

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

LETTER TO
THE SOVIET
LEADERS

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Translated from the Russian by Hilary Sternberg

INDEX ON CENSORSHIP

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Editor's Note

On September 5, 1973, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote a letter to the present leaders of the Soviet Union. It is not an "open" letter in the usual sense of that term, since it was not distributed to the writer's friends, nor made available to the press, and its existence at that time was kept a close secret. Instead, it was dispatched to leading figures in the Soviet government in the hope of evoking some sort of response from them.

For three months no response was forthcoming and the author received no sign that his letter had been either received or read by them. Then, at the very end of 1973, came the publication in Paris in Russian of *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn's massive exposure of the Soviet criminal-justice and labor-camp system over the last fifty years, and the ensuing dramatic confrontation which, in February, 1974, led to the author's enforced deportation to the West. Now, in the light of this new situation, Solzhenitsyn has decided to make this slightly modified version of his letter public.

It is well known that for the past eight years Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has been unable to publish a word in the Soviet Union and during part of this period was obliged

of thousands of Soviet citizens in Austria and Italy who were determined not to return home but who were betrayed by the Western Allies through a combination of deceit and force. No less an achievement than Stalin's have been the successes of Soviet diplomacy in recent years: for the Western world, as a single, clearly united force, no longer counterbalances the Soviet Union, indeed has almost ceased to exist. In finding the unity, steadfastness and courage to face the Second World War, and then the reserves of strength to pull itself out of postwar ruin, Europe appears to have exhausted itself for a long time to come. For no external reasons, the victorious powers have grown weak and effete.

At the peak of such staggering successes, the last thing a person wants to hear is other people's opinions and doubts. This, of course, is the worst possible time I could have chosen to approach you with advice or exhortations. For when outward successes come thick and fast, it is the hardest thing in the world to desist from piling up more, to place limitations on oneself and to change one's whole outlook.

But this is where the wise differ from the unwise: they heed advice and counsels of caution long before the need becomes overwhelming.

Furthermore, there is much about these successes that gives little cause for self-congratulation. The catastrophic weakening of the Western world and the whole of Western civilization is by no means due solely to the success of

an irresistible, persistent Soviet foreign policy. It is, rather, the result of a historical, psychological and moral crisis affecting the entire culture and world outlook which were conceived at the time of the Renaissance and attained the peak of their expression with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. An analysis of that crisis is beyond the scope of this letter.

And something else one notices—and cannot fail to notice—about our successes is two astonishing failures: at the same time that we achieved all these successes we ourselves bred two ferocious enemies, one for the last war and the other for the next war—the German Wehrmacht and Mao Tse-tung's China. Circumventing the Treaty of Versailles, we helped the German Wehrmacht train their first officers on Soviet training grounds, where they received their first experience of the theory of modern warfare, tank thrusts and airborne landings, all of which later proved very useful to them when Hitler accelerated his military preparations. And the story of how we bred Mao Tse-tung in place of a peaceable neighbor such as Chiang Kai-shek, and helped him in the atomic race, is recent history and very well known. (Are we not heading for a similar failure with the Arabs also?)

And here we come to the crux of the matter we are discussing: These failures stemmed not from mistakes committed by our diplomats, nor from the miscalculations of our generals, but from an *exact adherence to the precepts of Marxism-Leninism*—i.e., in the first instance, to

fought. Like the Vietnam War at the very least (to which it will be similar in many ways), it will certainly last a minimum of ten to fifteen years—and, incidentally, will run almost exactly along the lines forecast by Amalrik, who was sent to his destruction for what he wrote instead of being invited to join the inner circle of our advisers. If Russia lost up to one and a half million people in the First World War and (according to Khrushchev's figures) twenty million in the Second, then war with China is bound to cost us sixty million souls at the very least, and, as always in wars, they will be the best souls—all our finest and purest people are bound to perish. As for the Russian people, our very last root will be extirpated. And this will be the climax of a long line of extirpations, beginning in the seventeenth century with the extermination of the Old Believers, continuing with Peter the Great and a string of successors (which I will also leave to one side in this letter) and ending with this, the ultimate one. After *this* war the Russian people will virtually cease to exist on this planet. And that alone will mean the war has been lost *utterly*, irrespective of all its other consequences (for the most part dismal, including the consequences for your power, as you realize). One's heart bleeds at the thought of our young men and our entire middle generation, the finest generation, marching and riding off to die in a war. To die in an *ideological* war! And mainly for a dead ideology! I think *even you* are not able to take such an awesome responsibility upon yourselves!

and the same turnabout, a *single* decision, would not deliver us from *both* dangers. Such a happy coincidence is rare. Let us value history's gift and not miss these opportunities.

And all this has so "suddenly" come tumbling out at mankind's feet, and at Russia's! How fond our progressive publicists were, both before and after the Revolution, of ridiculing those *retrogrades* (there were always so many of them in Russia): people who called upon us to cherish and have pity on our past, even on the most Godforsaken hamlet with a couple of hovels, even on the paths that run alongside the railway track; who called upon us to keep horses even after the advent of the motorcar, not to abandon small factories for enormous plants and combines, not to discard organic manure in favor of chemical fertilizers, not to mass by the million in cities, not to clamber on top of one another in multistory apartment blocks. How they laughed, how they rommented those reactionary "Slavophiles" (the jibe became the accepted term, the simpletons never managed to think up another name for themselves). They hounded the men who said that it was perfectly feasible for a colossus like Russia, with all its spiritual peculiarities and folk traditions, to find its own particular path; and that it could not be that the whole of mankind should follow a single, absolutely identical pattern of development.

No, we had to be dragged along the whole of the Western bourgeois-industrial and Marxist path in order

to discover, toward the close of the twentieth century, and again from progressive Western scholars, what any village graybeard in the Ukraine or Russia had understood from time immemorial and could have explained to the progressive commentators ages ago, had the commentators ever found the time in that dizzy fever of theirs to consult him: that a dozen worms can't go on and on gnawing the same apple *forever*; that if the earth is a *finite* object, then its expanses and resources are finite also, and the *endless, infinite* progress dinned into our heads by the dreamers of the Enlightenment cannot be accomplished on it. No, we had to shuffle on and on behind other people, without knowing what lay ahead of us, until suddenly we now hear the scouts calling to one another: We've blundered into a blind alley, we'll have to turn back. All that "endless progress" turned out to be an insane, ill-considered, furious dash into a blind alley. A civilization greedy for "perpetual progress" has now choked and is on its last legs.

And it is not "convergence" that faces us and the Western world now, but total renewal and reconstruction in both East and West, for both are in the same impasse. All this has been widely publicized and explained in the West thanks to the efforts of the Teilhard de Chardin Society and the Club of Rome. Here, in a very condensed form, are their conclusions.

Society must cease to look upon "progress" as something desirable. "Eternal progress" is a nonsensical myth.

time. And suddenly now, when it has been revealed that the world's energy resources are drying up, we, a great industrial superpower, like the meanest of backward countries, invite foreigners to exploit our mineral wealth and, by way of payment, suggest that they carry off our priceless treasure, Siberian natural gas—for which our children will curse us in half a generation's time as irresponsible prodigals. (We would have had plenty of other fine goods to barter if our industry had not also been built chiefly on . . . *ideology*. Once again ideology stands in the way of our people!)

I would not consider it moral to recommend a policy of saving only ourselves, when the difficulties are universal, had our people not suffered more in the twentieth century, as I believe they have, than any other people in the world. *In addition to the toll of two world wars*, we have lost, as a result of civil strife and tumult alone—as a result of internal political and economic “class” extermination alone—66 (sixty-six) million people!!! That is the calculation of a former Leningrad professor of statistics, I. A. Kurganov, and you can have it brought to you whenever you wish. I am no trained statistician, I cannot undertake to verify it; and anyway all statistics are kept secret in our country, and this is an indirect calculation. But it's true: a hundred million *are no more* (exactly a *hundred*, just as Dostoyevsky prophesied!), and with and without wars we have lost *one-third* of the population we could now have had and almost *half* of the one we in fact have! What

other people has had to pay such a price? After *such* losses, we may permit ourselves a little luxury, the way an invalid is given a rest after a serious illness. We need to heal our wounds, cure our national body and natural spirit. Let us find the strength, sense and courage to put our own house in order before we busy ourselves with the cares of the entire planet.

And once again, by a happy coincidence, the whole world can only gain by it.

Another moral objection may be raised: that our Northeast is not entirely Russia's, that a historical sin was committed in conquering it; large numbers of the local inhabitants were wiped out (but nothing to compare with our own recent self-extermination) and others were harried. Yes, it was so, it happened in the sixteenth century, but there is nothing whatsoever we can do now to rectify *that*. Since then, these spreading expanses have remained almost unpeopled, or even entirely so. According to the census, the people of the North number 128,000 in all, thinly scattered and strung out across vast distances. We would not be crowding them in the slightest by opening up the North. Quite the contrary, we are now sustaining their way of life and their existence as a matter of course; they seek no separate destiny for themselves and would be unable to find one. Of all the ethnic problems facing our country, this is the least, it hardly exists.

And so there is one way out for us (and the sooner we take it, the more effective it will be), namely, for the state

to switch its attention away from distant continents—and even away from Europe and the south of our country—and make the Northeast the center of national activity and settlement and a focus for the aspirations of young people.*

FIVE *Internal, Not External, Development*

This switching of the focus of our attention and efforts will need to take place, of course, in more than just the geographical sense: not only from external to internal land masses, but also from external to internal problems—in all senses, from outer to inner. The actual—not the ostensible—condition of our people, our families, our schools, our nation, our spirit, our life style and our economy demands this of you.

Let us begin at the end, with agriculture. It is a paradox, impossible to believe: that such a great power, one of such military might and with such brilliant foreign-policy successes, should be in such an impasse, and in such desperate straits with its economy. Everything we have achieved here has been gained not by brains but by numbers, that is, through the extravagant expenditure of human energies and material. Everything we create costs

* Of course, a switch of this kind would oblige us sooner or later to withdraw our protective surveillance of Eastern Europe. Nor can there be any question of any peripheral nation being forcibly kept within the bounds of our country.

us far more than it is worth, but the state allows itself to disregard the expense. Our "ideological agriculture" has already become the laughingstock of the entire world, and with the world-wide shortage of foodstuffs it will soon be a burden on it as well. Famine rages in many parts of the world, and will rage even more fiercely because of overpopulation, scarcity of land and the problems of emergence from colonialism. In other words, people cannot produce the *grain*. We, who should be able to, however, don't produce enough, or we shudder after one year of drought (and doesn't the history of farming tell us of cases of seven years in succession?). And all because we *won't* admit our blunder over the collective farms. For centuries Russia *exported* grain, ten to twelve million tons a year just before the First World War, and here we are after fifty-five years of the new order and forty years of the much-vaunted collective-farm system, forced to *import* twenty million tons per year! It's shameful—it really is time we came to our senses! The village, for centuries the mainstay of Russia, has become its chief weakness! For too many decades we have sapped the collectivized village of all its strength, driven it to utter despair, and now at last we have begun *giving back* its treasures and paying it fair prices—but *too late*. Its interest and faith in its work have been drained. As the old saying goes: Rebuff a man and riches won't buy him back. With the impending world-wide shortage of grain there is only one way for us to fill the people's bellies: give up the forced

collective farms and leave just the voluntary ones. And set up in the wide-open spaces of our Northeast (at great expense, of course) the kind of agricultural system that will feed us at a natural economic tempo, and not flood us with Party agitators and mobilized labor from the towns.

I assume you know (it's obvious from your decrees) about the state of affairs throughout our national economy and throughout our gargantuan civil service: people don't put any effort at all into their official duties and have no enthusiasm for them, but cheat (and sometimes steal) as much as they can and spend their office hours doing private jobs (they're forced to, with wages as low as they are today; for nobody is strong enough and no lifetime long enough to earn a living from wages alone). Everybody is trying to make more money for less work. If this is the mood of the nation, what sort of time-scale can we work to for saving the country?

But even more destructive is vodka. That's something else you know about, there was even that decree of yours—but did it change anything? So long as vodka is an important item of state revenue nothing will change, and we shall simply go on ravaging the people's vitals (when I was in exile, I worked in a consumers' cooperative and I distinctly remember that vodka amounted to 60- to 70 percent of our turnover).

Bearing in mind the state of people's morals, their spiritual condition and their relations with one another and with society, all the *material* achievements we trum-

pet so proudly are petty and worthless.

When we set about what, in geographical terms, we shall call the opening up of the Northeast, and, in economic terms, the building of a stable economy, and when we tackle all the technical problems (construction, transportation and social organization), we must also recognize, inherent in all these aspects, the existence of a *moral* dimension. The physical and spiritual health of the people must be at the heart of the entire exercise, including every stage and part.

The construction of more than half our state in a fresh new place will enable us to avoid repeating the disastrous errors of the twentieth century—industry, roads and cities, for example. If we are to stop sweating over the short-term economic needs of today and create a land of clean air and clean water for our children, we must renounce many forms of industrial production which result in toxic waste. Military obligations dictate, you say? But in fact we have only *one-tenth* of the military obligations that we pretend to have, or rather that we intensively and assiduously create for ourselves by inventing interests in the Atlantic or Indian oceans. For the next half-century our only genuine military need will be to defend ourselves against China, and it would be better not to go to war with her at all. A well-established Northeast is also our best defense against China. *No one else on earth* threatens us, and no one is going to attack us. For peacetime we are armed to excess several times over; we

not exist as a country, but is merely some sort of inarticulate rump. So here again, at every step and in every direction, it is *ideology* that prevents us from building a healthy Russia.

A man's mental and emotional condition is inextricably linked with every aspect of his daily life. People who are forced to drive caterpillar tractors or massive-wheeled trucks down grassy byways and country lanes ill-suited and unprepared for them, churning up everything in their path, or who, out of greed, jolt a whole village awake at first light with the frenzied revving of a chain saw, become brutal and cynical. It is no accident either that there are these innumerable drunks and hooligans who pester women in the evenings and when they are not at work; if no police force can handle them, still less are they going to be restrained by an *ideology* that claims to be a substitute for morality. Having spent a fair amount of time working in both village and town schools, I can confidently state that our educational system is a poor teacher and a bad educator, and merely cheapens and squanders the childhood and hearts of our young people. Everything is so organized that the pupils have no reason at all to respect their teachers. Schooling will be genuine only when people of the highest caliber and with a real vocation go into teaching. But to achieve this we will have to expend untold energy and resources—and pay our teachers much better and make their position less humiliating. At the moment the teacher-training institute

has the least prestige of almost all the institutes and grown men are ashamed to be schoolteachers. School dropouts rush into military electronics like flies to a honey pot—is it really for such sterile pursuits that we have been developing these last eleven hundred years?

Apart from not getting what they need from the schools, our future citizens don't get much from the family either. We are always boasting about our equality for women and our kindergartens, but we hide the fact that all this is just a substitute for the family we have undermined. Equality for women doesn't mean that they have to occupy *the same number* of factory jobs and office positions as men, but just that all these posts should in principle be equally open to women. In practice, a man's wage level ought to be such that whether he has a family of two or even four children, the woman *does not need* to earn a separate paycheck and *does not need* to support her family financially on top of all her other toils and troubles. In pursuit of the Five-Year Plans and more manpower we have never given our men the right sort of wages, with the result that the undermining and destruction of the family is part of the terrible price we have paid for those Five-Year Plans. How can one fail to feel shame and compassion at the sight of our women carrying heavy barrows of stones for paving the streets or for spreading on the tracks of our railway lines? When we contemplate such scenes, what more is there to say, what doubt can there possibly be? Who would hesitate to abandon the

made the lives of ordinary citizens unbearable—but you don't feel that yourselves; which has caused thieving and lying to pile up and up even in the day-to-day running of the country—and you are powerless against it); then the need to inflate military development for the sake of making grand international gestures, so that the whole internal life of the country is going down the drain and in fifty-five years we haven't even found the time to open up Siberia; then the obstacles in the way of industrial development and technological reconstruction; then religious persecution, which is very important for Marxism,* but senseless and self-defeating for pragmatic state leaders—to set useless good-for-nothings to hounding their most conscientious workers, innocent of all cheating and theft, and as a result making them suffer from universal cheating and theft. For the believer his faith is *supremely* precious, more precious than the food he puts in his stomach. Have you ever paused to reflect on why it is that you deprive these millions of your finest subjects of their homeland? All this can do you as the leaders of the state nothing but harm, but you do it mechanically, automatically, because Marxism insists that you do it. Just as it insists that you, the rulers of a superpower, deliver accounts of your activities to outlandish visitors from

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1 * Sergei Bulgakov showed in *Karl Marx as a Religious Type* (1906) that atheism is the chief inspirational and emotional hub of Marxism and that all the rest of the doctrine has simply been tacked on. Ferocious hostility to religion is Marxism's most persistent feature.

orders us to leave the Northeast unexploited and to leave our women with crowbars and shovels, and instead finance and expedite world revolution.

Beware when the first cannons fire on the Sino-Soviet border lest you find yourselves in a doubly precarious position because the national consciousness in our country has become stunted and blurred—witness how mighty America lost to tiny North Vietnam, how easily the nerves of American society and American youth gave way, precisely because the United States has a weak and undeveloped national consciousness. Don't miss the chance while you've got it!

The step seems a hard one at first, but in fact, once you have thrown off this rubbishy Ideology of ours, you will quickly sense a huge relief and become aware of a relaxation in the entire structure of the state and in all the processes of government. After all, this Ideology, which is driving us into a situation of acute conflict abroad, has long ceased to be helpful to us here at home, as it was in the twenties and thirties. In our country today *nothing constructive rests upon it*; it is a sham, cardboard, theatrical prop—take it away and nothing will collapse, nothing will even wobble. For a long time now, everything has rested solely on material calculation and the subjection of the people, and not on any upsurge of ideological enthusiasm, as you perfectly well know. This Ideology does nothing now but sap our strength and bind us. It clogs up the whole life of society—minds, tongues, radio and

press—with lies, lies, lies. For how else can something dead pretend that it is living except by erecting a scaffolding of lies? Everything is steeped in lies and *everybody knows it*—and says so openly in private conversation, and jokes and moans about it, but in their official speeches they go on hypocritically parroting what they are "supposed to say," and with equal hypocrisy and boredom read and listen to the speeches of others: how much of society's energy is squandered on this! And you, when you open your newspapers or switch on your television—do *you yourselves* really believe for one instant that these speeches are sincere? No, you stopped believing long ago, I am certain of it. And if you didn't, then you must have become totally insulated from the inner life of the country.

This universal, obligatory force-feeding with lies is now the most agonizing aspect of existence in our country—worse than all our material miseries, worse than any lack of civil liberties.

All these arsenals of lies, which are totally unnecessary for our stability *as a state*, are levied as a kind of tax for the benefit of Ideology—to nail down events as they happen and clamp them to a tenacious, sharp-clawed but dead Ideology; and it is precisely because our state, through sheer force of habit, tradition and inertia, continues to cling to this false doctrine with all its tortuous aberrations, that it needs to put the dissenter behind bars. For a false *ideology* can find no other answer to argument and

only a false one

And on the basis of realism one must admit that this will be within your power for a long time to come.

A long time—but not forever.

Having proposed a dialogue on the basis of realism, I, too, must confess that from my experience of Russian history I have become an opponent of all revolutions and all armed convulsions, including future ones—both those you crave (*not* in our country) and those you fear (*in* our country). Intensive study has convinced me that bloody mass revolutions are always disastrous for the people in whose midst they occur. And in our present-day society I am by no means alone in that conviction. The sudden upheaval of any hastily carried-out change of the present leadership (the whole pyramid) might provoke only a new and destructive struggle and would certainly lead to only a very dubious gain in the quality of the leadership.

In such a situation what is there left for *us* to do? Console ourselves by saying "Sour grapes." Argue in all sincerity that we are not adherents of that turbulent "democracy run riot" in which once every four years the politicians, and indeed the entire country, nearly kill themselves over an electoral campaign, trying to gratify the masses (and this is something which not only internal groups but also foreign governments have repeatedly played on); in which a judge, flouting his obligatory independence in order to pander to the passions of society, acquits a man who, during an exhausting war, steals and publishes Defense Department documents. While even

created merely a chaotic caricature of democracy, because first of all they turned out to be ill-prepared for it themselves, and then Russia was worse prepared still. Over the last half-century Russia's preparedness for democracy, for a multiparty parliamentary system, could only have diminished. I am inclined to think that its sudden reintroduction now would merely be a melancholy repetition of 1917.

Should we record as our democratic tradition the Land Assemblies of Muscovite Russia, Novgorod, the early Cossacks, the village commune? Or should we console ourselves with the thought that for a thousand years Russia lived with an authoritarian order—and at the beginning of the twentieth century both the physical and spiritual health of her people were still intact?

However, in those days an important condition was fulfilled: that authoritarian order possessed a strong moral foundation, embryonic and rudimentary though it was—not the ideology of universal violence, but Christian Orthodoxy, the ancient, seven-centuries-old Orthodoxy of Sergei Radonezhsky and Nil Sorsky, before it was battered by Patriarch Nikon and bureaucratized by Peter the Great. From the end of the Moscow period and throughout the whole of the Petersburg period, once this moral principle was perverted and weakened, the authoritarian order, despite the apparent external successes of the state, gradually went into a decline and eventually perished.

But even the Russian intelligentsia, which for more than a century has invested all its strength in the struggle with an authoritarian regime—what has it achieved for itself or the common people by its enormous losses? The opposite of what it intended, of course. So should we not perhaps acknowledge that for Russia this path was either false or premature? That for the foreseeable future, perhaps, whether we like it or not, whether we intend it or not, Russia is nevertheless destined to have an authoritarian order? Perhaps this is all that she is ripe for today? . . . Everything depends upon what sort of authoritarian order lies in store for us in the future.

It is not authoritarianism itself that is intolerable, but the ideological lies that are daily foisted upon us. Not so much authoritarianism as arbitrariness and illegality, the sheer illegality of having a single overlord in each district, each province and each sphere, often ignorant and brutal, whose will alone decides all things. An authoritarian order does not necessarily mean that laws are unnecessary or that they exist only on paper, or that they should not reflect the notions and will of the population. Nor does it mean that the legislative, executive and judicial authorities are not independent, any of them, that they are in fact not authorities at all but utterly at the mercy of a telephone call from the only true, self-appointed authority. May I remind you that the *soviets*, which gave their name to our system and existed until July 6, 1918, were in no way dependent upon Ideology: Ideology or no

Ideology, they always envisaged the widest possible *consultation* with all working people.

Would it be still within the bounds of realism or a lapse into daydreams if we were to propose that at least some of the real power of the *soviets* be restored? I do not know what can be said on the subject of our Constitution: from 1936 it has not been observed for a single day, and for that reason does not appear to be viable. But perhaps even the Constitution is not beyond all hope?

Still keeping within the limits of strict realism, I do not suggest that you alter the disposition of the leadership which you find so convenient. But take all whom you regard as the active and desirable leadership and transform them *en bloc* into a *Soviet* system. And from then onward let posts in the state service no longer depend on Party membership as they do now. In doing so you can clear your Party of the accusation that people join it only to further their careers. Give some of your other hard-working fellow countrymen the chance to move up the rungs *without* having to have a Party card—you will get good workers, and only the disinterested will remain in the Party. You will, of course, want to keep your Party a strong organization of like-minded confederates and keep your special meetings conspiratorial and “closed” to the masses. But at least let your Party, once it has relinquished its Ideology, renounce its unattainable and irrelevant missions of world domination, and instead fulfill its national missions and save us from war with China and

disavow his accursed teaching! Let it be an authoritarian order, but one founded not on an inexhaustible "class hatred" but on love of your fellow men—not of your immediate entourage but sincere love for your whole people. And the very first mark that distinguishes this path is magnanimity and mercy shown to captives. Look back and contemplate the horror: from 1918 to 1954 and from 1958 to the present day *not one person* in our country has been released from imprisonment as a result of a humane impulse! If the odd one has occasionally been let out, it has been out of barefaced political calculation: either the man's spirit was completely broken or else the pressure of world opinion had become intolerable. Of course, we shall have to renounce, once and for all, the psychiatric violence and secret trials, and that brutal, immoral bag of camps where those who have erred and fallen by the wayside are still further maimed and destroyed.

So that the country and people do not suffocate, and so that they all have the chance to develop and enrich us with ideas, allow competition on an equal and honorable basis—not for power, but for truth—between all ideological and moral currents, in particular between all religions: there will be nobody to persecute them if their tormentor, Marxism, is deprived of its state privileges. But allow competition honestly, not the way you do now, not by gagging people; allow it to religious youth organizations (which are totally nonpolitical; let the Komsomol be the

only political one), grant them the right to instruct and educate children, and the right to free parish activity. (I myself see Christianity today as the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia. But I request and propose no special privileges for it, simply that it should be treated fairly and not suppressed.) Allow us a free art and literature, the free publication not just of political books—God preserve us!—and exhortations and election leaflets; allow us philosophical, ethical, economic and social studies, and you will see what a rich harvest it brings and how it bears fruit—for the good of Russia. Such an abundant and free flowering of inspiration will rapidly absolve us of the need to keep on belatedly translating new ideas from Western languages, as has been the case for the whole of the last fifty years—as you know.

What have you to fear? Is the idea really so terrible? Are you really so unsure of yourselves? You will still have absolute and impregnable power, a separate, strong and exclusive Party, the army, the police force, industry, transportation, communications, mineral wealth, a monopoly of foreign trade, an artificial rate of exchange for the ruble—but let the people breathe, let them think and develop! If you belong to the people heart and soul, there can be nothing to hold you back!

After all, does the human heart not still feel the need to atone for the past?...

Perhaps it will seem to you that I have deviated from