

THE YEAR 1968 IN THE HISTORY OF SAMIZDAT. IN MEMORIAM PETER DORNAN

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Summary: The year 1968 was crucial in the history of Soviet dissent. The first five numbers of “Chronicle of Current Events” as well as Sakharov’s *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* appeared in samizdat. In Moscow, as well as elsewhere in the USSR, there were protests against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the same year at Radio Liberty in Munich a special unit was created with the purpose of maintaining and developing a samizdat collection and processing samizdat texts for broadcasting; also, a program entirely devoted to readings of complete samizdat documents was launched. Other radio features devoted to Samizdat would be added in the following years. Thus, the impact of dissent and samizdat on Soviet society was dramatically amplified as a result.

Samizdat in the West

In July 1968 the world discovered the name of Andrei Sakharov. The New York Times had published his “Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom.”¹ It wasn't a scoop. Sakharov's essay had already appeared in Dutch in *Het Parool*,² an Amsterdam newspaper, although very few people had paid any attention to it. The Moscow correspondent of *Het Parool*, Karel van het Reve, had managed to send his newspaper a typescript of Sakharov's text which had been given to him by the young dissident historian Andrei Amal'rik. A copy of the same essay had been offered earlier to one of the New York Times Moscow correspondents who had refused to accept it, thinking that it was a forgery and a provocation.

¹ *Text of Essay by Russian Nuclear Physicist Urging Soviet-American Cooperation [Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom]*, in NYT, 22.7.1968.

² A. Sacharow, *Hartekreet van een Russisch geleerde*, in “*Het Parool*,” 6, 13.7.1968.

Sakharov's essay which, incidentally, circulated in samizdat, was later published in various other languages including Russian in the New York emigre newspaper "Novoe Russkoe Slovo,"³ but several other Russian language editions followed.

The Western communist parties were somehow taken aback. After the case of the writers Siniavsky and Daniel and in the presence of an ever-growing conflict between the masterminds of the "Prague Spring" and the Kremlin, this was another shock for them, because the beliefs of their followers could be undermined. The Soviet world seemed to be increasingly less monolithic: its cracks were widening.

Both in the West and in the Soviet Union only a few insiders had heard of Sakharov, and they had only a vague idea about his contribution to the development of Soviet thermonuclear weapons. Journalists and researchers alike got down to work to find out more about him. But the first author to give an exhaustive picture of the Soviet physicist's personality and work was, a few years later, Peter Dornan, the head of Radio Liberty's Samizdat Section.⁴

Soviet dissidents' writings had reached the West earlier, of course, and would reach the West in greater numbers thereafter, and nowadays, when the danger is over, samizdat has become the object of regular academic studies. Important collections are held and developed by dedicated research centers and institutes⁵ such as, in addition to the older Hoover Institution at Stanford University, the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa at Bremen University, the Moscow Memorial Association, the Open Society Archives (OSA) at the Central European University.

³ *Razmyshleniia o progresse, mirnom sosushchestvovanii i intellektual'noi svobode*, in "Novoe Russkoe Slovo", 24-27.7, 29-31.7, 1-2.8.1968.

⁴ Peter Dornan, *Andrei Sakharov: The Conscience of a Liberal Scientist*, in Rudolf Tökés (ed.), *Dissent in the Ussr: Politics, Ideology, and People*, Johns Hopkins University Press 1975, pp. 354-417.

⁵ See on this subject, for the USA, Ksenya Kiebusinski, *Samizdat and Dissident Archives: Trends in Their Acquisition, Preservation, and Access in North American Repositories*, in "Slavic & East European Information Resources", vol. 13 (2012), № 1: 3-25.

In Italy since 1999 the Center for the Study of East European History (CSSEO) organizes conferences, exhibits and meetings on Soviet dissent and samizdat. No one doubts any longer that samizdat documents are an important source for the study of at least some aspects of Soviet history.

But it was not always like that. Some Western authors, including Soviet experts, embraced the official Soviet verdict that the information disseminated by samizdat was fabricated or at best unreliable. Others were very careful about including references to samizdat documents in their published works. Giving credence to unofficial sources of information could involve the risk of being refused an entry visa, of losing contact with Soviet colleagues and eventually of compromising one's own career.

On the other hand, samizdat was the best source on dissent and repression by the KGB and the Procuracy, on what was really going on in trials behind closed doors, on conditions in labor camps, religious persecution, the Jewish question, national movements, and labor conflicts.

Obviously, emigre circles in the West and their publishing organs had a vested interest in disseminating information, non-fiction and literary works circulating in Samizdat. I will here list some of the most important publishing houses, journals and newspapers: the YMCA's publishing house, Nikita Struve's journal "Vestnik RKhD" and the weekly "Russkaia Mysl" in France; the journals "Grani" and "Posev", produced by the Narodno-Trudovoi Soiuz (NTS) in Frankfurt-on-Main, Germany; the newspaper "Novoe Russkoe Slovo" and the journal "Novyi Zhurnal" in the USA.

There were not many Western scholars who already at that time treated samizdat seriously as a source of knowledge about the USSR. Consequently, their names are particularly worthy of being mentioned here. Among them, true pioneers were Peter Reddaway, then a young lecturer at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who translated into English and annotated the first eleven issues of "Khronika tekushchikh sobytii" ("Chronicle of Current

Events”)⁶ Michael Scammel, the founder of “Index on Censorship” in 1972,⁷ and Cornelia Gerstenmeier in Germany.⁸ In the Netherlands we can find Ferdinand Feldbrugge,⁹ a professor of East European law at Leiden University, and Karel van het Reve who established The Herzen Foundation in Amsterdam in 1969 and in 1971 became the editor of the series “Biblioteka samizdata” (Samizdat Library”), followed in 1974 by the “Al’manakh Samizdata: nepodtsenzurnaia mysl’ v SSSR” (Annals of Samizdat: uncensored Thought in the USSR).

In the United States in 1968, Edward Kline, the owner of Kline Brothers, a chain of Department Stores, together with an expert on Russian literature, Max Hayward, established the Chekhov Press - reviving the “Izdatel’stvo imeni Chekhova”, an older trade mark that had dried up in 1958 - dedicated to publications in Russian of banned Soviet authors. Uncensored literary works in Russian would also be published by Ardis, a publishing house founded in 1971 by Carl e Ellendea Proffer in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1973 Ed Kline, together with Valery Chalidze (one of the founders of the Moscow Committee for Human Rights along with Andrei Sakharov and Andrei Tverdokhlebov), established the “Khronika Press” publishing house in New York. In 1972 Chalidze had been invited to deliver a lecture on human rights at Georgetown University. Once in Washington, he was deprived of his Soviet citizenship by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and prevented from returning to the Soviet Union.

Going back to the United Kingdom, in 1969 Michael Bourdeaux, an Anglican cleric, established the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, later

⁶ Peter Reddaway (ed.), *Uncensored Russia – protest and dissent in the Soviet Union. The unofficial Moscow journal, A Chronicle of Current Events*, New York: American Heritage Press, 1972.

⁷ Michael Scammel, *How Index on Censorship Started*, in George Theiner (ed.), *They Shoot Writers, Don’t They?* London: Faber and Faber, 1984, pp. 19-28.

⁸ Cornelia Gerstenmaier, *Die Stimme der Stummen: Die demokratische Bewegung in der Sowjetunion*, Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972.

⁹ See, e.g., his *Samizdat and Political Dissent in the Soviet Union*, Leiden: Sijthoff, 1975.

renamed Keston College, and in 1973 launched the journal “Religion in Communist Lands”. As co-initiator of both the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism and the Herzen Foundation we find the ubiquitous Peter Reddaway.

The Revd. Canon Michael Bourdeaux, by his own admission, had been inspired by the Milan-based center Russia Cristiana, created in 1957. Unlike Keston College, however, whose activity was mainly focused on religious questions, Russia Cristiana at that time was also interested in other aspects of Soviet society. The journal “Russia Cristiana,” edited by Father Romano Scalfi, regularly published Samizdat writings covering a broader span of issues. Also, in cooperation with Milan-based publishing house Jaca book, “Russia Cristiana” produced several collections of samizdat documents.¹⁰ The number of readers was quite limited, although both Soviet samizdat and Soviet dissent gained a reasonable level of acceptance in Italian society after three important events in 1977: the Venetian Biennale on Dissent, including an exhibition of original samizdat documents (repeated in Turin in 1978),¹¹ a seminar on Soviet dissent organized by ultra-left newspaper *Il Manifesto*, also in Venice, and the Rome Sakharov Hearings.¹²

¹⁰ See, e.g., *URSS: Dibattito nella comunità cristiana*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1968; *Terra nuova sotto la stella rossa. Documenti del samizdat religioso*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1971; Massimo Gori [pseudonym of Mario Corti] (ed.), *La lunga strada di un'alternativa nell'URSS, 1968-1972: Sei documenti del samizdat politico*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1972; Felix I. Milani (ed.), *La repressione culturale in Lituania*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1972; Russia Cristiana also published on its own an interesting volume on Samizdat with facsimile reproductions of original documents: *Samizdat. Cronaca di una vita nuova nell'URSS*, Milan: Edizioni Russia Cristiana, 1975; another volume was edited with the cooperation of Russia Cristiana by Robi Ronza: Robi Ronza (ed.), *Dissenso e contestazione in Unione Sovietica. Camuzdam*, Milan: Istituto di propaganda libraria, 1970.

¹¹ See the catalog of the exhibits, coordinated by Sergio Rapetti with the consultancy of Mario Corti and Jurii Maltsev, *Il dissenso culturale nell'URSS. Documenti letterari e del samizdat. Manifestazione organizzata dalla Gazzetta del Popolo con la collaborazione della Biennale di Venezia* [Turin]: Gazzetta del popolo [1977-1978].

¹² See also, for France, *Samizdat I. La Voix de l'opposition communiste en URSS*, in “La vérité”, Nov. 1969, № 646; for the USA, George Saunders (ed.), *Samizdat. Voices of the Soviet Opposition*, New York: Monad Press, 1974.

1968: An important stage in the history of samizdat and Soviet dissent

The year 1968, proclaimed by the UN as the International Year for Human Rights, was crammed with events related to the history of Soviet samizdat and dissent. Between April and December, the first five issues of “Khronika tekushchikh sobytii” (“Chronicle of Current Events”) were released, all of them edited anonymously by the poet Natalia Gorbanevskaja. It was the first Samizdat periodical to report on human rights violations. All the issues carried on their title page the heading “The Year for Human Rights in the Soviet Union”.

The first issue was almost entirely devoted to the so-called “Trial of Four”, namely Aleksandr Ginzburg, Jurii Galanskoy, Aleksei Dobrovol’sky, and Vera Lashkova. They had been charged with “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” (art. 70 of the RSFSR Criminal Code). Aleksandr Ginzburg, the main defendant, had compiled and disseminated a “White book”, documenting the trial of writers Andrei Sinivasky and Iulii Daniel’.¹³ Galanskoy had been accused of editing and distributing “Phoenix 1966”,¹⁴ a political-philosophical-literary almanac, Dobrovol’skii for authoring an article published in “Phoenix 1966”,

¹³ Aleksandr Ginzburg (ed.), *Belaia kniga po delu Siniavskogo i Daniel’ia*, Frankfurt/Main: Posev, 1967.

¹⁴ Some of “Feniks 1966” materials were published in Frankfurt am Main in the issue № 63 of the NTS journal “Grani. Zhurnal literatury, iskusstva, nauki i obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli,” 1967, Year XXII, № 63; followed by *Poety iz zhurnala “Feniks 1966”*, *ibid.*, 1967, Year XXII, № 64: 112-115; G. Pomerants, *Kvadril’on*, *ibid.*, pp. 151-166; Iu. Galanskoy, *Organizatsionnye problemy dvizhenija za polnoe i vseobshchee razoruzhenie i mir vo vsem mire. Redaktsionnyi kommentarii zhurnala “Feniks 1966”*, *ibid.*, pp. 167-174; A. Dobrovol’sky, *Vzaimootnoshenie znaniia i very. Apologeticheskii opyt Alekseia Dobrovol’skogo*, *ibid.*, pp. 194-201; *Obsuzhdenie maketa 3’go toma Istorii KPSS v Institute marksizma-leninizma pri TsK KPSS s uchastiem starykh bol’shevikov. Konspekt*, *ibid.*, № 65: 129-156; G. Pomerants, *O roli npravstvennogo oblika lichnosti v zhizni istoricheskogo kollektiva*, *ibid.*, 1968, Year XXIII, № 67: 134-165; Iu. Galanskoy, *Otkrytoe pis’mo delegatu XXIII s-ezda KPSS M. Sholokhovu*, *ibid.*, pp.115-133; *id.*, *Spravedlivosti okrovavlennye usta*, *ibid.* 1968, № 68: 101-104; E. Varga, *Rossiskii put’ perekhoda k socializmu i ego rezul’taty (Konspekt)*, *ibid.*, pp. 137-156; № 69: 135-153; the almanac was also published in Italian: *Feniks-66: Rivista sovietica non ufficiale*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1968. The translator, who signed with the pseudonym Nicola Sorin, was affiliated with “Russia Cristiana”.

and Lashkova for assisting with the typing of both publications. All four were sentenced to various prison camp terms.¹⁵

The trial set off an unprecedented petition campaign in defense of the four defendants. For many people it was a more relevant event and danger than the 1966 campaign in defense of writers Andrei Siniavsky and Iulii Daniel'. Petitions and appeals, many of them circulated in samizdat, were signed mostly by intellectuals including some members of the Communist Party. At least seven hundred signatories were estimated.

As a result, many signatories lost their jobs, students were expelled from their Universities and party members from the Communist Party, as documented in a long list published in the second issue of "Chronicle", notably in its first section under the title "Extra-judicial political repressions in 1968".

The third issue of "Chronicle" was dated August 30, and it focused on the reactions of Soviet citizens to the events in Czechoslovakia. In particular, it reported that a group of Party members, including General Petr Grigorenko and the writer Aleksei Kosterin, had visited the Czechoslovak Embassy in Moscow to hand in a letter of solidarity with the reforms in that country. But the main focus was on a demonstration against the invasion of Czechoslovakia which had taken place five days earlier on Red Square. The trial of the seven demonstrators, which took place in October, was reported in the following issue.

On August 25, a small group of dissidents had gathered at the Lobnoe mesto (the Place of the Cross), a stone platform in front of Saint Basil's Cathedral on Red Square. As soon as linguists Konstantin Babitsky and Larisa Bogoraz, the poet Vadim Delone, electrician Vladimir Dremluga, poetess Natalia Gorbanevskaja, physicist Pavel Litvinov and philologist Viktor Fainberg had unfolded a few banners with various slogans such as "Long live free and independent Czechoslovakia," "Shame to the occupiers," "Hands off the CSR," "For your freedom and ours," within a few minutes the protesters had been brutally assaulted by KGB guards on duty near the Kremlin Spassky gates and detained.

¹⁵ P. Litvinov (ed.), *Protsess chetyrekh. Sbornik materialov po delu Galanskova, Ginzburga, Dobrovol'skogo, Lashkovoi*, Amsterdam: The Alexander Herzen Foundation, 1971.

There had been another participant at the Red square demonstration, 21-year-old Tatiana Baeva, but she was convinced by the other demonstrators to claim that she had been there by accident, so she was released soon after being arrested.

The trial was held in October. Dremluiga was sentenced to three years in a labor camp, Delone to two years and ten months, Pavel Litvinov was sentenced to five years of exile, Larisa Bogoraz to four, and Babitsky to three years. Viktor Fainberg, who had his teeth knocked out during the arrest, did not appear in court and was sent to a psychiatric prison hospital. Natalia Gorbanevskaja, mother of two children, had been released after the arrest. She wrote a book about the demonstration and the trial which circulated in samizdat in 1969 and was published abroad the following year.¹⁶ In December 1969 Gorbanevskaja was again arrested and charged with article 190/1 of the RSFSR Criminal Code” (“dissemination of knowingly false fabrications defaming the Soviet State and social system”). She was declared mentally incompetent to stand trial and spent one year in the Kazan psychiatric prison hospital and the Serbsky institute.

Although the most striking, the Red square demonstration was not the only protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Several citizens, for example, refused to endorse the invasion at meetings organized ad hoc by the authorities, and some of them lost their jobs.

As we have already seen, in 1968 the world discovered Andrei Sakharov. “Chronicle” № 5, dated December 31, could not fail to provide a short summary of Sakharov’s “Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom” under its new subtitle “Survey of samizdat in 1968.”

In the following years the “Chronicle” grew richer with new subheadings and sections such as “Political prisoners,” “News in brief,” “Samizdat update,” “News from the camps,” “Trials of recent years,” “Religious persecution,” “Polit-

¹⁶ Natal’ia Gorbanevskaja, *Polden’: Delo o demonstratsii 25 avgusta 1968 goda na Krasnoi ploschadi*, Frankfurt/Main: Posev, 1970.

ical prisoners in psychiatric hospitals,” “The Jewish movement to leave for Israel,” “The Crimean Tatar movement,” “Repressions in Ukraine,” and others.¹⁷

Radio Liberty’s Samizdat section

As things turned up, the year 1968 was crucial for Samizdat also at Radio Liberty in Munich, Germany: Samizdat texts which were randomly procured by staff members of various language services were brought together in a single repository within the Research department then headed by Albert Boiter.¹⁸ Obviously, because the *raison d’etre* of Radio Liberty was the production and transmission of radio programs in the main languages of the USSR, the primary task of the staff in charge of the collection was to select and reproduce the documents to be broadcast on air. By the end of 1971 the Samizdat writings selected and reproduced for that purpose had reached a total of 3 000. Each selected item was assigned a progressive number preceded by the acronym AS (Arkhip Samizdata – Samizdat Archive).

However, as of 1971, at the request of a group of scholars who had met in London on April 23 of that year, the texts were made available by subscription for the use of academic and research institutions as well as by the media. The one-day London conference sponsored by Radio Liberty was attended by Albert Boiter, Michael Bourdeaux, Abraham Brumberg, editor of “Problems of Communism”, Martin Dewhurst, a Russian literature lecturer at the University of Glasgow, David Floyd of “The Daily Telegraph”, Max Hayward of St Antony’s College, Oxford, Leopold Labedz, editor of “Survey”, Peter Reddaway and Leonard Schapiro of the Lon-

¹⁷ See also on “Chronicle”, e.g., Mark Hopkins, *Russia’s Underground Press. The Chronicle of Current Events*, New York: Praeger, 1983; Jillian Forsyth, *The Chronicle of Current Events and the Soviet Human Rights Movement*, Dalhousie University Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2017; in particular on the structure of “Chronicle” and on other Samizdat journals see Iu. A. Rusina, *Zhurnaly samizdata 1960-1970-ch gg.*, in “Dokument. Arkhiv. Istoriia. Sovremennost’”, 2001, Vyp. 1: 279-295. In general, on the history of Samizdat and its authors see, for ex., Ead., *Samizdat v SSSR: Teksty i sud’by*, Ekaterinburg, 2015.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Albert Boiter, *Samizdat: Primary Source Material in the Study of Current Soviet Affairs*, in “The Russian Review” (Jul., 1972), vol. 31, № 3: 282-285.

don School of Economics and Political Science.¹⁹ As it became known only very recently, David Floyd turned to have been, by his own admission, a Soviet agent.²⁰ Martin Dewhurst was to become a valued assistant from time to time at the Samizdat Unit of Radio Liberty.

Some 3 000 documents were collected in a series of 30 volumes under the title of “Sobranie Dokumentov Samizdata” and published between 1972 and 1978. Materials which arrived in Munich after 1970 were included in a more or less regular weekly publication called “Materialy Samizdata,” which was distributed externally on subscription beginning in 1971. A clear idea of which AS numbers were included in the “Sobranie” and which ones in “Materialy Samizdata” can be obtained by consulting the Memorial Society website “Katalog Samizdata”.²¹ Between 1968 and the closure of the RFE-RL Samizdat Section in 1992 more than 6 500 documents were issued.

It should be noted that Radio Liberty was not much interested in the inclusion of literary works in its samizdat collection, as they were mostly available in Russian emigre journals or publishing houses. The focus was rather on reproducing samizdat accounts of trials, reports of searches, minutes of interrogations, appeals by political prisoners, documents of various dissident groups, political programs and essays on political and social topics.

The history of the establishment of the RL Samizdat Section is still somewhat confused and controversial. There were internal conflicts concerning the maintenance and management of the documents. According to Peter Dornan, who was in charge of this small unit, just reproducing and editing the documents selected for broadcasting (and later also for the benefit of external users) was not enough: they must be carefully selected, thoroughly verified for authenticity, en-

¹⁹ Ibid.; also, Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty. An Insiders’ Memoir of Radio Liberty*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, pp. 151-154.

²⁰ Adam Lusher, *Former Daily Telegraph Journalist “spied for communist Russia”*, in “Independent”, 25 February 2018.

²¹ <http://samizdat.memo.ru/samizdat/introrus>.

tirely retyped, annotated, whenever possible name indexed, cross referenced, etc. Facts, names, background, quotations had to be checked.²²

This could be done thanks to the resources at the disposal of Radio Liberty, which, in addition to the main Western media, received the output of all the Soviet news agencies and all the relevant periodical and newspaper publications available for subscription in the West. Radio Liberty may have possessed the largest collection of Soviet periodicals and newspapers outside the USSR, not to speak of its transcripts of radio and TV programs provided by the staff of the Monitoring Section and the data on Soviet officials, based on Soviet media collected by the staff of the Research Department's "Krasnyi arkhiv" or "Red Archive", guided by Dr. Herwig Kraus.

Eventually the rigorous approach suggested by Peter Dornan prevailed, at least from the launch of "Materialy Samizdata." Furthermore, Dornan's small unit was detached from the Research Department to occupy an equal level in the organizational chart as well as an equal level with the Broadcasting Services. Dornan reported directly to the highest authority of RL (later RFE-RL), and his unit was insulated from the conflicting interests of broadcasters and researchers. Indeed, Peter Dornan was the pioneer *par excellence* of samizdat in the West.²³ His 1975 essay on Sakharov, at the time the most exhaustive study of Sakharov's work, is an example of Peter Dornan's scrupulousness.²⁴

²² On the history of the Samizdat section of Radio Liberty see also, e.g., Olga Zaslavskaya, *From Dispersed to Distributed Archives: The Past and the Present of Samizdat Material*, in "Poetics Today", 2008, 29 (4): 669-712, with a reference to Mario Corti. 1996 Interview, HU OSA 206, Administrative History Files, Samizdat Archives, OSA Archivium.

²³ On Dornan see, e.g., Felix Corley, *Obituary: Peter Dornan*, in "The Independent", 17.11.1999; Mario Corti, *Radio Liberty's Peter Dornan*, in RFE-RL Newslines, Vol. 3, № 216, 5.11.1999; Id., *Pamjati Petera Dornana*, 4.11.1999, on RFE-RL's website: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/24198395.html>; on Dornan and his personal collection donated to Drew University: *Dornan Collection/Russian Samizdat Archive* on the website of Drew University: <https://www.drew.edu/library/special-collections-archives/special-collections/dornan-collection-russian-samizdat-archive/>

²⁴ See fn 4.

At one point a conflict emerged between Radio Liberty and Valery Chalidze, who claimed exclusive rights for the publication of the “Chronicle of Current Events” in the West.²⁵ Although this claim was not indisputable, the two parties came to an agreement: Radio Liberty would continue to produce an annotated edition of each issue of the “Chronicle”, but only for internal use. Chalidze’s desire for monopoly rights, however, did not prevent other publishers from disseminating their own editions.

Friederike Kind-Kovács, a historian of samizdat and tamizdat, maintains that Radio Liberty prepared “a system of illegal circulation with agents on both sides of the Iron Curtain,” and that “accessing *samizdat* materials, smuggling them across the Iron Curtain, editing them and then broadcasting them back into the Soviet bloc were part of a complex system of cross-Iron Curtain activities initiated by the radios.”²⁶ This notion does not reflect reality and must be totally rejected. The Samizdat Section never undertook any action intended to obtain samizdat texts directly from the Soviet Union. The documents were delivered to the Unit, mostly in photocopies, by individuals or institutions, for example by Russian emigres interested in promoting the publication or broadcasting of samizdat writings. One of them was Valery Chalidze, who, notwithstanding his previous conflict with Radio Liberty, sent copies in particular of those texts that he, for one or another reason, could not publish himself. Also Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, Peter Reddaway and other organizations and individuals contributed to the expansion of the collection.

Indeed, strange as it may sound, the collection contained relatively very few original documents (manuscripts, typescripts, carbon copies, mimeographed or printed materials). Among the originals were secret audio recordings of court pro-

²⁵ See., e.g., Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty as the “Echo Chamber” of Tamizdat*, in Friederike Kind-Kovács, Jessie Labov (ed.) *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond. Transnational Media during and After Socialism*, New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013, pp. 70-91, 80.

²⁶ Friederike Kind-Kovács, *Voices, letters, and literature through the Iron Curtain: exiles and the (trans)mission of radio in the Cold War*, in Linda Risso (ed.), *Radio Wars. Broadcasting during the Cold War*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, p. 69, 71-72.

ceedings against dissidents as well as manuscripts which were very difficult to read (for example, manuscripts written in very tiny handwriting on cigarette paper). These materials were sent in their original form because their initial recipients did not have the time, resources or competence to transcribe them themselves.

Another important resource developed by the Unit was the massive collection, updated on a daily basis, of subject and biographical files on Soviet dissent, containing clippings from Soviet and international periodicals and newspapers, agency news items, transcripts of radio and TV programs as well as from Samizdat documents. In other words, the staff selected and collected all possible data on dissent in the USSR, the various religious groups and confessions, national movements, the Jewish movement for emigration, human rights, labor camps and prisons, psychiatric hospitals, Soviet judicial bodies, procuracy, KGB and MVD, etc. The Unit also managed a small specialized multilingual library and various retrieval card systems, one of which, personally maintained by Peter Dornan, contained cross-referenced data on “persecutors” (procuracy or KGB investigators, prosecutors, judges, labor camp and prison guards, etc.) and their “victims.”

Among the other tasks, the Samizdat staff made their expertise and the Section resources available to RL-RFE editors and researchers as well as to the numerous visiting external scholars and journalists.

At present all the issues of “Materialy Samizdata,” the collection of unpublished Samizdat documents, the subject and biographic files and the retrieval card systems are preserved at the Open Society Archives (OSA) of the Central European University in Budapest.

Samizdat on the air

As indicated above, Radio Liberty strategists understood quite quickly that the systematic broadcasting of Samizdat texts would have a dramatic impact on Soviet society. Samizdat on paper circulated almost only exclusively in intelligentsia circles in Moscow and other large cities of the USSR. If launched back

through the ether, samizdat writings would reach much broader layers of the population including individuals in remote locations.²⁷ It would be **broadcasting** in the true sense of the term. Listening to foreign radios in the Soviet Union was somewhat risky, it was done behind closed doors and windows, but it was less risky than possessing, producing or disseminating samizdat materials on paper. Thus, in addition to world news, programs on various subjects, analyses of and commentaries on international politics and the internal politics of the USSR, on Russian and Soviet history and the emigration, most of which were produced by exiles, the radio would now broadcast full and verbatim Samizdat texts, thus functioning as an amplifier of the free voices coming directly from within Soviet society.

In the fall of 1968 the first regular samizdat-based program was launched under the title “Pis'ma i dokumenty” (Letters and Documents). Other programs *ad hoc* followed in subsequent years, such as, “Dokumenty nashego vremeni” (Documents of Our Time), “Obzor samizdata” (Survey of Samizdat), “Dokumenty i liudi” (Documents and people), “Prava cheloveka” (Human Rights). Full readings of literary works prohibited in the Soviet Union and published in tamizdat, i.e., by Russian emigre publishing houses, were already broadcast in other feature programs, one of which was called, significantly, “S drugogo berega” (From the Other Shore). These broadcasts would become a distinctive brand of Radio Liberty. No other Western radio broadcasting in the various languages of the Soviet Union would devote as much airtime, resources and care to samizdat materials.

It was precisely thanks to samizdat that Radio Liberty could fulfill an important part of its mission. Besides providing exhaustive information on world events, different from that inflicted by the Soviet official media to their readers and listeners, Radio Liberty was in a position to impart information on events occurring inside the Soviet Union ignored or intentionally distorted by the official media. The Soviet people were kept up to date on Solzhenitsin and Sakharov as

²⁷ Cf. F.G.M. Feldbrugge, *Samizdat and Political Dissent in the Soviet Union*, Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1975, pp. 15-16, with a reference to AS 1086.

well as on the vicissitudes of other authors whose works were prohibited in the USSR, they could listen to the songs of Alexander Galich and other bards, they got to know the names of human rights activists, discovered the existence of political dissent in their country and of an unofficial art produced outside the canons of socialist realism.

Thus, by echoing the dissidents' and human rights activists' concerns, the radio consigned to their texts most of the criticism of the Soviet regime and its representatives which could not be represented any longer as here "slander" coming from some emigre "renegade" on the payroll of a foreign power and at the service of anti-Soviet propaganda -- as the media in the USSR used to blame Radio Liberty's broadcasts and the emigre intellectuals who worked for the Radio. It stemmed from within the country and belonged to Soviet citizens, most of whom were identified by name and were ready to pay a high prize for their beliefs and activities.

Samizdat re-entered its home territory expanded through the ether. Over time and thanks to the writings of samizdat authors Radio Liberty began to be perceived as a familiar voice, a home service rather than a broadcaster representing foreign interests.

As Alexander Suetnov, an expert on Soviet independent publications, would write many years later: "In the seventies we learnt about the existence of samizdat either from the foreign radio stations or from court proceedings."²⁸

The Soviet regime seemed to feel the blow and went on the counterattack. The official media began to argue that some of the samizdat writings had been manufactured at the radio's headquarters in Munich.

In 1973, for example, an article on "Ogonek" fathered on Radio Liberty a samizdat political document entitled "Program of the Democratic Movement of the Soviet Union."²⁹ The document was authentic, of course. It had been obtained

²⁸ "Piatnitsa. Organ Oktiabr'skogo raionnogo Soveta Moskvyy", Moskva, 1990, № 2: 10.

²⁹ Arkadii Sakhnin, *Podkhodiashchaia kandidatura*, in "Ogoniok", № 51 (2424), 15.12.1973, p. 28.

and published in 1970 by the Herzen Foundation in Amsterdam, and Radio Liberty never disputed that. At the Radio a photocopy of the printed brochure had been assigned an AS progressive number, as it was usually done for all the documents intended for broadcasting, and it was included in “Sobranie dokumentov samizdata”.³⁰ Some of the authors’ names, who at the bottom of the document identified themselves only as “Democrats of Russia, Ukraine, and the Baltic Countries,” are known today and at the time they were all residing in the Soviet Union.

As stated in a book published by the official agency “Novosti:” “‘Samizdat’ is one of RL’s creations and is used for preparing so-called ‘scientific studies’ which are sent to 570 subscribers, including bodies of the press, government institutions and various Sovietology centers in the West. Some of the ‘samizdat’ materials have been written by so-called dissidents. But much of this material can be safely stamped ‘Made in RL’...”³¹

These allegations got more credit in Western pro-Soviet circles than among Soviet citizens, less inclined to place much trust in the media of their own country.

In conclusion, thanks to Radio Liberty’s broadcasts, more people in the USSR listened to samizdat than read it. As the above-mentioned samizdat historian Friederike Kind-Kovács wrote: “Some circles inside the Soviet bloc used the radios as a replacement for the far riskier and more restricted access to and use of *samizdat* literature. On 27 April 1976, Mikhail Delone, a 23-year old teacher from Moscow, ‘a September 1975 emigrant’, reported that he was ‘especially interested in listening to Western broadcasts because, for some reason, *samizdat* materials never seemed to get through to [him]’. So, the orally transmitted *samizdat* replaced or enriched the physical access to the materials... The broadcasts, orally transmitted

³⁰ *Programma Demokraticheskogo dvizheniia Sovetskogo Soiuz*, Amsterdam: The Alexander Herzen Foundation, 1970; reproduced in “Sobranie dokumentov samizdata”, Vol. 5, AS № 340.

³¹ Gennadii Alov, Vassilii Viktorov, *Aggressive Broadcasting: Evidence, Facts, Documents. Psychological Warfare*, Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1985, p. 100.

through the exiles, reached therefore far wider audiences than the written alternatives of the dissident colleagues inside the Soviet bloc ever did.”³²

The Polish events in Soviet samizdat

Far reaching developments for the political and geopolitical assets in Eastern Europe were to follow in the coming years. Such revolutionary events as the emergence of KOR and of *Solidarność* in Poland would exert a notable influence on Soviet society and find an echo in samizdat (although, even before those events there had been workers protests in the Soviet Union as well as timid attempts to form independent trade unions).³³

The events in Poland were regularly reported - for example, in the “Information Bulletin of SMOT” (Svobodnoe mezhproufessional’noe ob-edinenie trud-jashchikhsia – Free Inter-Professional Association of Workers), an independent union born in 1978.³⁴ An Open Letter to Soviet Workers on the Polish events authored by Moscow mathematician Vadim Iankov was circulated in 1982.³⁵ Charged with article 70 of the RSFSR (“anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation”), on January 1 of the next year Iankov was sentenced to four years of strict regime corrective labor colony plus three years of exile.³⁶ Another Samizdat document

³² Kind-Kovács, op.cit., p. 71.

³³ See, e.g., Karl Schlögel, *Der Renitente Held. Arbeiterprotest in der Sowjetunion 1953-1983*, Hamburg: Junius, 1984, one of the first books on the subject; also, Mario Corti, *Aleksei Nikitin and the Movement for Worker’s Rights in the USSR*, in “Radio Liberty Research Bulletin,” 25th Year, №19 (3120), May 13, 1981.

³⁴ See, e.g., AS №№ 4760: 3-7 (IB SMOT, № 15/1981); 4622: 2 (IB SMOT, № 19/1981); 4728-4729 (IB SMOT, №№ 26/1981, 27/1981), 4752: 5-8 (IB SMOT, № 29/1981-1982), 4806: 8-16 (IB SMOT, № 30/1982).

³⁵ AS №4615 – V. Iankov, *Pis’mo russkim rabochim po povodu pol’skikh sobytii, statia podmoskovnogo matematika ob istorii sozdaniia i tseliakh profsoiuza Solidarnost’*, m.b. Moskovskaia oblast’, g. Dolgoprudnyi, Noiabr’ 1981 – Ianvar’ 1982.

³⁶ “Vesti iz SSSR/USSR News Brief,” № 2, 1983.

telling of strikes in 1981 and 1982 at a bus factory in the city of Pavlovo, Gorky oblast, described how at secret meetings workers circulated the highly significant slogan “if the [production] norms are raised, we’ll do the same as in Poland.”³⁷. The same slogan, in different versions, some even hilarious, circulated everywhere in the USSR.

I would like to focus briefly on an interesting essay entitled “Pol’skaia revoliuciia” (The Polish Revolution) circulated anonymously in Samizdat beginning in 1982.

A historical introduction covering the period from the German invasion of Poland in 1939 to the beginning of the workers’ disturbances in the Polish Littoral in 1980 was followed by a chronological survey of the subsequent events, concluding with the declaration of martial law by general Wojciech Jaruzelski on December 13, 1981. While empathizing with the Polish opposition, the author, although *en passant*, harshly criticized Soviet dissident movement for their pretended “apoliticity”, their “legalistic squabbling” and their appeals to the Soviet authorities to respect their own laws. “Wherever laws are not applied,” according to the then unknown author, “and even promulgated with no intention of applying them, legalistic squabbling simply substitutes for more productive forms of thinking, for which the dissidents have no aptitude.”³⁸ As it seemed to him, a more fruitful form of opposition would have been a combination of both legal and illegal forms of struggle and of both open and underground activity.

That point of view was not new, and it was expressed more explicitly by the editors of the samizdat Eurocommunist journal “Varianty” – which circulated in Samizdat in the early Eighties - in their responses to a questionnaire compiled by the French journal “L’Alternative.” In addition, the editors of “Varianty” suggested that a way out of what they called “the dissident’s crisis” would have been “the

³⁷ AS 4985 – *Soobshchenie o zabastovkakh rabochikh g. Pavlovo Gor’kovskoi oblasti v 1981-82*, veroiatno, leto 1982.

³⁸ On the nature of Soviet “dissent” and some distinctions between its different components see, e.g., Mario Corti, *O nekotorykh aspektakh dissidentskogo dvizheniia*, in “Karta. Rossiiskii nezavisimyi istoricheskii i pravozashchitnyi zhurnal”, 1994, № 6: 42-46.

formation of political organizations of different tendencies and a turning to ‘the lower strata’ with concrete social programs.” They also stressed the necessity of a “switch to illegal channels (while using all available legal possibilities)... the creation of illegal structures, both organizational and technical,” as taught by the experience of Poland.³⁹

While editing “The Polish Revolution” for publication in “Materialy Samizdata,”⁴⁰ I realized that one of the sources used by the author must have been the Italian Communist Party organ “L’Unità,” one of the few Western newspapers available in the USSR.⁴¹ The essay, which Russian historian Michel Heller defined as “the first fundamental research on the 1980-1982 Polish events,”⁴² was subsequently published in London with my introduction.⁴³

Years later the author was identified with Abram Il’ich Fet, a Novosibirsk mathematician who died in 2007, known also for some of his incursions into the field of theoretical physics. He was a prolific author, under various synonyms, of essays on social and political topics circulated in *samizdat*, some of which were published in the Russian tamizdat journal “Sintaksis”, co-founded in Paris by Andrei Siniavsky and his wife Maria Rozanova.

Fet’s biography has been recounted in various articles and it’s now fairly well known.⁴⁴ Suffice it to say here that his struggle against the Soviet regime had

³⁹ AS № 4619: 18-19, 23.

⁴⁰ AS № 4904 (1983).

⁴¹ On “Polish Revolution” see also Mario Corti, *A Samizdat Work on the Events in Poland*, in “Radio Liberty Research Bulletin,” 319/83.

⁴² M. Geller, *Mashina i vintiki: istoriia formirovaniia sovetskogo cheloveka*, M., 1994, p. 124.

⁴³ *Pol’skaia revoliutsiia*, London: Overseas Interchange Ltd., 1985; today also online: <http://modernproblems.org.ru/hisrory/188-polish-revolution.html?showall=1>.

⁴⁴ E.g., E.N. Savenko, *Avtor prepochel ostat’sia neizvestnym*, in “Gumanitarnye nauki v Sibiri. 2011, №3: 89-92.

officially started in 1968, when he had been expelled from the Institute of Mathematics and banned from teaching at the University of Novosibirsk for having signed, together with other 45 Novosibirsk intellectuals, the so called “Letter of 46”⁴⁵ to the Supreme Court of the USSR in defense of the four dissidents (Aleksander Ginzburg, Jurii Galanskov, Aleksei Dobrovol’sky e Vera Lashkova) sentenced in January of that year.

⁴⁵ “Sobranie dokumentov samizdata,” vol. 1, AS № 21.