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ABSTRACT

Drawing from *samizdat* (self-published) and *tamizdat* (foreign-published) materials, this article traces the understandings of parliaments and parliamentarism in individual works by Soviet dissidents and reconstructs the authors' underlying assumptions in the application of the two ideas. It focuses on the articulations and the implications of four concepts pertaining to parliamentarism – deliberation, representation, responsibility, and sovereignty – in the dissidents' criticisms of Soviet 'parliamentarism' and their own parliamentary designs. Despite the consensus that the USSR Supreme Soviet was both a façade and pseudo parliament and the frequent appeals to popular sovereignty, only a handful of authors discussed parliamentarism as the latter's manifestation before the Perestroika. With very few dissidents placing deliberation at the centre of a post-Soviet order, the conviction that social and political systems should be based on an 'ultimate truth' and respective societal blueprints dominated the dissident discourse in which a parliament, if mentioned at all, was a rostrum rather than a forum.

Introduction

> [The Armenian Radio was asked,] 'What will be the results of the USSR Supreme Soviet elections in ten years?'
> 'We can't answer that because the exact results of these elections were recently stolen from the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee.'[1]

This joke from the 1970s reflected the widespread disbelief in the façade parliamentarism of the Soviet Union: the elections to the Supreme Soviet were a set-up, while the ostensibly supreme body was a mere rubber stamp for the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) Central Committee's decisions. Such a view was shared by practically all Russian-speaking oppositional intellectuals who ever expressed their opinion on the matter in uncensored media – *samizdat* (self-published) or *tamizdat* (foreign-published)

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[1]D. Shturman and S. Tiktin (eds.), *Sovetskii Soiuz v zerkale politicheskogo anekdota* (London, 1985), p. 21.

materials. The dissidents[2] rebuked the Supreme Soviet, dubbed the 'people's parliament' by official propagandists,[3] as both a façade and pseudo parliament, if interpreted in the terms of Andrey Medushevksy. Façade or nominal parliamentarism meant that the Supreme Soviet was not an institution of decision-making within the Soviet imitation of constitutionalism in practical terms, while pseudo or sham parliamentarism indicated the lack of proper legal foundations for the Supreme Soviet to function as a parliament.[4]

Discussing the criticism of the Supreme Soviet and the alternatives suggested by the dissidents, this article reconstructs their understandings of both parliaments and parliamentarism in negative and positive terms. In other words, it offers the oppositional answers to the questions why there were neither in the USSR, and what the two were supposed to be. Despite the critical consensus on the Supreme Soviet and the wider discussion of popular sovereignty in the works of the dissidents, parliamentarism as a manifestation of popular sovereignty was barely discussed until the Perestroika. The presupposition that social and political order should be based on an 'ultimate truth' or a principle, be it a version of Christianity, socialism, or nationalism, nurtured blueprints for a perfect society and contributed to the widespread view that a parliament, if present in political designs at all, was a rostrum for expressing such a 'truth' rather than a deliberative institution. Together with the frequent criticism of Soviet individuals, especially from a moral standpoint, this tendency can be interpreted as disenchantment with popular sovereignty and the treatment of the people (or the nation) as an object of intellectuals' agency. Blueprint-making responded to the official ideology, while the objectification of the people was a further reflection of Soviet ethics and etatism.[5]

Blueprints dominated the political works of Soviet dissidents, yet there were authors who stressed that an 'ultimate truth' could only be uncovered through deliberation. Although Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, a physicist, laid out his 'best' scenario of global development in 1968, he stressed that only an open discussion would help the majority find the correct mode of action.[6] In 1974, Roi Aleksandrovich Medvedev, a teacher, rebuked those dissidents who did not see polemics as beneficial for the movement.[7] Despite the fact that not all of them discussed parliamentarism, Petr Markovich Abovin-Egides, Valerii Nikolaevich Chalidze, and other dissidents also explicitly articulated the need for deliberation.[8] Notwithstanding the occasional calls for a broader open-end discussion among the dissidents, suggesting that it was up to the sovereign

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[2]In the broad sense, the dissidents were all those who voiced their opposition to the Soviet regime publicly while in the Soviet Union, although they could continue their criticism in emigration, see L. Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, CT, 1987), pp. 3, 15–16.

[3]K.F. Kotov, *Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR – podlinno narodnyi parlament (v pomoshch' lektoru)* (Alma-Ata, 1966); Iu.I. Tiutekin and L.E. Lungu, *Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR – nash narodnyi parlament (v pomoshch' lektoru)* (Kishinev, 1970).

[4]A. Medushevsky, *Russian Constitutionalism: Historical and Contemporary Development* (London, 2006), pp. 5, 16–17, 20.

[5]A. Amal'rik, *Prosushchestvuet li Sovetskii Soiuz do 1984 goda? [April—June 1969]* (Amsterdam, 1970), pp. 16–17; A.I. Solzhenitsyn, 'Na vozvrate dykhaniia i soznaniia: po povodu traktata A.D. Sakharova "Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellektual'noi svobode [1969/October 1973]"', in *Iz-pod glyb: sbornik statei [Moscow, 1974]* (Paris, 1974), pp. 7–28. As Graeme Gill had pointed out, the trust in the officials rather than the people came about during Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev's tenure, see G.J. Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 190.

[6]A. Sakharov, 'Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellektual'noi svobode [June 1968]', in A. Sakharov (ed), *Trevoga in nadezhda: sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols (Moscow, 2006), vol. I, p. 128.

[7]R. Medvedev, 'Eshche raz o demokratizatsii i o razriadke [15 April 1974]', 1–2 (AS 1680, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 11). In the text, Medvedev cited a similar opinion of Valerii Nikolaevich Chalidze on the matter.

[8]P. Abovin-Egides, 'Tak brat' zontik ili ne brat'? Vmesto epiloga k stat'e "Aktual'nye problemy demokraticheskogo dvizheniia"', *Poiski* 2, (1980), pp. 247–8; V. Chalidze, 'O nekotorykh tendentsiiakh v emigrantskoi publitsistike', *Kontinent* 23, (1980), p. 171.

people to decide which socio-economic system to choose and not up to the intellectuals,[9] no major forum of the dissident movement emerged before the Perestroika.

The attempts to systematize Soviet dissent resulted in numerous classifications of oppositional groups. The bipartite juxtapositions of 'liberals' and 'conservatives' or 'westernizers' and 'slavophiles' and the tripartite scheme of 'liberalism', 'Marxism-Leninism', and a 'Christian ideology' owed their existence to the 'grand debate' of the late 1960s–early 1970s between Sakharov, Medvedev, and the writer Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn, arguably the most well-known Soviet dissidents among European and American observers, and remained widely present in the studies of Soviet dissent.[10]

The approaches based on group/ideology leave many nuances out of the discussion, especially when Soviet dissent is studied as an intellectual movement, since many individual texts let alone the whole bodies of authors' works cannot be aligned with a specific ideology, while there also were dynamics in the views of individual authors. This article focuses on ideas and concepts instead. Robert Horvath and Philip Boobbyer, both of whom stressed the diversity of dissident thought, proved that such an approach is appropriate. Horvath discussed the sets of ideas which originated in the dissident movement and which had a tremendous effect on the post-Soviet discourses, while Boobbyer explored the ideas of consciousness and truth in the dissident thought.[11]

Focusing on the ideas of parliament and parliamentarism, the present study sought to reconstruct the assumptions behind them,[12] locate them within larger societal and political projects, and juxtapose them with the official intellectual context. Understanding parliament as a 'political institution for expressing dissensus and for conducting debates among the representatives of the citizens in a spirit of fair play', Pasi Ihalainen, Cornelia Ilie, and Kari Palonen singled out four core concepts pertaining to parliamentarism – deliberation, representation, responsibility (of a cabinet), and 'sovereignty (of a parliament within a polity)'.[13]

In terms of the four core concepts, the criticisms of Soviet 'parliamentarism' agreed that the Supreme Soviet was unrepresentative (due to the lack of free and alternative elections), did not have any effect on the cabinet and was non-sovereign within the system (due to the predominance of the CPSU Central Committee), and did not hold any proper discussions whatsoever. As for the dissidents' own parliamentary designs, most of the texts addressed below sought to make a parliament representative, some discussed its relations with a cabinet, while few explored the issues of a parliament's sovereignty and deliberation in decision-making.

The study relied on *samizdat* and *tamizdat* texts, some of which were written after the authors had emigrated from the USSR. Most of the sources were accessed at the Open Society Archives in Budapest (HU OSA) which host the extensive Samizdat Archive

[9]Abovin-Egides, 'Tak brat' zontik ili ne brat'?', p. 247.

[10]Amal'rik, *Prosushchestvuet li Sovetskii Soiuz do 1984 goda?*, pp. 8, 37; H. Fireside, 'Dissident Visions of the USSR: Medvedev, Sakharov & Solzhenitsyn', *Polity* 22, (1989), pp. 214–15; M.S. Shatz, *Soviet Dissent in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 160, 163, 165–7.

[11]P. Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (London, 2005), p. 3; R. Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratisation and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (London, 2005), pp. 5–6.

[12]H. Kalmo and Q. Skinner, 'Introduction: A Concept in Fragments', in H. Kalmo and Q. Skinner (eds), *Sovereignty in Fragments: The Past, Present and Future of a Contested Concept*, (Cambridge, 2014), p. 5.

[13]P. Ihalainen, C. Ilie, and K. Palonen, 'Parliament as a Conceptual Nexus', in P. Ihalainen, C. Ilie, and K. Palonen (eds), *Parliaments and Parliamentarism: A Comparative History of a European Concept* (New York, 2016), p. 1.

(AS or *Arkhiv samizdata*) collection, both as compiled volumes and individual materials. Individual unpublished documents were made available by the Research Centre for East European Studies in Bremen (*Forschungsstelle Osteuropa* or FSO) and the Research and Information Centre 'Memorial' in Saint Petersburg. Some *samizdat* materials were published in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[14]

Soviet 'parliamentarism'

The 1936 Soviet Constitution proclaimed toilers' (workers' and peasants') sovereignty and made the bicameral universally elected USSR Supreme Soviet 'the supreme body of state power' and the only legislative authority. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers were responsible before the Supreme Soviet. The Presidium had broad legislative and executive authority between the sessions of the Supreme Soviet and the right to convene and dissolve it. The 1977 Soviet Constitution extended the notion of sovereignty to include the whole people and reaffirmed the USSR Supreme Soviet's status and design.[15] Few in the opposition, however, saw the system as even remotely democratic. Even though the USSR Supreme Soviet remained an addressee for the dissidents' appeals and protests, hardly any of them considered it to be a body of decision-making let alone supreme state power. Those who not only mentioned but specifically discussed the Supreme Soviet highlighted the issues of its sovereignty (within the polity), representation, deliberation, and the cabinet's responsibility.

Despite Vladimir Il'ich Lenin's opposition to parliamentarism, the USSR had a parliament for most of its history. Although the term parliament was not in either of the two constitutions, it was occasionally used for the Supreme Soviet since its first convocation in 1938, especially after the CPSU Twentieth Congress (1956).[16] Apart from Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev's speech on Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin's cult of personality which, despite being concealed from the public, circulated in *samizdat*,[17] the congress admitted parliamentary ways of social and political change outside of the USSR into official ideology.[18] The first detailed dissident critiques of the Soviet political system emerged in middle of the 1960s, with the end of the Khrushchev Thaw and the shattered hopes for political change. Internationally, the 1968 Prague Spring, the attempt of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to reform the state, proved the main contributing factor to the discussion of political change.[19]

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[14]V.V. Igrunov, M.Sh. Barbakadze, and E.S. Shvarts (eds.), *Antologia samizdata: nepodtsenzurnaia literatura v SSSR, 1950-e – 1980-e*, 3 vols (Moscow, 2005).

[15]'Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik, utverzhdena chrezvychainym VIII s"ezdom Sovetov Soiuza SSR, 5 dekabria 1936 goda (s posleduiushchimi izmeneniiami i dopolneniiami)', Moscow State University, 1936, http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1936.htm; 'Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik, priniata na vneocherednoi sedmoi sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR deviatogo sozyva 7 Oktiabria 1977 g.', Moscow State University, 1977, http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1977.htm.

[16]A. Vyshinskii, *Sovetskii parlament* (Pyatigorsk, 1938); Kotov, *Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR – podlinno narodnyi parlament*; Tiutekin and Lungu, *Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR – nash narodnyi parlament*.

[17]N.S. Khrushchev, *O kul'te lichnosti i ego posledstviiakh* [25 February 1956] (AS 460, HU OSA, 300-85-9, Box 40).

[18]M.A. Manasov, *O vozmozhnostiakh ispol'zovaniia parlamentskogo puti dlia perekhoda k sotsializmu* (Moscow, 1958).

[19]K. Miklóssy, 'Khrushchevism after Khrushchev: The Rise of National Interest in the Eastern Bloc', in J. Smith and M. Ilic (eds), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964* (London, 2011), pp. 150–70. The 'thaw' itself featured a campaign against dissent, see R. Hornsby, 'The Outer Reaches of Liberalization: Combating Political Dissent in the Khrushchev Era', in Smith and Ilic (eds), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin*, pp. 61–78.

The critiques of Soviet 'parliamentarism' and the political system in general relied on the consensus that it was the CPSU and not the people who had sovereignty. Two works, published outside the USSR but circulating in the country, proved formative for the predominant interpretations of the party's power. *The New Class* (1957) by Milovan Đilas, a Yugoslav politician and then a dissident, understood not just the party leadership but more broadly the Communist bureaucracy (later dubbed as *nomenklatura* by Russian-speaking authors) as the new ruling class. *The Technology of Power* (1959) by Abdurakhman Genazovich Avtorkhanov, a Chechen émigré author, foregrounded the role of groups and individuals within the Soviet elite.[20] The ideas of Đilas (or ones very similar to his) were prominently featured in the programme documents of two clandestine groups – the Union of Communards (*Soiuz kommunarov*, active since 1963 and suppressed in 1965) and the All-Russian Social-Christian Union for the Liberation of the People (*Vserossiiskii sotsial-khristianskii soiuz osvobozhdeniia naroda* or VSKhSON, active since 1964 and suppressed in 1967).[21] Both provided detailed criticisms of the Soviet system and proposed alternatives.

Valerii Efimovich Ronkin and Sergei Dmitrievich Khakhaev, Leningrad engineers, of the Union of Communards issued a *samizdat* brochure *From the Dictatorship of the Bureaucracy to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* in 1964. Rejecting the idea of popular sovereignty, which was not yet in the constitution but had been in the CPSU Program since 1961, from a Marxist standpoint, Ronkin and Khakhaev claimed that the USSR was a 'hegemony [*gospodstvo*] of the new class of exploiters – the party-state bureaucracy', uniting the members of the large economic and administrative apparatus, both appointed and 'formally elected', as well as the writers and journalists of official media.[22]

Ronkin and Khakhaev specifically criticized the situation with the legislative authority. The elections were deemed a comedy, since most of the voters had no information on candidates, and there was one candidate for each position. Analyzing the Sixth USSR Supreme Soviet, elected in 1962, Ronkin and Khakhaev concluded that the bureaucratic class, estimated as two percent in the total population, had over a half of all seats in the two chambers (the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities), and hence the Supreme Soviet did not accurately represent other classes of the society. According to the authors, a similar situation was at the CPSU congresses, although the share of bureaucrats dropped well beyond fifty percent at the CPSU Twenty-Second Congress (1961). Ronkin and Khakhaev stressed that neither the Supreme Soviet nor the contemporary party congresses seriously discussed any documents, received from the top level of leadership, or made any significant amendments to them. No ordinary deputies ever raised any issues on own initiative. Besides, ordinary deputies and delegates at the congresses did not represent their respective classes since they were privileged in both material and moral terms and preselected from those especially susceptible to propaganda. Furthermore, the lack of basic competence in state matters and access to relevant information on the issues

[20]M. Dzhilas, *Novyi klass* (New York, 1961); A. Avtorkhanov, *Tekhnologiia vlasti*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main, 1976); M. Voslenskii, *Nomenklatura: gospodstvuiushchii klass Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 2nd edn (London, 1990).

[21]Veniamin Viktorovich Iofe, a member of the Union of Communards, claimed later that its programme was written before the authors read Đilas' book, see V.V. Iofe [N. Peskov], 'Delo "Kolokola"', in N. Gorbanevskaia (ed), *Pamiat': istoricheskii sbornik*, 2 vols (New York, 1976–82), vol. II, p. 272.

[22]V.E. Ronkin and S.D. Khakhaev, *Ot diktatury biurokratii k diktature proletariata: puti postroeniia kommunizma v SSSR* [1963], pp. 1–2 (Research and Information Centre 'Memorial', Saint Petersburg).

which they had to resolve made them fully subordinate to the 'ruling bureaucracy'. Finally, despite the existence of the fully subordinate legislative bodies, the bureaucracy preferred to discuss the most sensitive issues in purely bureaucratic bodies. Ronkin and Khakhaev concluded that all authority in the state was in the hands of the materially privileged bureaucrats who 'appointed, elected, and controlled' each other.[23]

Igor' Viacheslavovich Ogurtsov, then a student of philosophy and Oriental languages in Leningrad, and other authors of the VSKhSON program (adopted in 1964 and published abroad in 1975)[24] came to similar conclusions about the Communist system at large, seeing it as 'the dictatorship of Communist bureaucracy', 'a new ruling class'. Relying on anti-Marxist rhetoric, the VSKhSON program foregrounded the international aggressiveness of this class and the 'revolutionary Communist expansion'. At the same time, their analysis drew heavily from Marxism, describing the ruling class as the 'omnipotent monopolists' and the subordinate class of everybody else as 'the people pressed into impersonal enslaved [*krepostnaia*] mass'. The difference between the two classes was in their access to property, which the latter did not have. The VSKhSON program, however, saw the ruling Communist parties not as bearers of sovereignty but as mere instrument in the hands of the ruling elites, 'the party oligarchy' or 'the party clique grouping around the dictator secretary general' who had all prerogatives in governance and even set up the 'norms of "Communist moral"'. All bodies of government, from local agencies to the USSR Supreme Soviet, were mere extensions of the party and in no way 'represented the people', especially with the show elections. According to the VSKhSON programme, secret political police and ideological monopoly consolidated the system.[25]

The New Class interpretation of the Communist leadership, let alone the whole party, was not shared by Medvedev and other contributors to the *samizdat* journal *Politicheskii dnevnik* [*Political Diary*] (1964–1970), which Medvedev edited. Although *Politicheskii dnevnik* (which frequently had anonymous publications) described Avtorkhanov's book as inaccurate,[26] Medvedev also stressed the role of groups and individuals in the top tier of Soviet elite,[27] and *Politicheskii dnevnik* devoted much attention to the struggle within the party.[28]

The view that individuals in the party leadership were subjects of social and political change implied the possibility of initiating democratization from within the party, just as it happened in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and eventually in the Soviet Union some twenty years later. Since the middle of the 1960s, the emergence of the dissident movement in the narrow sense, as a movement for legality and human rights which relied on non-violent methods of public struggle, and the predominance of evolutionary approaches to social and political change,[29] contributed to the attempts of constructive or symbolic

[23]Ronkin and Khakhaev, *Ot diktatury biurokratii k diktature proletariata*, p. 7.

[24]D. Denlop, *VSKhSON, Vserossiiskii sotsial-khristianskii soiuz osvobozhdeniia naroda: programma, sud, v tiurmakh i lageriakh* (Paris, 1975).

[25]*Programma Vserossiiskogo sotsial-khristianskogo soiuza osvobozhdeniia naroda (Narodno-revoliutsionnaia khartiia)* [2 February 1964], pp. 4, 8, 13–15, 17–18 (AS 2070, HU OSA, 300-85-9, Box 53).

[26]R. Medvedev, 'Voprosy, kotorye volnuiut kazhdogo', *XX vek* 1, (1976), pp. 16, 18 (AS 2299, HU OSA, 300-85-9, Box 58).

[27]'O knige A. Avtorkhanova "Tekhnologiia vlasti"', *Politicheskii dnevnik* 55, (1969), pp. 25–30 (AS 1009, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 8).

[28]See, for instance, 'Ob iun'skom plenume TsK KPSS v 1957 godu', *Politicheskii dnevnik* 9, (1965), pp. 44–6 (AS 1002, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 8); 'XXII-i s"ezd KPSS', *Politicheskii dnevnik* 9, (1967), p. 42 (AS 1005, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 8).

[29]R. Horvath, '"The Solzhenitsyn Effect": East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege', *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, (2007), pp. 879–907.

dialogue between the opposition and the Soviet elite, in which the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and individual republics and their Presidiums became addressees of numerous petitions, public letters, and proposals.

Some of the open letters and appeals dealt with the Supreme Soviets directly. Petro Hryhorovych Hryhorenko, a Soviet commander of Ukrainian descent, urged the voters not to support Aleksei Nikolaevich Kosygin at the 1966 USSR Supreme Soviet elections, deeming him responsible for the 'mistakes' of the Stalin and Khrushchev governments as their member. This appeal was understandably not published by the official newspapers *Pravda* [*Truth*] and *Izvestiia* [*News*] but was printed by the émigré journal *Posev* [*Seeds*].[30] In his 1969 *Open Letter to the Deputies of Soviets of the USSR* [*Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic*], which was later published in the émigré journal *Suchasnist'* [*Modernity*], Vasyl' Semenovych Lisovyi, a Ukrainian philosopher, argued that the soviets of the USSR were barely effective and had almost no authority due to the parallelism of party and state bodies.[31] In 1971, Boris Vasil'evich Efimov submitted his constitutional project, supposedly first drafted in 1966, to the constitutional commission of the USSR Supreme Soviet.[32] One cannot be certain if any of these appeals were made in earnest. Some of them, like Solzhenitsyn's 1973 *Letter to the Leaders of the Soviet Union*, appeared to be symbolic and may be seen as position statements in the first place. Although the letter was Solzhenitsyn's first widely circulating political text in which he voiced skepticism of parliamentarism and democracy in Russia, he implicitly criticized the lack thereof in the USSR and suggested that hoping for real elections was unrealistic.[33]

An earlier document, the 1970 *Memorandum of the Democrats to the USSR Supreme Soviet on the Illegal Seizure of Power by the CPSU Leadership and its Unconstitutional Actions*, which was circulated by the clandestine organization the *Democratic Movement of the Soviet Union* [*Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza* or DDSS] and later published abroad, was openly provocative in its demands from the Supreme Soviet to publicly discuss it.[34] The document was written by Sergei Ivanovich Soldatov, an engineer and a native of Estonia of Russian descent, who was the leader and the main author of the DDSS program documents and several *samizdat* periodicals, and another unnamed person. The DDSS program materials, including the 1969 *Program of the Democratic Movement of the Soviet Union*, which was published abroad and contained basic critical remarks on the Soviet system in general and the Supreme Soviet in particular,[35] were barely discussed and were rarely supported in dissident circles, and the *Memorandum*, which provided a detailed analysis of the 1936 Constitution, was in fact an attempt to win over the members of the legalist Moscow human rights movement. The legalist activists rejected the very clandestine nature of the DDSS, while its ideas, deemed declarative, remained outside the mainstream debates in the opposition.[36]

[30]P.G. Grigorenko, *Prizyv k izbirateliam Mosk. izbirat. okruga golosovat' protiv A.N. Kosygina* [3 June 1966], p. 1 (AS 240, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 2).

[31]V. Lisovyi [A. Koval'], *Otkrytoe pis'mo deputatam sovetov USSR* [April 1969] [AS Translation from Ukrainian], p. 1 (AS 265, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 2).

[32]B.V. Efimov, *V komissiiu Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR po razrabotke konstitutsii* [5 July 1971] (FSO, 01-030.192).

[33]A.I. Solzhenitsyn, *Pis'mo vozhdiam Sovetskogo Soiuza [September 5, 1973]* (Paris, 1974), pp. 42, 44–5.

[34]Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza, *Memorandum Demokratov Verkhovnomu Sovetu SSSR 'O nezakonnom zakhvate vlasti rukovodstvom KPSS i ego antikonstitutsionnoi deiatel'nosti'* [5 December 1970], p. 1 (AS 602, HU OSA, 300-85-9, Box 15).

[35]Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza, *Programma Demokraticheskogo dvizheniia Sovetskogo* Soiuza [1969, Published by the Herzen Foundation in Amsterdam in 1970], pp. 15–16 (AS 340, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 2).

[36]S. Soldatov, *Zarnitsy vozrozhdeniia* (London, 1984), pp. 166–9, 201–2.

Although the *Memorandum* criticized the contents of the 1936 Constitution, it admitted that if the CPSU leadership followed it, it would still 'be a grandiose step forward in the development of social relations'. The text's main argument was that the 'leadership of the CPSU which usurped the power rightfully belonging to the soviets thereby deprived the people of the Soviet Union of their sovereignty'.[37] Commenting the 1936 Constitution article by article, Soldatov and his co-author provided a detailed critique of the USSR Supreme Soviet's situation in the system, pointing to its lack of sovereignty, the absence of the cabinet's responsibility before it, and the lack of deliberation.

> According to the Constitution, the powers of the Supreme Soviet in the legislative sphere are universal and no other body or organization is vested with these powers. Throughout the entire existence of the Soviet state, the CPSU leadership has pursued an unconstitutional policy of so-called 'merging party and soviet leadership'. […] De facto, as a result of the seizure of power by the CPSU leadership, the state is not a socialist state, but a party state. Therefore, the cabinet is appointed by the Politbiuro [Political Bureau] of the CPSU Central Committee. The constitutional body, the Supreme Soviet, was removed from power. […] It is not surprising that the sessions of the Supreme Soviet are more like a ritual prayer service than a business legislative forum. […] The representative body turned into a puppet theater directed by the Communist Party leadership.[38]

The *Memorandum* accused the party elite of mistrusting representative institutions. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was subordinate to the Politbiuro and did not use its constitutional right to convene the sessions of the Supreme Soviet, which were rare and short. The Presidium never used its right to hold a referendum. Similar to the Union of Communards, the DDSS did not see the Supreme Soviet as representative due to the absence of proper elections. 'In practice, the elections to all instances of the soviets turned into a farce, a comedy played by the party apparatus and its accomplices'. As the *Memorandum* noted, despite the elections being falsified, the Supreme Soviet never attempted to check their results.[39]

The intended audience for Medvedev's 1972 detailed critique of the Soviet system, titled *The Book on Socialist Democracy*, included the Soviet government and the Soviet people, even though it was published abroad.[40] Medvedev formulated his critique of the system from a Marxist-Leninist standpoint. Understanding the soviets as original representative bodies, different from parliaments, he nevertheless concluded that they had lost much of their initial features, which was consolidated by the 1936 Constitution. Their formation on territorial rather than occupational basis severed the connection between the voters and the deputies. The introduction of direct elections at all levels, instead of the Leninist system of direct elections only at the lowest level and the formation of upper tiers through delegation, undermined the connections between different levels of authority. On the practical level, Stalin turned soviets into mere annexes of party committees. The non-alternative elections and the nomination of candidates in a bureaucratic way by regional party committees lowered the responsibility of both deputies, who did not fear being non-elected, and voters, who did not know those whom they formally elected. In addition to that, the elections featured numerous violations. Medvedev noted that the

[37]Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza, *Memorandum Demokratov Verkhovnomu Sovetu SSSR*, p. 1.
[38]Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza, *Memorandum Demokratov Verkhovnomu Sovetu SSSR*, pp. 19–20.
[39]Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza, *Memorandum Demokratov Verkhovnomu Sovetu SSSR*, pp. 19–21, 36.
[40]R. Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii* (Amsterdam, 1972), p. 30.

principle of the secret ballot was not observed, as only those voters who had to cross out a name in the ballot (vote against the only candidate) had to go to voting booths, which meant that the supervisors present at the stations could identify them as opponents of the approved candidate.[41]

Unlike Lenin, Medvedev supported the division of legislative and execute powers, yet he did not see the 1936 Constitution as successfully implementing it. With its extremely short sessions once or twice a year, the USSR Supreme Soviet could not become a working parliament, and its *de facto* authority was negligible. Medvedev noted that there was some development. The purely decorative status of the Supreme Soviet under Stalin had changed since the late 1950s, with more activity in the Supreme Soviet commissions and the increase in their number, but neither the Supreme Soviet nor its Presidium took their rightful place as bodies of people's power. The Supreme Soviet did not exercise legislative initiative, without single cases of even considering a law on a deputy's or a deputy group's initiative, of critically discussing the drafts coming from executive bodies (albeit it made nonessential remarks), and of rejecting a draft or returning it to the executive for revision. Due to the rare sessions, urgent laws were adopted as the Presidium's decrees with minimal discussion and then retroactively approved by the Supreme Soviet. The proceedings in the Presidium and the commissions, which also convened between the Supreme Soviet's sessions, were not transparent and challenged the constitutional sovereignty of the Supreme Soviet within the system by taking over its functions. The meetings of the Supreme Soviet itself became mere formalities.[42]

The problems of the Soviet system as a whole were to a large extent caused by the problems within the CPSU. Medvedev rebuked the lack of democracy within the party as violation of its own charter. Although he mentioned some competition and discussions of candidacies at the lowest level of party organization, already the elections to the CPSU district committees were formal and undemocratic. There were no discussions of any political matters, which had notalready been resolved by higher party authorities, while the party rank and file did not partake in decision-making, which resulted in widespread indifference. Medvedev decried the excessive role of the initially complimentary party apparatus of appointed bureaucrats, which had a tremendous influence on decision-making and the formation of elected party bodies. Due to its mere overblown size, the bureaucratic apparatus, specifically that of the CPSU Central Committee, substituted legislative and executive authorities. Draft acts were worked out by the party bureaucracy in detail, then adopted at the Central Committee's Secretariat, Politbiuro, or Plenum meetings, and only then passed down to the Council of Ministers or the Supreme Soviet for nominal approval, as any major amendment at this level would mean mistrust of the Central Committee. Some acts were worked out in the ministerial apparatus, but these also underwent detailed discussion and adoption in the Central Committee, which hence took over the functions of both the Supreme Soviet and the cabinet. Since the most influential deputies of the Supreme Soviet also occupied leadership positions in the executive branch, in the military, and in the party, there seemed no need for them to have a new discussion at the final formal stage anyway.[43]

[41]Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii*, pp. 160–63, 167, 172–3, 176–7.
[42]Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii*, pp. 157–9, 166.
[43]Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii*, pp. 126–30, 137, 166–7.

The problem of recruiting and replacing leadership and staff at all levels of the Soviet system, within the party, formal official agencies, and 'informal' organizations, was especially pressing in Medvedev's opinion and contributed to many other problems. Nepotism, personal loyalty, or ethnic background of potential candidates being the main principles of recruitment and the formality of elections to party and state bodies, coupled with random circumstances, resulted in the lack of capable politicians in the top tiers of the party and the state, the predominance of retirement age people, and the consequent lack of competence in the leadership.[44]

The critiques of Soviet 'parliamentarism' by the Union of Communards, the VSKhSON, and the DDSS were known to the broader dissident and émigré circles, thanks to the increased attention to human rights and procedural violations in the USSR, information on which was regularly published in *A Chronicle of Current Events* [*Khronika tekushchikh sobytii*] and other *samizdat* and *tamizdat* media. It was, however, the stories of the members of the three clandestine organizations, most of whom, like Ronkin, Khakhaev, Ogurtsov, and Soldatov, were imprisoned, rather than the detailed contents of the respective programs which gained wider attention.[45] The legalist mainstream of the dissident movement dismissed the clandestine nature of the organizations and their radical rhetoric. Medvedev's critique, published under his real name and initially in *tamizdat*, gained much more attention. At the same time, Sakharov, Chalidze, and other prominent Soviet (and émigré) human rights activists sharply criticized Medvedev's political position, which he formulated in the 1973 article *The Problem of Democratization and the Problem of Détente*. Medvedev claimed that the statements in defense of human rights in the USSR made by Western and Soviet figures hampered détente and consequently slowed down the improvement of the situation with human rights in the USSR.[46] Medvedev's tactical position proved marginal. The Helsinki Final Act (1975) boosted the human rights movement, with many activists self-organizing into a number of 'Helsinki' groups.[47]

Given the broader consensus that there was only façade and pseudo parliamentarism in the Soviet Union and the sharp disagreements on how the situation had to be dealt with, no detailed critiques of the Supreme Soviet followed. The 'parliament' was nevertheless briefly mentioned in several critical articles and open letters which were written in response to the official draft and the eventually adopted 1977 Constitution. These texts were published in different *samizdat* and *tamizdat* media, including a multi-issue *samizdat* collection *Around the Draft Constitution* which was then partly summarized in the abstracting *samizdat* journal *Summa*. Most of the texts focused on human rights and the role of the Communist Party, which was formalized as part of the Soviet system in the new constitution. Ernst Semenovich Orlovskii, an engineer, specifically criticized the lack of information on how the party was constructed and made decisions in the new constitution and pointed to the nomination of candidates to elected state bodies at fictitious 'meetings on nomination' rather than openly from the party (as the new constitution would in fact imply). He concluded that the real political activity in the USSR was

[44]Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii*, pp. 130–34.
[45]Denlop, *VSKhSON*; Iofe, 'Delo "Kolokola"'; Soldatov, *Zarnitsy vozrozhdeniia*.
[46]For the excerpts from Medevedev's article and the responses to him, see 'Diskussiia o sviazi problem prav cheloveka i razriadki mezhdunarodnoi napriazhennosti'', *Khronika zashchity prav v SSSR* 5–6 [1973] (1974), pp. 5–11.
[47]P. Roth, 'The Soviet Union and the New World Information Order', in R.E. Kanet (ed), *The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the Third World* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 76.

outside the constitution. Sof'ia Vasil'evna Kallistratova, a lawyer, reminded that the non-alternative elections were a mere formality, while the USSR Supreme Soviet never rejected a single initiative of the CPSU Central Committee.[48]

Gleb Olegovich Pavlovskii, then a worker, concluded that the new constitution formally deprived the Supreme Soviet of its authority by making the CPSU responsible for shaping domestic and foreign policy of the country. He pointed to the proclamation of the self-contained sovereignty of the state (as both its source and its instrument) by the new constitution, ironically calling it 'the Charter of the State's Liberties'. The premise was that there was no society outside the state. At the same time, Pavlovskii suggested that a 'third force', which existed between the state and the society, was the sovereign of the Soviet system. The metaphor of the 'third force' could be interpreted as both the process of arbitrariness and corruption, omnipresent in the Soviet system, and those involved in it (the 'organized rabble') and present in every agency. For Pavlovskii, it was this 'third force' which did not allow democratization but at the same time posed a grave danger to the Soviet system itself.[49]

Parliamentary designs

The explicitly political texts (rather than those focusing on human rights) proposed either a gradual reform or a complete overhaul of the Soviet system. Despite their ideological diversity, with Christianity, nationalism, and socialism among the most popular alternative foundations for a future society, many of the societal blueprints were etatist. Some of the projects discussed below even had totalitarian elements, such as focus on the masses rather than interest groups and the inseparability of public and private interests,[50] which may be seen as a reflection of Soviet ideology. At the same time, detailed government and parliamentary designs were rare, and they did not necessarily align with the supposed ideological orientations of their authors.

Since the second half of the 1960s, the most widespread political slogan among both the legalist and clandestine opposition was that of democratization. Citing the Marxist ideal of a socialist society, the Union of Communards called for a multiparty system (or faction-building within one party as its equivalent) as a means of countering the arbitrariness of bureaucracy and ensuring basic democratic freedoms in their *samizdat* journal *Kolokol* [*The Bell*] in 1965.[51]

Sakharov's 1968 *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*[52] and the 1970 *Letter to the Leaders of the Party and the Government* by Sakharov, Medvedev, and Valentin Fedorovich Turchin made the call for democratization mainstream in the political dissident movement. Applauding the achievements of socialism, even in its flawed Soviet version, and seeing it as a viable economic system which, at

[48]S.V. Kallistratova, 'Nekotorye zamechaniia po povodu "Proekta Konstitutsii SSSR" 1977 g. [13 June 1977]', *Zarubezh'e* 55–56, (1977), pp. 29–32; A. Vershik (ed.), *'Summa': Za svobodnuiu mysl'* (Saint Petersburg, 2002), pp. 47–51, 240. For a more detailed discussion of individual opinions, see E.A. Kazakov, '"Konstitutsiia razvitogo sotsializma" – vzgliad iz oppozitsii', *Magistra vitae* 1, (2018), pp. 46–54.

[49]G.O. Pavlovskii [P. Pryzhov], 'Tret'ia sila: simptomatika novoi Konstitutsii [1977/1978]', *Poiski* 1, [1978] (1979), pp. 11, 24, 54–5, 58–9.

[50]H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, 1979), pp. 308, 418–19, 432.

[51][Volgin], 'O mnogopartiinoi sisteme', *Kolokol* 24, (1965), pp. 4–6 (Research and Information Centre 'Memorial', Saint Petersburg).

[52]Sakharov, 'Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellektual'noi svobode'.

least partly, could survive in the future, Sakharov, Medvedev, and Turchin stressed the leading role of the CPSU and called for gradual reform. The authors relied on economic determinism, explaining that democratization was the only way to avoid an economic collapse and to revert the 'antidemocratic perversions of socialism' under Stalin. The letter called for gradual introduction of alternative elections (those featuring more than one candidate per position) and more 'rights and responsibility' for the USSR Supreme Soviet.[53] Although a multiparty system was not discussed in the letter, Sakharov, Medvedev, and Turchin clarified their positions on the matter in other texts and interviews. Sakharov initially viewed it as non-essential but soon made it one of his slogans and included in his second major programme text, the 1975 *On the Country and the World*.[54] Turchin opposed the idea of a multiparty system calling for a non-partisan one, suggesting that openness, participation of the masses in politics, and 'intolerance of the society to violation of ethical principles' would be sufficient for holding authority in check.[55]

For Medvedev, a multiparty system, which he discussed in his 1972 book, was possible but not essential, especially since the formation of alternative parties could prompt the CPSU start a new wave of repressions. According to Medvedev, a reform of the Supreme Soviet did not require a multiparty system. He nevertheless called for open political struggle, which, from his point of view, would contribute to the development of Marxist-Leninist ideology and bring up a better generation of Communist leaders, and for democracy within the CPSU, which he described not as a party but as the vanguard of the Soviet society (just like the CPSU described itself). The CPSU apparatus had to be scaled down, in order that the organization would become a centre of 'scientific' leadership of building Communism rather than a surrogate legislature and administration. For the Supreme Soviet itself, the quality of legislation, with more serious discussions of legislative initiatives, and the supervision over the executive were essential. Medvedev called for openness of discussions and specifically stressed deliberation in the process, maintaining that the 'popular masses' needed to know not only what laws were adopted but also how they were discussed and how particular suggestions were argued. Without this it would be impossible to 'bring up' the people in the spirit of political activity. The Supreme Soviet also needed to gradually become a permanently active and professional legislation, with all those elected resigning from other positions. The elections themselves had to be alternative and based on the principle of bottom-up nomination of candidates. Medvedev deemed the return to the pre-1936 election system, that is direct only at the lowest level, possible but was especially supportive of occupational representation from industry (and other establishments) in both soviets and the CPSU instead of territorial representation. He viewed representative democracy as the best guarantee of popular sovereignty in a socialist society.[56]

Efimov's 1966/1971 reformist project also foregrounded popular sovereignty but included elements of direct democracy – the referenda at both the all-union level and the level of administrative divisions. At the same time, all issues to be decided at the

[53]A.D. Sakharov, V.F. Turchin, and R.A. Medvedev, *Pis'mo rukovoditeliam partii i pravitel'stva* [19 March 1970], pp. 2–3, 5, 10–11 (AS 360, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 2).
[54]Sakharov, 'Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellektual'noi svobode', 124; A. Sakharov, 'Interv'iu korrespondentu Shvedskogo Radio i Televideniia Ulle Stenkhol'mu [2 July 1973]', in Sakharov, *Trevoga i nadezhda* (Moscow, 2006), vol. I, p. 168; A.D. Sakharov, *O strane i mire* (New York, 1975), p. 71.
[55]V. Turchin, *Inertsiia strakha: sotsializm i totalitarizm*, 2nd edn (New York, 1978), pp. 212–17.
[56]Medvedev, *Kniga o sotsialisticheskoi demokratii*, pp. 111–12, 122–4, 130–31, 141, 144–6, 159, 163–70, 173–5, 177.

referendum had to go through representative bodies – the soviets of toilers' deputies (named according to the 1936 Constitution) which were supreme government bodies (rather than simply government bodies in the 1936 Constitution) in respective administrative divisions. Arguing for political decentralization, Efimov nevertheless retained the USSR Supreme Soviet as the supreme body of state power, although its term was to be shortened from four to two years. Whereas its structure and competence, including the formation of and the supervision over the Council of Ministers, were to remain largely unchanged, Efimov's project denied the Supreme Soviet the right to delegate its functions to other bodies or waive them. Like Medvedev, Efimov argued for a permanently active Supreme Soviet, with breaks of no longer than three months a year combined. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was substituted with the Bureau, which had the right to call the Supreme Soviet for an extraordinary session. The meetings of the Supreme Soviet, its Bureau, and commissions were to be open (with the exception of discussions pertaining to state secrets), with their minutes and materials published. Most legal acts (with the few exceptions listed in the constitution) had to be approved by the President of the USSR, also universally elected for a two-year term. The President also nominated ministers and supervised the work of the cabinet. The project also included the election of the Vice President of the USSR, which made it similar to the US Constitution. Efimov's project featured a number of checks and balances between the President and the Supreme Soviet, such as the conditions for respective early elections. Just like in the Soviet and US constitutions, Efimov's project featured the Supreme Court as the supreme judicial body. Unlike the 1936 Constitution, Efimov's project made no references to socialism and began with a bill of rights, including the right to private property.[57]

As Evgenii Kazakov had pointed out, Efimov's project did not evoke any response among the dissidents.[58] The bulk of the polemics between dissident and émigré authors revolved around large-scale societal blueprints rather than specific government designs. In the case of Sakharov's 1968 text, it was his suggestion to establish a world government in the process of convergence between socialism and capitalism which attracted many critical responses making him reconsider and speak of a consultative expert council under the United Nations (UN) in 1975.[59] Chalidze, also a physicist, rebuked Sakharov's scientism in 1969 arguing that a world government would lead to human degeneration and claiming that totalitarianism was one of the consequences of the scientific revolution.[60] The same year, Solzhenitsyn pointed to the inevitable intellectual authoritarianism of such a government defending his own moral authoritarian blueprint for a post-Soviet Russian society to be based on Orthodox Christianity.[61]

The vision of religion at the centre of a post-Soviet society, however, did not preclude its supporters from offering parliamentary designs. Ogurtsov's group drafted a theocratic system based on the idea that 'social justice and freedom' could be supported only by a 'growing religious consciousness of the society'. Although the 1964 VSKhSON program

[57]B.V. Efimov, *Predlozheniia k proekty konstitutsii SSSR* [1966/July 5, 1971], pp. 17, 19–21, 30–34, 36, 37a–41 (FSO, 01-030.192).
[58]Kazakov, '"Konstitutsiia Rzvitogo Sotsializma" – vzgliad iz oppozitsii', p. 47.
[59]Sakharov, 'Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellektual'noi svobode', pp. 125–6; Sakharov, *O strane i mire*, p. 72.
[60]V.N. Chalidze, '"Razmyshleniia o progresse … ": otklik na broshiuru A.D. Sakharova [August 1969]', *Obshchestvennye problemy* 1, (1969), pp. 45–6 (AS 479-a, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 6).
[61]Solzhenitsyn, 'Na vozvrate dykhaniia i soznaniia', pp. 22–3.

declared freedom for all religions and independence ('sovereignty') of the self-funded [Christian] Church from the state, the Church played a prominent role in the state system. The program suggested separation of four powers – legislative, executive, supervisory [*bliustitel'naia*], and judicial. The Supreme Sobor [ecclesiastical congress], which embodied the 'spiritual authority' of the people and was the supreme supervisory authority, had the right to veto any decision of other bodies if they contradicted the 'principles of the social-Christian order' and elected the Head of State, although the latter was to be approved by popular vote. The 'highest Church hierarchy' made up one third of the Supreme Sobor, while the remaining members had to be the 'outstanding representatives of the people' to be elected for life. The People's Assembly, the supreme legislative body, was to be elected from rural and municipal communities, trade and industrial corporations, associations of 'liberal occupations', and political organizations (although the document said that the latter would not be called parties). The Head of State rather than the People's Assembly appointed the cabinet, but the latter was responsible before the parliament as well as the Head of State. The only mentioned aspect of the People's Assembly's practice was the necessary guarantee for a 'legal' opposition's right to expression and 'legal' criticism of the government.[62]

The 1969 DDSS program was secular and proclaimed the creation of the inclusive Union of Democratic Republics in place of the USSR as its goal. Its political system was to be based on universal elections which had to be preceded by unconstrained peaceful campaigning, with broad nomination rights for any organized group of at least 500 members. The programme included the separation of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial, with the former being represented by the Supreme Soviet of Republics.[63] Yet later program documents of the DDSS and the affiliated group which called itself Moral-Political Revival [*Nravstvenno-politicheskoe vozrozdenie*], which were published in several *samizdat* media edited by Soldatov (and which were predominantly written by him),[64] made 'free theocracy' the ultimate goal of the movement and the supposed result of societal evolution. Soldatov claimed that 'moral authority, hierarchy of love, with guaranteed freedom' was to be the essence of 'theocratic' interactions between people. Although these materials were inspired by Christianity, they envisioned a new religion of the future humanity to be based on a fusion of world religions. The programme documents did not state explicitly if there was a possibility not to follow such a religion and did not mention freedom for atheists, which made such a future structurally comparable to that envisioned by the Soviet ideology. At the same time, Soldatov mentioned in his essays that his organization could in fact be in legal opposition, should it lose elections to other parties, and would use this time to find and correct its errors.[65]

Responding to the economic determinism of Soviet ideology, many oppositional works devoted much attention to the economic structure of their societal and political blueprints. The VSKhSON program foregrounded self-governing communities and corporations, which were to be proportionally represented in the parliament through elections (without specific details). Besides, it introduced the supreme body of 'industrial administration',

[62]*Programma Vserossiiskogo sotsial-khristianskogo soiuza osvobozhdeniia naroda*, pp. 39–42.
[63]Demokraticheskoe dvizhenie Sovetskogo Soiuza, *Programma Demokraticheskogo dvizheniia Sovetskogo* Soiuza, p. 17.
[64]Soldatov, *Zarnitsy vozrozhdeniia*, pp. 202–3.
[65]S.I. Soldatov [K. Vol'nyi], 'Bor'ba za svobodu – dolg narodov Rossii', *Luch svobody* 7, (1973), pp. 40, 49–50 (AS 1175-zh, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 3).

the 'Corporate Chamber' or the 'National Council [*sovet*] of Trade-Industrial Unions',[66] which can be seen as a reflection of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (which was briefly reintroduced in 1963–1965) and the State Planning Committee.

Anatolii Emmanuilovich Krasnov-Levitin, an Orthodox priest and a writer, also suggested incorporating some religious moral norms into governance, such as, for instance, banning 'pulp-type' literature which ostensibly fuelled 'lowly passions'. His political programme was, however, predominantly social democratic and very close to the ideas of moderate socialist politicians in the late Russian Empire. He foregrounded trade unions and cooperatives (production and consumption societies) as the elements of a reformed system. All positions of leadership locally (for instance, in schools and factories) were to become elected. The state, nevertheless, was still expected to govern the country's economic life. The supreme legislative authority was to be carried out through the universally elected legislative assembly (also referred to as the Supreme Soviet) and referenda (although Krasnov could have envisioned them as consultative). The elections had to become alternative. Like Ogurtsov's group, Krasnov did not oppose political pluralism but also rejected the concept of political parties, maintaining that he believed in 'movements' which were born 'among the people'. Although Krasnov formulated his vision as a program, he still claimed that social democracy was 'inevitable' in the development of the whole humanity to be followed by an 'anarcho-syndicalist' period when 'potent associations of toilers' – 'trade-union syndicates' – would replace the state, marking the 'complete liberation of humanity from all external shackles'. The model socialist world, according to Krasnov, would then inevitably be followed by a 'mystical period', with both 'occult sciences' and Christianity on the rise, ultimately resulting in the predominance of the latter and the humanity's arrival to 'eternal happiness'.[67]

Vadim Vladimirovich Belotserkovskii, a chemist, also foregrounded the idea of economic self-organization in his 1985 political program, inspired by the Polish Solidarność movement. The system, which he called 'self-government' [*samoupravlenie*], would be based on group property and self-governing collectives, with political democracy, including referenda, at all levels. The supreme 'supervisory-legislative' body, the Soviet of Representatives of Self-Governing Collectives, was to be elected on occupational principle (and territorial in rural areas) and was not a 'professional' parliament with its one-term limit on representatives, so that the representatives did not lose the interests of those whom they represented. Among further measures of decentralization, Belotserkovskii, evoking Rudolf Steiner's idea of a threefold social order, suggested to separate political, economic, and cultural-scientific spheres, so that each of them would have its own legislative and executive authority. Belotserkovskii expected the legislative branch (or branches) to be 'inevitably' non-partisan. The representatives could be able to be members of any parties but would be constrained by the interests of their self-governing collectives. At the same time, the executive branch had to be formed of 'professional' politicians, capable of representing state interests, and Belotserkovskii considered electing its members from among nominees of political parties. Eventually, however, he expected political parties to go extinct in a society of self-governing collectives.[68]

[66]*Programma Vserossiiskogo sotsial-khristianskogo soiuza osvobozhdeniia naroda*, pp. 31, 36, 41.
[67]A.E. Krasnov-Levitin, *Zeml'ia dybom* [1974], pp. 29–30, 35, 51, 71, 73–5, 82 (AS 1876, HU OSA, 300-85-9, Box 48).
[68]V. Belotserkovskii, *Samoupravleniie* (Munich, 1985), pp. 43, 58–63.

For some non-Russian dissidents, national independence was the main feature of a post-Soviet future, which was often framed in democratic terms.[69] Interestingly, Supreme Soviets were nevertheless part of some nationalist projects. In his letter to the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, Lisovyi urged all deputies in Ukraine to turn the existing soviets into true bodies of people's (national) self-government.[70] The Armenian clandestine National United Party, which aspired to gradually achieve Armenia's independence, to start with a referendum and then become institutionalized through a constituent assembly and a 'modern' constitution, considered the republican Supreme Soviet an alternative way of achieving its goal. Should the party not succeed at the referendum, it was to participate in the elections to the republican Supreme Soviet and prepare future independence within it and with its help. The Armenian Supreme Soviet was expected, for instance, to help establishing diplomatic relations with other states and the UN.[71] Although it is questionable how earnest the authors were in their appeals in each individual case, the inclusion of the republican Supreme Soviets may have relied on the hope of nationalist affinity between republican Communists and dissidents. Indeed, as Jeremy Smith had shown, in Latvia and Azerbaijan deputies did go against the party line when defending national languages in the 1950s.[72] Most social democratic and liberal dissidents did not reject the implementation of the union republics' right to leave the Soviet Union (or the polity to replace it).[73]

As for the Russian nationalist dissidents, they generally opposed 'Western democracy' and parliamentarism, very much like Solzhenitsyn did in his earlier political writings.[74] As Nikolai Mitrokhin had demonstrated, the societal blueprints of Russian nationalists included the options of an Orthodox Christian autocracy and of national Communism, based on a fusion of Orthodox Christianity and Leninism. Many authors expressed openly chauvinist and racist views.[75] At the same time, some Russian nationalist dissidents did not oppose polemics as such. Vladimir Nikolaevich Osipov, then a firefighter, urged for a polite discussion between different groups of the democratic opposition in 1974, claiming that aggressive polemics predisposed terror.[76] He did publish a critical letter by Krasnov in his rightist *samizdat* journal *Veche* [*Assembly*] a year before, although he did not support Krasnov's initiative to take the journal's name, appealing to the bodies of collegial decision-making historically prominent in Novgorod and Pskov, more seriously and turn it into a forum for a broader popular discussion.[77]

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[69]As Dina Zisserman-Brodsky had argued, *samizdat* itself 'became a social institution for the formation of ethnic politics', see D. Zisserman-Brodsky, *Constructing Ethnopolitics in the Soviet Union: Samizdat, Deprivation and the Rise of Ethnic Nationalism* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 185–6.

[70]Lisovyi, *Otkrytoe pis'mo deputatam sovetov USSR*, p. 2.

[71]*Organizatsiia nezavisimosti Armenii 'Natsional'no-ob"edinennaia partiia'* [1976], pp. 5, 8 (AS 3119, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 12).

[72]J. Smith, 'Leadership and Nationalism in the Soviet Republics, 1951–1959', in Smith and Ilic (eds), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin*, pp. 84–5.

[73]Some were, however, hoping that the republics would stay in a reformed union, see, for instance, Krasnov-Levitin, *Zeml'ia dybom*, p. 77.

[74]Solzhenitsyn, 'Na vozvrate dykhaniia i soznaniia.'

[75]N. Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia: dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR, 1953–1985* (Moscow, 2003), pp. 504, 511–12, 516–26; Zisserman-Brodsky, *Constructing Ethnopolitics in the Soviet Union*, pp. 45–6.

[76]V. Osipov, *K voprosu o tseli i metodakh legal'noi oppozitsii*, [May 1974], pp. 1–2 (AS 1760, HU OSA, 300-85-9, Box 45).

[77]A.E. Krasnov-Levitin, 'Pis'mo redaktoru zhurnala "Veche" V. N. Osipovu [September 7, 1973]', *Veche* 9, 1973, p. 190 (AS 2040, HU OSA, 300-85-11, Box 8).

In 1987, the Perestroika seemed to start along the reformist path, very much in line with Medvedev's ideas, yet very soon the whole state collapsed. Some of the dissidents, like Medvedev and Sakharov, became members of the reformed parliamentary bodies – the newly established USSR Congress of People's Deputies and the reconfigured Supreme Soviet, while it were indeed the republican Supreme Soviets which started to adopt declarations of sovereignty. It was in a deputy's capacity when Sakharov submitted his draft constitution of the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia, a 'voluntary union of sovereign republics', to Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev in 1989. Sakharov's project included the separation of powers, with the Congress of People's Deputies of the Union remaining the sole legislature. The parliament, although the project did not use this word, was to consist of two chambers – the Chamber of Republics, elected on a territorial basis, and the Chamber of Nationalities, elected from nationalities – and did not hence differ much from the pre-reform Supreme Soviet. Both chambers were to be elected in general elections for five years. The project also featured the President as the head of the Union's Central Government, also universally elected for five years, and the 'Deputy' President (vice president). Referenda were reserved for the departure and arrival of republics and for possible removal of the President from office (to be preceded by a vote in the Congress of People's Deputies).[78] Neither Sakharov's project nor his suggestion to make the existing Congress of People's Deputies the sole legislative authority of the country were considered by the congress in the process, which Neil Robinson called the 'failure of socialist pluralism'.[79]

It was in 1990, during the later stage of the Perestroika which already featured a 'sovereign' Russian Federation, when Solzhenitsyn, then still living abroad, made his suggestions about the constitution of the Russian state. Although he cited pre-revolutionary Russian thinkers and foreign experience (including that of the USA) in his pamphlet *Rebuilding Russia*, his project bore many similarities to those of the other dissidents. Solzhenitsyn still did not accept 'Western democracy' and parliamentarism for Russia. Instead he proposed a four-level system of *zemstvo* (local or rural) self-government, with direct elections only at the lowest level. Such a system, which was never fully implemented in Russia, was structurally similar to the pre-1936 soviet system discussed by Medvedev, with the All-Zemstvo Assembly being reminiscent of the All-Russian and All-Union Congresses of Soviets. Furthermore, Solzhenitsyn openly claimed that the existing chambers of the Supreme Soviet were 'not bad at all' and could be incorporated into the bicameral All-Zemstvo Assembly. Apart from legislation, the All-Zemstvo Assembly would have the right to nominate presidential candidates for a popular vote, like the VSKhSON's Supreme Sobor. The President appointed ministers, but the cabinet was responsible both to him and the All-Zemstvo Assembly. Referenda were also part of the proposed system, like in the social democratic projects. Furthermore, Solzhenitsyn considered the possibility of a consultative State or Sobor Duma (appealing to the Russian imperial parliament) in a 'distant state future'. Such a Duma was to be convened from social strata and occupational groups, which Solzhenitsyn called estates. Solzhenitsyn's appeal to

[78]A.D. Sakharov, 'Proekt Konstitutsii Soiuza Sovetskikh Respublik Evropy i Azii [Submitted to M.S. Gorbachev on 27 November 1989]', in A.D. Sakharov (ed), *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1996), vol. II, pp. 591, 601–4.

[79]N. Robinson, 'Parliamentary Politics under Gorbachev: Opposition and the Failure of Socialist Pluralism', *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 9, (1993), pp. 91–108.

'democracy of small spaces' and the occupational Duma made his structure similar to those of Belotserkovskii and Medvedev.[80]

Conclusion

Although the fact that the USSR Supreme Soviet was both a façade parliament and a pseudo parliament was widely accepted by the dissidents, its mere existence pushed the political debate, and many of the concrete parliamentary designs started with the criticism of the Soviet 'parliament'. Despite the widespread discourses of democratization and human rights, all of the alternative projects were part of larger societal blueprints, among which only those pertaining to national independence of non-Russian republics seemed to rely on deliberation of the future economic and political structures, let alone their moral and religious aspects. Furthermore, even those projects which rejected etatism seemed to remain in its realm, with the projected states being responsible for the economy and sometimes also for religion, thereby reaching to private spheres and remaining primary to the projected societies. The overreliance on expertise, be it moral or intellectual, can be seen as a reflection of the official Soviet ethics. Some of the projects also had pronounced goals of supposed social and political development of the Soviet Union (Russia) or even the whole world. In this respect, these projects may be seen as attempts to reframe both the etatism and the messianic character of the Soviet regime (or simply make it work in the case of the Marxists). Many of the projects featured a potent presidency.

Despite their diversity, parliamentary designs were few and barely discussed in detail among the dissidents let alone the broader Perestroika elite, predominantly consisting of active or former members of the CPSU. The societal blueprints, on the other hand, were very much part of the attempts to modify or replace the dogma of the Soviet regime. Ultimately, parliamentarism never left its marginal status in the highly personalized politics of post-Soviet Russia. Boris Nikolaevich El'tsin and not the Supreme Soviet, which apart from Communist hardliners and rightists included social democrats, came to represent democracy (understood through market reforms) for many domestic and international observers during the constitutional crisis and the bombardment of the Supreme Soviet building in 1993. While some of the principles and institutions, which were discussed by the dissidents, can be seen in the 1993 Russian Constitution, the latter document established a presidential rather than parliamentary regime, while the political practice shifted the parliament even further to the background.[81]

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[80]A.I. Solzhenitsyn, *Kak nam obustroit' Rossiiu? Posil'nye soobrazheniia* (Paris, 1990), pp. 37–45.
[81]See, for instance, T.F. Remington, *The Russian Parliament: Institutional Evolution in a Transitional Regime, 1989–1999* (New Haven, 2001); T.A. Troxel, *Parliamentary Power in Russia, 1994–2001: President vs Parliament* (New York, 2002).

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