

## Alexander Yakovlev, Glasnost, and the Destruction of Soviet Societal Consciousness

<http://www.soviet-empire.com/ussr/viewtopic.php?f=110&t=52073>

### Introduction

In 1985, the USSR gave the outward appearance of a stable and powerful state, with no clear signs of national, ethnic or social discord, and a political base of nearly twenty million Communist Party members. Six years later, suffering from an array of political, economic and social crises, the country ceased to exist. In the last twenty years, a rich preliminary historiography on the collapse of the Soviet Union has been written. Historians and political scientists have presented a variety of theories explaining why the country fell apart. Some focus on the inherent 'flaws of socialism,'<sup>1</sup> others discuss the role of strong intellectual, nationalist and popular opposition to the Communist Party,<sup>2</sup> while others still focus on external factors such as the Cold War and the country's failure to integrate into the emerging global information society.<sup>3</sup>

One crucial aspect to understanding the country's sudden crisis and disintegration which has been insufficiently explored by scholars is the conscious and systematic effort by liberal reformers, led by ideology secretary Alexander Yakovlev, to restructure Soviet societal consciousness.<sup>4</sup> This endeavour was carried out via the re-evaluation of the present, the reinterpretation of the past and the disassembly of the old hegemonic ideology, social norms and moral values.<sup>5</sup> Its ultimate result was the

1 Jack Matlock, *Autopsy of an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1995).; Wisla Suraska, *How the Soviet Union Disappeared* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

2 Walter Laqueur, *The Dream That Failed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).; Alexander Dallin, "Causes of the Collapse of the USSR," *Post-Soviet Affairs* Vol.8 (1992), p.279-302.; Dmitri Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).; Yitzhak Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).; Jerry F. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR, 1985-1991* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 1997).

3 Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994).; Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).; B. Wayne Howell, "Reagan and Reykjavik: Arms Control, SDI, and the Argument for Human Rights," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* Vol.11, No.3 (Fall 2008), p.389-415.; Manuel Castells and Emma Kiselova, *The Collapse of Soviet Communism: A View from the Information Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

4 Merriam-Webster defines 'consciousness' as 'the state of being characterized by sensation, emotion, volition, and thought.' <[www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consciousness](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consciousness)>. For the purposes of this essay, the elements of 'societal consciousness' include the society's hegemonic ideology, worldview, conceptions of the legitimacy of the state, dominant historical and cultural narratives, and social ethics and norms.

5 In a book entitled *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, Russian historian, sociologist and journalist Sergei Kara-Murza details the powerful capacity of social institutions, mass culture and the

media to program and manipulate people's thoughts and behaviour. Kara-Murza documents the means by which these institutions successfully worked to influence and transform the Soviet and post-Soviet people's mass consciousness during and after perestroika. In many ways Kara-Murza's work supports and complements ideas and formulations arrived at independently by the author. See Sergei Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem* (Moscow: Eksmopress, 2001).

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collapse of support for the Soviet project among elements crucial to its maintenance, including the mass intelligentsia and the nomenklatura. This essay will seek to complement the academic discourse on the collapse of the USSR by focusing on the effort to reform societal consciousness and its consequences.

A secondary goal of this essay will be to challenge a widespread association of glasnost, both as a theoretical concept and as a concrete historical process, with openness, transparency, and the freedom of information and debate. According to most scholarly accounts, if glasnost played a role in the collapse of the country, it was by means of its unleashing into the open of long-standing public dissatisfaction with the regime. This is said to have resulted in the speedy institutional collapse of the Communist Party and the frail Marxist ideology upon which it was based.<sup>6</sup> This essay will argue that such an explanation is overly simplistic, and must be qualified with an understanding that, especially in the crucial period between 1986-1989, 'glasnost' was in actuality very much a state-directed project aimed at the radicalization and reorientation of public discourse away from formerly hegemonic political and socio-cultural norms. Using the extreme hierarchization of Soviet political and social power structures to their benefit, the reformers staffed the media, cultural institutions and academia with liberal, reform-minded intellectuals. Once conservative opposition to reform crystallized, the reformers came to use many of the traditional tools and resources of the pre-reform 'totalitarian' system to disarm opponents, including their monopoly over the mass media and cultural institutions, powers of appointment, and direct and indirect forms of censorship.<sup>7</sup> Only after the successful radicalization of public discourse and the marginalization of anti-reformist forces were the mechanisms of totalitarian informational and ideological control gradually disassembled. This essay will thus argue that the theoretical concept of

6 See for instance Ofira Seliktar, *Politics, Paradigms, and Intelligence Failures: Why So Few Predicted the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), p.125-129.; John Miller, *Mikhail Gorbachev and the End of Soviet Power* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1993), p.90-103.; Dmitrii Furman, "Historical Materialism Turned Upside Down? From the Ideology of Perestroika to the Ideology of "Building Capitalism" in Russia," Trans. Michel Vale. *Russian Social Science Review* (1995), p.18.

7 This thesis is in essence an adaptation and expansion of an argument made by Russian-Armenian political scientist Sergei Kurginyan in *Sud Vremeni* (Court of Time), a popular Russian historical television debate program. ("Glasnost: Shag k podlinnoi svobode ili informatsionnaya voina?" *Sud Vremeni*. Petersburg – Channel 5. December 6, 2010.)

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glasnost must to a large extent be disassociated from concrete historical processes occurring in the Soviet Union during perestroika.

Beginning with a discussion of the Soviet media, cultural and academic environment in the pre-glasnost period, the essay will then move on to document the coming to power of Alexander Yakovlev and his work as Central Committee Secretary for Propaganda in placing liberal, reform-minded elements of the intelligentsia in positions where they could influence social discourse. It will then examine developments in the media, academia, and culture during perestroika, and analyze how these influenced popular thinking about the country's political, social and economic system. Next, the essay will consider the implications which the extreme hierarchization of power in the Soviet system had on the process of reform, and some of the ways in which the reformers used the 'totalitarian' apparatus to their benefit. After that, the essay will discuss the causes and consequences of the 1988 climactic victory in the struggle against conservative opponents of reform. Finally, the essay will conclude with an analysis of the results of reform, namely the destruction of Soviet societal consciousness.

### **The USSR Pre-Glasnost**

Glasnost, literally 'voice-ness' or 'publicity,' is a political term advocating openness in government institutions and the freedom of information. First used in the Russian political arena in the era of Tsars Alexander I and II,<sup>8</sup> in the twentieth century it was first employed during the construction of Soviet power in the aftermath of the October Revolution. Lenin spoke of the need to subject the "economy, as well as the bureaucracy and party machinery" to media criticism, as part of "a constant struggle against 'everything negative which remains from the old structure and has become manifest for one reason or another in the construction of the new.'"<sup>9</sup> Throughout the reform period of the mid-to-late 1980s, Gorbachev would justify his own glasnost campaign on the basis of this 'Leninist' principle.

<sup>8</sup> At that time, it was referred to as an open "exchange of opinions within the bureaucracy about the country's much needed social and economic transformation." (Brian McNair, "Glasnost and Restructuring in the Soviet Media," *Media, Culture and Society* Vol.11 (1989), p.328.; See also Tomasz Goban-Klas, "Gorbachev's Glasnost: A Concept in Need of Theory and Research," *European Journal of Communication* Vol.4 (1989), p.248.)

<sup>9</sup> McNair, 1989, p.328-329.

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In practice, throughout most of its history, the Soviet Union did not operate according to the 'Leninist' idea of glasnost. Nevertheless, especially after the post-Stalin thaw, a degree of openness in the media, the cultural sphere, and academia did exist. A mistake made by many Western observers when studying the perestroika period is to attribute certain long-established forms of social commentary and criticism to Gorbachev's glasnost. Alaina Lemon comments on this tendency to misread "signs read locally as continuity...as signs of change because...they seem to clash against [the] socialist fabric."<sup>10</sup>

Discussing the Soviet media apparatus, Jonathan Becker posits that in the post-Stalin period a “post-totalitarian press system” came into existence, resulting in “an increase in diversity in press content.”<sup>11</sup> While retaining the power to exert “both positive and negative control,” the state came to tolerate much of what it did not explicitly endorse, and even allowed for a degree of “permitted dissent,” especially among publications with limited, elite audiences.<sup>12</sup> As editors were given more authority to become first-line censors, a diversity of conceptions over what constituted the correct ‘socialist approach’ made it possible for a variety of viewpoints to be published among the vast array of Party, state and interest group publications.<sup>13</sup> Michael Binyon confirms that while the Western image of the Soviet press was one “of a turgid...official prose,”<sup>14</sup> Soviet journalism was in actuality quite effective in working to investigate and document a number of serious societal problems such as alcoholism, youth violence and government corruption.<sup>15</sup>

All throughout the cultural sphere, a degree of social criticism existed and thrived. Lemon notes that “[m]yriad Soviet cultural products –television, cartoons, films, variety shows, children’s

10 Alaina Lemon, “Sympathy for the Weary State?: Cold War Chronotopes and Moscow Others,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 51, No.4 (2009), p.842.

11 Jonathan A. Becker, *Soviet and Russian Press Coverage of the United States: Press, Politics and Identity in Transition* (London: MacMillan, 1999), p.15.

12 Ibid.

13 David Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.321-322.

14 Michael Binyon, *Life in Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 118.

15 Ibid., p. 59, 118-119, 195.

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plays...display[ed] slippages, contradictions, and non-sequiturs to hegemony.”<sup>16</sup> Attributing this tendency to the explosive growth in cultural production and distribution during the post-war period, Kristin Roth-Ey notes that as a result:

"people found more spaces within to pursue their own interests, as they defined them...even as they appeared to contradict big-picture ideological and economic goals...Soviet culture had many taboos still, and people could be harshly punished for violating them. But with the renunciation of mass terror after Stalin’s death, these were penalties of an altogether different order. Now there were roomier pockets within the Soviet culture formation for individuals and institutions to pursue various interests –not freedom of action, but a broader scope for leveraging relationships, ignoring instructions, and playing one principle against another in the name of a third."<sup>17</sup>

David Lane suggests that the state’s decision to tolerate much of this material also came from a sense of necessity to bow to ‘public demand’ in order to avoid losing its effectiveness as the hegemonic disseminator of information, ideas, and values.<sup>18</sup> Thus, satirical short films known as *Fitil*, describing the absurdities and shortcomings of daily life, played on television and in

movie theatres in the place of advertising. The satirical journal Krokodil regularly pushed the boundaries of acceptable criticism through its cartoons. In the late 1970s, a number of novels by famous Soviet writers discussed problems such as the decay of the village, the spread of alcoholism, and the difficulties of working class life.<sup>19</sup>

Along with the media and cultural institutions, academia also benefited from the post-Stalin thaw. Linda Lubrano's 1970s study of Soviet science confirms the existence of conditions "quite similar to [that] of scientists in other countries,"<sup>20</sup> including tolerance for informal networks, pluralism among scientific elites, and a liberal political tradition among many scientists.<sup>21</sup> Kara-Murza, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences since the 1960s, argues that the liberal intelligentsia's radical opinions and theoretical formulations were developed through thirty years of informal institutional debate, usually

<sup>16</sup> Lemon, p.842.

<sup>17</sup> Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p.13.

<sup>18</sup> Lane, 1992, p.324.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Laqueur, "Gorbachev and Epimetheus: The Origins of the Russian Crisis," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.28 (1993), p.401.; Binyon, p.193.

<sup>20</sup> Linda L. Lubrano, "The Hidden Structure of Soviet Science," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* Vol.18, No.2 (Spring 1993), p.148.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148-149.

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with little interference from the state.<sup>22</sup> Former Gorbachev advisor Yevgeny Ambartsumov confirms that liberally-minded intellectuals had little difficulty in retaining their status, since the threat of removal from one institute or office in practice usually only meant transfer to another.<sup>23</sup>

Ultimately, within shifting and sometimes unclear boundaries set by the state, Soviet journalists, cultural workers, and academics had more flexibility to express independent opinions than is recognized by most Western observers. While explicitly questioning the legitimacy of the regime, the validity of socialism or the role of the Party was publically impermissible, pointing out the absurdities, injustices and frustrations of life within 'real existing socialism' was usually perfectly acceptable long before glasnost.

Tolerance for a level of social criticism did not by itself threaten to turn late-Soviet society against the hegemonic ideology, symbols and narratives being inculcated by the state. Marxism-Leninism formally remained the sole permitted "Weltanschauung imbued with incontestable scientific truth,"<sup>24</sup> and the state retained control of the institutions disseminating the narratives which people used to conceptualize their identities and place within the system.<sup>25</sup> While popular belief may have been strained by the difficult circumstances of daily life and by the partial disconnect between the explicit moral code expressed through propaganda and actually existing realities, Alexei Yurchak notes that "great numbers of people living in socialism" nevertheless

“genuinely supported its fundamental values and ideals.”<sup>26</sup> Vladimir Shlapentokh concurs, noting that the vast majority of Soviet people questioned in sociological surveys in the early-to-mid 1980s showed support for virtually all of the official dogmas put forth by the state, including the premise of the supremacy of public over private property, the doctrine

22 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.82.

23 Yegeny Ambartsumov, “Perestroika Began in Prague: Interview with Yevgeny Ambartsumov,” *Democratizatsiya* Vol.17, No.4 (October 2009), p.373.

24 Abdusalam A. Guseinov and Vladislav A. Lektorsky, “Philosophy in Russia: History and Present State,” *Diogenes* Vol.222-223 (2009), p.11-12.; See also Stephen Kotkin, *Steeltown, USSR: Soviet Society in the Gorbachev Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p.44.

25 Donald Filtzer, “Red Warriors,” *History Workshop Journal* Vol.63 (Spring, 2007), p.345-346.; Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.310.; Alfred B. Evans, Jr., *Soviet Marxism-Leninism: The Decline of an Ideology* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), p.4.

26 Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p.484.

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of social equality, central economic planning, the state’s conception of patriotism, and the moral superiority of Soviet-Russian culture over that of the West.<sup>27</sup> Ultimately the Soviet Union prior to glasnost was a unique and conceptually stable society with its own hegemonic ideology, worldview, historical and cultural narratives and social ethics and moral norms.

Gorbachev, Yakovlev and the Project to Reform Soviet Society

Soon after coming into office in March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev began a process of reshuffling the Politburo and the Central Committee, removing his political and ideological enemies, the aged holdovers of the Brezhnev era, and corrupted Party and state bureaucrats, replacing them with technocrats, pragmatic centrists, and what turned out to be liberal democratic socialists. Doubtlessly his most important new appointment was Alexander Yakovlev, former Soviet ambassador to Canada and director of the Institute for World Economic and International Relations (IMEMO), who became the head of the Central Committee Secretariat’s Department of Propaganda in September 1985.<sup>28</sup> Characterized by his associates as a ‘pragmatic liberal,’<sup>29</sup> Yakovlev would confirm the true intensity of his anti-communist convictions only after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup> Conceived of as the main intellectual force behind many of Gorbachev’s reformist ideas,<sup>31</sup> Yakovlev quickly rose to prominence

27 Vladimiar Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and How it Collapsed* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), p.141, p.181.

28 Gorbachev first met Yakovlev in 1983 as a result of an official trip to Canada as a member of a Soviet agricultural delegation. Yakovlev would later recall that at their first meeting, the two men took the opportunity to speak “completely frankly about everything...the main idea [being] that society must change, and must be built on different principles.” (Yakovlev cited in Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold*

War (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p.184.) Upon returning to Moscow, Gorbachev convinced Yuri Andropov to bring Yakovlev back to the USSR, and to appoint him to the directorship of the IMEMO.

29 Joseph Gibbs, *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet Media in the First Phase of Perestroika* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), p.15.

30 Writing after the collapse, Yakovlev characterized the Bolshevik project as a "criminal" enterprise which carried out a "democide" against the Russian people and arose from a utopian ideology facilitating the promulgation of "inhuman concepts." (Alexander Yakovlev, *A Century of Violence in Soviet Russia* Trans. Anthony Austin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p.15, 151.)

31 Yakovlev's role in formulating the postulates of Gorbachev's reformist ideology and in surrounding him with 'his people' (other radical liberal reformers) is documented in the memoirs of many former members of the Soviet political elite, including Politburo members Yegor Ligachev and Nikolai Ryzhkov, and Gorbachev's Chief of Staff Valery Boldin. (Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin: The Memoirs of Yegor Ligachev* Trans. Catherine A Fitzpatrick et al. (New York: Pantheon Books), p.97, 112.; Valery Boldin, *Ten Years that Shook the World: The Gorbachev Era as Witnessed by his Chief of Staff* Trans. Evelyn Rossiter (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p.73, 113.; Peter Shearman, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* Vol.26, No.1 (1997), p.130-131.)

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during the perestroika period in the areas of propaganda, ideology, and foreign affairs. Arguably the most important and underrated of his activities was his role in the promotion of a new cadre of liberal intellectuals in the media, the arts, and academia, the results of which ultimately led much of society to a re-evaluation and rejection of the Soviet system.

### **1986: The Breakthrough Year for the Liberal 'Cultural Offensive'**

In the aftermath of what appeared to be a traditionally conservative Party Congress in February-March 1986, Yakovlev was given authority to begin a series of personnel changes in the country's leading media organs, artistic unions, and academic offices. Carrying out what Simon Cosgrove has called a "cultural offensive," Yakovlev's work "consisted of a series of direct interventions in literary and cultural institutions," effectively constituting "'a massive pre-emptive strike' against conservative forces" opposed to reform.<sup>32</sup>

Within the space of a few months in mid-to-late 1986, crucial personnel changes were made in the central print media.<sup>33</sup> Major publications including *Ogonyok* (a magazine published by the Pravda publishing house), *Moskovskie Novosti* (a weekly bilingual Russian/English newspaper, published by Novosti Press Agency), *Kommunist* (official Party theoretical journal), *Trud* (the labour unions' paper), *Krasnaya Zvezda* (organ of the Ministry of Defence), and the literary journals *Novi Mir*, *Voprosi Literaturi*, *Znamya*, and *Sovetskaya Kultura* all received new chief editors. These people, including personalities like Vitali Korotich, Yegor Yakovlev and Sergei Zalygin, were known to Alexander Yakovlev for their liberal reformist, westernizing views, and came to run the publications which became known as the "flagships of glasnost."<sup>34</sup> Given the

Soviet editor's traditional responsibility to act as first-line censor

32 Simon Cosgrove, *Russian Nationalism and the Politics of Soviet Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.92.

33 Given the intense centralization of the Soviet media apparatus, the importance of these changes cannot be overemphasized. Of over 8500 periodicals published in the USSR in 1987, the thirty-one all-union publications enjoyed over half of total annual circulation, many of the rest either emulating or extensively quoting from these central organs. (Paul Roth, "Soviet Media Policy Since 1985," in ed. Federal Institute for Soviet and International Studies, *The Soviet Union, 1987-1989: Perestroika in Crisis?* (London, Longman, 1990), p.106.)

34 Cosgrove, p.93-94.

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and to hierarchically discipline his organization to promote the Party line, the promotion of these liberals to top posts effectively facilitated the gradual radicalization of social discourse.<sup>35</sup>

While some central organs received new editors, many others which had moderate or liberal-leaning editors prior to perestroika quickly aligned themselves to Yakovlev's new Party line.<sup>36</sup> Explaining their propensity to do so, John Murray posits that because the media was "an institution" which had since the time of Stalin "been the mouthpiece of the Party," it was only natural for its organs to reflexively and nearly unanimously respond in support of the new Party-directed "crusade for glasnost."<sup>37</sup>

Some publications, including the newspapers *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and the central Party organ *Pravda* saw their moderate and conservative editors replaced later, between 1987 and 1989, as a result of their growing resistance to the new line. For instance, while *Pravda* editor Viktor Afanasyev was formally removed from his post in 1989 for publishing a defamatory article on Yeltsin,<sup>38</sup> Gorbachev later revealed in his memoirs that the real reason for Afanasyev's dismissal was his conservative opposition to ever-deepening glasnost.<sup>39</sup>

After the reform of the central press system, only a few major all-union print publications were left "as a rump in the hands of the opponents of reform," including the monthly literary journals *Moskva*, *Molodaya Gvardia* and *Nash Sovremennik*, and the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.<sup>40</sup> Later characterizing these organs as the "heralds of hatred" and the "flagships of the ideological campaign

35 John Garrard and Carol Garrard, *Inside the Soviet Writers' Union* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p.201.

36 These included monthlies and bimonthlies like *Argumenti i Fakti*, *Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, *Druzhba Narodov*, *Yunnost*, *Innostrannaya Literatura*, the Leningrad Writers Union organ *Neva*, the RSFSR Writers' Union paper *Oktiabr*, youth newspapers *Moskovskii Komsomolets* and *Sovetskaya Molodezh*, and the well-known daily *Izvestia* (organ of the Supreme Soviet).

37 John Murray, *The Russian Press from Brezhnev to Yeltsin: Behind the Paper Curtain*



(Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1994), p.101.

38 The piece, based on an article originally published in an Italian newspaper, had portrayed Yeltsin as an alcoholic (McNair, 1989, p.332.)

39 Gorbachev wrote: “the farther glasnost reached and the more boldly the editors of other newspapers spoke out, the dryer, duller and more orthodox the materials published by Pravda... became... We had to find a new editor.” (Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p.209.)

40 Cosgrove, p.94-95.

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against national democratic developments,”<sup>41</sup> Yakovlev would wage an extensive and vigorous campaign against them in his capacity as head of propaganda.<sup>42</sup>

Contemporaneously with the print media, the realm of culture also saw speedy, hierarchically directed personnel changes after the 27th Party Congress. In mid-1986, reformers Vasili Zakharov and Yuri Voronov replaced their conservative predecessors at the Ministry of Culture and the Central Committee’s Cultural Department, responsible for supervising developments in the area of culture at the national level. Pragmatic centrist Mikhail Nenashev was made head of Goskomizdat, the State Committee for Publishing, managing the country’s entire system of publishing houses, book trade, and book censorship. Under his supervision, Goskomizdat issued a directive in November 1986 which allowed publishing houses “to adopt and change their own ‘thematic plans’ and to fix their own print-runs,” and by 1987 the first small cooperatively owned publishers were allowed to form.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout 1986 and 1987 Yakovlev worked to nominate liberally-minded artists to head creative unions such as the USSR Writers’ Union, the Theatre Workers’ Union, and the Cinematographers’ Union. Avant-garde filmmaker Elem Klimov, elected first secretary of the Cinematographers’ Union in May 1986, was among the most radical of these new union bosses, calling for the complete dismantling of ideological censorship and for “a real moral cleansing and...public condemnation” of past errors, and of the people who had made them.<sup>44</sup> In December 1986 Gorbachev

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Yakovlev, *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*. Trans. Fitzpatrick, Catherine A. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p.135-136.

<sup>42</sup> Republican, regional and local newspapers and periodicals varied in their enthusiasm to align to the Yakovlev line. While most of the local press reflexively moved toward emulating the central press, the process was not uniform, and some individual newspapers, regional publications, and even entire republics at least temporarily resisted the growing radicalism of the central media discourse. For example, while the Baltic press quickly aligned to and then surpassed the radicalism of the Yakovlev line, in Ukraine substantive reform and liberalization of the press did not begin until 1989, after the removal of conservative republican first secretary Vladimir Shcherbitsky. (Scott Shane, *Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1994), p.139-140.; Mykola Riabchuk, “A Perilous Way to Freedom: The Independent Mass Media in the Blackmail State,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*

Vol.26, No.1/2 (Summer-Winter 2001), p.96.)

43 Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p.81-82.

44 Elem Klimov cited in Anthony R. Deluca, *Politics, Diplomacy, and the Media: Gorbachev's Legacy in the West* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), p.67.; Klimov's task would be aided by Alexander Kamshalov, new head of Goskino, the State Committee for Cinematography, who oversaw the reduction of central censorship, the promotion of financial autonomy for film studios, and more republican-level control of film output. (Josephine Woll, "Glasnost' and Soviet Culture," in Alexander Dallin and Gail Lapidus (eds.), *The Soviet System: From Crisis to Collapse* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1995), p.225.)

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invited leading members of the creative intelligentsia to a meeting where he formally approved the process of the liberalization of the arts begun by Yakovlev earlier in the year.<sup>45</sup>

During the early years of perestroika, academia also saw a quick, systematic and centrally directed promotion of reform-minded scholars to positions of authority in the country's top universities and research institutes, often through the direct personal intervention of Gorbachev and Yakovlev.<sup>46</sup> To name but a few important appointments: famous liberal sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya was made head of the Soviet Sociological Association and the director of the All-Union Centre for the Study of Public Opinion; Yevgeni Primakov (future member of the Yeltsin cabinet) became the head of IMEMO; radical liberal historian Yuri Afanasyev was made rector of the State Historical-Archival Institute at Moscow State University; and reformist economist and Gorbachev advisor Abel Aganbegyan became chair of the Economics Department of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.<sup>47</sup>

As a result of the new appointments, various schools and institutes gradually came to reject Marxism-Leninism as the 'guiding' paradigm in each of their respected fields, first implicitly and later explicitly. Yakovlev himself publicly participated in this process to transform academic discourse. In articles appearing in Pravda and the Party theoretical journal Kommunist in April 1987, he criticized the 'infallible truths' and 'dogmatism' inspired by the Marxist-Leninist approach to knowledge, arguing that these principles "elevated 'authoritarian thinking' to a new political, moral and intellectual principle."<sup>48</sup> The newly promoted liberal intellectuals, given license to promulgate their theories and opinions on economics, history, foreign policy and other important topics in the country's central newspapers and periodicals, gained a hegemonic voice as perestroika progressed.

45 Brigit Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), p.185.

46 Alexander Tsipko, "The Collapse of Marxism-Leninism," in Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich, (eds.) *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System: An Insiders' History* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p.182.; I.A. Butenko, "The Russian Sociological Association: Actors and Scenery on a Revolving Stage," *International Sociology* Vol.17, No.2 (June 2002), p.242.; Euvgeny Novikov and Patrick Bascio, *Gorbachev and the Collapse of the Soviet Communist Party: The Historical and Theoretical Background* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994),

p.55-57.

47 Alexander Dallin, "Soviet History," in Alexander Dallin and Bertrand M. Patenaude (eds.) *Soviet Scholarship under Gorbachev* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p.33-36.

48 *Ibid.*, p.30.

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## **Implications of the Appointments: The Transformation of Media and Cultural Discourse**

### The Media

With the onset of perestroika, much of the Soviet news media came to abandon its traditional 'high brow' style of journalism, along with its regular Marxist ideological analysis of events. From 1987 on, television and the pages of the central press came to be flooded with formerly sensitive and underreported topics such as drug abuse, child abuse, poverty, the inadequacies of the social welfare system, and problems in the military.<sup>49</sup> While the appearance of much of this formerly censored information had potential for building a healthy and open media environment, it was regrettably very often formulated in the style of 'yellow journalism,' focusing only on negative trends, exaggerating their scale and scope, and attempting to blame them on the 'system' or the 'legacy of Stalinism.'<sup>50</sup> As perestroika progressed, much of the day-to-day journalistic narrative came to fetishize 'negationism'<sup>51</sup> and apocalyptic formulations of a 'polnaya razruha' ('complete disintegration') of society, which gradually took hold of societal discourse as a result.<sup>52</sup>

Editors' desire to increase their periodicals' subscription rates doubtlessly played a role in advancing the new sensationalist style of journalism.<sup>53</sup> Popular periodicals like *Ogonyok* came to compete with television programs like *Vzglyad* (Viewpoint) and *600 Sekund* (600 Seconds) in pushing the boundaries of the permissible.<sup>54</sup>

49 Peter Meylaks, "Drugs and Symbolic Pollution: The Work of Cultural Logic in the Russian Press," *Cultural Sociology*, Vol.3, No.3 (2009), p.377-378.; Sonja D. Schmid, "Transformation Discourse: Nuclear Risk as a Strategic Tool in Late Soviet Politics of Expertise," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* Vol.29, No.3 (Summer 2004), p.360.; Natalia Danilova, "The Development of an Exclusive Veterans' Policy: The Case of Russia," *Armed Forces & Society* Vol.36, No.5 (2010), p.906.; Yang Zhong, "The Transformation of the Soviet Military and the August Coup," *Armed Forces & Society* Vol.19, No.1 (Fall 1992), p.52-53, 60-64.; McNair, 1989, p.333.

50 Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p.170.; Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.399-400.

51 Moshe Lewin, *Russia/USSR/Russia: The Drive and Drift of a Superstate* (New York: The New Press, 1995), p.302.

52 Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.46-47.

53 This trend was even partially institutionalized at the Journalists' Union at its Sixth Congress

in March 1987, where a number of financial mechanisms incentivizing the production of news that would sell were introduced. (McNair, 1989, p.343.)

54 Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.247.; Broadcasting imagery of shocking Afghan war footage, rotting corpses in morgues, murdered and mutilated children, and similarly grisly and offensive material, 'shock' was *Vzglyad's* 'trademark.' (DeLuca, p.61.)

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Critics of the new style of journalism were quick to point out the socially harmful and sometimes outright libellous nature of much of the new material. Pravda editor Afanasyev noted his view that many of the "sensational stories" were concocted out of a desire to "to boost circulation" rather than to "inform readers."<sup>55</sup> Other commentators, often appearing in reader editorials of major newspapers, similarly noted the tendency among journalists to do shoddy research, to exaggerate, to lie outright, and to present "single mistakes as general patterns."<sup>56</sup>

The transformation of media discourse during perestroika can be effectively illustrated by looking at the coverage and analysis of two contemporary issues –the war in Afghanistan and the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. In the case of Afghanistan, discourse on the war began to shift in 1987, with *Ogonyok* magazine providing one of the earliest explicit criticisms.<sup>57</sup> The war was transformed from a 'demonstration of proletarian internationalism' to a case of 'imperialist adventurism,' Soviet soldiers playing the role either of "war criminals," or "victims" of criminal state policy.<sup>58</sup> In the case of Chernobyl, media coverage in the immediate aftermath of the disaster focused on the courageousness of the people working to contain it and on feelings of national unity fostered by efforts to mitigate it.<sup>59</sup> Between 1987 and 1988, discourse began to shift. First criticizing the organizational chaos in the work to extinguish the fires and to evacuate the disaster zone, the flagships of glasnost then began to argue that coercion, rather than courage, moved the firemen, builders, and specialists to continue their work.<sup>60</sup> By

55 Richard Sakwa, *Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985-1990* (New York: Philip Allan, 1990), p.80.

56 For example, an editorial in Pravda from August 1987 by a court official noted the tendency by the press to distort, insult, and generate among readers "the impression of chaos, arbitrariness and mass violations of socialist laws." (Vladimir Shlapentokh, "Public Opinion in Gorbachev's USSR: Consensus and Polarization," *Media, Culture and Society* Vol.12 (1990), p.156.).

Another editorial, appearing in *Izvestia* in March 1988 grumbled that "if every press 'sensation' was carefully checked...half of them would be shown to be false." (Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media* (London, Routledge, 1991), p.78.)

57 According to *Ogonyok* editor Vitali Korotich, Gorbachev personally telephoned him in 1987, instructing him to publish articles critical of the war, in order to justify the government's decision to withdraw from the conflict. (Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians* (New York: Random House, 1990), p.103-104.)

58 Danilova, p.904, 906.

59 Nicholas Daniloff, "Chernobyl and Its Political Fallout: A Reassessment," *Demokratizatsiya* Vol.12, No.1 (Winter 2004), p.122.

60 Schmid, p.361-362.

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1989, journalists were turning “to the social and political roots” of the disaster, citing the ‘inhumanity of the Soviet system,’ where the “human being [was just] a cog in the works.”<sup>61</sup> In 1991, on the eve of the collapse of the country, the accident was written off as “the corpse of a bygone era...of lies and spiritual decay –fill[ing] the air with the stench of radiation.”<sup>62</sup>

#### Literature and the ‘Thick Journals’

Beginning in late 1986 and early 1987, popular ‘thick’ journals catering to the mass intelligentsia began publishing a torrent of formerly suppressed national and foreign literature by personalities like Bulgakov, Pasternak, Nabokov, Orwell and Koestler. By 1989, with the serialization of Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* in *Novi Mir*, few of the old literary taboos were left to be broken. Since most of these works were originally banned for their implicitly or explicitly political content, their appearance in print had major implications extending beyond the realm of literature, coinciding with a re-evaluation of the ideological underpinnings of the Soviet state being carried out by an increasingly radicalized mass intelligentsia.

The budding popularity of formerly censored work coincided with a growing disdain for many of the old established aesthetic and “ideological pillars” of Soviet literature, including Gorky, Maiakovski and Vyshnevski.<sup>63</sup> Even Pushkin, adopted by the Soviet regime as the founder of Russian literature, became subject to criticism when an old article published abroad by Andrei Sinyavsky was reprinted in *Oktyabr* in 1989. In the article, entitled ‘*Progulki s Pukshkinim*’ (‘Strolls with Pushkin’), Pushkin’s tremendous literary stature was questioned and his work written off as ‘fetishized,’ ‘sacralised’ and overrated, prompting a wave of criticism from nationalist Russian writers accusing the author of ‘Russophobia.’<sup>64</sup>

61 *Ibid.*, p.364.

62 Grigori Medvedev cited in R. Sich, “Truth was an Early Casualty,” *Bulletin of Atomic Sciences* (May/June 1996), p.42.

63 Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, p.246.

64 C.I. Chprinin, *Russkaya Literatura Segodnya: Putevoditel* (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2003), p.22.; A copy of the original article can be found online: Abram Terts (Andrei Sinyavsky), “*Progulki s Pushkinim*,” *Oktyabr*, No.4 (1989). < <http://readr.ru/abram-terc-progulki-s-pushkinim.html>>

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Among the contemporary work of the glasnost period, Anatoli Rybakov’s *Deti Arbata* (Children of the Arbat) was arguably the most famous piece –a novel of historical fiction set in the Stalinist 1930s. Conceived of by contemporary critics as ‘mediocre’ in the artistic sense, the work became popular mainly for its exploration and re-evaluation of a politically sensitive period of time.<sup>65</sup> While authors like Rybakov focused on history, others, including Astafyev,

Rasputin and Voinovich worked to criticize and savagely satirize the present. Discussing the intense politicization of Soviet-Russian literature during this period, Alexander Genis explains that all “its genres degenerated into journalism,” the “life of a literary work [coming] to be measured not in terms of generations, but in terms of months, weeks, and even days.”<sup>66</sup> Noting the tendency among writers to constantly seek thematic ‘virgin soil’ and to publish on the basis of ideological rather than aesthetic conceptions, critics point out that consequently, little literature of lasting literary significance was created during the glasnost period.<sup>67</sup>

### Cinematography

Beginning in late 1986, a small number of films from the ‘unshelved past’ began to appear in Soviet movie theatres, the most famous of which was Tengiz Abuladze’s 1984 allegorical anti-Stalinist *Pokayanie* [Repentance], a film receiving numerous state prizes and widespread local and international attention.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, many of the old guiding conventions of Soviet cinematography, including socialist realism and filmmaking “geared toward satisfying spectators’ ‘aesthetic needs,’”<sup>69</sup> were

65 Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), p.423.

66 Alexander Genis, “Perestroika as a Shift in Literary Paradigm,” in Mikhail Epstein et al., *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture* Trans. Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), p.87.

67 Alexander Genis, “Onions and Cabbages: Paradigms of Contemporary Culture” in Epstein et al., p.398.; Helena Goscilo, “Introduction,” in Helena Goscilo and Byron Lindsey (eds.) *Glasnost: An Anthology of Russian Literature Under Gorbachev* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990), p.xxxii-xxxiii.; Julie Curtis, “Literature under Gorbachev –A Second Thaw?” in Catherine Merridale and Chris Ward (eds.) *Perestroika: The Historical Perspective* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), p.173.

68 Woll in Dallin and Lapidus, p.225.

69 Joshua First, “From Spectator to “Differentiated” Consumer: Film Audience Research in the Era of Developed Socialism (1965-80),” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* Vol.9, No.2 (Spring 2008), p.322.

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removed from contemporary filmmaking, replaced by avant-garde and socially critical forms of film and documentary production.<sup>70</sup>

Films of the perestroika era came to be dominated by the *chernukha*, a style of filmmaking portraying unremitting bleakness, negativity and pessimism in the presentation of life, based in the desire to “chronicle...social horror...to reveal historical atrocity and ‘truth,’” to push “cultural production to the limit.”<sup>71</sup> The main characters of these films, frequently from socially peripheral groups such as prisoners, criminals, and prostitutes, were often explicitly or implicitly portrayed as heroic individuals fighting ‘the system.’<sup>72</sup> Film critics Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky argue that the *chernukha*’s portrayal of inhumanity and immorality, unmotivated

cruelty and the death of all former ideals was specifically designed to leave film audiences “nauseated.”<sup>73</sup>

Apart from Alexander Proshkin’s 1987 *Holodnoe Leto Pytdesyat Tretego* (Cold Summer of 53’), the single popular contemporary political film with anti-bureaucratic and anti-Stalinist undertones, the majority of the successful films of the late 1980s were *chernukhas*, attracting viewers through their sensational innovations and ‘gritty’ portrayal of Soviet reality. *Malenkaya Vera* (Small Vera/Small Faith) depicted the dilapidated state of working-class life, but was immortalized for containing the first sex scene in Soviet cinematic history. *Interdevochka* (Intergirl) sympathetically portrayed the life of a Soviet prostitute willing to sacrifice everything for “a different way of life,”<sup>74</sup> and is noted among film critics for its shock value and profane dialogue.<sup>75</sup> Released between 1988 and 1989, the above mentioned

<sup>70</sup> Theatre and the performing arts underwent a similar reorientation, epitomized by Mikhail Shatrov’s work to critically re-evaluate Soviet history and contemporary Soviet reality through his plays. (Thomas Sherlock, “Politics and History under Gorbachev,” in Dallin and Lapidus, p.246.; Isaac Tarasulo, “Unofficial Groups and Soviet Youth,” in Isaac J. Tarasulo (ed.) *Gorbachev and Glasnost: Viewpoints from the Soviet Press* (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 1989), p.128-129.)

<sup>71</sup> Emma Widdis, “An Unmappable System: The Collapse of Public Space in Late-Soviet Film,” *Film Criticism*, Vol.21, No.2 (Winter 1996-1997), p.13.

<sup>72</sup> Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniiem*, p.246.

<sup>73</sup> Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky, *The Zero Hour: Glasnost and Soviet Cinema in Transition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.164.

<sup>74</sup> Yuri Bogomolov, “Cinema for Every Day,” in Andrew Horton and Michael Brashinsky (ed.) *Russian Critics on the Cinema of Glasnost* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.22.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.187-188.

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films were among the last of the Soviet blockbusters to draw millions of spectators.<sup>76</sup> Panned by film critics for “formulaic storylines,” “vacant,” incoherent style and the tendency to reach for platitudes,<sup>77</sup> *chernukhas* came to be rejected by the public as *perestroika* wore on since they “offer[ed] no positive outlook or spiritual guidance amid the chaos” of everyday life during *perestroika*.<sup>78</sup> Public rejection, the collapse of state support for film distribution, the importation of movies and television series from abroad, and the increasing availability of videocassette players all contributed to the virtual collapse of the film industry in the early 1990s.<sup>79</sup>

Through the late 1980s documentary filmmaking underwent its own radicalization, coming to discuss sensitive historical issues and the contemporary problems of poverty, drug addiction, youth alienation, and prostitution. Like cinema, documentary filmmaking also gradually turned to the *chernukha* style. Stanislav Govoruhin’s 1990 film *Tak Zhit Nelzya* (It is Impossible to Live Like This), arguably the most famous of the *perestroika* era documentaries, epitomized this

shift, mercilessly enumerating and condemning the problems in Soviet society, and ultimately indicting the whole record of Soviet rule.<sup>80</sup>

### **The New Intellectual Discourse: De-Stalinization and the Reinterpretation of the Past**

In February 1987, Gorbachev made a speech in which he called upon historians, writers and intellectuals to begin a comprehensive campaign to fill in the *beliye piatna* (white spots) of history. Later that year, in preparation for the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, he called on the *intelligentsia* to reveal the full extent of the ‘criminal’ nature of Stalinism.<sup>81</sup> As a result, between

76 Birgit Beumers, “Cinemarket, or the Russian Film Industry in ‘Mission Possible,’” *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol.51, No.5 (1999), p.877.

77 Bogomolov, p.19.; Horton and Brashinsky, 1992, p.163-164.

78 Beumers, 1999, p.891-892.

79 *Ibid.*, p.874-875, 887.

80 Discussing the grim and dour tone of the picture, journalist Scott Shane recalls how, after going to see the film in Moscow upon its release, he overheard a conversation between two men as the credits rolled: “After that, you want either to shoot yourself or to emigrate. There’s nothing else left.” (Shane, p.223.)

81 Brian McNair, “Media in Post-Soviet Russia: An Overview,” *European Journal of Communication* Vol. 9 (1994), 1994, p.116.; Seliktar, p.147.; Only one year earlier, in a February 1986 interview for the French Communist daily *L’Humanité*, Gorbachev, asked about Stalinism, replied that it was a “notion made up by opponents of communism and used...to smear the Soviet Union and socialism as a whole.” (Stephen White, *After Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.80.)

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1987 and 1988, virtually every aspect of Stalin era Soviet history became subject to critical reinterpretation, including the once sacred historical narratives of collectivization, industrialization, and the great victory in the Second World War. Articles published in the flagships of *glasnost* quickly came to challenge dominant historical narratives, suggesting that the famine in the Ukraine in the 1930s was a deliberate state policy, challenging the need for rapid industrialization, and arguing that Stalin facilitated the rise of Hitler.

In 1987, a campaign was initiated to assess the death toll resulting from Stalin’s leadership. As the campaign progressed, the ‘low’ figures based on KGB archives and government commissions (estimating 3.8 million people convicted of state crimes between 1917-1990, of whom 828,000 were shot)<sup>82</sup> were overshadowed by higher and higher estimates, a 1988 *Neva* article citing 8-10 million killed, another 1988 article in *Argumenti i Fakti* by Roy Medvedev estimating 40 million,<sup>83</sup> and a 1991 *Komsomolskaya Pravda* article citing Solzhenitsyn’s estimate of 110 million.<sup>84</sup> In 1989, Medvedev’s figure was adopted into a new textbook on Soviet history,<sup>85</sup> while the ever-rising death toll figures naturally resulted in implicit and explicit comparisons of Stalinism to Nazism.<sup>86</sup> Discussing the radicalism of the new discourse,



Moshe Lewin argued that the introduction of new figures was rarely followed up by critical analysis, noting: “If evidence show[ed] that there were several million camp inmates [critics would] insist that there must have actually been double or triple that number. To them, half a million or a million executions sound[ed] like a mere apology for murder [and they concluded] that there must have been millions more.”<sup>87</sup>

82 Vadim Medvedev, *V Komande Gorbacheva: Vzglyad Iznutri* (Moscow: Bilina, 1994).

Electronic edition: < <http://lib.ru/MEMUARY/GORBACHEV/medvedev.txt>>

83 Walter Laqueur, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p.125, 352, n.10.

84 Sergei Kara-Murza, *Sovetskaya Tsivilizatsiya* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2001). Electronic edition:

< [http://www.kara-murza.ru/books/sc\\_b/sc\\_b\\_content.htm](http://www.kara-murza.ru/books/sc_b/sc_b_content.htm)>

85 Laqueur, 1990, p.125.

86 Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, p.241.

87 Lewin, 1995, p.302.

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At the same time that broad historical trends and statistics were subjected to radical revision, so too were many important individuals in the Soviet historical pantheon, including Pavlik Morozov, Alexei Stakhanov, and Zoia Kosmodemianskaya. Morozov, whose heroism was first demythologized by articles in *Ogonyok* and *Yunnost*,<sup>88</sup> was later reinvented from a symbol of class consciousness and dedication to the state to a “symbol of legalized and romanticized treachery.”<sup>89</sup> Stakhanov’s personal record and the publicity given to his accomplishments underwent extensive criticism, and by mid-1988 articles appeared in *Trud* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* revealing that he had died a “bitter drunkard.”<sup>90</sup> Kosmodemianskaya, one of the country’s most famous wartime partisans, had her entire wartime record and personal character subjected “to the most ferocious and wide-ranging attacks” in the late period of perestroika.<sup>91</sup> Kara-Murza concludes that the construction of new ‘black myths’ around these figures was usually conducted “through omission, misrepresentation and false association,”<sup>92</sup> their builders’ goal being to destroy the important symbols of national historical consciousness.<sup>93</sup> Only after the collapse of the Soviet Union were many of the new revisionist accounts on the lives and exploits of these individuals questioned or decisively refuted.<sup>94</sup>

As a result of the media campaign to reinterpret Soviet history, school history examinations were cancelled in 1988, the old pre-perestroika textbooks conceived of as woefully outdated and “full of lies.”<sup>95</sup> Teachers were encouraged to incorporate the new interpretations made in newspaper and

88 His story de-idealized as a mere family squabble gone wrong. (Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.91-92.; Laqueur, 1990, p.197.)

89 White, p.82.

90 Laqueur, 1990, p.196.

91 Lisa A. Kirschenbaum and Nancy M. Wingfield, “Gender and the Construction of Wartime

Heroism in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union,” *European History Quarterly* Vol.39, No.3 (2009), p.481-482.

92 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.315.

93 *Ibid.*, p.303.

94 Kirschenbaum and Wingfield, p.481-482.; Teddy J. Uldricks, “War, Politics and Memory: Russian Historians Reevaluate the Origins of World War II,” *History & Memory* Vol.21, No.2 (Fall/Winter 2009), p.69.; Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.314.

95 Suzanne Sternthal, *Gorbachev’s Reforms: De-Stalinization through Demilitarization* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), p.112.

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journal articles into their teaching, and to test on the basis of the new material,<sup>96</sup> thus formalizing the introduction of the radical media discourse into the education system.

Constrained by the rules of the historical profession, which demanded methodical analysis, well-researched conclusions and solid reasoning, professional historians were slow to enter the historical debate. They were also outnumbered by publicists, novelists, playwrights and film and television writers, who could release their work faster, often producing “deliberately provocative historical works in order to strengthen the financial positions of their journals, theatres, and newspapers.”<sup>97</sup> These groups were supported by a small number of prominent reformist historians including people like Yuri Afanasyev and Dmitri Volkogonov, who used their stature and the power of their office to explicitly and implicitly support the formulations made by journalists and artists.<sup>98</sup> Only towards the end of perestroika, when historical discourse had already shifted decisively, did many moderate historians begin to incorporate themselves in a major way into the debate.<sup>99</sup> They critiqued the journalistic style of much of the new historical analysis, warning against “black and white” analysis, “blanket rejections” and “the replacement of one half-truth with another.”<sup>100</sup> Reformers counterattacked by defaming mainstream historians and charging their institutes with the “wholesale falsification of history,”<sup>101</sup> Afanasyev writing off the entirety of Soviet historical studies of the past half-century as ‘pseudo-science.’<sup>102</sup>

Yakovlev personally participated in the campaign of historical revisionism at the highest levels of power, chairing several government historical commissions, including the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Stalin’s Victims (1988) and the Congress of People’s Deputies’ commission investigating

96 Hedrick Smith, p.140.

97 Sherlock in Dallin and Lapidus, p.251.

98 Discussing an assertion made in Rybakov’s *Deti Arbata* about Stalin’s plan to kill Sergei Kirov and to thus initiate the Great Purge, Dmitri Volkogonov noted in a 1988 issue of *Oktiabr* that though there was no archival evidence to support such a claim, “knowing Stalin as we know him today, his exceptional cruelty, his intrigues and perfidy, it is quite possible that this was done by him.” (Laqueur, 1990, p.75.)

99 For instance, only in 1990 and 1991 did Viktor Zemskov’s authoritative historical-archival

analysis of Stalin-era repressions come to be published, challenging the hearsay and ‘guestimate’ evidence of A. Antonov-Ovseenko, Roy Medvedev, and other revisionists. (Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.269.)

100 D.W. Spring, “History: Remaking History –Soviet Perspectives on the Past,” in D.W. Spring, ed., *The Impact of Gorbachev: The First Phase: 1985-90* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), p.74.

101 Sherlock in Dallin and Lapidus, p.251-252.

102 Spring in Spring, p.74-75.

### The Campaign to ‘Hit at’ Leninism through Stalinism

In 1999, Yakovlev recalled in his introduction to the Russian edition of the *Black Book of Communism* that prior to perestroika, a select group of intellectuals “informally developed a plan: to hit at Stalin and Stalinism through Lenin, and then, if successful, at Lenin and revolutionism in general through Plekhanov, the Social Democrats, liberalism, and ‘ethical socialism.’”<sup>105</sup> This ‘informal plan’ was successfully carried out during perestroika, and would have a tremendously destructive effect on Soviet mass consciousness. Yurchak notes that because Lenin was traditionally the main ‘anchor’ upon which the Party and state leadership had relied to legitimize itself, the undermining of his status as the ‘master signifier’ of the system portended catastrophic consequences for the system itself.<sup>106</sup>

In May 1988, in the midst of the media and artistic community’s campaign against Stalinism, liberal journalist Vasili Seliunin published ‘Istoki’ (‘Sources’/‘Roots’), one of earliest and most well-known journalistic attacks on Lenin, where he questioned the idea that the distortions of socialism began with Stalin. Seliunin argued that the ‘command-administrative system’ built by Stalin was made possible by the harsh methods of Lenin, the utopianism of maximalist socialism, and the Bolsheviks’ monopolization of power in the aftermath of the October Revolution.<sup>107</sup> Many other commentators, ranging from liberal westernizers to conservative Russian nationalists, soon came to advance similar arguments in the

the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1989). Yakovlev has been criticized in recent years for the biased way in which he chaired the latter commission,<sup>103</sup> which one commentator has dubbed “less a proper investigation,” and more means of support for the Baltic “struggle for independence.”<sup>104</sup>

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103 Alexander Kapto, "Pakt Molotova-Ribbentropa: Mistifikatsiya ili Realnost?" *Bezopasnost Evrasii* Vol.38, No.4 (2009), p.224, 228-229.

104 David Pryce-Jones, *The War that Never Was: The Fall of the Soviet Empire: 1985-1991* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), p.95.

105 Alexander Yakovlev, "Bolshevism – Sotsialnaya Bolezn XX Veka," in Robert Laffont (ed.) *Chernaya Kniga Kommunisma* Trans. E. Brailovskaya et al. (Moscow: Tree Veka Istории, 1999), p.14.

106 Yurchak, p.74.

107 David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.68.; Malia, p.434.; Yakovlev, disguising his disdain for Lenin during the reform period (in fact calling for a return to 'true Leninism'), bluntly stated after the collapse that Stalin was "a worthy pupil of Lenin's in his hatred and in his taste for blood." (Yakovlev, 2002, p.91.)

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country's central newspapers and journals.<sup>108</sup> Like the campaign against Stalin and Stalinism, the one against Lenin and his cult was also aided by literary, theatre, and film productions. Vasili Grossman's *Vse Tchet* (Everything Flows), published in 1989, was the harshest, portraying Lenin as a "cruel and despotic prophet...a product of one thousand years of Russian serfdom and...an apostle of a new, Communist slavery."<sup>109</sup>

In July 1989, explicitly questioning the moral basis for Soviet power in the USSR, Yuri Afanasyev argued that because the Soviet regime "was brought into being through bloodshed and with the aid of mass murderers and crimes against humanity," it had no historical justification for existence.<sup>110</sup> Through similar arguments, reformist intellectuals wrote off the entire Bolshevik project as cruel, bloody, and ultimately meaningless.<sup>111</sup> Discussing the legacy of Bolshevism, famous liberal historians and social critics such as Yulia Boroday, Yevgeni Plimak and Alexei Kiva emphasized the shameful underdevelopment and backwardness of the country, the immorality of its ideology, and the "moral infantilism" of the generations of people living under it.<sup>112</sup> Writing in *Izvestia* in 1990, Kiva argued that Marxism was a dogma "attractive to the lumpenized masses."<sup>113</sup> Mikhail Bulgakov's *Sobachie Serdse* (Heart of a Dog), a hugely popular novel turned into many theatre productions and even a television film during perestroika, affirmed the growing conception among much of the intelligentsia that the

October Revolution was carried out by the ‘grey masses’ who ‘trampled the dignity’ of the Russian intelligentsia.<sup>114</sup>

As hegemonic historical discourse shifted toward the open rejection of Lenin, the Bolsheviks and the Revolution, it became popular to publically re-examine and romanticize the history of pre-

108 Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratization and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), p.35-36, 44, 46.; Kevin O’Connor, *Intellectuals and Apparatchiks: Russian Nationalism and the Gorbachev Revolution* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), p.99.; Robert V. Daniels, *The End of the Communist Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.95.; Evans, p.163.; Goscilo in Goscilo and Lindsey, p.xxi.;  
109 Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, p.239.

110 Afanasyev cited in Horvath, p.45.

111 Shlapentokh, 2001, p.194.

112 Novikov and Bascio, p.55.

113 Roy D. Laird, *The Soviet Legacy* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), p.27.

114 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p. 245.

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revolutionary Russia. In 1988, Seliunin posited that Tsarist Russia was a country progressing toward democracy.<sup>115</sup> Gorbachev advisor Fedor Burlatsky, writing in 1989, noted that the October revolution “threw out” democracy together with the “bourgeois bathwater,” while the worst traditions of old Russia “filtered through into the new society.”<sup>116</sup> At the new Congress of People’s Deputies in 1989, Yuri Afansyev publically called for a new “February Revolution,” ostensibly a “return from the Leninist principles of October to the constitutionalist principles of February.”<sup>117</sup> According to Karen Dawisha, the emergence of counterfactual historical possibilities and the recognition that October was not the product of ‘historical inevitability’ helped to erode faith in the Party and its ideological underpinnings.<sup>118</sup>

Critical of those individuals working to dismantle the old historical narratives, moderate conservative Politburo member Yegor Ligachev argues in his memoirs that this “large-scale manipulation of mass consciousness” worked not in the interests of social renewal, but “to crush everything that had been sacred in the past,” ultimately resulting in the “spiritual pauperization” of the nation.<sup>119</sup> Unopposed to historical revisionism in principle, Ligachev argues that it was the extent of the media campaign’s one sidedness that was the problem, noting that:

"[t]he cresting flood of denunciatory articles engulfing the mass media began to deform the historical retrospective. The past rose up from the pages of the right-wing radical press not as a diverse and contradictory combination of achievements and errors but in exclusively gloomy if not pitch-black tones. Judging from these publications, there was nothing good in the past; our fathers and grandfathers had passed their time on this earth in senseless suffering, mired in travail. This unfair and slanderous bias did not correspond to the truth; it disturbed and agitated the social atmosphere. And it was directed...in the final analysis, against the nation, against its

historical memory."120

### **The New Intellectual Discourse: The Re-Conceptualization of the Present**

Having embarked on a campaign to re-interpret the past, the new intellectual discourse of perestroika also simultaneously undertook the task of re-conceptualizing the Soviet present. The first

115 Jonathan Steele, *Eternal Russia: Yeltsin, Gorbachev and the Mirage of Democracy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p.41-42.

116 Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.151.

117 Malia, p.467.

118 Karen Dawisha, "Communism as a Lived System of Ideas in Contemporary Russia," *East European Politics and Societies* Vol.19, No.3 (2005), p.471.

119 Ligachev, p.287-288.

120 *Ibid.*, p.285-286.

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step to delegitimizing existing reality involved the rejection of the facts and figures purported to represent it. Seliunin and Khanin's article 'Lukavaya Tsifra' ('False Figure'), published in *Novi Mir* in February 1987, was among the first and most famous of the new works meant to discredit old measurements of social and economic progress.<sup>121</sup> As the old figures were rejected, new 'authoritative figures' and facts were simultaneously brought forth to present a new, highly negative picture of reality. As noted by Becker, statistics published in an April 1988 issue of *Moskovskie Novosti* comparing Soviet and American living standards were "more gloomy" than anything "even the most militant cold warrior could present."<sup>122</sup> Like the campaign to destroy old historical narratives, the tables and statistics featured in the pages of journals like *Argumenti i Fakti* played their role in delegitimizing the old order, effectively saying "[d]own with communism...in a different way."<sup>123</sup>

Despite the radical intelligentsia's claims to supporting a new level of openness and objectivity, some contemporary observers have critiqued them for their tendency to exaggerate, to replace old half-truths with new ones, and to lie outright. Discussing economist Abel Aganbegyan's famous argument about the Soviet overproduction of tractors being symbolic of the absurd dynamics of the planned economic system, Kara-Murza explains that the USSR on the contrary never had enough tractors for its agriculture.<sup>124</sup> Stephen Kotkin, commenting on the shifting media discourse on the United States and the West, notes that the perestroika-era media came to portray "the Soviet realm as utterly destitute and exploited, while the West came across as paved with gold and unreservedly free," the old anti-Americanism replaced by "exaggerated pro-Americanism."<sup>125</sup>

As a new critical style of social discourse emerged, old Marxist-Leninist ideological formulations underwent crushing criticism in every area of debate. In fact, some reformist

academics first came to turn the postulates of Marxism against the Soviet system itself. Philosopher Boris Kurashvili argued on

121 Laqueur, 1993, p.395.

122 Becker, 1999, p.120.

123 Pryce-Jones, p.81.

124 Kara-Murza, Manipulatsiya Soznaniem, p.394-395.

125 Stephen Kotkin, Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.69-70.

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the basis of the theory of historical materialism that the Soviet project was a ‘violation’ of the objective laws of history.<sup>126</sup> In a series of articles published between 1989 and 1990, Tatyana Zaslavskaya posited that the USSR had not in fact become a classless society, that the nomenklatura was exploiting and oppressing working people, and that there was no distinction to be made between socialism and capitalism –only varieties of “capitalism with socialist features.”<sup>127</sup>

In April 1987, future Moscow mayor Gavril Popov thought up the term ‘command-administrative system’ as a derogatory method of describing the Soviet political and socioeconomic model.<sup>128</sup> Quickly passing into the social discourse (with variations of the term even used by Gorbachev), the term succinctly described the ‘fundamentally undemocratic’ nature of the Soviet system and critiqued its dependence on bureaucratic organs, the military and the political police for survival.<sup>129</sup> Articles by economist Leonid Abalkin and sociologist Igor Kliamkin complemented Popov’s formulation, rooting Soviet ‘totalitarianism’ in the nature of the Marxist socialist economic model of public ownership and state management.<sup>130</sup>

In addition to being critiqued for its alleged tendency toward dictatorship, the socialist economic system was also criticized for its purported operation in defiance “of the objective laws of economic life.”<sup>131</sup> First carefully justifying an economic reform program on the basis of Lenin’s NEP,<sup>132</sup> by 1989 liberal academics and social commentators were calling for the wholesale repudiation of the economic mechanisms of the old ‘command-administrative system.’<sup>133</sup> Yakovlev personally criticized the

126 Kara-Murza, Manipulatsiya Soznaniem, p.226.

127 Kotz and Weir, p.68.; Also see John E. Elliot, “Disintegration of the Soviet Politico-Economic System,” International Journal of Social Economics Vol.22, No.3 (1995), p.37.

128 Malia, p.433.

129 Laqueur, 1990, p.254.

130 Evans, p.164.; Laqueur, 1990, p.241.

131 Nikolai Shemlev cited in Alec Nove, “The Soviet Economic Crisis,” National Institute Economic Review Vol.138, No.1 (November 1991), p.85.

132 Neil Robinson, Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A Critical History of Soviet Ideological Discourse (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), p.168.

133 Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p.152.; Shlapentokh, 2001, p.169.

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“dogmatic absolutization of state property” and argued that the economic ideals of communism were ‘utopian.’<sup>134</sup>

Analyzing the transformation of the public debate on economics, Vladimir Shlapentokh notes that “ideological imperatives” shared among liberal economists led them to the construction of “illusions that mixed desirable values and realities.”<sup>135</sup> Promising economic ‘El Dorados’ and mystical ‘hidden reserves’ to be tapped with the implementation of meaningful market reforms,<sup>136</sup> economists eventually came to promote the idea that mass private ownership would end alienation, decrease inequality, and encourage individual responsibility and the personal dignity argued to be lacking in socialism.<sup>137</sup> Larisa Piyasheva even asserted in 1990 that the capitalist societies of the West were actually free from economic coercion, their people depicted to be working not out of the need to survive but for the sake of social prestige and the expression of creativity.<sup>138</sup> After 1989, as the economy began to collapse, economists began arguing that only a radical program of privatization and marketization could “save the country from disaster.”<sup>139</sup>

With the rise of Gorbachev’s doctrine of ‘new political thinking’ in international affairs, the new liberal intellectual discourse played its role in legitimizing the idealistic worldview officially subscribed to by the state. First working to discredit ‘old thinking,’ a famous article by foreign policy analyst Vyacheslav Dashichev published in May 1988 blamed Brezhnev-era dogmatism and incompetence for the failures of Soviet foreign policy, the decline of détente, and the USSR’s encirclement by hostile powers.<sup>140</sup> As the old Marxist and realist/statist conceptions about the inevitability of Western capitalist hostility to socialism and to the Soviet Union came to be rejected, analysts from the foreign policy

<sup>134</sup> Evans, p.179, 204.

<sup>135</sup> Vladimir Shlapentokh, “Privatization Debates in Russia: 1989-1992,” *Comparative Economic Studies* Vol.35, No.2 (1993), p.20.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Gregory, “How the Soviet System Cracked,” *Policy Review* Vol.151 (October/November 2008), p.54.

<sup>137</sup> Shlapentokh, 1993, p.21, 26.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>139</sup> Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, p.261.; Also see Shlapentokh, 2001, p.195.; Nove, p.86.; Novikov and Bascio, p.115-116.

<sup>140</sup> Viacheslav Dashichev, “East-West Quest for New Relations: The Priorities of Soviet Foreign Policy,” in Tarasulo, p.225.

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institutes began publically promoting strategic concessions in the interests of ‘universal human



values' and 'broad' global welfare.<sup>141</sup> Subsequently, Soviet military and economic aid to old allies in the third world came be portrayed by the media as a waste of resources, and coverage of third world liberation struggles waned.<sup>142</sup>

As the old hegemonic ideologically-based 'enemy image' of the United States was gradually swept aside, it was replaced not by normal and impartial coverage but by an inverted media image, portraying the US as a superior society in virtually every way –materially, morally and spiritually.<sup>143</sup> As a result, public conceptions of the Soviet system in relation to the rest of the world were fundamentally transformed. A mass survey conducted in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (a newspaper read mostly by members of the intelligentsia) in early 1989 noted that 64% of respondents concluded that the Soviet Union “could not serve as a worthy example to anyone or for anything.”<sup>144</sup>

### **Systemic Overcentralization of Power and the Hegemony of the New Radical Discourse**

Discussing the reform processes occurring in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s under the auspices of *glasnost*, Shlapentokh notes their “extraordinary” and historically unprecedented nature, the state effectively carrying out “a frontal offensive against its own ideology.”<sup>145</sup> In Shlapentokh’s characterization, the old system, “a rigid, hierarchical organism, turned out to be defenseless against the actions of its leader, who undermined its vital mechanisms.”<sup>146</sup> Conceptualizing Gorbachev as the “single motor of initial change,” Shlapentokh points out that even as political opposition to his reforms

141 Kimberly Marten Zisk, “Soviet Academic Theories on International Conflict and Negotiation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol.34, No.4 (December 1990), p.687, 689, 691.; Peter Zwick, “New Thinking and New Foreign Policy under Gorbachev,” *Political Science and Politics* Vol.22, No.2 (June, 1989), p.216.

142 Charles Quist-Adade, “From Paternalism to Ethnocentrism: Images of Africa in Gorbachev’s Russia,” *Race & Class* Vol.46, No.4 (April 2005), p.84, 85-88.

143 Kotkin, 1991, p.53, 75.; Andrei P. Tsygankov, “The Irony of Western Ideas in a Multicultural World: Russians’ Intellectual Engagement with the “end of History” and “Clash of Civilizations,” *International Studies Review* Vol.5 (2003), p.58-60.; Ries, p.174-175.; Laird, p.99,101.; Shane documents how perestroika-era television coverage in programs like *Vzglyad* took “the world as [it was] portrayed for decades and [turned] it 180 degrees: we are the ones who are exploited, impoverished, and censored... and they are the ones who live the good life and are free. It was a shocking, embittering, and disillusioning message that came from Ostankino every Friday night.” (Shane, p.169.)

144 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznanie*m, p.197.

145 Shlapentokh, 2001, p.193.

146 *Ibid.*, p.201.

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crystallized, it was unable to challenge him directly, or to formulate alternative policies, capable only of temporarily stalling the reform process.<sup>147</sup> The Party apparatus, constrained by the

principle of Party discipline, ended up giving up one position after another, ultimately voting to deprive itself of its own monopoly on power.<sup>148</sup>

The intensely hierarchical nature of the system extended to every sphere of political, social and cultural activity. Physically in control of virtually every organ of information dissemination, the reformist Party and state leadership could also rely, in Yakovlev's words, on the population's psychological dependence on salvation "from above."<sup>149</sup> As a result, the fundamental transformation of Soviet mass consciousness would only require a small 'core' of radical intelligentsia situated in the top posts in the media, the cultural sphere and academia. Focusing on the press, Shlapentokh notes that "what the liberal press achieved in the country was amazing...it took less than one hundred liberal intellectuals to effect a change in viewpoint of the mass intelligentsia and of the politically active part of the rest of the population."<sup>150</sup>

Reviewing the Soviet media system's transformation, Becker argues that especially during the period between 1985 and 1988, the press effectively "served as a weapon in the battle for policies, power and authority," used by the reformers to help discredit conservative rivals and corrupted Party and state bureaucrats.<sup>151</sup> Steele concurs that until the late 1980s, glasnost "did not change editors' [traditional] approaches. A struggle for power was going on throughout Soviet society, and the press was one of the most important weapons in it."<sup>152</sup> DeLuca too notes that in its early years, glasnost was not about freedom of speech or of the press, "or the right to speak out against perestroika," but a

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p.190.; According to Kotkin, these conservative attempts to fight the reforms in the only way they could simply intensified the reformers' determination to discredit the conservative Party and state apparatus and to destroy its ideological and political power base. Observing the reformers' anti-conservative fanaticism, Kotkin notes that as late as 1990, even as "calls for an overthrow of the regime multiplied and republican legislatures passed laws superseding those of the USSR, Gorbachev continued to state publically that the principle obstacle to 'reform' was opposition by 'conservatives.'" (Kotkin, 2008, p.85.)

<sup>148</sup> Steele, p.92.

<sup>149</sup> Yakovlev, 1993, p.124.

<sup>150</sup> Shlapentokh, Soviet Intellectuals, p.265.; See also McNair, 1994, p.117.

<sup>151</sup> Becker, 1999, p.51.

<sup>152</sup> Steele, p.100.

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campaign instituted around the Leninist principle of mobilizing and (re)educating the masses –to "restructure" attitudes and policy and to "insure the irreversibility of the reform process."<sup>153</sup> Ligachev recalls with regret the fact that, as Central Committee Secretary of Ideology from 1985-1988 (officially sharing control over the media with Yakovlev), he did not do more to try to influence the formation of new ideological positions in magazines and newspapers during the early years of perestroika.<sup>154</sup> With unconvincing naiveté, he contends that Yakovlev, "who had spent many years in the West, naturally had a much better understanding" of "the crucial role of the mass media" as a potentially "powerful and dangerous weapon" in the hands of those who

direct it.<sup>155</sup> Other members of Gorbachev's entourage, including Chief of Staff Valery Boldin and advisor Anatoly Chernyaev, note that Ligachev was simply outmanoeuvred by Yakovlev in the struggle for ideological control. Boldin, noting that Ligachev was a forthright and unsubtle person, says that he was outwitted by Yakovlev's ability to calculate "many moves ahead... Ligachev would schedule a press briefing one day, but Yakovlev, at another meeting with editors the next day or through individual contacts, would cancel everything Ligachev had said."<sup>156</sup> Chernyaev, discussing the debates over the release of controversial artistic works such as Abuladze's *Pokyanie* and Rybakov's *Deti Arbata*, notes that each time Ligachev would voice his opposition, and each time his objections would be overruled and the works released.<sup>157</sup>

### Empowering the Radical Intelligentsia

Prior to perestroika, liberally-minded intellectuals had a small collection of specialized journals and periodicals, and faced varying degrees of censorship and repression over time, effectively limiting what they were capable of publishing. The vast majority of the media apparatus, the academic presses, and the artistic institutions were controlled by conservative Marxist-Leninists who worked to preserve the status quo, either from within (as editors and heads of institutes and creative unions) or without

153 DeLuca, p.56.

154 Ligachev, p.98.

155 Ibid., p.105.

156 Boldin, p.121.

157 Anatoly S. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* Trans. Robert D. English and Elizabeth Tucker (University Park, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p.113.

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(through Glavlit and other central censorship organs). In this situation, political thought radically divergent from hegemonic informational norms had virtually no real ability to reach large numbers of people. The dissidents, as open opponents of the regime, were even more restricted. Discussing the difficulties they faced in engaging the state in public debate, Young and Launer note that with "no access to the media...their efforts had little social impact within the borders of the Soviet Union."<sup>158</sup> Caroline Humphrey adds that as a result, most ordinary people simply wrote dissidents off "as pariahs or...as people 'with a screw loose.'"<sup>159</sup> Decimated and demoralized during the 1970s, it took Gorbachev's active initiative "to drag them [back] into public activity."<sup>160</sup>

In their analysis of the Soviet collapse, David Kotz and Fred Weir compare the radicalization of the Soviet intelligentsia in the glasnost period with a similar historical process of radicalization which occurred among elements of the American intelligentsia during the Great Depression. They conclude that while major media outlets remained largely closed to radical leftist American intellectuals in the 1930s, the radical liberal Soviet intellectuals "faced no such barriers" during the era of perestroika. On the contrary, the "top political leadership had actually given [them the]

freedom to write as they wished, using the mass media as their vehicles.”<sup>161</sup>

Empowered by the state, the radical intelligentsia worked to influence and radicalize the mass intelligentsia, a massive group in Soviet society which by the mid-1980s was estimated to comprise anywhere between twenty and fifty million people.<sup>162</sup> Stephen Lovell estimates that prior to perestroika, only about two million of this group had been thoroughly liberalized through informal discussions and the circulation of samizdat literature.<sup>163</sup> In the late 1980s, as they were radicalized by the new social

158 Marilyn J. Young and Michael K. Launer, “The Final Days: The Development of Argumentative Discourse in the Soviet Union,” *Argumentation* Vol.16 (2002), p.445.

159 Caroline Humphrey, “Inequality and Exclusion: A Russian Case Study of Emotion in Politics,” *Anthropological Theory* Vol.1, No.3 (2002), p.345.; Also see Yurchak, p.107-108, 129, 143.

160 Shlapentokh, 2001, p.183.

161 Kotz and Weir, p.67.

162 Lovell, p.74.

163 Ibid.

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discourse, the mass intelligentsia came to constitute “the largest pro-reform constituency,”<sup>164</sup> first supporting Gorbachev against the conservatives, and then shifting their allegiance to Yeltsin and other democratic and nationalist leaders throughout the country.<sup>165</sup> Gennady Batygin argues that the intelligentsia’s loss of faith in socialism and the state constituted a fatal blow to the entire Soviet system, since their ability and willingness to articulate “social myths” and to transmit them to the mass public via ideology, “moral and legal norms, [and] images of past and future” played a crucial role in the consolidation and preservation of Soviet power.<sup>166</sup>

#### Hegemony of the New Discourse: Censorship in Reverse

As discussed above, the radical liberal intelligentsia came to gain a hegemonic voice in the social discourse of perestroika. This was achieved not only through their access to the mass media and promotion to important posts, but also through the direct and indirect censorship of their opponents. Ligachev regularly criticized the ‘one way democracy’ approach of glasnost journals,<sup>167</sup> warning Gorbachev that instead of a pluralism of opinion, there existed a “dictatorship” in the media.<sup>168</sup>

Kurginyan and Kara-Murza, both prominent moderate conservative members of the Soviet intelligentsia during perestroika, have both confirmed the tendency among glasnost-era media to refuse publication of their work, ostensibly for its political content. Kurginyan, writing in the midst of the reform process, noted his inability to get published in the central press despite his prominent status as a

164 Theodore P. Gerber and Michael Hout, “More Shock than Therapy: Market Transition, Employment, and Income in Russia, 1991-1995,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.104, No.1

(July 1998), p.10.; See also David Lane, "From State Socialism to Capitalism: The Role of Class and the World System," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* Vol.39 (2006), p.146.; Kotz and Weir, p.69.

165 Shlapentokh and others have noted the mass intelligentsia's tendency to opt to "discard socialism" at a much more rapid pace than society as a whole. (Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals* p.82, 237.; Shane, p.215.; Laird, p.80, 84.) While the masses experienced "a much more modest, but no less remarkable" loss of faith in socialism (Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals*, 265.) the mass intelligentsia, constituting the most politically active group in society (Michael Urban et al., *The Rebirth of Politics in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.93), were the crucial force in supporting the rising tide of national protest in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.89.), and acted as the main defenders of Yeltsin and the White House during the dramatic August 1991 coup attempt which ended in the complete disintegration of Soviet power. (Shlapentokh, 2001, p.200.)

166 Gennady S. Batygin, "The Transfer of Allegiances of the Intellectual Elites," *Studies in East European Thought* Vol.53 (2001), p.258.

167 Jonathan Harris, *Ligachev on Glasnost and Perestroika* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1989), p.32-35.

168 Yegor Ligachev, "Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin," in Dallin and Lapidus, p.709.

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famous theatre director and advisor to the Pavlov government, arguing that "the principle of 'whoever is not with us is against us' continues to operate today in a modified form."169 Karakurza, seeking to publish an article in response to a 1988 Seliunin piece which proposed the introduction of an unemployment mechanism, notes that he was rejected by over a dozen publications and told that the "editors do not agree with [his] point of view," despite the fact that each of the papers was formally an organ of the Party and that employment was guaranteed as a fundamental social right by the Soviet Constitution.170

Recently appearing on a popular Russian television historical debate program, liberal *Moskovskii Komsomolets* editor Pavel Gusev explained, when asked why he refused to publish articles which were critical of the reform process, that he, "like those revolutionaries of 1917" who dismantled the old order, was a "revolutionary...fighting on his own front line...to defeat the old system and to see new people in power." He rejected the publication of articles by those who were opposed to reform because he was afraid that they might "foul up" what he called the new "air of freedom."171

Working in his capacity as Secretary of Propaganda, Yakovlev himself has discussed the necessity to use the 'mechanisms of totalitarianism' against the old system:

"Looking back, I can proudly say that that the subtle, clever, but very simple tactics –using the mechanisms of totalitarianism against the totalitarian system –worked. There was no other way to carry out the political struggle –Bolshevism completely rejected any democratic transition, any alternative thinking."172

Yakovlev's 'subtle' use of the 'mechanisms of totalitarianism' did not pass unnoticed. Pravda editor Viktor Afanasyev implicitly criticized the government as early as March 1987 in a speech to the congress of the Union of Journalists, noting the propensity for state organs to harass and intimidate conservative periodicals. Afanasyev asserted that "[t]he moment a correspondent is given an

169 Sergei Kurginyan et al., *Post-Perestroika: Conceptual Model of Development of the USSR* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1990).

Electronic edition: < <http://www.ecc.ru/books/pp/pp.htm> >

170 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniiem*, p.219.

171 "Glasnost: Shag k podlinnoi svobode ili informatsionnaya voina?" *Sud Vremeni*. Petersburg – Channel 5. December 6, 2010.

172 Yakovlev, in Laffont, p.14.

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assignment to collect critical material... 'telephone calls follow... Attempts are made to prevent a correspondent's work and publication of their material.'"173 He also pointed to instances of journalists being fired from their posts and dismissed from the Party for deviating from the new line.174

Like the conservative organs, the liberal 'flagships of glasnost' were also subjected to surveillance and ideological control. *Ogonyok* editor Vitali Korotich once recalled how, in late 1987, having published an informal opinion poll from Novosibirsk about support for perestroika there which indicated that only 30 percent were in favour:

Yakovlev told me that Gorbachev called him early in the morning and told him that in Siberia there is a plot against him, a conspiracy... They sent a strong commission there, and Yakovlev called me and asked me to fire this guy [writer Dmitry Biruyukov] from our staff immediately, because he is an enemy of perestroika who published such a terrible thing –that Siberia's against perestroika! [Laughs] I never fired this guy –I hid him somewhere in our staff. But Yakovlev, liberal Yakovlev, pressed me. Maybe three or four times he called me...and asked me if I fired this guy and if he'll never be published [again]."175

Yakovlev's conflict with the conservative journal *Nash Sovremennik* serves as another example of his personal effort as head of propaganda to repress the viewpoints of conservative opponents of reform. Affiliated with the RSFSR Writers' Union, *Nash Sovremennik* was a flagship journal of a group which served as the principle source of intellectual opposition to perestroika.176 Unable to remove conservative editor Sergei Vikulov in 1986, Yakovlev would end up waging a campaign against the journal which lasted several years. Performing a character assassination of Vikulov and his editorial staff by calling them a bunch of 'disorderly alcoholics,' Yakovlev then ordered an investigation of the journal by his department, claiming that "he had received complaints from within the journal that things were

173 Doder and Branson, p.258.

174 Ibid.

175 Gibbs, p.15. [Emphasis in original]

176 The RSFSR Writers' Union was unique among its republican counterparts, most of which had quickly aligned themselves with radical liberal forces at the outset of perestroika. Moskva and Literaturnaya Rossiya, two of the other main conservative publications, were also affiliated with this union. Unsuccessful in his efforts to nominate a reformer to the leadership of the RSFSR Writers' Union at its July 1986 Congress, Yakovlev would use the flagships of glasnost to carry out an intensive campaign of criticism against the union. The liberal press charged the leadership of the union with corruption, called them out as timeservers and literary hacks, and categorized them as 'conservatives' and 'reactionaries' opposed to healthy and positive change (Garrard and Garrard, p.197-199, 209.) It was not until mid-1990 that liberal reformist elements could consolidate to take over the union at its next regular congress.

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not in order.”<sup>177</sup> The investigation coming up short, Yakovlev then began sending Gorbachev alarmist memoranda stating that he had found evidence of “Nazi-type propaganda” in the journal, accusations which Gorbachev dismissed as having no basis in reality, probably due to his sympathy for the moderate Russian nationalism espoused in the journal.<sup>178</sup> Only in 1989, when national discourse formulated in Marxist-Leninist terms began collapsing, was Vikulov was finally ousted, replaced by radical nationalist and anti-communist Stanislav Kuniaev<sup>179</sup> (by that point Yakovlev was no longer in charge of the propaganda department). With Kuniaev's appointment, Nash Sovremennik, former stronghold of 'red' nationalism, began publishing articles condemning the “monstrous genocide” carried out by the Soviet regime against its opponents in the aftermath of the civil war.<sup>180</sup> Most of the other conservative journals followed suit, losing their Marxist and moderate conservative nationalist editors and their affiliation with the CPSU and turning into battlegrounds between 'red,' 'brown,' and 'white' nationalists.<sup>181</sup> In late 1988, with reformist hegemony assured in the aftermath of the Andreyeva affair (discussed below), Yakovlev was transferred from his post as head of propaganda to foreign affairs, where he acted as advisor to Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. He was replaced by Vadim Medvedev, a former protégé of his.<sup>182</sup> Soon after, the close supervision of the central press and the arts declined, and in late 1988 the Department of Propaganda's responsibility was formally and legally transformed to an informational/advisory role.<sup>183</sup>

### **The Andreyeva Affair**

In March 1988, a letter by Leningrad chemistry teacher Nina Andreyeva was published in the central newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya. Entitled “I Cannot Forsake My Principles” the letter was a voice of opposition to the abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles and to the 'distortion' of history which

<sup>177</sup> Cosgrove, p.92.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p.95.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p.118.

180 Spring in Spring, p.83-84.

181 Cosgrove, p.111, 113, 116-118.

182 Medvedev had worked with Yakovlev in the 1960s while the latter was the Deputy Secretary of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee (Vadim Medvedev, V Komande Gorbacheva)

183 Becker, 1999, p.53-54.

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Andreyeva felt was occurring in the media and in the arts. Ultimately the letter and its use by the reformers to crack down on the conservatives came to epitomize the climax in the political struggle against the opponents of reform.

Characterized by many Western academic observers as an ‘anti-Semitic,’ ‘neo-Stalinist,’ ‘Russian nationalist,’ ‘anti-perestroika manifesto,’ the letter’s argumentation was actually quite moderate. The title of the letter was a quote from one of Gorbachev’s speeches, and the letter closed with another quotation in which Gorbachev talked about “the importance of Marxist-Leninist principles.” Warning of the “ideological ‘confusion’ and ‘one-sidedness being sown by certain glasnost writers,” Andreyeva criticized both ‘left-liberals’ and ‘neo-Slavophile’ Russian nationalists, noting that the effect of their efforts was to confuse the young people she was teaching. The liberals were critiqued for their idealization of the West and for espousing the political principle of individualism over collectivism, the Slavophile nationalists for their romanticization of pre-revolutionary Russia. Contrary to the much ascribed ‘neo-Stalinist’ character of the letter, Andreyeva actually noted that she shared the indignation of all Soviet people over the repressions of the 1930s, from which her own family had also suffered. Ultimately, Andreyeva called for a ‘balanced’ assessment of the Stalin period –for the recognition that in addition to noting the mistakes and crimes, the press should also acknowledge the great achievements of the period.<sup>184</sup>

Boldin has recalled that Gorbachev’s initial reaction to the letter was that it was “all right.”<sup>185</sup> However, upon hearing that it was receiving support from citizens writing to Pravda and other press organs, being circulated through Leningrad and reprinted by the provincial press,<sup>186</sup> Gorbachev and

<sup>184</sup> Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny, *Socialism Betrayed: Behind the Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (New York: iUniverse, 2010), p.142-143.; An online copy of Andreyeva’s original article can be found online: Nina Andreyeva, “Ne Mogu Postupatsa Printsipami,” *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (March 13, 1988). <[www.revolucia.ru/nmppr.htm](http://www.revolucia.ru/nmppr.htm)> ; On the issue of Andreyeva’s supposed anti-semitism: her criticism of the Jewish ‘refusniks’ agitating for permission to emigrate was that they were portraying their effort as a manifestation of the struggle for democracy, while Andreyeva believed that their real motive was the desire for personal material betterment (known in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia as ‘kolbasnaya emmigratsiya’ (‘sausage immigration’).

<sup>185</sup> Boldin, p.168.

<sup>186</sup> Keeran and Kenny, p.145.; Gibbs, p.68.; McNair, 1989, p.341.; Ligachev, p.309.



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Yakovlev decided to launch a full scale political and media attack. A two day session of the Politburo was held –unprecedented for the discussion of a mere newspaper article, where, as Ligachev recalled, “the usually reasonable style at Politburo sessions had changed completely and turned punitive,”<sup>187</sup> each Politburo member called in turn to voice his condemnation of the letter.<sup>188</sup> Speaking at the session, Yakovlev emphasized the threat that the letter posed not only to the reform program but also to “Gorbachev personally.”<sup>189</sup>

The official response in Pravda, written by Yakovlev and released anonymously in early April, polemicized the letter, turning it into a pretence for attacking conservative forces opposed to perestroika in an overwhelming and systematic way.<sup>190</sup> Titled “Principles of Perestroika: Revolutionary Nature of Thinking and Acting,” the rebuttal claimed that Andreyeva’s letter represented “in a highly concentrated form...intolerance to the elementary idea of renewal,” and “the brutal exposition of fixed positions that are in essence conservative and dogmatic.” Arguing that the letter constituted a defence of Stalinism, the rebuttal noted that those behind its publication were said to be trying to “revise party decisions.”<sup>191</sup> It critiqued Andreyeva for her supposed rejection of historical truth, which was being ‘reinstated’ thanks to glasnost and perestroika, cleansed “of the false and sly half-truths” of the past.<sup>192</sup> The rebuttal concluded by disingenuously calling for the “mastery of the full profundity of the Marxist-Leninist concept of perestroika” and “for more glasnost, more democracy, more socialism.”<sup>193</sup>

187 Ligachev, p.305.

188 Ibid., p.307-308.

189 Chernyaev, p.154.

190 Yakovlev’s rebuttal was published several weeks after Andreyeva’s letter, leading many observers temporarily convinced that the letter signalled an ideological shift back to pre-perestroika media and cultural norms. Korotich has decisively debunked the idea that the leadership had wavered in the face of the conservative onslaught, explaining that as he was planning to respond, Yakovlev called him and told him to postpone his response, saying that “[t]he answer to Nina Andreyeva [had to come] from the official level... from the highest level.” (Gibbs, p.68.) In other words, the time lag was a conscious policy measure, possibly designed to get the leadership of the conservative opposition to reveal itself in full in preparation for the crushing attack against them which followed.

191 Yakovlev cited in Gibbs, p.69.

192 Alexander Yakovlev, “Principles of Perestroika: The Revolutionary Nature of Thinking and Acting,” in Tarasulo, p.295.

193 Ibid., p.302.

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Sovetskaya Rossiya, its offices raided in search of evidence of a conspiracy, was forced to issue a retraction, and forbidden from publishing reader letters supporting Andreyeva.<sup>194</sup> Other papers were also coerced into compliance.<sup>195</sup> Meanwhile, as recalled by Chernyaev, liberal

papers printed “such an avalanche of anti-Stalinism...as would never have been tolerated... before the incident.”<sup>196</sup> Party first secretaries who had republished the letter in their regional papers were also reprimanded. Sverdlovsk first secretary Yuri Petrov, refusing to repent to Gorbachev for republishing the article, was relieved of his post and sent off as ambassador to Cuba.<sup>197</sup> Ligachev himself, suspected of being behind the letter, lost any remaining responsibility for the media, and was formally transferred to the Secretariat for Agriculture after the September 1988 emergency plenum.<sup>198</sup>

In his memoirs, Ligachev has come to recognize that the Andreyeva letter was a tool “used in the battle with those who opposed the destructive radical anti-Soviet idea,”<sup>199</sup> arguing that it was a case of manipulation “in the best tradition of [Mikhail] Suslov’s Agitprop.”<sup>200</sup> Pointing out the artificially inflated sense of importance attributed to the letter, Chernyaev has noted that “if there had been no Nina Andreyeva, we would have had to invent her.”<sup>201</sup> Yakovlev himself has confirmed that the destruction of the conservative opposition in the aftermath of the Andreyeva affair constituted the ‘crossing of the Rubicon’ to radical reform.<sup>202</sup> Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny explain that the response to Andreyeva’s letter signalled “the decisive turning point in the transformation of perestroika from an Andropov-inspired reform effort within the traditional context of Soviet socialism to an open attack on the major pillars of socialism –the Communist Party, socialized property, and central planning,”<sup>203</sup> Kotkin confirms that the campaign against the letter was a means by which the reformers were able to

194 McNair, 1989, p.341.; Keeran and Kenny, p.146.; Ligachev, p.309.; Gibbs, p.69.

195 Cosgrove, p.112.

196 Chernyaev, p.156.

197 Ibid., p.159.

198 Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.175.

199 Ligachev, p.308.

200 Ibid., p.303.

201 Chernyaev, p.156.

202 Roy Medvedev and Giulietto Chiesa, *Time of Change: An Insider’s View of Russia’s Transformation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p.196.

203 Keeran and Kenny, p.142.

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decisively discredit the old conservative Party apparatus and to institute a radical restructuring of the political system.<sup>204</sup>

### Fallout from the Affair

Speaking in April 1988 on the anniversary of Lenin’s birth, recently promoted Politburo candidate member Georgy Razumovskii discussed the need for Soviet society to ‘return’ to Leninist socialism, “with its diversity of forms of economic, social, and spiritual life,” to repudiate “conceptions of socialism fostered during the cult of personality,” and to recognize “informal groupings as a legitimate reflection of people’s impatience with...existing mass

organizations.”<sup>205</sup> Razumovskii’s speech came to presage many of the fundamental political reforms passed at the Nineteenth Party Conference of the CPSU, held in June 1988.

Emboldened by his media victory against conservative forces, and using his authority as General Secretary, Gorbachev successfully pushed a number of radical proposals through the Conference with little discussion and little opposition from the conservative majority.<sup>206</sup> He forced nearly one hundred members of the Central Committee to vote for the elimination of their posts,<sup>207</sup> moved to abolish the Party’s coordinating role in the management of the economy,<sup>208</sup> and created a new partially popularly elected legislative branch –the Congress of People’s Deputies. The official resolution read at the conclusion of the Conference noted the necessity to “irrevocably repudiate the command-directive

204 Kotkin, 2008, p.74.

205 Harris, p.38.

206 Malia, p.428.

207 Shlapentokh, 2001, p.212.

208 Ellman and Kontorovich cite the decision to remove the Party’s coordinating role in the economy as one of the key reasons for the ultimate crisis and collapse of the economy. With the destruction of the Party-directed planning mechanism, over a thousand Central Committee departments and several hundred thousand workers charged with planning and coordinating the economy were eliminated, the remnants amalgamated into a single socioeconomic department. Without Party supervision, enterprises were left without planning constraints or guidelines, and enterprise directors had nowhere to turn to ensure the delivery of raw materials and finished goods to their destinations. While the planning mechanism collapsed, no effective market mechanism stepped into its place, and the economy slipped into paralysis. (Vladimir Mozhin, “The Party and the Economic Reform,” and Yuri Belik, “Changes in the Central Committee Apparatus,” in Ellman and Kontorovich, p.165-166.; Lev Freinkman, “Politics and Enterprise Behaviour,” in *Ibid.*, p.187-189.; Yuri Kuznetsov, “Local Party Organs and the Economy During Perestroika,” in *ibid.*, p.197, 200-205, 208.; See also Donald F. Dixon and Evgeny Polyakov, “Physical Quality-of-Life Indicators in Post-Stalinist Russia,” *Journal of Macromarketing* (Spring 1997), p.43-45.; Philip Hanson, “Soviet Economic Reform: Perestroika or ‘Catastroika’?” *World Policy Journal* Vol.8, No.2 (Spring 1991), p.311, 314.; Elliot, p.32-36.)

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methods,” and the “deformations” of the Stalinist system which were said to have crippled the Soviet system.<sup>209</sup>

In September 1988, Gorbachev completed his “veritable coup d’état” against conservative elements of the Politburo and the Secretariat, calling an unprecedented emergency plenum, lasting only one hour, which removed virtually all of his remaining conservative opponents, including Mikhail Solomentsev, Andrei Gromyko, and Ligachev.<sup>210</sup>

1989-1991: The Decisive Collapse of Socialism and the Rise of Liberal Pluralism and Nationalism

By 1989, the radical liberal intelligentsia which had played such an important role in supporting Gorbachev and the reform process took a decisive turn against him and his reform communist program. Discussing the media discourse of this period, Vladimir Buldakov notes that “[i]f in 1988...radical, democratic mass publications...were still conducting a supportive campaign on behalf of the ‘real’ October, cursing Stalin for everything that went wrong and mourning his victims...by 1989 the situation had totally changed.” The goal of the liberal intelligentsia had become “to obliterate the Communist Party...along with its ‘October roots.’”<sup>211</sup> Many of Gorbachev’s most famous liberal allies, including personalities like Yegor Yakovlev, Tatyana Zaslavskaya and Yuri Afanasyev now came to openly oppose him and his attempt to salvage the Soviet project, which they judged ‘incapable of reform.’<sup>212</sup>

As criticism of the reformers’ muddled program and of Gorbachev’s personal style of leadership increased, he began vigorously denouncing the media for “throwing matches” in a country “knee-deep in gasoline,”<sup>213</sup> condemning “social demagogues [who] have found their way into some editorial offices,” and reprimanding sensationalist journalists “who, in their chase after popularity, are ready to speak out

209 Sternthal, p.112-113.

210 Solomentsev and Gromyko were retired, and Ligachev was moved to the Secretariat for Agriculture. The ‘coup’ was in some sense quite literal, Gorbachev putting the Moscow Military District on alert during the plenum. (Malia, p.430.)

211 Vladimir P. Buldakov, “The October Revolution: Seventy-Five Years On,” Trans. Alan Wood *European History Quarterly* Vol.22 (1992), p.498.

212 Urban et al., p.91.

213 Gorbachev cited in Shane, p.165.

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against their own mother.”<sup>214</sup> Chernyaev recalls in his memoirs how, together with Vadim Medvedev, he often had to save bold editors from the General Secretary’s wrath, telling Gorbachev that the new critical style of discourse was merely a healthy expression of pluralism.<sup>215</sup> Ligachev too has noted how Gorbachev would often tell Medvedev to “‘deal with the situation’ [in the press,] but no one ever followed up on this, and Medvedev never reported his results.”<sup>216</sup> In this way, Gorbachev’s ministers and advisers were usually effectively able to defuse his growing anger and frustration with the media without making any real effort to curb the growing radicalism of media discourse.<sup>217</sup>

The televised proceedings of the new Congress of People’s Deputies parliament elected in March 1989, watched by as many as 200 million people, helped to further undermine “the legitimacy of the Party, Soviet history, and the whole social order,”<sup>218</sup> many of the radical deputies labouring to discredit the old system and to portray the leadership as irresolute, incompetent and dishonest.<sup>219</sup> In many ways the Congress acted more as a debating club than as an organ of political power. As ethnographer Nancy Ries notes, “[t]o watch the televised sessions of the Congress...was to hear endless litanies on one topic or another –actually an

endless competition of litanies.”<sup>220</sup> Radical deputies from the famous ‘interregional group,’ including future political heavyweights like Yeltsin, Popov and Anatoli

214 Gorbachev cited in Horvath, p.77.

215 Chernyaev, p.176.

216 Ligachev, p.101.

217 In 1989, when a poll in *Argumenti i Fakti* showed that Yeltsin, Sakharov, and Popov were all more popular than Gorbachev in Moscow, the General Secretary famously demanded the resignation of the weekly’s editor, Vladimir Starkov. When the editor refused, receiving support from his coworkers and other liberal editors, Gorbachev backed down, though not without destroying his liberal credibility in the eyes of much of the liberal intelligentsia. In early 1991, after a military attempt to restore order in Vilnius resulted in bloodshed, Gorbachev threatened to suspend the new Press Law for the media’s alleged lack of objectivity in its coverage of the events. Again he backed down, his angry outcry again serving only “to warn others that Gorbachev may not be such a champion of glasnost after all.” (Urban et al., p.81.)

218 Keeran and Kenny, p.183.; See also Malia, p.451.

219 During the election campaign in the run-up to the Congress, national and local media helped to facilitate the election of liberal candidates through a campaign of intense criticism against conservative candidates. This is how Leningrad Party Secretary Yuri Solovyev, relentlessly attacked in *Leningradskaya Pravda* and the central organ *Izvestia*, famously and embarrassingly lost his seat through a vote of no confidence even though he ran unopposed. (Steele, p.111.)

220 Ries, p.167.

Sobchak, used the venue to launch their political careers, coming to openly advocate national self-determination, market reforms, and “political, economic, and moral pluralism.”<sup>221</sup> In August 1990, a new press law formulated by the Supreme Soviet came into effect, formally abolishing the Party’s monopoly ownership and control of the media and resulting in the privatization through cooperativization of the vast majority of the state’s share. By 1991, hundreds of new journals and periodicals were registered, along with several new television channels and dozens of radio stations, virtually all of them politically supportive of the democrats and nationalists (some of them even financed by newly created political parties).<sup>222</sup>

### The Rise of Nationalism

Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Communist Party had formally worked to unify a vast and ethnically diverse empire behind the promise of building communism. As the Party and its ideology were attacked and destroyed from within and without, they left in their wake opportunities for ethnic, linguistic, clan and religious affiliation to take their place in the political arena.<sup>223</sup> Between 1989 and 1991, nationalist political discourse emerged in virtually every republic and autonomous region of the country.<sup>224</sup> Directly and indirectly, much of the central, republican and local media came to actively promote and otherwise aid this new discourse.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Marina Peunova, “From Dissidents to Collaborators: The Resurgence and Demise of the Russian Critical Intelligentsia Since 1985,” *Studies in East European Thought* Vol.60 (2008),

p.235-237, 240.

222 Julia Rozanova, "Public Television in the Context of Established and Emerging Democracies: Quo Vadis?" *International Communication Gazette*, Vol.69, No.2 (2007), p.135.; Josephine Woll, "Glasnost: A Cultural Kaleidoscope," in Harley D. Balzer, *Five Years that Shook the World: Gorbachev's Unfinished Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p.111.; Beumers, 1999, p.889.; White, p.99-100.

223 As noted by Yuri Slezkine, the USSR was an ethno-federal state, with nationality being an important element of identity. Once "Gorbachev finally discarded the worn-out Marxist verbiage, the only language that remained was the well honed and long practice language of nationalism." (Yuri Slezkine, "The Soviet Union as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.338.

224 Mark Bessinger notes that among the mass protest movements organized in the late 1980s and early 1990s, only 6% made political demands without simultaneously making nationalist demands, and only 1/3 promulgated democratic demands together with their nationalist demands. (Beissinger, 2002, p.76.)

225 Geoffrey A. Hosking, "The Beginnings of Independent Political Activity," in Dallin and Lapidus, p.105-106.; Isabelle T. Kreindler, "A Second Missed Opportunity: Russian in Retreat as a Global Language," *International Political Science Review* Vol.14, No.3 (July 1993), p.266, p.269.; Malia, p.448.

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As the old concepts of the 'friendship of the peoples' disintegrated, new formulations about Russian cultural and political imperialism took hold in many republics, with "Russia and the Russians" deemed "responsible for all the problems, past and present."<sup>226</sup> At the same time, Russian nationalists undertook their own campaign discussing the RSFSR's 'lack of rights' within the Union and its economic 'subsidization' of the rest of the country.<sup>227</sup> Kotkin concludes that the Russian nationalists' ability to publicly speak of themselves as an 'aggrieved minority' demonstrated "the suicidal dynamic of openness for the system."<sup>228</sup>

Public statements by Alexander Yakovlev did not help the centre in its struggle to keep the country together. Taking a trip to the Baltics in August 1988, he encouraged the newly formed, proto-nationalist popular front organizations there by noting that while "a state in the form of a union must have a common defence and foreign policy...the rest...ought to be the prerogative of the republics."<sup>229</sup> Printed in all the major republican media organs in Lithuania and Latvia, Yakovlev's message and encouragement were of such importance that the Lithuanian Sajudis Popular Front organization would come to divide historical time into 'pre-Yakovlev' and 'post-Yakovlev.'<sup>230</sup>

### **Ideological Diversion, 'Newspeak' and the Concealment of Reformers' Real Intentions**

Writing about the conceptual origins of glasnost, Yakovlev has conceded that the reformist leadership's decision to liberalize and radicalize social discourse was not based on any sense of objective social necessity:

"Strictly speaking, the turn toward glasnost was not inevitable in those years. It was dictated more by the philosophy of perestroika and its initiators than by immediate necessity. At that stage society would have supported even some fairly radical version of an administrative 'perfection of socialism,' strengthening the technocratic approach, as opposed to the Party-ideological approach for solving vital problems."<sup>231</sup>

226 Gorbachev, p.346.

227 Mark Beissinger, "Nationalism and the Collapse of Soviet Communism," *Contemporary European History* Vol.18, No.3 (2009), p.333, 342-343.

228 Kotkin, 2008, p.70.

229 Yakovlev cited in Graham Smith, "Latvians," in Graham Smith (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union* (London: Longman, 1990), p.64.

230 Beissinger, 2002, p.174.

231 Yakovlev, 1993, p.104.

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Because the Soviet system prior to perestroika had a strong measure of popular support, a large core constituency of Party members and many non-party sympathizers, and a powerful security mechanism organized to defend the regime, the campaign to destroy the old hegemonic ideology had to be carried out carefully, slowly and in secrecy, using ideological deception and political duplicity.<sup>232</sup>

Discussing the introduction of new terminology and the transformation of old ideological signifiers during perestroika, Michael Urban et al. note that slogans like 'a return to Leninist norms' and 'the renewal of socialism' constituted "marvels of political ambiguity, enabling liberals and conservatives alike to share the same symbols and terms even while they might understand them in radically different ways."<sup>233</sup> In this way, the liberal reformers could use old terminology to criticize their opponents and simultaneously to disguise radical new ideas within the old acceptable expressions. As the ideological reform effort progressed, these terminologically transient 'vanishing mediators,' having performed their role, gave way to more and more radical formulations.<sup>234</sup> Kara-Murza conceives of this process of linguistic reformulation as a form of 'Newspeak,' a 'totalitarian' technology ultimately used by the reformers to radically transform mass consciousness.<sup>235</sup> Kurginyan concurs, noting that the "strategy of semantic war...designed to address conscious and subconscious, group and individual identity," saw the flipping of fundamental ideological, social and moral parameters, ultimately having as its aim "a total restructuring of the basic values and attitudes of the nation."<sup>236</sup>

<sup>232</sup> As Euvgeny Novikov and Patrick Bascio note: "When one considers that Gorbachev and the rest of the Soviet elite...had to deal with an entrenched majority of perhaps 20 million men and women, [the decision to initiate radical reforms] was a formidable and personally dangerous task...The premature disclosure of the plan would have meant removal from power and almost certain execution, but [the reformers] gambled that secrecy and cautious implementation would

bring them success. The attack on Marxism was carried out by the clever citing of obscure passages from Communist classics, and a subtle revisionism of works already generally accepted by the unsophisticated Party membership.” (Novikov and Bascio, p.54-55.)

233 Urban et al., p.80.; See also Kristian Petrov, “Construction, Reconstruction, Destruction: The Fall of the Soviet Union from the Point of View of Conceptual History,” *Studies in East European Thought* Vol.60 (2008), p.188.

234 Petrov, p. 196.; Thus, ‘socialist democracy’ became ‘democratization,’ ‘socialist pluralism’ turned into ‘pluralism of opinion,’ and then ‘political pluralism.’ ‘Socialist competition’ was replaced by ‘competition,’ ‘socialist markets’ evolving into ‘market socialism,’ and finally into ‘a regulated market economy.’ ‘Peaceful coexistence’ was replaced by ‘universal human values’ and the idea of a ‘Common European Home.’ (Ibid., p.195-196.; Keeran and Kenny, p.137-138.)

235 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.61.

236 Sergei Kurginyan et al., *Pole Otvetnogo Deystviya* Proceedings from a Seminar of the Political Club ‘Post-Perestroika’, April 3, 1993. Electronic edition: <  
<http://www.ecc.ru/books/pod/pod.htm>>

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union, some of the people charged with carrying out the ideational and semantic war against the old system, including Yakovlev himself, openly acknowledged their tendency to act in a deceitful manner in order to advance their aims. In a 2003 interview in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Yakovlev sheepishly commented: “I myself am a sinner –lying not once. I spoke about the ‘renewal of socialism’ but knew where it was all heading.”<sup>237</sup> Political scientist and Yakovlev assistant Alexander Tsipko, discussing his own tendency toward ideological deception during the reform period, justified his actions on the basis of his fear of a revival of rigid Marxism-Leninism: “the game I played and my brand of revisionism did make sense in spite of its vulnerability on moral grounds. The non-Marxist brand of Marxism drew the intelligentsia away from the greatest threat of all, the true dogmatic Marxism and faith in the healing powers of the Revolution.”<sup>238</sup>

### **Conclusion: Glasnost and the Destruction of Soviet Societal Consciousness**

Through the course of glasnost, the radical intelligentsia in control of the social discourse came to discard the country’s history as a never-ending string of repressions and injustices, while castigating existing social reality as morally shameful, materially impoverished, and spiritually empty. Ultimately, the reformers wrote off the entire Soviet experience as a wasted period devoted to pursuing the unachievable.<sup>239</sup> Partly as a result, Martin Malia notes that by the time the Soviet flag came down over the Kremlin in December 1991, “the Soviet Union had suffered the structural equivalent of defeat in a major war,” except that the extent of catastrophe was even worse, “for it was self-inflicted...[T]hat an advanced industrial nation and superpower should collapse without any large-scale military defeat, after forty-five years of peace...is unheard of in modern history.”<sup>240</sup>

237 Anatoly Kostyukov, “Ya govoril pro obnovlenie sotsializma, a sam znal, k chemy delo idet,” interview with Alexander Yakovlev, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 12, 2003 <



[http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2003-12-02/1\\_yakovlev.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2003-12-02/1_yakovlev.html)>

238 Tsipko in Ellman and Kontorovich, p.182-183.

239 Robert Strayer, Why Did the Soviet Union Collapse? Understanding Historical Change (Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p.105.

240 Malia, p.489.

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In the aftermath of the collapse, Yakovlev would note that the glasnost campaign succeeded in “debunking of the neoreligion of Marxism” and its myths,<sup>241</sup> resulting in a “qualitative breakthrough...in the consciousness of people who believed in socialism and its perfection...[in] an understanding...that all aspects of our existence [would] require profound and radical reform.”<sup>242</sup> Yurchak confirms that within the space of a few years, Soviet citizens underwent “a profound change of discourse and consciousness,” the things they read, watched and talked about with friends producing “new language, topics, comparisons, and ideas” which led to “a widespread realization that the state socialism which had seemed so eternal might in fact be coming to an end.”<sup>243</sup>

Ultimately, the destruction of Soviet societal consciousness –of its dominant narratives, myths, and norms, contributed in a major way to the phenomenon of ‘collective culture shock,’ –the near total breakdown of the existing political, social and cultural system which occurred in the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet period.<sup>244</sup> In the early 1990s, as reform brought the existing moral order to the brink of collapse, the public underwent a “moral panic,” fearing that collapse would “hurtle society back to the past, a past which was not only pre-modern but also ‘pre-moral.’”<sup>245</sup> The destruction of old norms and moral values saw the emergence of primitive attitudes which had long lain dormant, or at least publicly repressed, including rabid anti-Semitism, anti-Caucasian racism, and archaic gender stereotypes.<sup>246</sup> The rapid decline of social trust and the loss of faith in binding social norms resulted in increasing cynicism, passivity and discouragement,<sup>247</sup> Genis comparing perestroika to the Protestant Reformation, both leaving the individual alone “in a world bereft of symbols,” with “nothingness” emerging as the dominant cultural paradigm.<sup>248</sup> An explosion of interest in faith healing, UFOs, sorcery and astrology

241 Yakovlev, 1993, p.105.

242 Yakovlev, 1993, p.104.

243 Yurchak, p.3.

244 Claudia Feichtinger and Gerhard Fink, “The Collective Culture Shock in Transition Countries – Theoretical and Empirical Implications,” *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* Vol.19, No.6 (1998), p.302.

245 Harry Pilkington, *Russia’s Youth and its Culture: A Nation’s Constructors and Deconstructed* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.158.

246 McNair, 1991, p.203.; Ries, p.177-179.

247 Ries, p.171.; Shlapentokh, 2001, p.210-211.

248 Genis, “Onions and Cabbages,” in Epstein, p.399.

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among normal, educated people in the late period of perestroika confirmed the ‘schizophrenization’ of society, people appearing to have temporarily lost their capacity for rational thought.<sup>249</sup>

In recent years, discussing the exceptional duration and intensity of the ‘ideological disarray’ occurring in Russia in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse,<sup>250</sup> some scholars have concluded that this can be partially attributed to the fact that the rejection of the Soviet model of political, economic and socio-cultural organization also constituted a rejection of many features of pre-Soviet Russian national consciousness.<sup>251</sup> Stemming from the mir (the commune) and the principles of sobornost (spiritual communion) –peasant concepts of collectivism and cooperation at the expense of individualism,<sup>252</sup> the Bolshevik project has been argued to have been an amalgamation of European socialist ideas and latent Russian collectivist traditions and ideals.<sup>253</sup> Having explicitly rejected socialist values, the radical reformist vision born out of the perestroika period also consciously or unconsciously rejected these ancient ideals and latent attitudes, leading to a prolonged period of emotional and material suffering.

During perestroika, various age and social groups reacted in their own ways to the destruction of the old social order. Many adults raised in the pre-reform system, experiencing an initial rush of “euphoria and exhilaration,” quickly came to feel a “pervading sense of fragmentation,”<sup>254</sup> suffering from informational overload and an oversaturation of constant negativism.<sup>255</sup> The new discourse, demonstrating “an awesome capacity for destruction of the existing order,” seemed to have “no

249 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.275-276.

250 Shlapentokh, 2001, p.202.

251 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.218, 237.; Kurginyan et al., 1990.

252 Sergei Kara-Murza, “Padenie Rozdaemosti v Rossii: Faktor Kulturi,” *Molodaya Gvardiya* Vol.7-8 (2010), p.114.; Alexandre Ardichvili, “The Relationship Between Meaning of Working and Socioeconomic Transformations: The Case of Post-Communist Russia,” *Advances in Developing Human Resources* Vol.11, No.2 (April 2009), p.224.; Discussing the principle of sobornost, Nikolai Biryukov and Victor Sergeev have noted that the Bolsheviks’ political rhetoric was consistent with much of the pre-revolutionary idealistic philosophy behind the concept of the sobor. “In fact,” they argue, “the Bolshevik victory itself would hardly have been possible had not their leaders’ slogans touched familiar chords in the souls of their potential followers.” Despite its failure to fully live up to the ideals of sobornost, the Communist Party continued for a long time to successfully “draw on...national political tradition for its justification.” (Nikolai Biryukov and Victor Sergeev, “Parliamentarianism and Sobornost’: Two Models of Representative Insitutions in Russian Political Culture,” *Discourse and Society* Vol.4, No.1 (1993), p.60-61.)

253 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.237.

254 Lewin, 1991, p.169.

255 Kathleen E. Smith, *Remembering Stalin’s Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.179.

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equivalent capacity for creation,”<sup>256</sup> leaving a tremendous sense of spiritual emptiness in its place. Ultimately, many adults came to feel that they had lived their lives in vain. Henry Kissinger, accompanied by a young Gorbachev aide while walking to the Kremlin in 1989, was told that the ideological revision of the entirety of Soviet history meant “that every citizen older than twenty-five has wasted his life.”<sup>257</sup>

Elderly people were especially susceptible to traumatic feelings of loss. As Shane notes, for older people “the old myths had been very beautiful, the old slogans deeply moving, interwoven as they were with memories of sacrifice and of victory in World War II.”<sup>258</sup> The dismantling of the old narratives of the Great Patriotic War, among the last ‘foundational myths’ to be dismantled, took a heavy emotional toll on veterans. Several days prior to the May 1990 celebration of the forty-fifth anniversary of Victory Day, an article published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* entitled ‘Ukradenaya Pobeda’ (‘Stolen Victory’) emphasized the disconnect between the victory of the people and the regime, personified by Stalin, arguing that victory was brought about not because of Stalin but in spite of him.<sup>259</sup> Similar discussions elsewhere in the mass media<sup>260</sup> all ultimately led to a situation where, in Youngblood’s words, “surviving veterans... had little left to celebrate...Glasnost [destroying] most, if not all, illusions about Soviet grandeur.”<sup>261</sup>

The collapse of youth ideological, aesthetic and moral education, along with state support for institutionalized youth culture, resulted in the emergence of a vast array of non-conformist youth groups which reject the collapsing ‘rational-technological’ ‘wholesome image’ of Komsomol culture.<sup>262</sup> Disillusioned by the state of contemporary society, many of these groups turned to escapist and

<sup>256</sup> Shane, p.280.

<sup>257</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p.797.

<sup>258</sup> Shane, p.216.

<sup>259</sup> Dmitrii Andreev and Gennadi Bordyugov, “Prostranstvo Pamyati: Velikaya Pobeda I Vlast,” in Falk Bomsdorf and Gennadi Bordyugov (eds.) *60-Letiye Okonchaniya Vtoroi Mirovoi I Velikoi Otechestvennoi: Pobediteli i Pobezhdeniye v Kontekste Politiki, Mifologii i Pamyati* Materials from International Forum (Moscow, Moscow Fund Freedriha Naumanna, September 2005), p.132-133.

<sup>260</sup> Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2007), p.203.

<sup>261</sup> Youngblood, p.203.

<sup>262</sup> Claire Wallace and Sijka Kovacheva, “Youth Cultures and Consumption in Eastern and Western Europe,” *Youth & Society* Vol.28, No.2 (December 1996), p.199-200.

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hedonistic lifestyles, substituting drugs, pirated media and gang violence for the state’s weakening attempts to regiment them.<sup>263</sup> Noting that these groups were often formed out of

explicit opposition to the rest of society, psychologists warned in vain that the difficulty of returning to mainstream society caused by joining them often led to depression, drug dependence, and suicide.<sup>264</sup> As state funding and control of culture collapsed, national youth culture gradually began to be replaced by internationalized pop culture,<sup>265</sup> and high culture by low culture, including pornography and violent literature and films.<sup>266</sup>

In the late 1980s sociologists discovered that prostitution was “a favoured career choice” among young women surveyed in high schools.<sup>267</sup> Explaining this alarming trend, Elizabeth Waters has commented on the tendency among the flagships of glasnost to glamorize and exaggerate the financial benefits of prostitution,<sup>268</sup> noting that while they paid “lip-service...to moral indignation,” journalists often painted “in such detail the lives of luxurious idleness led by prostitutes that their writing was in effect an advertisement for the profession.”<sup>269</sup> In other journalistic and artistic narratives prostitutes were “transformed...into a symbol of resistance to the old conventions, to the straightjacket of the stagnant society,”<sup>270</sup> idolized as heroines fighting for a “noble cause” against the ‘command-administrative system.’<sup>271</sup>

263 Claire Wallace and Raimund Alt, “Youth Cultures Under Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of the Swings Against the Nazis,” *Youth & Society* Vol.32, No.3 (March 2001), p.295-296.; William Alex Pridemore, “Social Problems and Patterns of Juvenile Delinquency in Transitional Russia,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* Vol.39, No.2 (May 2002), p.195.; Letizia Paoli, “The Price of Freedom: Illegal Drug Markets and Policies in Post-Soviet Russia,” *American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol.582 (July 2002), p.169-170.

264 *Ibid.*, p.182-183, 185.

265 Wallace and Kovacheva, p.209.

266 Much of the domestically made material among this lot emerged as a result of the pressures of self-financing. In her discussion of Russian children’s book publishers, Maria Nikolajeva notes that in the late 1980s, squeezed by the never-before-experienced pressures of the market, many publishers simply stopped publishing children’s books, substituting crime novels, escapist fantasy, science fiction, and pornography in their stead. (Maria Nikolajeva, “Russian Children’s Literature Before and After Perestroika,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* Vol.20, No.3 (Fall 1995), p.108-109.); See also Shane, p.186.; Stites, p.191.)

267 Elizabeth Waters, “Restructuring the ‘Woman Question’: Perestroika and Prostitution,” *Feminist Review*, No.33 (Autumn, 1989), p.8.; See also Helena Goscilo, *Dehexing Sex: Russian Womanhood During and After Glasnost* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.13-15.

268 Elizabeth Waters, “Prostitution,” in Jim Riordan (ed.) *Soviet Social Reality in the Mirror of Glasnost* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), p.134-135, 143.

269 *Ibid.*, p.139.

270 *Ibid.*, p.144.

271 *Ibid.*, p.146.; Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.324.

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Youth gangs, their existence publicized and sensationalized by the glasnost media, mushroomed as a result of urban decline, rising levels of social inequality, the emergence of new sources of

income, and a lack of support from teachers and parents.<sup>272</sup> Igor Ilyunsky notes that the latter trend could be attributed to the collapse of the spiritual, moral and cultural values of the old generation and of the old order as a result of the revelations of glasnost.<sup>273</sup>

Explaining the collapse of old Soviet youth identities, Ries notes that for many young people, “glasnost unintentionally ushered in the adoption of ‘bad’ as emblems of ‘goodness’ or at least of freedom,” prostitutes, businessmen, and criminals, often “modeled after the archetypal images of American ‘bad guys’ long used as emblems of capitalist evil by Soviet propaganda.”<sup>274</sup> Others conceive of the collapse as the result of the campaign to ‘relativize’ moral norms and social taboos.<sup>275</sup> Discussing the results of these efforts, child and youth psychologist Irina Medvedeva has observed that the glasnost period saw “a complete shift of [psychological] orientation...[leading to] the invalidization of the psyche of an entire generation of young people.”<sup>276</sup>

Ultimately, together with the destruction of the economy and the collapse of the Party’s political hegemony, the destruction of Soviet societal consciousness played a crucial role in the speedy and relatively peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>277</sup> Much more than a struggle to bring the freedom of information and the press into Soviet society, glasnost was a centrally organized and state-directed campaign carried out by a small group of political reformers and their allies within the radical liberal intelligentsia to reform and ultimately destroy nearly every aspect of the old Soviet societal consciousness, including its hegemonic ideology, conceptions of the legitimacy of the state, dominant historical and cultural narratives, and societal ethics and norms. Having successfully destroyed the old consciousness, the reformers were unsuccessful in constructing and consolidating a new one, resulting in national paralysis and leading to the social apathy, regression and degradation which have plagued virtually the entire post-Soviet space through the 1990s and into the present.

272 Pilkington, p.146-147, p.155.

273 Igor Ilyunsky, “Trends in the Development of Soviet Youth,” in Riordan, p.39.

274 Ries, p.175.

275 Kara-Murza, *Manipulatsiya Soznaniem*, p.323-324.; Kurginyan et al., 1993.

276 Medvedeva cited in “Glasnost: Shag k podlinnoi svobode ili informatsionnaya voina?” *Sud Vremeni*. Petersburg – Channel 5. December 7, 2010.

277 Local conflicts in places like Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria and Tajikistan excepted.

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