues. Thus, for example, Western experience has shown that the problem of the "absolute impoverishment of the masses" is effectively solved even within the framework of modern capitalism—by scientific and technological methods and by additional factors: partial control by the state side; pressure of trade-union struggle carried out in the framework of bourgeois freedoms; pressure of the public conscience; and fear of explosions of violence. We further see that the capitalistic economy has learned to use "regulating rods" for averting dangerously explosive situations, and operates in the sort of oscillating mode that we can consider normal. Finally, it is necessary to recognize that the very complex problems entailed by the concentration of power in a few hands are softened and muted in a beneficial way by bourgeois freedoms, and this is by no means a defect, whereas for us the same problems arise blatantly in all their magnitude.

At the same time, it is evident that if we were to live absolutely isolated from the outside world, we would not know that other stable historical paths existed. Moreover, the most important scientific truths would be unknown to us for a very long time, since they would lie beyond the bounds of the ideological barrier, protected by all the power of the state. And, incidentally, by virtue of that our ideology would turn out to be "proven"—essentially just as it was until 1953.

Learning these historical facts, must we not regard with extreme caution absolutely all "theories" and "laws" of social development? In the region of state management, should we not turn to a careful but active *experimental* search for the optimal paths, taking into account our own historically formed ideas and characteristics? That search is now being held back by the absence of *glasnost* and the absence of freedom of discussion on any questions about the economic and political structure of our society.

4. It seems correct to say that the variant of a severely regulated socialism becomes advantageous as an alternative to wasteful, free capitalism only when there is a basic scarcity of energy and other resources. However, today one can consider it proven that humanity will manage to provide itself with energy in the course of the next hundreds of years. Do you not think that for this reason severe regulations are already unnecessary, and we can pass to almost complete freedom in the sphere of ideas, excluding from this sphere only ideologies of violence and revolt? Do you not think, further, that for the same reason we might fearlessly be able to pass to much greater freedom of expression of personal initiative also in the sphere of production?

5. The biggest error of the Marxist theory of social development is that the innate spiritual needs and qualities of man do not enter into the theory. In effect, Marxism denies them a presence in the nature of man. However, this assumption is not proven scientifically, that is, by the methods of experimental biology, biochemistry, biophysics. Science is only just edging up to these questions. But by observing the "large-scale" disparity between practice and Marxist theory, one can already point to the most critical blunders.

First of all, human ethics—conscience—exists and is one of the powerful and eternal driving forces of history. This quality springs up in a person together with imagination, and thanks to a capacity to feel pain not just from actual but even from imagined sufferings. A person is therefore able to suffer when he knows about the suffering of others. Marx himself was just such a person, although he created an oversimplified scheme that does not take this quality into account.

As for violence, to which such importance is attached in Marxism, it also is a driving force of history. However, here is an important

and subtle point. Human violence is by no means always a strictly determined consequence of external conditions, as it is among animals, but can apparently spring up spontaneously and then "go critical." The problem of violence therefore demands *eternal* vigilance by its principal opponents, regardless of their social system and level of civilization.

Further, the need for free and sometimes spontaneous choice is an innate quality of human beings. Precisely free choice, but not "freedom as knowledge of necessity," is true freedom. It is senseless to struggle against this need. A modern state must be able to satisfy it, while at the same time limiting it within a reasonable framework of law.

The need to express his very own individual opinion to others is, also, the most important innate need of a human being, especially when his stomach is full.

Does it not seem to you that the approach we have taken to man and his place in society is primitive and objectively does not really conform to human qualities and needs?

6. Do you agree that true culture is indivisible and continuous, and that our intellectual lag can be explained to a considerable extent by those devastating breaks that we ourselves made in our delicate cultural fabric in the course of history; that a scholar's intellect is cultivated by the scientific tradition, and not just the scientific but indeed the entire cultural milieu; and that the limits placed on imagination in art influence imagination in science?

7. Do you agree that we do not seriously study the problem of stimulating large-scale economic activity; that while truly keeping within the framework of state ownership, we might be able—advantageously for business—to intensify stimuli sharply by imitating Western experience? Perhaps, for example, it is necessary to introduce a regime of free initiative into some branches of the economy, from time to time, while simultaneously linking managers' salaries to their profits—determining the economic sphere to be brought under such a regime with reference to the current state of the market. However, it is clear that the most important thing is to have the opportunity to discuss *any* ideas in this area freely. Do you agree with this?

8. Various claims about "partial capitalism without private ownership" or something of that kind will possibly shock some dogmatists. But, first, our chief principle—absence of private ownership—will remain; and, second, I am forced to note that in our country, socialism has in practice taken on the characteristics not even of "feudalism without private ownership," but—under Stalin—of slaveholding without private ownership. Indeed, what were the millions of inmates of the camps, or the scientists in *sharagas*, if not slaves of the state? And

how does the *kolkhoznik* without a passport differ from the communal peasant [under the czars] as regards his rights? What sort of thing is our current system of local residence permits, if not a feudal restriction of free movement around the territory of the country? The impression will arise that up to now our people have not learned to think in unfeudal categories in the sphere of legal relations. Is it not time for us to pass to another, more modern plane of freer relations?

9. One of the most effective opportunities to equalize intellectual potential among countries is to abolish the ban on free travel abroad. I am talking about trips taken whenever and for as long as is necessary to a scholar, engineer, student, writer, artist, and any citizen. What is the sense of this prohibition, which does not benefit the state and humiliates citizens?

10. One of the survivals of history in our consciousness is the fact that we will not permit anyone any criticism of the Central Committee. In these circumstances it must be recognized that the only legal channel of "feedback" for internal policy is the transmission of works of criticism abroad, so that by a complicated path back they reach the ears of the government. Does no one on the Central Committee understand the utter absurdity of this situation?

11. Our method of political administration is a typical regime without feedback. In essence, we compete with capitalism while having placed ourselves in the most disadvantageous conditions; we do not exploit *all* possible stimuli and all channels of feedback; and we do not trust our own fellow citizens. We would avoid many blunders and calamities if the people were granted as a first step at least a consultative voice, not formally but in practice, and if we turned, for example, to the well-tried method of feedback—freedom of the press, that is, a press without political and ideological censorship, with the proviso mentioned above. Does it not seem to you that some tensions have arisen in the country today which might be easily and painlessly removed by abolishing censorship, assuming it were done in time?

12. Any criticism of the Central Committee is regarded as a crime. Therefore people either "vacillate together with the Party" or are hurled against the barricade of a brutal struggle. You know, of course, that today there has appeared a small but growing number of people being hurled against that barricade. This "logic of struggle" is imposed by the government itself. I ask, what is the point of it? Would it not be more intelligent for us, at the end of the twentieth century and sixty years after the Revolution, finally to establish normal, intermediate forms of mutual relations between citizen and state? I mean again and primarily, as the first step—abolition of censorship of the press, free exchange of information, *glasnost*.

13. You obviously understand that to imprison opponents in psy-

chiatric hospitals and to cripple them there by injections—this measure is like sterilization of political opponents in the Nazi Reich. Here, basically, there is nothing to ask about.

Yours sincerely,

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