

## Economic Reform in the USSR and Eastern Europe : The Novosibirsk Paper

Ramnath Narayanswamy

In this paper, an attempt has been made to situate the importance of the famous Novosibirsk paper on the conception and implementation of economic reform in the USSR and Eastern Europe. In late 1983, a confidential paper on economic reform was leaked to the Western press providing valuable insights about the nature of views and arguments obtaining within the closed doors of the Soviet administrative and academic world on various problems confronting the Soviet economy and discussions on remedial measures contemplated in these circles to remove them (Zaslavskaya, 1983). A little while later, the *Arkhip samizdata* came forward with the full Russian text supplemented with several useful annotations (Zaslavskaya, 1984). While the title page and the author's name were missing from the original copy, the *Arkhip samizdata* supplied evidence to credit authorship to Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a professor and full member of the USSR Academy of Sciences from Novosibirsk, as well as head of the section dealing with social problems at the Institute of Economics and Organisation of Industrial Production of the Siberian division of the Academy. A word of caution is however necessary : while there is no doubt about the paper's interest and its value in highlighting the character of Soviet economic thinking prevailing among the higher echelons of the economic and administrative hierarchy, the circumstances under which it was placed before the public remain unknown. It is said to have been a confidential paper presented at a closed seminar organised by the economic departments of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, the Academy of Sciences and Gosplan. Despite these factors, its authenticity does not appear to have been in serious doubt. According to Philip Hanson, a noted specialist on Soviet affairs: '... there is no internal evidence (...) to throw doubt on the press reports of its origins ... the report that it existed officially in just seventy numbered copies seems plausible enough (Hanson, 1983). In what follows, I shall limit myself to the significance of Zaslavskaya's paper with a view to briefly examine their implications on the problems and prospects of economic reform in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.