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Subslug: [Interview with Academician L.I. Abalkin, deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, by N. Garifullina, on 19 September; place not given: "A Choice Has To Be Made"--first two paragraphs are SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA introduction]

FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:

1. [Interview with Academician L.I. Abalkin, deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, by N. Garifullina, on 19 September; place not given: "A Choice Has To Be Made"--first two paragraphs are SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA introduction]

2. [Text] The debate at the USSR Supreme Soviet on the transition to a market economy seems to have reached "boiling point." What decision will the people's deputies adopt, and which path will the country take? Millions of people await the answer with anxiety and hope.

3. SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA recently familiarized readers with the Shatalin-Yavlinskiy program. And today one of the authors of the government program--Academician L.I. Abalkin, deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers--shares his thoughts. The conversation with him took place 19 September.

4. [Garifullina] Leonid Ivanovich, on addressing the USSR Supreme Soviet session, you made principled comments on the presidential program for the transition to a market economy. You said at that time that this was not only your personal opinion--it was supported by members of the USSR Government. Could you speak about this in greater detail?

5. [Abalkin] I was speaking not of details--there are very many of them--but of three fundamental, conceptual disagreements which cannot be eliminated by the method of reaching agreement. They demand a

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choice. Here it is not a matter of seeking a compromise but of the need to make a political decision.

6. The first comment concerns the choice of the option for moving toward the market. We all reached the conclusion--and I believe that this is proved convincingly by historical experience and science--that without the market it is impossible to extricate the country from the crisis and to create an efficient, flexible economy that is receptive to scientific and technical progress and geared to the consumer. But the transition to the market certainly does not mean abandoning socialism. On the contrary, it means impregnating socialism with new qualities and emancipating its potential--economic, social, and spiritual. However, it is very difficult to combine the market with the model of socialism which has evolved in our country.

7. How are we to move toward the market? The presidential program proposes an accelerated transition. It is also called "shock therapy," but I do not think these are the right words. An accelerated, speeded-up transition is more accurate. But we believe that such an option is unacceptable for the country. We favor the radical-moderate option, which combines decisive changes with caution, consideration, and strict calculation. You can say as much as you like that we are too cautious, but this is not a character trait of those who drew it up but a position based on a sober analysis and prognosis.

8. What is at the basis of this approach? The crisis in the economy is developing and deepening. This is a reality. The structure of the economy has evolved over decades, it is cumbersome, with a huge proportion of extracting sectors and with monopolized production structures. It is unrealistic to restructure everything in weeks and months or, maybe, even over several years.

9. Further, considerable sections of the population are not ready to work under the new conditions. It is possible to speak about stereotypes of thinking and a backward mentality--but, once again, these are realities. It is necessary also to take account of the political instability in society, the increased activities of certain forces, and the growth of national separatism. All this leads to the conclusion that, if we go too hastily, disregarding the possible consequences, then this could not only result in a greater crisis in the economy but also discourage us from tackling the reform at some time in the very near future.

10. The next difference concerns the view of the fate of the Union. Yes, of course, the deformations which have accumulated in interethnic relations over the decades and the infringement of the

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rights of nations, ethnic groups, republics, and regions are realities which have been perpetrated, but it is necessary to overcome them and preserve the union state. It is a subject in international law, a great power, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a power which has signed many postwar agreements. And, accordingly, it is a state which must possess all the necessary attributes in the economic sphere too, have a unified border, a unified custom house and territory, and a unified monetary system, and have at its disposal the USSR Central State Bank fulfilling functions approximating to those fulfilled in similar states by the federal reserve system, as in the United States, or by the Deutsche Bundesbank in the FRG. Accordingly, not only does each republic possess sovereignty but the USSR also has its own sovereignty as a state. Yes, the powers and the borders of sovereignty are determined by treaty, but this is all to come and does not yet exist, and we are accustoming ourselves to living in a rule-of-law state and we respect and observe the laws. The constitutional norms of the Union extend throughout the territory. The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic Supreme Soviet has adopted a concept and a program which essentially proceeds from recognition of the elimination of the USSR as a state. This Union is also supplanted by a union, but an economic one, by some international agreement which is said even to be close to the EC. It is possible to find a more accurate definition--the British Commonwealth of Nations, for example, or maybe an even more accurate one: the old CEMA with all its flaws.

11. As regards the new Union Treaty, in my view subsequent political agreements will merely make the economic union official, and the state's disintegration will be a fait accompli. And it is proposed to do this without broad discussion, in secret....

12. [Garifullina] Maybe this is why there is such haste?...

13. [Abalkin] The haste is understandable too. The thing is that at first the '500 days' program contained a kind of mystery effect. You understand, they suggest to people: There is some miraculous means, and our people believe in miracles or, at least, they want to believe that there is a painless path, without sacrifices and upheavals, without a drop in living standards, without a rise in prices....

14. You might have noticed that in such crisis situations there begins a mass belief in aliens, UFO's, extrasensory perception, and much else. This is a social phenomenon, you know. I spoke of this many years ago. This situation began to be manifested clearly in the late seventies and early eighties. Way back then I used to appear and say how social collisions give rise to such a belief. And so the '500 days' program also contained a kind of mystery effect. No one

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had yet seen it, but the idea of its miracle-working properties was being purposefully and systematically inculcated in the mass consciousness.

15. But when the program is placed on the table, when everyone can read it, perceive some contradictions and shortcomings, or, at any rate, take a conscious and critical approach to its calculations and authenticity, the mystery effect vanishes. But the time which elapses before the decision is adopted is destructive. And so people want to adopt the program as quickly as possible, without professional investigation and analysis, on trust alone. "Let's believe! Such names are there, such humane aims are proclaimed. Let's adopt it, and then we can see. We will amend it, finish it off, correct it, elaborate it. Why bother with trifles now?!"

16. [Garifullina] And, at the same time, begin introducing this program super-promptly, as early as 1 October?...

17. [Abalkin] There is another nuance here. Yes, time is altogether getting short. The government program is also short of time, and we must not delay for long. The first of October marks the start of the fourth quarter--we too emphasize this in our programs. Only there this date is a zero option--there has been no history, and nothing at all has happened before 1 October. And yet there is history. The reform is already under way. The laws on ownership, land, and leasing have already been adopted, the tax system has been adopted, and the Law on the Population's Income Tax has been in effect since 1 July.

18. [Garifullina] Was all this the preparation?

19. [Abalkin] Yes, the preparation, but also the introduction of the reform. The resolution on joint-stock companies was adopted so as not to wait for any further legislative acts. The first companies have already been registered. Commercial banks, which are the second level of the banking system--there are already approximately 300 of them--are preparing the ground. The first trade exchanges have already been set up and are beginning to function. Life is on the move! The cooperative movement is developing too.

20. [Garifullina] That is, preparations were being made during all the years of perestroika to introduce the program and make the transition to the market?

21. [Abalkin] Not all the years. I must be fair and admit that there was tardiness in implementing the economic reform and failures to meet deadlines, and it was introduced uncomprehensively. This happened particularly during 1987-1989--after the well-known

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decisions at the beginning of the reform. But if we speak of the new government, which has been working for just over one year, this work really has been carried out consistently throughout the year. And particularly intensively over the past eight months, since December, since the decisions of the Second Congress of People's Deputies which supported the measures proposed by the government and gave instructions to prepare the program.

22. Incidentally, it is important to point out that very frequently even respected people, highly respected people's deputies speak of the responsibility and the mistakes of the government over five years. But the government has been operating for just one year, just like all the new structures of power, starting with the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet, which were elected only in March last year and began work in May. So it is incorrect and unforgivable--I repeat--for quite professional and competent people to muddle dates or to do this deliberately.

23. But you were right to remark that the preparation was made consistently and that the whole system certainly did not start from scratch. The laws which I mentioned have been adopted, and a new package of documents has been prepared and was submitted in August for examination by the USSR Supreme Soviet. All this boils down to very responsibly taking a big radical step.

24. The weakness of uncoordinated actions has already been proved by our experience. This is inadmissible, and therefore many laws have already been adopted and normative acts are being prepared. I will begin with a simple matter. We have already adopted a decision to introduce new purchase prices. Peasants await new prices for milk, meat, cotton, sugar beets, sunflowers-- the plan is built on them. This is a powerful incentive for any forms--peasant farms, collective farms, state farms--to begin functioning efficiently. For the price is, above all, an incentive for producers. If we introduce the pension law 1 January, we must have its financial base--new deductions for social insurance. The third thing is deductions from social insurance, and the pension law. If we introduce a new system of taxes on profits--we seem to have all agreed on this, and the law comes into force 1 January--it proposes a package for changing the system of prices. Without them it is impossible to introduce either taxes or new interest rates on bank credits, which, incidentally, are included in all the programs. They are all bound up, and you cannot tear them apart. So it is unacceptable to try to tear up and dismember only a part of these measures, so as to cast doubt on the reality of social programs, of major financial and material support for the countryside and the agro-industrial sector by means of prices and special targeted investments of funds in the social restructuring of the countryside--the provision of gas supplies, road construction,

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the guaranteed supply of material and technical resources. It is hardly admissible to improve the economy at such a price. That is, this is either the consistent, logical implementation of the steps which have been begun or an attempt to cancel out everything that has been done and to begin afresh, having torn up these measures at the time of their introduction.

25. [Garifullina] How do you assess the reality of financial improvement in the alternative programs?

26. [Abalkin] I can state with absolute accuracy, on the basis of an analysis of the proffered materials, that the measures in the program under discussion for financial improvement over a short period--100 days--are unrealistic. They are not confirmed by calculations and cannot be implemented without an offensive upon the living standards of broad sections of the population and upon social programs. And if they are unrealistic, the guarantees which could restrain the sharp, rapid growth in prices that have been set free fall away. This means that it is quite likely that the inflation spiral will unwind and we will lose the advantages which improvement could produce.

27. Here, just as in the second point on the future structure of the USSR, it is necessary to choose. The way we see it and they--these approaches--are incompatible.

28. And society must make the choice. Precisely society. But the choice cannot and must not go through in some offices, without the people. We must determine which option we choose. I see how complex and responsible the task facing the Supreme Soviet is.... And yet I emphasize once again that it is a question of a choice, and this is not just a comparison of two alternative options. The choice of program is both a choice of destiny and an assumption of responsibility. Someone must answer for any option. Whoever submitted the program, voted for it, and assumed responsibility for its fulfillment must also answer before history, before the people's judgment.

29. If we speak of the government, it is prepared to answer only for the program which it elaborated and which it submitted repeatedly for discussion. It has been discussed three times in the Presidential Council and the Council of the Federation, in addition to the Supreme Soviet. Of course, we can assume responsibility only under certain conditions, and we are ready to formulate them.

30. [Garifullina] What are these conditions?

31. [Abalkin] To be brief, they are strict observance of the adopted laws and the USSR Constitution. Rejection of any actions which

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violate the norms of life in a rule-of-law state. Observance of these laws at all levels and the restoration of law and order. Rejection of all destructive actions which represent nothing but playing with the people's destinies. Rejection of economic blockades of territories and mass strikes, for which the country's population has to pay all the same, and the opening of enterprises of priority importance for the national economy connected with the production of medicinal preparations and many other products. The declaration, if you like, of civilian peace and the conclusion of voluntary concord.

32. We are on the edge of an abyss. Any incautious step could topple us into it. We must appeal to the people's reason, to their consciousness--without this it is impossible to work. This is an appeal not only to the republics. It is an appeal to public movements and mass public actions. It is also an appeal to such a very mighty fourth element of power--the press and the mass media, which shape public opinion in the country. We must unite and understand what awaits the people. And not try to place personal, political, or scientific ambitions above the people's interests.

33. [Garifullina] Leonid Ivanovich, what key, fundamental differences are there between the programs in their approaches to privatization and the easing of state control?

34. [Abalkin] The most fundamental difference in this sphere concerns land. We are opposed to the sale of land and its transfer to private ownership. We recognize different forms: freedom of management and freedom to choose any forms of management. Peasants, rural workers, and city dwellers who want to use land will decide for themselves. Provision can be made for long-term leasing, leasing for an unlimited term, and the bequeathing of leased land, if ecological and other requirements are not violated in its use. The sale of land into private ownership contradicts the very logic of economic development. Incidentally, many experts with whom we have spoken, even Western ones, have warned us of the dangerous consequences of selling land. Yes, a person must feel confident and stable, and the bequeathing of land to children must be guaranteed, but the land is the common property of the people who inhabit the country, just as other natural resources are.

35. As for privatization.... Incidentally, this term is not quite accurate, and we do not use it. Reduction of state control is a more accurate yet also a more complex concept. I will cite the following example. In my view, the president has accomplished an act of colossal political strength-- he has transferred to the ownership of the Academy of Sciences the property of institutes, laboratories, and scientific centers. It has ceased to be state property and is now the property of the Academy of Sciences. But is it really private

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property if all the installations, laboratories, space centers--just what does it not include!--if all this is now at the disposal of the community of scientists? This is a totally different structure. There likewise exist multifarious forms of property of various types--cooperative, collective, joint-stock, and certain others which are not covered by the concept "private property." It is admissible and is dictated by its own logic when it is a question of a hairdressing salon, a gasoline pump, a bakery, or something similar. But, when reducing state control, it is necessary to ensure the primacy of labor collectives. Precisely these must own the means of production and dispose of the results of their labor. Both the master's mentality and high responsibility for the results of their labor will take shape precisely with the transfer of state property to them.

36. All forms must be combined and, when placed under equal conditions, by means of normal struggle and competition, prove their advantages and correspondingly occupy a greater or lesser proportion. I would say that there are no profound differences of principle here, because the question of exploitation has been removed both from the program submitted for discussion by the president and from ours. I would like only to point out that reducing state control is a lengthy process. A juridical change in the forms of ownership is an act of a moment, while a change in economic forms of relations requires considerably longer times. It is dangerous to rush things.

37. [Garifullina] Leonid Ivanovich, the program of the Union government is criticized primarily and chiefly for supposedly being based on a substantial rise in prices, and this has quite an impact on people who, on the whole, are not familiar with the program. Do the alternative programs intend to avoid an increase in prices?

38. [Abalkin] When the programs are being compared, it is natural that the supporters of both programs try to emphasize the weak aspects or to accentuate attention on them. I get the impression that this question is manifestly misrepresented and exaggerated. An attempt is being made to prove that all disagreements boil down only to this, and the myth that this is the chief difference is being stubbornly spread.

39. I am convinced that the creation of certain illusions is an attempt to evade the fundamental questions of which I spoke at the beginning--the fate of the Union, an accelerated transition, or a cautious, considered movement toward the market. These questions take a back seat, as it were, and red rags are pulled out to tease public opinion.

40. The difference lies elsewhere. Prices will rise in all

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instances--this is a law of the market, a law of economics. If prices do not rise, speculation will increase, and no methods, including administrative measures, can beat speculation if such a system of price formation exists. It is fertile ground for speculation. Prices always gravitate toward their conventional, natural level. If this is not done legally, it happens illegally on the black market.

41. The difference is this. By regularizing prices, which inevitably follows from the overall logic of deductions for social insurance, and raising the prices of oil and coal, without which we cannot finance the development of basic sectors of the economy--this all has a chain-reaction effect --first, we fully compensate the population for the price increase implemented by the state. One for one. Ruble for ruble. We do not want to make a single kopek out of this. And, second, we then place this sum of prices under the state's control.

42. This is the kind of magnitude of the sums involved so that you can get a feel of the logic. The volume of commodity turnover in our country is roughly 400 billion rubles [R]--these are annual sales. The increase in prices which we envisage amounts to R135 billion--approximately one-third of the total volume--and one-third goes to compensate the population, ruble for ruble, as I have already said. The state imposes a certain limit on all these prices, which are basic for the population-- they include foodstuffs, clothes, footwear, and cultural and domestic goods. It places these prices under its control. Some 30 percent of prices are under the control of the Union government, 40 percent are given over to the republics, and approximately 30 percent are given up to contract prices and free price formation. After increasing expenditure and then compensating the population for it, we guarantee the continued production and sales of products to the population at firm prices.

43. A different option has been chosen in the program submitted by the president. It states that prices will not be raised formally or administratively by the government but will change under the influence of supply and demand, i.e. market conditions. It provides for limits on certain commodities and names a list of 150 commodities. They do not include bread, it is said, except for just two kinds, while the rest are free. You do not particularly have to be a seer to understand that there will not be bread for 13 kopeks or "Orel" bread, but there will be all the rest, only more expensive, and no one will receive compensation for that. There will be indexation, for, incidentally, our programs coincide with regard to indexation. But if financial improvement, of which I have spoken, is unrealistic, prices will start to creep up, and it will be hard to control their growth. And, according to our estimates, it will be

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considerably higher than forecast. True, there appear to be no guilty parties here. Well, really, who is guilty? Prices have risen by themselves. The market! But this does not make things any easier for people. Of course, if you draw a veil over this and do not focus attention on it, then the state appears to remain aloof here.

44. [Garifullina] Paying tribute to the government program, a deputy said that it candidly shows the ravines, but there are also catwalks by means of which it is possible to extricate oneself from the ravines. Which of these "catwalks" strikes you personally as strongest?

45. [Abalkin] The extensive program of measures for financial improvement. The buildup of output through conversion, particularly of complex domestic equipment, which we want to throw onto the market in order to tie up money savings; the reduction of actual spending on defense, on production, of investments, and on aid to foreign states.

46. We are not abandoning the realization of the planned social programs, and so we are not reckoning on carrying out the period of financial improvement in 100 days, and it will be doing well if it takes only 18 months. This coincides with the general logic of the moderate radical option: to improve things, but as painlessly as possible. To improve things, but without treading on social programs.

47. There are the following niceties. People say: "We will sell off state property, and so we will both achieve financial improvement and stabilize the market." But we have made a very professional analysis--involving excellent specialists--of the structure of savings. A person holds money but cannot today buy a television set, a refrigerator, a washing machine, a suite of furniture, or a set of kitchen utensils. He has put the money by and is waiting. So if you sell a hairdressing salon, a laundry, or a poncho that was military property, someone will buy and some money will be drawn off, but the guy who put it by for a television set or a refrigerator will not buy shares. All the same, this money will remain in the consumer market as pressing demand, and if we do not counter it with appropriate measures, it will not be reabsorbed. But even if people buy some property, maybe this will reduce the sum of the investments that we now have, but it will not produce a great improvement and might even worsen the financial situation, because these are credit resources, the population's savings. All the same, this whole mass that has been put by will await its turn.

48. [Garifullina] How does the government intend to protect us under market conditions?

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49. [Abalkin] We are making a very broad study of guarantees and measures of social protection, and we include such questions of social protection as ensuring employment, creating jobs and alternative forms of employment--which is very important under conditions of coming unemployment--retraining worker cadres.... The population's ecological protection also comes under the social block. Everything is written down in detail. And, most importantly, we do not recognize the admissibility of curtailing social programs that have already been adopted.

50. [Garifullina] Leonid Ivanovich, do you consider it possible to adopt without discussion by the entire people a program which will abruptly change the political and economic situation in the country? And, incidentally, what is your attitude to the people's deputies' proposal to hold a referendum?

51. [Abalkin] A proposal to hold a referendum was advanced by the government back in May, when cardinal changes in the system of price formation were being discussed, and we went openly, although people said to us--you are committing suicide and you will not get support or trust. But we replied that we wanted to play an honest game and so were ready to hold a referendum. But the proposal was not adopted. These are not such simple questions. If, let us say, the government program is put to a nationwide referendum and if we receive support in that, then the government gets independence from the Supreme Soviet and even from the congress and we receive the highest mandate of confidence from the people and become independent in implementing economic policy. Whoever has obtained the people's approval--and a referendum is the highest expression of the people's will--possesses such a right. However, far from everyone was prepared to risk the government's getting the opportunity. The overall distribution of sociopolitical forces and the struggle against the government had an influence.

52. A referendum demands precision, clarity, and simplicity. A 180-page program cannot be submitted for discussion. And how to vote? I agree with this. Two questions are ready for a referendum. The president himself spoke of one of them in his speech in the Supreme Soviet. This is the question of private ownership of land, a most pointed question demanding a clear answer--for or against.

53. And the second question for a referendum, of which I spoke in my speech, is the question of the future state structure of the USSR. For or against preserving the USSR as a federative state.

54. It is clear, simple, and obvious. And the people must make their choice unequivocally. And then, having received the people's answer, it is necessary to stop all political games, for then no one

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has the right to dispute the choice made by the people. At least not for quite a while, within the life of a generation.

55. Matters really have now reached the extreme exacerbation of the situation, although perhaps I have not put it accurately--things probably have not reached that point. People sometimes say: Things could not be worse. Excuse me, but if we do not take decisive measures, do not instill order, and do not achieve concord in society, life as it is today will seem like paradise.

56. What can await us if we do not venture upon considered, well thought-out steps and do not achieve concord? The prognosis is quite clear: The first crisis will break with the onset of winter and will escalate into a very strong public protest and disobedience. If we still manage somehow to get through the winter, then a general collapse of economic ties will, I believe, ensue toward spring--by February-March. This will be the most terrible political and economic crisis in the country, and it is already hard to predict the further consequences.

57. Today we have not yet reached the furthest line but are standing before it, and God forbid that we cross it, for then it will be too late to hold a referendum and then some other force must come and say: "Enough! Let us instill order." What is needed to prevent that happening is the maximum concord, awareness of our responsibility for the peoples' destinies, and readiness to assume it. Then an opportunity will emerge to extricate the country from the crisis and from the impending threat of chaos.

58. [Garifullina] Leonid Ivanovich, does it not seem to you that the following problem is one of the causes of instability in the country--local Soviets and the center syndrome?

59. [Abalkin] Alas, it does exist. What is the matter here? A real demarcation of powers has occurred. A huge number of spheres of the national economy--the agro-industrial complex with all its sectors, housing and municipal services, and construction--have been transferred to the jurisdiction of local soviets in the republics. Some of them recently, but others long ago, like the bread-baking industry, for example. But the center syndrome does exist: "Bus services in our city are bad. Which way is Ryzhkov's government looking?" A rough formula. This has taken root and become the object of speculation.

60. People who either do not possess management skills or are unable to resolve specific questions, who frequently arrived in the soviets riding on a wave of rally emotions and of attempts at destructive criticism of absolutely everything, are now trying to shirk

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responsibility. The operation of city transport and municipal services, preparations for winter, fruit and vegetable supplies to the city, the organization of the trade in bread, etc. are the direct, full, and exclusive province and responsibility of local organs of power. It is essential to reject the center syndrome. Given your own irresponsibility and inability to cope with things, you must not shift the pointer of responsibility to those who have no bearing on local affairs. This gives rise to a general atmosphere of nervousness and political instability.

61. [Garifullina] How do you forecast the development of events if one program or the other is adopted?

62. [Abalkin] First, if the government's program is adopted and, second, if terms on which the government will assume responsibility are accepted, a slow process of improvement awaits us. A process extending over 18-24 months. There will be gradual stabilization and the gradual resolution of tasks connected with saturating the consumer market. This will not happen at once with regard to large goods. There will begin--although also, maybe, not in an accelerated version--an upsurge of labor activeness, a new motivation mechanism will take shape, a thrifty attitude toward labor, property, and national assets will be revived, ecological crises will gradually be resolved, and there will be an equally slow and gradual restoration of the population's confidence in the ability of the country's leadership to emerge from the crisis. The situation will be rough and even quite prone to zigzags, and the possibility of conflicts is not excluded. A problem-free future hardly awaits us, but, on the other hand, there will be gradual improvement.

63. If we take the "500 days" program in its initial form, I do not believe in it. I consider it unrealistic and not feasible at the initial stage, and all the rest will follow from this. If, as is proposed, all existing structures of management are destroyed without delay, ministries are eliminated without delay, and prices are set free, then it is possible to expect a collapse with the inevitable destruction of economic ties between regions and related enterprises. In many cases production will be paralyzed no later than the spring and, most likely, sooner--and there will be a considerable slump in production. The mothballing of construction projects will cause mass unemployment. No protective mechanisms will be able to compensate for the splurge in prices. Not only an economic but also a political crisis will develop and could either take the long drawn-out line toward still greater chaos and collapse or result in the removal from the political arena of the forces which authored this program and in the arrival of some new authoritative political structures.

64. I would not like to meet with you in six months' time and say:

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See, I told you so. I do not want that to happen. But this is only possible if an attempt is not made to implement it. And if it is----no, I do not want that! You must not win bets at the cost of the people's sacrifices.

65. But I am obliged to see this result as a citizen and a scientist and to struggle against this with all my might, which is what I am doing. So far, it is true, without any particular success.

66. [Garifullina] Leonid Ivanovich, does the debate in parliament reassure you, and how do you assess it in general?

67. [Abalkin] Of course, the debate does not satisfy me very much. I observe this process at close quarters, and I feel that deputies are under quite tough pressure both from the drafters of the programs and from the press, which has expressed its opinion without even reading them. And pressure resulting from the authority of Russia: "Look, they have adopted a program, so what about us?" And yet they voted without reading the second program at all. It was clear to them--without reading it!--that it was bad! Nonetheless, a deputy must demand respect for himself and only vote when everything is clear to him, when he has made the choice himself, not under pressure....

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