FTD-HT-23-229-70

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WILL RUSSIA CONTINUE TO EXIST? A DISCUSSION OF THE WORK OF ANDREY AMALRIK

by

Ye. Rachinskaya and M. Koryakov

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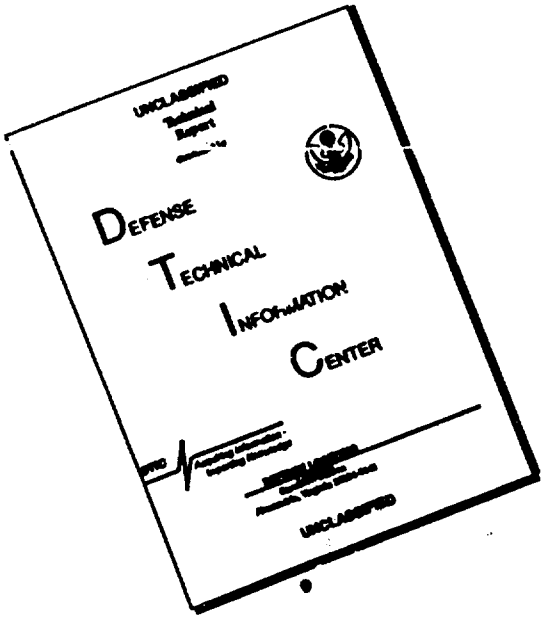

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EDITED TRANSLATION

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ANDREY AMALRIK

By: Ye. Rachinskaya and M. Koryakov

English pages: 12

Source: Novoye Russkoye Slovo (New Russian Word), 25 and 29 January 1970, pages unknown.

Translated by: R. Zeccola (Contract No. F33657-70-C-0020)

UR/0000-70-000-000

PREPARED BY:

TRANSLATION DIVISION
FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
WP-AFB, OHIO.

TWO ARTICLES

from

NOVOYE RUSSKOYE SLOVO[1]

entitled

WILL RUSSIA CONTINUE TO EXIST? A DISCUSSION OF THE WORK OF ANDREY AMALRIK[2]

Ye. Rachinskaya
(*Novoye Russkoye Slovo, 25 January 1970*)

and

Nikhail Koryakov
(*Novoye Russkoye Slovo, 29 January 1970*)

FIRST ARTICLE

(*25 January 1970*)

There has recently appeared on the book market an article by a Soviet journalist and historian, A. Amalrik, whose name was briefly mentioned in the emigré press in connection with the A. Kuznetsov "affair." The article is mainly interesting for its depiction of the status of Soviet society, as it appears to a, so to speak, "on-the-spot" intelligent observer. Nevertheless, the author's assessments and conclusions must be approached with caution, for Amalrik is clearly not a lover of Russia, not a "patriot of his country," as are some of the outstanding spokesmen of the Soviet Intelligentsia whose voices reach us from time to time "from the other side." Suffice it to say that at the out-

[1] Translator's Note: Novoye Russkoye Slovo ["New Russian Word"] is an emigré – published Russian-language newspaper (the oldest in the US) printed in New York. The paper pursues a rigorously anti-Communist position.

[2] Translator's Note: The two articles translated deal with Amalrik's book "Will the Soviet Union Endure to 1984."

set of his article Amalrik notes, with evident relish, that his will be the pleasure, as a historian, of witnessing the demise of the Russian state. True, over the course of history he finds nothing that is good in that state: what we have grown accustomed to thinking of as Great Russia was, in Amalrik's view, a country which for centuries "became bloated and spread like some acidic dough" and perceived no other purposes, a country which has never honored any agreements and never wished to have anything to do with anyone. His view of Russia is that of a malevolent foreigner, and this raises a question as to the accuracy of his conclusions and assessments, because without a sense of spiritual closeness to one's own people one cannot understand and sense the full range of the tragedy that people is experiencing, or intuitively comprehend the subsurface processes occurring among the masses of the people – processes which are hidden from the view of an external and indifferent observer.

I shall not dwell on Amalrik's thoughts regarding purely political considerations. It is enough to note that he predicts a war between China and the USSR within the next ten to fifteen years, a war which will assume the nature of a protracted guerrilla conflict along the enormous border between the two countries, and which will force the USSR to redeploy its main forces to the Far East, resulting in the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the eastern empire of the Soviet Union, and the growth of nationalist movements in the separate republics constituting the USSR, with the latter's ensuing disintegration. If by that time the regime has not completely outlived itself, popular discontent will blaze forth and take on such forms compared to which the horrors of the Russian revolutions of 1905-1907 and 1917-1920 will seem like idyllic street scenes. All this has already been widely commented on by western journalists, sociologists, and historians who are both more knowledgeable and more competent.

More interesting is what Amalrik has to say about attitudes in Soviet Russia itself. Here again, he paints an extremely gloomy picture. After what he calls the "summit revolution" of 1952-1957, the Stalin-created monolith cracked and an opportunity arose for the origination of a certain public movement which might be called a "cultural opposition." This opposition was directed not against

the regime as such, but against its culture, which, however, was an indissoluble appurtenance of the regime. It was during this period that Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago" appeared, that poets held public declamations of verse on Mayakovskiy Square, that exhibitions of independent artists (Zverev, Rabin) were arranged, that the songs of Galich, Okudzhava, Vysotskiy gained vast popularity on millions of phonograph records. The government fought against all this, but could not secure a complete victory. Some seeds of "free-thinking" had already been sewn, and from the depths of the cultural revolution there emerged a force which now took its stand against ideology and certain aspects of the regime itself. A movement began, known by the name of "Samizdat" [literally: "Self-Publish"], and, what is more interesting, there began to circulate through the country not only those frequently anonymous locally written compositions which were unable to make the pages of the official press, but the compositions of Soviet writers (Sinyavskiy, Daniel) first published abroad, and even the works of foreign authors (Orwell, Djilas) along with articles from foreign newspapers and magazines.

"Samizdat" paved the way for what Amalrik calls the "Democratic Movement", which he conceives of as already the embryonic stage of a "political opposition." This movement encompasses representatives of three different ideologies: 1) so-called "authentic" marxism-leninism, from which the country's leadership has presumably deviated, 2) Christian ideology (a return to moral precepts, with a touch of Slavophilism), and 3) a "liberal ideology" (the transition to a democratic society). All these ideologies, according to Amalrik, are rather vague in nature and unclearly interdifferentiated, although common to all of them is evidently a demand for a system of legality founded on respect for the principal human rights. Still, this trend has apparently not been exacerbated by any real desire for struggle or a policy of action.

The basis of this oppositionally-oriented group is the intelligentsia. Amalrik uses this word in the broad sense, understanding by it those people who are capable of intellectual labor. He writes that the various collective and individual letters of protest were signed by a total of 738 persons, including: scientists – 45 percent,

practitioners of the arts – 22 percent, engineers and technical people – 13 percent, physicians and jurists – 9 percent, workers – 6 percent, and students – 5 percent. The ranks of the Democratic Movement, he goes on to say, contain only a few "activists," the rest are "sympathizers."

But what of the repercussion the activities of these people might be having among the broad masses of the population? Amalrik tells us nothing about this, although judging by the eagerness with which the public buys up "underground" literature, the population of the corrective-labor camps, the intensification of internal pressure in the USSR, and the harshness of the punishments which the government imposes on overt "rebels," the upper echelons of power are alarmed by the attitudes and the prevailing moral climate in the country. Of course, in Amalrik's view, this (to use his term) "middle class" is a force not to be relied on by any genuine democratic movement. Its basis is comprised of academic circles who, by the very nature of their work, are virtually incapable of an active stance. But what is most regrettable, all the most gifted and action-centered people have for decades been consistently removed from societal life, leaving an inprint of gray mediocrity on the whole of Soviet society. Secondly, in Amalrik's opinion, the regime has evidently succeeded in breaking "the society's spirit" – as a result of continuous repression – so that deeply engrained in that society is a consciousness of its own impotence. Finally – and this is most important – everyone in the USSR works for the State and this creates among the people a civil-servant mentality, which is to say the psychology of obedient executors of higher directives.

And still, despite Amalrik's evident desire to paint the most lugubrious possible portrait of the Soviet society and state, certain vital forces are unquestionably being reborn in the country. A kind of fresh, new wind is blowing, fanned by a younger generation unwilling to restrict its thinking to the categories of official cliches or to close its eyes to the realities about it. At the same time, Amalrik asserts, the regime itself is falling into decrepitude. The ruling elite, from whose ranks, as from Soviet society at large, the most gifted, brilliant, and innovative ele-

meats have been consistently eliminated, is caught in a process of degeneration. The author sees the regime, long since deprived of any ideological basis, engaged merely in a struggle for self-preservation; it "no longer attacks, it only defends." I question whether this is so. One needs only point to the extremely aggressive international posture of the Soviet Union and the undeniable tightening of "pressure" within the country itself.

"Thus," Amalrik writes, "a passive middle class is opposed by a passive bureaucratic elite. Of course, however passive the latter may be, there is actually nothing for it to change, and, in theory, it could endure for a very long time, at the cost of the most unconsequential concessions and the most inconsequential repressions."

Still, looking back over the last ten or fifteen years, Amalrik believes that there is in fact some evolution under way in different areas of life and that a reversal of this course will be difficult. This has nothing to do, however, with any deliberately implemented authentic "liberalization" or any definitive plan. Such a plan does not exist, and what so many are inclined to regard as "liberalization" is nothing more than the spectre of the regime's advancing decrepitude.

But what of the people, the popular masses? What does Amalrik think of them? One has the impression that the intellectual elite, closed off in their relative prosperity, the writers, most of whom have become public officials – that all these people are concerned only with their own purely professional interests and, after the severe privations they have endured, with the purely day-to-day arrangements of life, that a special mood of "just let them leave us alone," of "gradually everything will work out" has taken hold of society. Little thought, evidently, is given to the people, and it appears that the gulf between the intelligentsia and the people in the USSR is incomparably wider than it ever was before the Revolution, when the best representatives of Russia society had a legitimate concern for the people and, although idealizing it, endeavored to elevate its soul, its aspirations, and its hopes. Amalrik's estimate of the people of his country is a severe and

pitiless one. The Soviet people, in his opinion, are strangers to the concept of liberty; they perceive this concept as a synonym of anarchy. They lack any respect for personality as such. They accept only "strong authority" and their understanding of justice, on closer examination, can be summarized by the dictum" let no one else be better off than I am." Democratic ideas are alien and incomprehensible to them. Christian morality with its concepts of good and evil has been expunged from the consciousness of the people, while class morality, with its roots in hatred and divisiveness, which the new rulers of Russia have attempted to implant, has totally demoralized the society. Amalrik fails to find in the Russian people a single saving grace; it is as though decades or our culture have vanished without a trace, have been irrevocably obliterated; as though our country has been hopelessly submerged in a quagmire of materialism; as though the "living soul" has departed, abandoning our motherland.

If this is so, if Amalrik the Russophobe is correct, then it is a terrible truth. But it is not so and he is not correct. Life, vital and continually renascent, is already sending forth new shoots. A spirtual process of healing, of renewal is torturously taking form and, despite Amalrik's prediction at the end of his article that on the spot where once stood Great Russia goats will graze, as they grazed in the sixth century on the forum of seemingly immortal Rome - this will not be.

SECOND ARTICLE

(29 January 1970)

"A horrifying book," "a terrible book" – these are some of the phrases used by our talented publicist Sergey Rafalskiy to describe Andrey Amalrik's book, written in Moscow during the spring of 1969 and recently published in Amsterdam. Another emigré writer, K. Pomerantsev, in an article for the Parisian Russian-language publication "Russkaya Mysl'," says that this book "was written by a man who knows no love for Russia and is utterly alien to it."

To all this it should be added that the KGB (*Translator's Note: KGB – Committee of State Security*), which searched Amalrik's residence in May of 1969, failed for some reason to confiscate the manuscript of his book. It would thus appear that the Soviet secret police abetted the publication of this "horrifying book" in Amsterdam by the Gertsen Foundation Publishing House. For these and, perhaps, other reasons some see in Amalrik an agent of the KGB... in fact, that is precisely the term used to describe him by Argus (*Translator's Note: A satyrist writing for the Novoye Russkoye Slovo*) in one of his recent articles.

Any book, in my view, constitutes an objective fact which can be viewed and evaluated as such. It may very well be that Amalrik is indeed a "KGB agent," although Anatol Shub is hardly likely to agree with this appraisal of the man. But, who can tell? For even Anatol Shub, although he was personally acquainted with Amalrik and obviously knows what other foreigners living in Moscow

think of him... even Anatol Shub may be wrong. Anyway, here is the book – direct from Amsterdam. We greet it (as in fact we cannot help but greet it!) with the same question posed a few days ago (24 January) on the pages of this newspaper by Professor N. I. Ulyanov: "What guarantee is there that in the literature reaching us 'from the other side' there is not hidden some secret Machiavellian message?" Unfortunately, however, this question raises yet another question: Are Russian emigré circles really so illiterate that they are unable to recognize this "secret message"? Why, for example, did Prof. Ulyanov himself – an extremely erudite man and unquestionably one of the most intelligent of the Russian emigrés – not explain in his article just how the "samizdat (*Translator's Note: This term was explained in the previous article*), Grigorenko, and even Solzhenytsin" can possibly be of service to the KGB? One might hope that, if not Argus, then at least Prof. Ulyanov will read Amalrik's book, analyze it carefully, and demonstrate how and in what manner it might serve the interests of the Soviet intelligence community.

The book is entitled "Will the Soviet Union Endure To 1984?" [Russian title: "Prosushchestvuyet li Sovetskiy Soyuz do 1984 goda?"]. The question will, of course, appear absurd to a majority of Russians. But it is far from absurd to the author, who predicts that "war between the USSR and China will break out some time between 1975 and 1980." "As soon as it becomes clear that the Sino-Soviet conflict is assuming a protracted character, that the USSR is redeploying all its forces eastward, and that it can no longer maintain its interests in Europe, the reunification of Germany will occur." "The reunification of Germany will coincide with the process of the desovietization of the Eastern European countries and will significantly accelerate this process." "However, the events of greatest importance to the future of the USSR will occur within the country... There will be an extreme intensification of the nationalistic tendencies of the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union, primarily in the Baltic, the Caucasus, the Ukraine, and later in Central Asia and along the Volga. In certain instances, the propagators of these tendencies may be national Party officials, reasoning along the following lines: 'Let the Russians take care of their own problems.' They will also press for separate national status for the added reason that, by avoiding the

imminent general chaos, there is hope of retaining their privileged position." "I have no doubt," asserts Andrey Amalrik, the son of a historian and himself a historian by profession, "that this great Eastern Slavic Empire, created by Germans, Byzantines, and Mongols, has entered the last decades of its existence."

An "agent of the KBG"? A "man who knows no love for Russia and is utterly alien to it"? Love is always complex and contradictory. K. Pomerantsev recalls, in connection with Amalrik's book, the famous lines by the poet Pechorin, a contemporary of Gertsen:

"Kak sladostno otchiznu nenavidet'
i zhadno zhdat' yeye unichtozheniya!"[1]

We know, however, that K. Pomerantsev is well read in Berdyayev (*Translator's Note: A noted Russian philosopher*) and could have told us that Berdyayev, quoting these lines by Pechorin in "Russkaya Ideya", added: "This could only have been written by a Russian, and, at that, by one who had a passionate love for his motherland." To fail to understand this is to have a poor understanding of love, particularly passionate love.

At this point I must confess to having played a small joke on the reader a few lines above. Go back for a moment to the lines: "The book is entitled 'Will The Soviet Union Endure To 1984?' The question will, of course, appear absurd to a majority of Russians." The joke is that this last phrase – on the absurdity of the question – is not mine, but G. P. Fedotov's. Prof. Fedotov wrote an article bearing practically the same title as Amalrik's book. It was written in 1929 and published in the Parisian "Vestnik R. S. Kh. D.", and can be found in the recent posthumous collection "Litso Rossii." Immediately following the title "Will Russia Continue to Exist?", Fedotov wrote:

"This question will, of course, appear absurd to a majority of

[1] "How sweet it is to hate one's country and passionately await its destruction."

Russians. Over a period of eleven years now we have become accustomed to asking ourselves the same question: Will the Bolsheviks soon fall? That a national renaissance of Russia would begin following the overthrow of Bolshevism – of this there was not the shadow of a doubt."

For G. P. Fedotov, who was in fact an outstanding historian, the question was by no means absurd. "Under the guise of international Communism," Fedotov wrote in 1929, "and within the ranks of the Communist Party itself there are being formed those nationalistic elements whose aim it is to tear asunder the historic body of Russia. The Kazan Tatars, of course, have nowhere to go; they can at best dream of Kazan as the capital of Eurasia. But the Ukraine, Georgia (as represented by their intelligentsia) are restless with a desire for independence. Azerbaydzhan and Kazakhstan feel a natural attraction for the Asiatic centers of Islam. Japan is moving in the Far East, and China will soon follow suit. And, to boot, we realize with a shudder that the Siberians – full-blooded Great Russian Siberians – also have accounts to settle with Russia."

It is true, of course, that Prof. Fedotov's article does contain the hope that Russia will somewhat exist, while no such happy thought is to be found in Amalrik's book. But this can be explained, first of all, by Fedotov's maturity and Amalrik's immaturity (the latter, after all, is only 32 years old – he was born in 1938), and, in the second place, by the fact that in 1929 the threat of China loomed not so large as in 1969.

The question "Will Russia Continue to Exist" so tortured Fedotov that in 1947 he printed in "Novyy Zhurnal" (No. 16) another article on the same subject – "The Fate of Empires." The following lines occur toward the end of that article:

"Finis Russia? The end of Russia or a new page in its history? The second, naturally. Russia will not die as long as the Russian people lives, as long as that people lives on its land and speaks its language. Great Russia, with the addition of Belorussia [White Russia] (in all likelihood) and Siberia (for a long time to come) still constitutes an enormous body with an enormous population, is

still the largest of the European peoples."

This, then, is how Fedotov pictured the new page of Russian history.

Regarding Siberia, even in 1947 there was still room for optimism. But in 1965 (7 July) The New York Times carried a report from Paris under the caption "De Gaulle Looks Eastward." The author of the piece, S. L. Sulzberger, had had a conversation with the then president of France and the latter had told him that "the Transural territories of the Soviet Union will inevitably become Chinese," that China was "ultimately destined to amputate Asiatic Russia, in this way pushing Slavic Russia westward, toward Europe."

G. P. Fedotov... Charles de Gaulle... One more name belongs on the list – that of Walter Lippman. In the summer of 1969, in the Sunday supplement to The New York Times, a conversation with Lippman was printed in which he said:

"It is quite possible that the Soviet Union will be able to unleash a preventive strike against the nuclear facilities in China. But this will not be total war. Neither China nor the Soviet Union can seriously consider an invasion of the another's territory. This will be a border war, and I do not believe that they will have peace on their border.... If you accept, as I do, that our age (and I am not referring to the next six months) is an age of the declining influence of the very great powers, then the decay of the Soviet Empire in Asia and, possibly, the decay of the Chinese Empire seems predictable."

"When you speak of the decay of the Soviet Empire in Asia and the decay of the Chinese Empire," Lippman was asked by the interviewing journalist (the Washington correspondent of the London Times, Henry Brandon), "do you mean that certain republics of the Soviet Union will become independent?"

Lippman replied to this question as follows:

"They will fall away along the peripheries of these states, along that almost 8000-kilometer border, where essentially you have

regions which are neither Russian nor Chinese." (*Translator's Note: Conversation translated from the author's Russian translation.*

As we have seen, in large measure Andrey Amalrik repeats G. P. Fedotov: not only in the title of the book but also, for example, in his reasoning regarding "national Party officials." Amalrik also follows de Gaulle. If the former French president says that China, having amputated Asiatic Russia, will in this way "push Slavic Russia westward, toward Europe," Amalrik voices the view that "the Ukraine, the Baltic Republics, and European Russia will enter an All-European Federation as independent entities." Finally, when Amalrik writes that the war with China "will be waged over sparsely populated or non-Russian-populated territories, thus creating extensive opportunities for guerrilla infiltration and, conversely, logistical difficulties for large, technically equipped armies," he echoes Walter Lippman.

Thus, G. P. Fedotov, de Gaulle, and Walter Lippman are quite at home with the "KGB agent" or, what is more likely the latter has forced his way into the home of the former. If there is some "secret Mephistophelian message" hidden in Amalrik's book, then, quite obviously, it must also be contained in Fedotov's article "Will Russia Continue to Exist," in de Gaulle's conversation with L. Sulzberger, and in Walter Lippman's talk with Henry Brandom... Quite a recruitment job by the Mephisto of the Kremlin!

And then there is one other small question. What about Konstantin Leontyev? After all, Leontyev died in 1891, when there was no KGB. Amalrik, the author of this "horrifying," "terrible" book, isn't so original after all: long before him, Leontyev gloomily predicted that the Slavs "will burst like a soap bubble and dissolve, a little later than the others, into that same hated all-European bourgeoisie, finally to be trampled underfoot (for that is the direction!) by the Chinese onslaught."

UNCLASSIFIED
Security Classification

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

(Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified)

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY (Corporate author)
Foreign Technology Division
Air Force Systems Command
U. S. Air Force

2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION
UNCLASSIFIED

2b. GROUP

3. REPORT TITLE
WILL RUSSIA CONTINUE TO EXIST? A DISCUSSION OF THE WORK OF ANDREY AMALRIK

4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (Type of report and inclusive dates)
Translation

5. AUTHOR(S) (First name, middle initial, last name)
Rachinskaya, Ye. and Koryakov, M.

6. REPORT DATE
25 January 1970

7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES
12

7b. NO. OF REFS

8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO.
F33657-70-C-0020

b. PROJECT NO. 72201-57

c.

d.

9a. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
FTD-HT-23-229-70

9b. OTHER REPORT NO(S) (Any other numbers that may be assigned this report)

10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT
Distribution of this document is unlimited. It may be released to the Clearinghouse, Department of Commerce, for sale to the general public.

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY
Foreign Technology Division
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

13. ABSTRACT

There has recently appeared on the book market an article by a Soviet journalist and historian, A. Amalrik, whose name was briefly mentioned in the emigré press in connection with the A. Kuznetsov "affair." The article is mainly interesting for its depiction of the status of Soviet society, as it appears to a, so to speak, "on-the-spot" intelligent observer. Nevertheless, the author's assessments and conclusions must be approached with caution, for Amalrik is clearly not a lover of Russia, not a "patriot of his country," as are some of the outstanding spokesmen of the Soviet Intelligentsia whose voices reach us from time to time "from the other side." Suffice it to say that at the outset of his article Amalrik notes, with evident relish, that his will be the pleasure, as a historian, of witnessing the demise of the Russian state. True, over the course of history he finds nothing that is good in that state: what we have grown accustomed to thinking of as Great Russia was, in Amalrik's view, a country which for centuries "become bloated and spread like some acidic dough" and perceived no other purposes, a country which has never honored any agreements and never wished to have anything to do with anyone. His view of Russia is that of a malevolent foreigner, and this raises a question as to the accuracy of his conclusions and assessments.

DD FORM 1 NOV 65 1473

UNCLASSIFIED
Security Classification

14 KEY WORDS	LINK A		LINK B		LINK C	
	ROLE	WT	ROLE	WT	ROLE	WT
Propaganda Predictions Soviet Society Status						