

# The Correlation between Healthy and Ill Forces Is Not in Our Favor

INTERVIEW WITH TATYANA I. ZASLAVSKAYA

**T**atyana I. Zaslavskaya is a professor and department head in the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences at the Academy of National Economy under the government of the Russian Federation. Zaslavskaya played key academic as well as political roles during the Soviet reforms. Academically, she spearheaded the acceptance of sociology as a respected science in the Soviet Union (USSR). Politically, she was also a key architect of perestroika as the pioneer of public opinion research in the USSR, as director of the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), as well as, since 1989, a member of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies. A sociologist and economic specialist of the rural sector, Zaslavskaya joined a Novosibirsk research institute headed by Abel Aganbegyan in 1963, which allowed more freedoms than other academy of sciences branches to conduct controversial research on the conditions of the Soviet countryside. A report she authored on the dire situation of Soviet agriculture (what came to be known as the "Novosibirsk manifesto") leaked to the West in the early 1980s. Nonetheless, Agriculture Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev consulted with Aganbegyan and Zaslavskaya and retained them when he became general secretary. In this interview, Zaslavskaya speaks about Gorbachev, perestroika, her research and life in Novosibirsk, her transfer to Moscow, her uphill battle to establish VTsIOM, the political repercussions of her research, serving briefly as Boris Yeltsin's advisor, and her views on Russia's current situation.

**Demokratizatsiya:** In retrospect, what do you think of Gorbachev, now that we are celebrating twenty years since he came to power?

**Zaslavskaya:** Generally speaking, I highly value Gorbachev. I consider him one of those great figures of history, without a doubt. If Gorbachev had not come to head the Politburo in 1985, that half-existence, half-life we had in Russia would continue still several decades. Furthermore, I also highly value the personal qualities of Gorbachev, which manifested themselves not only in 1985, but continued for the next twenty years. And in the first place among them I would put his per-

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This interview was conducted in Moscow on March 26, 2005, by *Demokratizatsiya* founder Fredo Arias-King.

sonal decency. This is a quality that is lacking among most of our present-day politicians. Gorbachev was a man of state, and his interests first and foremost were the interests of the Soviet Union, of Russia. We hardly see men of state these days. Those people that today become deputies, governors, and ministers, they know that they will not be there for long and their only task is to take as much as possible for themselves, their grandsons, great-grandsons, and more. And the interests of Russia are used in some demagogic sense. But not Gorbachev. He is a man of state, and he had his dream, to build socialism with a human face, a social-democratic society, even if not always exactly being aware of what this entailed, but trying to reach new grounds within the framework of socialism. But, nevertheless, examples did exist, in the Scandinavian countries, in Germany, these social states, and we can say that broadly this was, so to speak, his dream.

But Gorbachev landed in some very rigid historical circumstances, and therefore he could not realize that which he wanted. And being a deputy of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 myself, I know this physical, this psychophysical pressure, of this mass of people, which Yuri Afanasev famously called the "aggressively obedient majority." The atmosphere of the Congress was transmitted by radio and television. Many people listened to it, but they listened mostly to the democrats. That hall was filled not with the air of the democrats but of that aggressively obedient majority that was against everything. The Inter-Regional Group had approximately 300–350 people out of the 2,250 deputies, and managed to speak at the podium at a rate of one for every ten. So, such were the difficult conditions. But we wanted a lot. To obtain much under such conditions, democratically, by the democratic voting of this mass of absolutely conservative people, of course, was impossible. Therefore Gorbachev spent much time trying to create a reliable majority in the Politburo, but even then the Politburo was fighting against the Central Committee of the Party. If you remember this dramatic moment when Gorbachev said at a session of the Central Committee that he was ready to resign his mandate, and there was complete silence. No one shouted, "How Mikhail Sergeevich? We trust you!" Just silence. Such was the situation. If we were to accuse him for something, it would likely be the nationalist events, such as Sumgait, Baku, Vilnius, Riga, etc. But I was not in his place so I have no right to judge him now — although I did then. But on the whole, I consider that Gorbachev opened a bright page, no question. And this page needed to be opened after all.

As you know, according to public opinion polls, many now think that it would have been better had perestroika not happened. But there was no choice. If it had not started in 1985, it would have in 2000. Why? Because there was already this sensation, our gross domestic product was falling already while the population continued to grow, and it seemed to me as if we were in a small island all lumped together and the water was rising to our necks, but, nonetheless, we were not doing anything about it, just hoping for something, and not even sure what. So, people, let's do something. So, as a whole, my estimation is very high toward him, but also to Raisa Maksimovna [Gorbacheva], whose charitable activity became known only after her death. As is known, people did not relate to her very highly. But indeed, just the fact that her activities were not declared, not advertised, this is a very positive fact.

And concerning the 1991 putsch, surely . . . sometimes the question is posed: Could it have been another way? Well, when history has already gone along some way, we can't truly say. But speaking abstractly, I think that if the putsch had not happened, and the Novo-Ogarevo process was allowed to proceed honorably until the end, I think that the Soviet Union nonetheless would have inevitably dissolved, but it would have done so in a civilized way. And an agreement could have been reached, such as with the dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian-Finnish union, which was dissolved in a reasonable way over many years, whereas here it was done catastrophically. What Yeltsin, [Ukrainian President Leonid] Kravchuk, and [Belarusian Supreme Soviet Chairman Stanislau] Shushkevich did [in December 1991 at Belovezha] was simply high treason. I do not know to what other treason it can be compared. In one night, to divide twelve countries that have no worked-out borders or statehood. This is simply plunging into the abyss. This was a time of troubles. And for what? So that these three people occupying second positions could then become the leaders of independent states. Here already is the exact opposite to Gorbachev's aspirations. To let the genie out of the bottle is easy, but try to put it back. Now these are independent countries, and they would have been independent, but already with established boundaries, and customs, and agreements. At that time, it was all one economic space. But they axed and cut everything—"here, you have the right hand, and you the left eye." And that right hand and left eye had to make do by themselves. And then Russia celebrates its independence. But independence from what? It is impossible to come up with a bigger absurdity. So this is what we have if we speak about Gorbachev and not of the economic reforms that came later and were not implemented by him.

**Demokratizatsiya:** Let's talk about your contributions and role in perestroika. You wrote about the situation before the reforms, about the "pyramid of corruption," and about the shadow economy in the USSR.

**Zaslavskaya:** At that time they would speak less about corruption than they did about the shadow economy. Though the term "shadow economy" was credited to me and I did do a lot to introduce it, I believe I had heard it somewhere else before, though it did spread quickly. The shadow economy is the dual economy. It is not the same as corruption. Corruption is especially connected with officialdom. It is the sale of administrative functions, the trade of administrative functions for dirty money. The shadow economy was quite creative. It was a special sector of economy that was quite actively developing, partially parasitizing on the basic economy. For example, underground shops at the plants. Such things existed, partially independently, but appeared thanks to this command economy.

This was a reaction to the impossibility of playing according to the rules established by the state. They were so absurd, so economically senseless, that barter developed, and it developed widely. In Altai we had to face the entire "genetic" chain. For example, the *sovkhos* needs coal for heating, and they have sheep, but the coalmine does not need sheep, they need fuel from the oil refinery. The oil refinery also does not need sheep, but they need machines. And the machine factory does need sheep. And such chains appear. People would enter into this barter

economy, where miners were compelled to go into the land to do harvesting. It was a return to the natural economy. Being there, we worked closely with all these people, understood these motives and all. The chairman of the *sovkhoz* in order not to freeze, had no choice. And so on with everyone else. But the special feature of this shadow economy is that it was not fixed anywhere, there was no calculation. And thus, if I exchanged the sheep and eventually had to give the government a million rubles but I got more from the whole transaction, I can cook the books so that while the government gets its million, the rest quietly goes into my pocket. And that is how money was, even then, flowing into the hands and pockets of authorities.

The shadow economy began to develop and became quite formidable, advantageous. And since it began to involve around itself in wide circles, including officials, then in essence there were no real means to combat it. We considered its existence and development as one of the indices of disease, the general disease of the economy and unfitness of those rules of the game around which it developed. Because it is known also that in Stalin's time, the state paid the *kolkhoz* for the ton of grain less than it cost to deliver this ton to the storage silo. And under such conditions established by the state, can the economy be developed? Well, it simply cannot. These practices were a certain tax, a simple surplus-appropriation system. But from here, strictly speaking, an attempt at the market was born. Once I spent on production say, eighty thousand rubles, then I would need at least ninety thousand to cover the costs of this matter. This means these were market relations and the idea about the fact that the relation of socialism, the relation by and large of the regulation of basic economic proportions at the commanding heights, does not contradict the existence of the market at the smaller level, in particular the free market within certain limits—without including narcotics or something similar of course. And that the market can inhale a certain spirit and force.

Indeed there was this sensation, that society in these seventy years generally had stopped thinking for themselves, and this produced such paternalism. Nobody believed in the authorities, nobody loved the authorities, but at the same time nobody but the state did anything, but this state had become something else. And therefore we started perestroika with these ideas of social justice, and not only that there should be no poor and no bums, but that if the farms produce bread that the country needs, then it should be paid at a fair price. And the situation for these people could not be that much worse. You know, in the 1950s or 1960s, I happened to be in the office of a Party secretary of a district committee, who angrily called the chairman of a *kolkhoz* and shouted, "Why have you not produced enough milk, do you want the children of the workers to be without milk?" But being in this village I knew that rural children hardly ever saw milk, since virtually all the milk was shipped to the cities. And this Party official shouted that the *kolkhoz* chairman wanted to leave the children of workers without milk—but nobody cared for the children of peasants, they were practically not considered people.

So, in this sense we understood social justice. And with this very elementary human sense we attempted to withdraw from this brutal and generally inhuman Soviet system. But about needing capitalism, the problem is that its initial accu-

mulation began with a murderous face, with explosions, terrorism, and so on, but we did not think about this. I think that, personally, one of its mistakes lies in the fact that . . . Do you know the [classic perestroika] book *Inogo ne dano?*

**Demokratizatsiya:** Certainly!

**Zaslavskaya:** Then you must also know that the first chapter in this book is mine. I attempted to analyze the forces that were for and against perestroika and, as a whole, after rereading this chapter not so long ago, I came to the conclusion that it was written from sufficiently correct positions. But which factor was not taken into account? The fact that in Soviet society there was accumulated a gigantic potential for destruction was

not taken into account. Here we did not think about this. I thought: Here these will be “for” our supporters, and these others will be the enemies that will resist. But that there was a huge mass of people that had been formed in the shadow economy, in Afghanistan, and these people were very energetic. They would go to the

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***“They were figuring out quite a lot; that they would not be lost afterwards but at least be a researched layer of society nevertheless and would be known from within.”***

front rows and push aside the pure-hearted Sakharov types and the democrats. This thought simply was not within me. Others may have had it, but not me.

We did not know our society properly. But for us it was not possible to study it, since all dark corners in our apartment, so to speak, were inaccessible. This means that in order to construct a sociological study, for example in Novosibirsk . . . in Novosibirsk it was quite difficult, they did not permit much. It was much simpler in other places. We received people from Perm, and we went to other cities, to Altai in my case. And to begin, you have to go to the secretary of the district committee and tell them the concept of the study. And he calls people, discusses whether such research is necessary or not. And here I remember some Permiaks came to us, they were studying the sexual life of young people, but in the end had to study workers and students. When they arrived in a large industrial city, this woman who was head of agitation and propaganda looked at their application forms and categorically forbade that line of research. They asked why she forbade it, why she was so against it. And the answer they got was that it was not so important, not necessary. But why not necessary, they asked. They said that on the basis of their previous studies, such-and-such was going on in the dormitories. She shot back, “Don’t you think we already know that? We know all that without your research. Now that I do not have your study, we don’t have to do anything. But once we have your study, we’ll have to do something. But what can be done? So, it’s more advantageous that we don’t know.” This attitude that “I don’t want to know, even though I already know,” it seems to me, was very typical on many, many questions, including the shadow economy and many other

things. Even in our society of sociologists, we had this somewhat too-rosy a view of society. We scolded our society, our citizens, for the fact that they were passive, they do not want to work, that they were lazy, loafers, and so forth. But we did not know that they were actually very active on other questions, and very, very shrewd, as they say. They were figuring out quite a lot; that they would not be lost afterwards but at least be a researched layer of society nevertheless and would be known from within. They were bureaucrats, and they were inaccessible. Therefore, the behavior of bureaucrats is probably the same, and you find in *Inogo ne dano* that they will be against and will obstruct, but that they would become the owners of the country in the final analysis, unfortunately, we did not hit upon. But if we had hit upon this, this is already another question. If, at that time, this was understood, could this have stopped this process? It is very difficult for me to answer.

**Demokratizatsiya:** Was your research the basis for Gorbachev's antibureaucratic campaign?

**Zaslavskaya:** This would be an exaggeration certainly, to say that it was done precisely on the basis of my study. We actually met recently at an exhibition at the Gorbachev Foundation. He comes up to me and embraces me, and in front of a few people there he tells me that someone had recently asked him if he had read the "Novosibirsk manifesto" of 1983. And with this laughter, as if it was something funny, he answered "I read it, I read it, and once again read it!"

We were introduced to him in 1982, and it seems to me that it may have immediately produced a sufficiently strong impression. He invited six scientists, six academicians, connected with agriculture, to discuss the food program with him. There was this project of the food program. They planted us there in the room, gave this project to us. In six hours we discussed these findings and then he invited us to voice our opinion. He granted the first word to academician Fedorenko, who was the chairman of the department of economics at the academy, who generally speaking accurately, answered that yes, it is a remarkable program, but it has some deficiencies—something to that sense. And then Gorbachev gave me the word. But we, by the way, for six hours had already discussed this program, so I already knew what our people there thought. "Well, and how about you Tatyana?" addressing me in the familiar, I guess it's a Party habit. "Well, Tatyana, what is your opinion?" "You know Mikhail Sergeevich, I have this impression that there is a very large difference between the preambles to each chapter and the content of these chapters. You read the preamble and it seems that the hand is raised for a powerful blow and that is it. But then you begin to read further and you see that it is as if someone restrained the hand—it wanted to strike, but they hold it—and so it descends only slowly. And this relates to the entire document. There was this sense of fulfillment. Let us all go now and turn things on their head—here we need a price increase, here we need to lower something else. Not between the preambles, but between the concept and the realization." He said, "Well, this is certainly correct, because I am the second secretary, and then there's a first secretary, and there is the Politburo." So I was glad. He asked if we liked

the preamble, and we did. “So at least that was good. Then the program is in a good direction?” he said. “Yes, in a correct direction.” Well, now comes the problem of implementation, so to speak. This was 1982, autumn. But sometime in October 1983, before the manifesto . . . no, since the manifesto was in August, it means it must have been June. I was not then well known. There was this joint meeting that took place between two academies—our Soviet one and the agricultural one. It was in the movie house “Oktyabr” on Novy Arbat, with five thousand occupancy. The subject was how to improve agriculture. Probably the whole Politburo was there. The session went one day, procedural matters took eighty minutes, and all economists of the economics department were given five speeches. But the rest—about the seeders, about the winnowing machines, about the mechanization—there was no one. Five to the economy, and of these five, one is set aside for social issues, for me. They told me that I had eight, maximum ten, minutes to talk. But I must say that for those eight minutes, I prepared several days. In matters these serious, one has to make sure that the message gets through with one voice. And I really wanted Gorbachev to be there to listen, but he left just when it was my turn to speak. And it was a great speech, one of those moments in life you do not forget. What was it with that hall? I cannot say that all of the hall arose, but they did explode in noise, applause, cries. As I returned to my place, many hands wanted to greet me. As I sat down, I still regretted that Gorbachev was not there to hear it. I was hoping that they later gave him the stenographic report of the speech.

Our group of academics later met at the House of Scientists at Kropotkinskaya. The vice director of the academy, Ovchinnikov, came up to me and said, “Tatyana Ivanovna, I congratulate you for yesterday’s speech. There is something I would like to tell you. As you know, I sat next to Gorbachev at that conference, but he left before you spoke.” “Yes, that I am aware of,” I answered. He continued, “As soon as he returned, he immediately requested the stenographic report, which they brought. He very attentively read it, put it down and sat down. He took it again and again reread it. He sat down, and for the third time he reread it!” I told him that this was great, this was better than speaking just once.

But we actually had much sympathy for Gorbachev. I remember when I was in Bulgaria in 1987. Everything was going well, the lecture, and suddenly a rumor was spreading that they had poisoned Gorbachev and that he was in grave condition. I remember leaning on the wall and lamenting that all perestroika will end. And if there was no Gorbachev, then who will take his place? [Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Politburo member] Nikolai Ryzhkov? But then it turned out that this rumor was false.

My entire line of cooperation with Gorbachev had to do with the study of public opinion. Within this period we met something like five or six times, some of them even at random. And he would ask, “How are things?” and I would answer, “So will the decision be forthcoming?” “Yes, it will be!” Then I would answer, “Then all is good then.” That decision was to study sociology. It was taken up by the Politburo in June of 1988, after one-and-a-half years. This decision made sociology a normal science and removed it from the stigma it had previously of being

a bourgeois pseudoscience. It was also decided to create the Center for the Study of Public Opinion, and also sociological departments and faculties. In that decision there were six main points about the development of sociology in the country. At this time I was the president of the Soviet Sociological Association, and in this qualification, I was invited to the Politburo, the only time in my life that I had, if not the misfortune, then at least the interesting opportunity to take part in a session. But it was a nightmare! [Politburo member Nikolai] Slyunkov was there and was questioning me. So dense! Most people who were not familiar with the Politburo had no idea what situation Gorbachev was forced to work under, with what kind of people. Ryzhkov, [Politburo hardliner Yegor] Ligachev. The remaining mass—generally zero. They did not listen to anything, did not understand. Just horrid. But then Gorbachev still had sufficient authority, so he explained to them what public opinion is, why it must be studied. And this was the highest leadership of the country!

Today, those people in power were collected from somewhere—nobody saw them before, nobody heard of them, and those that did, it was only bad things. I am not saying that the previous types were good, but those that came later, where did they find these people? [Russian prerevolutionary prime ministers Pyotr and Sergei, respectively] Stolypin, Witte, these were people who worried about the fate of the state. But who is this [Russian Prime Minister Mikhail] Fradkov? Why should he be the chairman of the Council of Ministers? And who is this Putin? We can ask the same about him.

**Demokratizatsiya:** Can Putin be the result of insufficient reforms to the KGB? Can we make the assumption that those foreign and domestic specialists at Sergei Grigoryants's conferences on the KGB back in 1992 and 1993 were correct, that Russia can expect a new dictatorship emanating from the unreformed Soviet political police?

**Zaslavskaya:** In 1988, I was invited to participate in the preparation of, I think it was the twenty-seventh CPSU Congress. I was in that group of authors, and they told us that tomorrow, Sunday, Gorbachev would be coming to see us for discussions. They selected six of us, including Aganbegyan, to discuss Gorbachev's draft speech. But that's not the point I want to dwell on. The interesting thing is that there was a small circle of people there, maybe four of us and four of them—[Anatoly] Lukyanov in particular. When everything ended, and most of the people left, on the other side of the table Lukyanov and Gorbachev were talking. Without paying much attention to our presence, they were speaking between themselves. Lukyanov seemed to answer to the Politburo for that speech by Gorbachev; he was somehow the leader of the collective. Lukyanov told Gorbachev: "Mikhail Sergeevich, it seems to me that you are not occupying a correct position in regards to the KGB. It is necessary to strike at them, it is necessary to strike strongly at them. What is this with these separate reproaches, that they did not fulfill something? It is necessary to say the entire truth, they are attempting to seize power! Thus far we just sit there, yawning, as they seize more and more turf." And he starts giving examples, as far as I can remember, that they have



already taken customs, that they are taking over another thing, that they are moving in on a third thing, and that they are concentrating in their hands supreme power. I think they noticed that they were not alone, so Gorbachev said, “Okay, we’ll discuss it later.” This was an incredible revelation for me, as I had never been close to such heights of authority. To me, the CPSU and KGB were like two sisters, lovingly embracing each other. But as it turned out, they were no such thing—it was war between them. Well, maybe not war, but severe rivalry. But since the CPSU, because of its status as a political party, did not have the right and possibility to have its own foreign banks and so on, all of its economic operations were conducted through the KGB. And when the system collapsed, all the Party money, it turned out, was in the hands of the KGB. And the KGB knew how to preserve that even amid the turmoil. The monuments were falling, but the resources were in their hands.

**Demokratizatsiya:** And as a result, we are perhaps living the consequences today. You had mentioned that you had more freedom to work in Novosibirsk. That research center there was interesting because it is referred to as a source of ideas that shaped perestroika. Tell us about your work in Novosibirsk, how it was like working for Aganbegyan, and how you ended up in Moscow.

**Zaslavskaya:** If I were to start from the beginning, it would be somewhere in the early 1960s. I had already worked twelve years at the Institute of the Economy in Moscow. But it was really boring. These were the years that, despite Khrushchev, nothing was permitted. Just horrible. But then Akademgorodok suddenly was formed, and suddenly I got an invitation to go there and to start from scratch. But the main thing, there would be a young and decisive academician, still candidate of sciences Aganbegyan, who wants to gather more young and creative economists around him and create a real economic science, which would reflect not some kind of dogma, but real life, the economy. This project inspired me and, furthermore, an excellent apartment was provided. And we went there, to that Akademgorodok, which was a miracle! There I quite quickly obtained the division of social problems.

At the institute there were seven divisions—all economic, except for one social. This division of social problems at different times had somewhere from fifty to seventy people. Then the university appeared, a faculty, the school of personnel, and so forth. But my specialization in Moscow was the economy of agriculture and there I was occupied by the migration of the rural population to the cities. Therefore, my entire life in Siberia was connected with agriculture, but the subject scope grew increasingly wider and wider. My first doctoral dissertation was about the economic problems of distribution of labor in the *kolkhozi*, but by the end it had expanded to the agrarian sector of Soviet society. I considered that the agrarian sector had two parts as a minimum, and they develop on the basis of their own natural laws, and whether that needed the same planning and programming, and so forth, as the rest. We tried to study this. Naturally, we came upon a model of development of this sector, and naturally, we always carried out very large-scale empirical studies.

In the 1970s, the stagnation began to be strongly felt, and in agriculture it was a falling back. This disturbed us, and we began to search for reasons—what the

problem was, what the causes were. We came to the conclusion that everything had to do with the economic mechanism, in its non-operation. And although we were sociologists, our social problems must be solved through the economic—since as long as there was no money, and nobody was getting paid, then there would be no results. At this stage of an evermore generalized approach, the project called “the social mechanism of economic development of the rural sector” was developed. By social measures I mean through the individual, not through more machines nor a campaign, as campaigns do not work. And when we developed this project, we organized an intercity seminar; seventeen cities were represented there. There I presented the report which came to be known as the

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***“And then, when perestroika began to get serious, the question appeared about the creating of VTsIOM.”***

“Novosibirsk manifesto,” with one hundred fifty pages. This was April 7–8, 1983. We had sent copies of the report out to ten academic institutes into the different cities still during the autumn of 1982. Therefore, people arrived not simply to listen to what was being said, they arrived already after reading the reports and already with an opinion. This was really

a feast during a plague! It was something incredible, this seminar. It continued for three days. The first speech was by Aganbegyan, about the state of the economy. The second speech was mine, connected with these ideas. After this there would only be debates, no reports, exclusively debates. Then, until the debates there was ten minutes, then eight, then seven, and then we did not manage to agree—you are scheduled for the end, and there is a line of people waiting to give their speech, that is, people talked effusively. They said that nowhere besides Akademgorodok at that time could these discussions take place. People found each other. This seminar was interdisciplinary—there were economists, sociologists, jurists, internationalists, but all of them of one mind. It was a remarkable seminar!

They did not allow me to publish my report, because of censorship. Kaptyuk personally requested me to remove a phrase, that it was necessary to change the system of production relations. I refused. Then, Aganbegyan took upon himself the responsibility—the director of the institute against the head of a department, it was no trivial matter! They printed for official use one hundred and fifty copies, but two of them got lost. We searched for them among the participants, but nothing. They were numbers nine and forty-four, that I recall very well. And so the KGB began its usual work—they accused us of leaking those reports to foreigners. The searches for these reports began in May, and broadcasting to the country began in August of the same year. Years later, some KGB officials admitted that this leak had nothing to do with us. Turns out those copies were removed by officials and were copied through those roto-prints. Apparently those were the

ones that were leaked out, but they said it was impossible by then to know who was responsible. I was so upset when I learned about this. However, I was an obedient servant of the Soviet state, by no means a revolutionary. When Koptyuk called me to say, "Tatyana Ivanovna, did you know that your report was broadcast on Voice of America?" I asked, "How, Vadim Semenovich? Do you know how it could have gotten to them?" I had no idea. Then they sent Aganbegyan and myself to an administrative council and charged us with poor storage of materials and even accused us at another Party council of ideological deviance. They really liked dancing on our corpses at that session. This just had to be seen! The chief of the scientific division was Golovachev. When we opened the seminar, Aganbegyan and I sat together and Golovachev on the second row. I did not know him, as he had been recently appointed. Aganbegyan asked me if I knew Golovachev—the one with the brown sweater, etc. He asked me to talk to him during the break, so that he can sign off. So during the break, I approached him and we had a talk. After this, when they judged us, we sat there, almost objects of psychological pressure. Golovachev said, "Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to be at the seminar personally." I ran up, but Aganbegyan said, "Sit down!" When they were judging us, he was speaking there next to the window, and I sat down facing the window showing my contempt for him. But that is what the morals were at the time. Randomly and not randomly, the road led to these views. It was a considerably long road . . . only it was rural.

And then, when perestroika began to get serious, the question appeared about the creation of VTsIOM. But for some dumb reasons probably connected with the staff of the Politburo, after this remarkable decision in 1988 to create the All-Union Center for the Study of Public Opinion, they discussed for a long time under which organ it should be located. There was a version to locate it at the USSR Academy of Sciences. That was rejected. Another was a proposal to put it under the science division of the Central Committee. That, too, was rejected. And so they put it under the All-Union Central Trade Union Council and Goskomtrud [the USSR State Committee for Labor]. This absurd center! Of all the possibilities throughout the apparatus, why them? But this proposal was accepted. And when they began to search for a director for VTsIOM, they began to search among trade union leaders. Of course, the sociological community howled, because they knew that the matter would be ruined completely. And so they began to turn to me, as I was already the president of the sociological association at this time, so this was right up my alley. The first to propose me officially was Shalaev. But I already had many roots there, twenty-five years living there with the entire family, children, grandchildren, a division created where I worked for twenty years. At first it seemed that the whole idea would be impossible, but then in the final calculation it became clear that either I agree, and I was an academician, or instead they would appoint someone from the All-Union Central Trade Union Council. And therefore, for me, it was necessary to agree. On December 16, 1987, I gave my agreement with the condition that the first deputy be Grushin, because I had never been directly involved with public opinion; I was not a specialist in this field. And Grushin gave his agreement. When I returned to Novosibirsk, on

January 3, I ended up in the hospital, since the attempt to pull out the roots proved to be very agonizing.

And that's how I ended up in Moscow for the organization and management of VTsIOM. Four years I dedicated to this matter, and I learned on the job. Grushin stayed there one-and-a-half years. But there were already other people, and somehow they managed. By the time of my withdrawal, there were already twenty-nine local departments and they all became independent centers. The basis of the network for the study of public opinion was already placed. So why did I withdraw voluntarily? First, I was a member of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies, the director of VTsIOM, and already I am not mentioning the academic work, etc. A reckless quantity of loads. Research and science were receding further and further, and I had to deal with more and more organizational work. I became disappointed quite rapidly in politics. I was selected to be a member of the Supreme Soviet commission on prices, labor, and social questions. There were forty people there—three of them, doctors of sciences in economics; they understood everything. The rest were milkmaids and chauffeurs, they understood nothing. To work in this committee was simply folly, a waste of time and a headache. No ideas could be developed there. With the first rotation I asked that they rotate me out. With the exception of the first session of that congress, I never spoke a word. I sat there and listened, but it had no sense—I could also listen on television. Masses of people would accost me with specific requests: "I do not have an apartment, help!" I am not a construction official. I did not know how to solve these problems, so I decided it was necessary to depart.

But there was still VTsIOM. In the fall of 1991, the reforms began. We had been created as a state office, with a budget and all. But now, the director must occupy himself with fundraising, with agreements and running everywhere to get support. Again, this was not for me. Obtain funds for one hundred and seventy people, this was not my area. I asked Yuri Levada, my deputy, to take this upon himself. He was concerned, and asked what awaited him, but was happy that VTsIOM would not be closed. I created a small division of three people to look at methodological questions, comparative studies, historical trends, so as to look from on high and evaluate that information flow coming to us. But at the same time, Shanin invited me to his new school to work under such favorable conditions. He would pay me, and I would be occupied exactly with what I want, namely, science. God, what happiness! I did not have to feed one hundred and seventy people.

By this time I left Yeltsin's council. This advisory council was just a decoration, no content whatsoever, absolutely zero. At the first session when he assembled us, there were Mark Zakharov, [Mikhail] Poltoranin, Yuri Boldyrev, Afanasyev, and many interesting people waiting to see what Yeltsin would tell us. And he said, "I certainly will not say anything, you say what you think is important." There was never an agenda whatsoever. You come and speak about what you want. The only time that I ever made contact with him is when he was in this intense competition with Gorbachev and we had much data—what people think about Gorbachev, about Yeltsin, comparative data—which we sent officially to him, to his office, to his administration. But I decided, just in case, to take these

documents with me to the council session and, as it ended, I approached him and said, “Boris Nikolaevich, we in general send you everything, but here I have a collection of public opinion research relative to you and Gorbachev, in case you are interested.” Yeltsin just grabbed them and answered, “You have no idea how important this is for me!” That means that all those documents we sent him had not reached him. So here is where Zaslavskaya’s ascending political star ended. At first it was quite difficult to return to science, when I worked with Shanin. These four years that I was away from it. Sometimes it seems that science crawls, but it really develops. It took me five years to catch up, and still more to be in the front lines again. But I consider all of that to have been justified. It is not right to sit in a corner and to scold, “They know nothing, they can’t do anything right.” No. It is necessary to try everything. But when you are convinced . . . I am convinced that the personal qualities of a scientist and of a politician are diametrically opposite. Politicians must be sly, dodgy, today say one thing and tomorrow contradict it. A scientist, on the contrary, must be straight, critical, and so forth, but he never will succeed in politics, this is for sure. As life made it difficult for me on that side, I will remain on this side.

**Demokratizatsiya:** How did Gorbachev react, when compared to Yeltsin, to the results of the surveys of public opinion?

**Zaslavskaya:** Our Party leaders were absolutely innocent babies with respect to public opinion. They were brought up on propaganda. They read the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. They believed that the entire Soviet people, as one people, support them and so on. This was deeply implanted. So, knowing what people think about you, as general secretary, and if you aren’t accepted by everyone—and moreover, sometimes it happens that more people don’t accept you than those who do—a first reaction is that everything is a lie, some underhand practices. I’m going to tell you a story, no offense to Gorbachev, because I have great sympathy toward him. He once made a speech, and when he entered the hall everyone began to praise him. Meanwhile, sociologists made a survey with a lot of questions. At the end it is reported that his speech was approved by 70 percent and that 30 percent disapproved—that such-and-such part was especially good and such-and-such especially bad. Gorbachev usually rejected all these results with some indignation, as if it was dirt, saying that he doesn’t believe in this research, that this is a lie. I ask, “Why, Mikhail Sergeevich?” He would say, “I personally came in the hall after my speech, spoke to many people and everybody liked it!”

**Demokratizatsiya:** That is unexpected of Gorbachev. The general impression is that he liked debate and not only tolerated but invited criticism and divergent opinions.

**Zaslavskaya:** Well yes, but later on there was another case. We had in VTsIOM a colleague by the name of Kapilyush, who was doing a particular piece of work for *Literaturnaya gazeta*, not for us. The paper organized a survey and got twenty thousand filled forms. It is impossible to analyze so many forms and consequently some were selected. The newspaper hired Kapilyush and he did it

according to the theory of casualty. He chose one thousand forms, analyzed them, and an article concerning Gorbachev was published. Then we had a phone call at VTsIOM. I was absent that time, I was undergoing an operation, and my deputy answered it. "What's the matter?" "You are undermining me! This is an attack on me! It was written that there were twenty thousand forms but that only one thousand were analyzed! You deliberately chose the negative ones, I don't believe those figures and demand revising all twenty thousand forms!" And if Gorbachev demands, well, they sat down and recounted all twenty thousand forms. Fortunately for Kapilyush the result was even worse than his one thousand. In principle, people who know statistics know the intervals. There was 0.1, but here it was 0.01 and it was normal, nothing was wrong, so it was good luck for Kapilyush that the result was worse.

That was the level where it began. There was no practice, no notion of public opinion. Actually, that opinion wasn't public. It was being formed for years, and for that people should discuss a lot with each other, the press and television should be free, etc. Only then you can affirm that public opinion really exists on a certain question in society, but not here where everything is falling to pieces. The contradictions of our public opinion were fantastic! Two incompatible things like this: Should our state assume responsibility for something? Seventy percent of people answered "yes." Should individual people themselves assume responsibility for that same thing? Sixty-five percent of people answered "yes." It is like in M. Zoshchenko's book *The Paradoxical Person*.

I would give you one more fact, more important for me. During my four years of work as director of VTsIOM, I had one phone call and one private meeting with a high-ranking official who was interested in public opinion. His name was [Minister of Internal Affairs Vadim] Bakatin. He was appointed . . . can't remember his position, it wasn't as chairman of the Council of Ministers but it was very high in the Kremlin and worked only for a few months but then was dismissed. But this is not so important, more important is that immediately after his appointment the next day he called and said: "Hello Tatyana Ivanovna, Bakatin is speaking. Glad to make acquaintance with you. I got a new appointment and can't imagine my future work without serious basis of public opinion. I'd like to study public opinion on the whole range of questions. Can you help me?" At that time we had no money. So it was great to do some research for him for money. I said, "We'll be glad to do any research for you," and he answered "Sorry, I have no money now, but at any rate can you give me some previously made materials?" "Certainly, we can. What exactly do you want?" The following day we had a meeting. One more thing I liked about him. He said that before him he had a list of some of the public institutions he would like to make contact with and rely on, and he read some of them. "What a man!" I thought. We agreed to keep in touch, but shortly thereafter he was dismissed. That was a unique case. The only one. Nobody else—ever.

**Demokratizatsiya:** That is very interesting, because there is this general impression among Sovietologists that there was a very fruitful and close connec-

tion between the intellectuals, such as yourself, and the perestroika, and reform leaders in the Kremlin.

**Zaslavskaya:** No, there weren't fruitful relations. VTsIOM was still worried about where to get the orders from. Goskomtrud was obliged to provide them for some time and then we received orders about migration, the labor market, employment, but never about political issues. In 1992 I was still an active figure at the Soros Foundation, a member of the board. I was thinking about leaving VTsIOM and had a serious talk with Soros about financing the monitoring of social and economic reforms in Russia. And he indeed allocated \$165,000 for the year 1993 and beginning of 1994. During that period we founded a journal which is still being issued. That period when Soros financed us we made twelve research projects, a monthly monitoring. It wasn't quite necessary. It was kind of excess, but that monitoring is still alive today. It began in 1992, and it is carried out and issued once every two months nowadays. The monitoring and the journal are still alive. And the monitoring holds out against today's fuss: at the moment—labor market, tomorrow—the orders; at the moment—attitude towards the Jews, tomorrow—to Beslan, etc. That monitoring is a kind of railway that allows us to keep the trail of our historical development during thirteen years. So it was our initiative with Soros's support, and not the government's work.

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***“The root of the problem is that Russia has never known democracy during her history . . .”***

**Demokratizatsiya:** What about before that? Maybe you had an indirect influence on perestroika's reforms through other early reform intellectuals, such as Aganbegyan?

**Zaslavskaya:** I think our research had some influence. Maybe through Aganbegyan, maybe through the Interregional Group [of USSR people's deputies], which went on gathering after that Yegor Yakovlev, Georgy Arbatov, *Obshchaya gazeta*, Aleksandr N. Yakovlev—a large group of intellectuals who people listened to. Above all, I had great support from a large mass of people and particularly from television audiences. Even now it happens. Recently one interviewer from *Novaya gazeta*, who now is fifty, told me how they used to leave their work at the agency and hurry to listen to me when I was speaking. When I happened by the metro, I couldn't move anonymously—everybody knew my face. Later, when I withdrew from my activity, I was in a trolleybus and a man turned to me with a question: “Are you Zaslavskaya?” “Yes.” “Where did you disappear to? We used to like to hear you so much. What are you doing now? Why nothing is heard about you?” I answered, “Nothing is heard because I came to the conclusion that I have long since abandoned politics, that God gave me an analytical

and scientific mind, but not for making politics. I try to do what I can, and my work is not so prominent.”

**Demokratizatsiya:** What is the root cause of this political malaise today?

**Zaslavskaya:** The root of the problem is that Russia has never known democracy during her history, only autocracy, Orthodoxy, *narodnost'*, serfdom, followed by a short rest and then again, collectivization—the new enslavement of peasants. There was a democratic intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, but they were a thin layer—only about 1 percent of the population, maybe even less, but of course they for us were the most interesting. We read the novels of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, as many as we could. They left their mark in our national consciousness. The ruling clique was formed in a worse way. Why worse? Because in the supreme Party schools and in the Central Committee institutes, democracy was killed. They had no idea what democracy was, or for what it was needed. Democracy and demagoguery was for them something similar, close to each other. For the assimilation of democratic values, years and generations are needed. That's why these values are rooted in the old intelligentsia families where forefathers hold the same views and supported the students' revolts. So our people ironically pronounce the word democracy like *der'mo-kratsiya*. *Der'mo*, in the widest sense, is trash, mud. But in the narrower sense—animal manure. The Russian expression about a person being “entirely in *der'mo*” is an abomination. Now democracy is most frequently called by simple people *der'mo-kratsiya*. Because for them it was wrapped up *der'mo* in reality. Thus it is very difficult to deal with democracy in Russia, even from the point of view of the word. Let's take, for example, the word justice. It is another matter, because people can perceive it, but not democracy. They think, damn democrats—[former acting Prime Minister Yegor] Gaidar, [former privatization tsar Anatoly] Chubais. Why? Because they stole, snatched national treasures, what belonged to the whole nation.

Actually, I have quite a pessimistic point of view of our future, yet the latest events give me a ray of hope. I mean the Orange Revolution, etc., because before there was this impression that with the people you could do whatever you wanted—they would endure everything, without any protests. Beslan, the crashing planes, the submarine Kursk sinking—there is no reaction, no official is dismissed, nobody is punished, thus, everybody is grumbling, but no action. Suddenly the Ukrainians, who practically have no difference from us Russians, come out in the streets, and by increasing numbers. On our Pushkin Square come out only eight people, and then nobody wants to support them. Suddenly it turns out that in a moment the people are growing stronger than the authorities that seemed to be invincible, absolutely invincible. Suddenly you realize that it is enough to come out in the street, withstand, not give up, etc. Thus far, we can't know how the new Ukrainian democracy will develop. But it happened in Georgia, then in Ukraine. Who ever expected Kyrgyzstan? It was less expected than any of the other ex-republics. During those events I happened to be in Ukraine, in Harkiv. The main idea among the students and teachers wasn't how to make a new state, but to show that the people aren't blockheads. We don't



want to be blockheads; we aren't any more. That was a common breath of relief of the people. The Kyrgyz people seem to have the same ideas. It may be that it will not work. It might come to another dead end. But if the people feel that they can do something, they become completely other people. It seems to me that our Russian people of today are completely another, too. These rumblings that are rolling through Russia, they are real—like the meeting in Voronezh, now here, then there. Our people have woken up at last. All these give us some hope, yet it seems there is no strength.

My latest book is called *Sovremennoe Rossiiskoe obshchestvo: Sotsial'nii mekhanizm transformatsii* [*Contemporary Russian Society: The Social Mechanism of Transformation*]. The main questions are, how can our society be transformed? Where is the gear? Who will do it? In the long run I am trying to analyze our active forces and to show that among them do exist democratic powers, but they are still very weak when compared with the oligarchical ones and with the KGB, yet they may be not so hopelessly weak. [Then Ukrainian president Leonid] Kuchma as well thought that they are hopelessly weak, but they weren't. That's why there is a ray of hope. We stand for democracy, not only in words, but in deeds. The Ukrainian democratic movement was for justice, against that wild, crazy, insolent forgery when the buses with the ballots were blown up. Two blown-up buses meant millions of ballots. And everything is forgiven, because nobody will ever object. Now it turns out that not everything is allowed—in society there are some other forces.

I think that Russia's destiny is more difficult than in other CIS countries. "The hat of Monomakh," the hat of imperial power, was shared in the former Soviet Union among fifteen republics. Then the republics began going away and the hat was left for the "elder brother." This "elder brother" remained Russia, with the giant empire superstructure of power, alone with its nuclear weapons and armaments, and so this is another matter. The Russians and the Ukrainians are brothers, but Russia and the Ukraine are not the same. What can be done with this hat? How to destroy it? Couldn't Russia somehow set herself free of the rest of the Soviet center and live happily ever after? This huge, wild superstructure is permanently growing as the bureaucracy is growing—we have already long ago overcome the level of the former Soviet Union. It is much bigger. Actually it is a parasite on the body of our society that sucks blood and merely spends time in casinos and other places.

**Demokratizatsiya:** Can the society wake up and raise its level of civic activity, as it did unexpectedly during the perestroika period, when it voted for reformers for the Soviet parliament, demanded the abolition of Article 6 of the Soviet constitution, and when they gathered hundreds of thousands of protesters on Red Square?

**Zaslavskaya:** I think this is absolutely inevitable, but it doesn't mean it will come soon. I don't expect this to be soon. So far, I can see mature forces. We have one of them by the name of Vladimir Ryzhkov. Do you happen know him? He is very popular among people. I can name two or three other people who have also gained popularity. And what are our authorities doing? Ryzhkov is a Duma deputy

from the Altai region, where he was born. They sent there a special procession, the whole group of polit-technologists with the special task to compromise him, to present him like a corrupter and not let him get into the Duma on the following elections. Fortunately, they failed. They provided money and instructions on how to blacken him. This task was given to all the regional newspapers, about one hundred and seventy of them, television channels, etc. All this provoked a wave of indignation, and a majority of those people from the largest mass media appealed with an open letter on television screens and in the newspapers describing all that disgrace, how they were given money to compromise the beloved deputy Ryzhkov. Our authorities hunt a problematic person individually, even though he is not at the top yet. He is just getting noticed by people, but they must eliminate him as soon as possible. What if he becomes their competitor? And he indeed was no corrupter. Our main aim is that a group of people free of corruption will come to head the state. Yuri Boldyrev is distinguished by these qualities. He is at the Accounts Chamber, but the Duma ignores their reports — they receive them but nothing happens. There are healthy forces, no doubt, yet the correlation between healthy and ill forces is not in our favor.

**Demokratizatsiya:** Did you feel during perestroika any pressure from the people who were against the reforms, who felt their power was threatened by your research, which was exploding certain myths from which they lived?

**Zaslavskaya:** Yes, I felt intolerable pressure. I can give you two examples. The first, at the All-Union Central Trade Union Council. I had marvelous relations with Shalaev, the chairman—a clever, progressive person. But those who surrounded him were just horrible trade-union figures. Once, in May of 1988 he called me and said, “I heard you made some research on public opinion concerning trade unions. Was it interesting?” “Both interesting and useful,” I said. “We are having a trade union conference in May and I want you to make a speech about your research—what people think of trade unions, just for peoples’ benefit.” So I made a speech. You can guess that the findings were critical. There were some concrete facts about what was wrong, and the first reaction of the audience was dead silence. “Any questions?” I asked. The people were sitting there, not knowing what to say. They had never heard something like that. Then a woman rose up and demanded that I be expelled from the USSR Academy of Sciences. The argument was that I came to talk about trade unions when I had never worked in them, had no idea of their work, and that my speech was rubbish. “I demand that we adopt a resolution expelling her from VTsIOM!” she yelled. There rolled a deep buzz of voices in the audience. One of them, a representative from the Jewish *oblast*, supported me and proposed to study the research; to his mind a number of questions were given objectively. A lady from Dnipropetrovsk became frantic. For the trade union council, this was unprecedented, scandalous. As a result, I felt this hatred growing inside me. And we were under them! Now I have to go back to them to approve further research!

The second case was more serious. There was this system and I was chosen as a USSR people’s deputy from the Academy of Sciences, not from a *raion* or

a territory. Not long before the Congress, I got a notice to come on a certain day to the secretary of the Gagarin *raikom* [district Party committee] to form the group of deputies taking part in the Congress. We gathered, though I kept thinking, why would we gather at this Party committee when we were chosen from different constituencies? The first secretary, this lady who looked quite respectable, gave us instructions. Our *raion* got the right to give two speeches at the Congress. She then said, “So that we will not argue with you, we have decided that the first speech will be given by the first secretary of the Party *raikom*, and the second, by the chairman of the *ispolkom* [Party executive committee], and we will support our comrades to present us at the Congress to applause.” So I muttered, “I don’t quite understand. What does this mean, a delegation, or the rights for speeches? I was chosen as a delegate from the Academy of Sciences and would like to speak at the Congress as the director of VTsIOM, since I consider that all deputies should know the main elements of public opinion about perestroika.” Shock. An unprecedented case! And from an academic, no less! Nobody knew what to say; a kind of exotic bird. It was not quite clear what to do with me—to drive me out was a bit shameful, even though I was speaking obviously foolish things. They took a decision to consult about me at the Moscow plenum, which was the next day. I went to this plenum, and as soon as I entered the hall, I saw the people looking at me and whispering among them. Somebody approached me and asked if I had read *Moskovskaya pravda*. “No.” “It’s over there, why don’t you read it.” There was an article about Zaslavskaya, what she did, what was famous in her life. It turns out that she destroyed and brought horrible poverty to the Soviet countryside. How? She was the mastermind of moving all small villages into bigger ones, and due to that the village lost a number of people and went wrong. Of course, there was no collectivization, there were no low purchase prices—the tragedy of the rural village was my fault. The author of this article, a journalist named Anatoly Salutsky, wrote seven or eight articles with two-week intervals each in different newspapers, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, *Moskovskaya pravda*, *Moskovskie novosti*, *Zelskokhozyastvennii*, *Izvestiya*, etc. Everywhere was the same author, A. Salutsky. Only one article was written in collaboration with Vladimir Staroverov, whom I had previously exposed for plagiarism—he stole about twenty pages of my text—but much more Salutsky.

Such a hounding it was. To what all this led? At the Congress of People’s Deputies as well I could not go without people pointing fingers at me—“There goes Zaslavskaya, the one that destroyed the countryside,” and so on. A secretary from the Altai *raikom* who did not even know me, who had no idea of what he was talking about, said in his speech, “How bad was the attitude of the Soviet government toward the village, and I know here at the Congress is the author of this consolidating of small villages, the big academician, and she is looking at us with her shameless eyes.” That just overflowed my patience. His speech was the last before the break, so I crossed the hall toward him, presented myself, and asked, “Hello, I am the academician Zaslavskaya. Who did you mean when speaking about shameless eyes? Me?” He was at a complete loss. Firstly he grew pale, then red. He was mumbling: “I . . . I don’t know anything, I was told to

speak . . . I . . . I don't know you." But the crowd gathered and I caught my opportunity to speak everything out. "Do you know that collectivization began in 1929 when I was only two years old? What, you think can I bear responsibility for its consequences? The purchase prices were fixed by Stalin when I was eleven years old. Should I be responsible for that, too? What about Khrushchev, when he decided to move his Khomutovsky *raion*?" They got on my nerves so much. Actually, I am an energetic person except for my nervous system, but I have a vulnerable spot—my honor, my dignity. I had a breakdown when the fifth or sixth Salutsky article was published. I didn't have an apartment. I was still living in the trade union *dacha* when a rather thick-skinned friend from Novosibirsk called me and said, "I have good news for you. A new article by Salutsky is coming out, this time in *Izvestiya*!" And I had a fit of hysteria. I was shouting, was roaring with laughter, even I was given some water to calm down. During all my life I had two or three such hysterias. It seemed to me that I was being driven crazy, that I wasn't able to endure that any more. In reality, I am a person of little importance. There were such big figures like Lukyanov, Yakovlev—people who claimed to be something in politics. But as for me, I didn't have any such pretensions—just the opposite. I used to renounce my positions. Nonetheless, I invited their hatred. There were some reasons to renounce—I couldn't stand all those accusations that I destroyed everything, even though I actually gave thirty-eight years to the agricultural sector, to working out social problems since 1950, when I graduated from university, up to 1988, when I left.

**Demokratizatsiya:** To go against the Bolshevik order is never easy. You know, Gorbachev had an interview with Yuri Shchekochikhin, R.I.P., which was published in our journal. There Gorbachev, still during his last days as USSR president, said that the neo-Stalinist article by Nina Andreeva for him was like an award, because such Stalinists can't sleep peacefully. Maybe you should think the same about this hounding. You contributed a lot to the development of democracy in Russia, to perestroika and public opinion research. Consider that hounding almost as a decoration, your award. Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

**Zaslavskaya:** In the modern world, a country cannot view its development in isolation. Even if it seems to be standing still, in reality it is moving backwards, because the others are moving forward. Today, the main factor that determines the role and the place of a country in the world and history is human potential. It is all these social qualities, such as physical and mental health, the level of education and culture, democratic inclinations, and—very importantly—activeness potential. It is people who are ready to fight for something, believe in something, who are striving for something, or who are just sitting submissively and waiting for somebody to come and do the work for them. And if I were to judge about the reforms already made, and especially when thinking about the future, I would put at the center of the problem the need to increase the human potential in Russia, because it has decreased sharply in the last twenty years. We thought that in the former Soviet society, we simply were not using our enormously big poten-

tial—nobody wanted to work, they just sat and waited for something. We wished we could bring our people into life and develop further our country. But, in reality, those twenty years destroyed this potential. And our demographical losses are enormous, a huge rate of mortality, these awful wars. Now we are destroying our systems of healthcare and education. It seems to me that our government is proceeding nowadays in an irresponsible way; it is being orientated toward temporary passing values. At best, this is a more effective economic order, and at worst, they are simply selfish aims—to snatch more and more, while the cultural potential in Russia is wasting away. I consider this idea to be very important. I usually attend many conferences, on social, political science, economic, and other issues. There I hear different talks about the disappearance of Russia, the disappearance of Russian civilization, that our degradation can reach the limit when there is no way back, that the Russian population is turning into habitual drunkards, especially in small towns and villages. Our nation is split into two parts: about 35 to 40 percent are successful and the other 60 percent are unsuccessful. In those 40 percent they have a higher living standard, business, elite and foreign education, salaries, etc., and the other 60 percent is experiencing a real dying off. Including genetically—what kind of children can be born from drunkards? Here, our drama lays.

The only thing I dream about is that a leader, a person—fantastic, outstanding, prominent—will appear with a real consciousness of state, who wouldn't think about himself only but about people too, who would break up this clique that thinks only about their cottages, how to steal more before they are dismissed, while our ordinary people are suffering. The opinion differs a lot when you ask, "So how are things?" Some speak about it like a nightmare, the others—all is wonderful. That is so because we have no middle class.

**Demokratizatsiya:** Aristotle said that you need a middle class to build stability and democracy. Do you feel that nowadays responsible sociological science is being replaced by that parody of the so-called polit-technologists?

**Zaslavskaya:** Yes, I do.

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