



**Department of History and Civilization**

**Transformation of the Political Speech  
under Perestroika  
Rise and Fall of Free Agency in the Changing Idioms,  
Rules and Second-order Statements of the Emerging  
Intellectual Debates (1985-1991)**

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE  
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## Introduction

We would like to tell the story of the transformations of the political speech during perestroika by studying the changes in the intellectual vocabulary, professed values and conventional rules of public debates. This transformation is taken in the context of the major political events and socio-economic changes. We mostly considered the theoretical essays of publicists, politicians, thinkers and researchers corresponding to the realm of intellectual history. The study is based on the long series of texts from the corpus of the leading theoretical periodicals and thick journals systematically read through and completed by a number of articles from other journals, round-tables, Politburo notes, and memoir literature forming a large representative sample of the political debates between 1985 and 1991.

The sense of this perestroika's transformation can be described in terms of the rise and fall of *human agency* as one of the central themes and as the self-representation of the political speech. The emerging political philosophy backing up the reforms was marked by attempts to find an appropriate intellectual language and intellectual foundations for an authoritative, principled and moving public speech. The historiosophical imagery – that of choices made by people in the crucial points of bifurcation on a bulky and branchy tree of the world history – at first provided this sought-for intellectual basis justifying public speech and placing the speaker in the central position of an agent choosing his historical path. We try to trace some of the successes and failures on this crooked path. The original search for a new modality of speech took its full meaning in the recognition of the failure of the official late Soviet ideology to provide practical guidance, theoretical coherence or moral vigour to its authorized beholders. Arguably, this major recognition of failure was made before perestroika by many Soviet officials and intellectuals in their *for interieur* and addressed by the official propaganda in a number of ways and in particular by the formula routinely condemning the “gap between words and deeds”.<sup>1</sup>

In 1984 Gorbachev stated the need to revitalize and seriously update the Marxist-Leninist theory by the free and honest scientific quest; since 1986 this message was heard and keenly approved by the Soviet public welcoming glasnost policy and frankness of the new General Secretary. Dogmatism, ban on the criticism of superiors and censorship were widely perceived as the impediment to the desired renovation of the political speech. The prevalent enthusiasm and anticipation of the rapid political and economic benefits of the frank political speech reached its pick in 1988 and lasted approximately until 1989 and the first Congress of the Peoples' Deputies. Afterwards, the realm of the liberated debate found itself in a state of an increasing chaos and miscommunication. The economic shortages on most

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<sup>1</sup> The “gap” was a constant concern of the Soviet officials in charge of propaganda and was expressed in different ways. Thus, it was publicly and forcefully discussed under early Brezhnev by Vladimir Stepanov, head of the Soviet propaganda (and predecessor in this post of Alexander Yakovlev), who in a book published in 1969, called for bolder and freer polemics with opponents and warned his colleagues about the growing gap between people's personal experience and official statements. We discuss these issues in the first chapter and in particular in its fourth section: “Studying public speech: language, personal integrity and no public sphere”. See: А. Яковлев, *Сумерки, Материк*, М., 2003, стр.323-324. David Benn, “New Thinking in Soviet Propaganda”, *Soviet Studies*, Jul., 1969, pp. 52-63;

basic products, secessionisms and the outbreaks of political violence (unprecedented for the post-war period in the USSR) considerably amplified by the freedom of press provided an unpleasant mirror of the liberated human agency. The intellectual recognition and integration of the new reality in the public speech proved difficult, virtually impossible until today. The sense of a gap between words and deeds remains prevalent.

We would like to find means to represent this risky collective enterprise of self-mastery through public speech by looking at the liberalization of its rules and at the evolution of the agency-centred vocabulary of the intellectual debates. As it appeared from our research, the rapid evolution from the censored hierarchical speech to the free expression and the changes in the key vocabulary did not follow the same rhythm, but they were arguably connected by the common arguments and mutual reflection. More surprisingly, the phase of the full freedom of speech at the end of perestroika coincided with the intellectual negation of its authority and practical relevance – the process reflected both by the rise of new idioms and by the prevailing political arguments. In this sense, collective *human agency* could be best described as an elusive object of intellectual longing made manifest and encouraged by glasnost, but upset in the course of its fulfilment.

#### *The emergence of historiosophical idioms in the political debates*

The hypothesis on the emergence of a specific historiosophical language of perestroika explored in this research first came out of the study of the discussions about the Soviet history in the three leading newspapers: *Ogonek*, *Moscovskie Novosti* and *Sovetskaya Rossia* with monthly samples taken in 1985, 1988 and 1991.<sup>2</sup> On these materials we then tried to uncover a “universal grammar” and basic dichotomies structuring the public debates on history and politics in modern nation-states, using perestroika as an example. We tried to uncover the common grammar of the rhetoric construction of a national identity in the national press. In the present research the methodological approach developed by J. G. Pocock and Q. Skinner helped narrowing and moderating the research questions by looking for changes in the usages of the specific idioms in the given period. To our knowledge the present study is the first attempt to explore the theoretical debates of perestroika adopting and (un)predictably adapting some of the insights of the Cambridge school of intellectual history. In the frame of this school we draw more on Pocock than on Skinner to the extent that the former had paid slightly more attention to the conventional means and vocabulary, while the latter privileged the intentions and calculations of the authors operating in the context of rhetoric conventions.<sup>3</sup> The attention to the prevailing intellectual language – conventionally deployed and purposefully modified by the authors engaged in the public debates – warns us from the consideration of the dominant idioms and

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<sup>2</sup> See : T. Atnachev, *Perestroïka : lire le passé au présent*, Memoire de DEA, IEP de Paris, 1998

<sup>3</sup> This point was not presented as a methodological difference but as a difference of emphasis not openly claimed by the two closely collaborating authors but often implied. Compare: J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, Essays on Political Thought and History, Cambridge University Press, 1983, see in particular, p.5-8; 12-21; and Q. Skinner, J. Tully, (ed.) *Meaning and contexte : Quentin Skinner and his critics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 353p.



conceptual apparatus of any historical period as “neutral”, “universal” or “natural”. These conventions and languages have their own intellectual history that is part of social and political history.

Perestroika’s fervent reassertion of the existence of *historical choice* in the past and present along with the fervent reassertion of the need to search for deeper *historical laws* rather than wrong choices, the quest for *missed alternatives* in the Soviet and Russian history along with the affirmation that perestroika had *no alternative*, or the representation of political options in terms of the branches parting from the *trunk-path* of an imaginary tree of the world history – are not just neutral or natural expressions. These historiosophical idioms simultaneously used by hundreds of perestroika authors in similar and well recognizable, interconnected tropes can teach scholars about the way people represented and discussed politics. But also about the ways people first ennobled and then downplayed public speech as a genre of political action. The new language expressed major historiosophical paradoxes in the assumptions on freedom, responsibility and necessity and it structured the political options and stakes perceived by different protagonists. The academic research on perestroika paid little attention to this original language, its intellectual problematique, implications and inner paradoxes. By contrast, scholars often re-appropriate some of the central historiosophical idioms of this period in order to uncritically describe the object of its studies in these familiar but yet almost unrecognized terms.<sup>4</sup>

We look at the new language as a means to better understand both the *public debates on history* and in this historical perspective – the emerging *political thought* in general. The rich scholarship of perestroika’s public debates on history approached them along several lines: as the deconstruction of the historiosophical claims of the Soviet ideology legitimating the regime and as partisan discussions about history between ideological camps full of factual errors<sup>5</sup>, as the uncompleted repentance and the revival of the repressed memories of the past crimes<sup>6</sup>, as the rational or manipulative deconstruction of the sacred Soviet values and cults<sup>7</sup>, as a failure of the official discourse erroneously rejecting its

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<sup>4</sup> We discuss the original studies of R. Marckvick and A. Bocharov who independently signalled the importance of these terms for perestroika in the second chapter in the section “Scholarship of the ‘ferment concerning Soviet history’ at the beginning of perestroika”. These two contributions were not based on a systematic study of perestroika’s debate and mostly focused on the pre-perestroika period when these terms emerged among the professional Soviet historians. For the description of perestroika in its own terms see the characteristic titles of the conferences and contributions to the collective publications on perestroika: “*Revisiting Perestroika – Processes and Alternatives*” – the title of the Conference organized by *Alexanteri Institute* in Helsinki (2007); первый раздел ««Перестройка» и возможные альтернативы: было ли дано иное», in *Пути России: двадцать лет перемен*, МСВШ ЭН, 2005. А. Бочаров, *Проблема альтернативности исторического развития в историографические и методологические аспекты*, Кандидатская диссертация, Томский Государственный Университет, 2002 (<http://klio.tsu.ru/contents.htm>)

<sup>5</sup> These two lines of interpretations could be seen as dominant and to a certain extent shared by most authors. See in particular: Takayuki, Ito, (ed.) *Facing up to the past : Soviet historiography under perestroika*, Sapporo : Hkkaido, 1990, 292p. R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, London & Indiana, 1989. R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, St Martin’s Press, London and NY, 1997. Elaine McClarnand, “The Politics of History and Historical Revisionism: De-Stalinization and the Search for Identity in Gorbachev’s Russia, 1985-1991”, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Feb., 1998), pp. 153-179

<sup>6</sup> Jacqueline Proyart, (ed.), *Mémoire de la Russie : identité nationale et mémoire collective*, Harmattan : Paris, 1996, 317p. Maria Ferretti, *La Memoria Mutilata*, La Russia Ricorda, Corbaccio, Milano, 491 p., 1993. Мария Феретти, «Расстройство памяти: Россия и сталинизм», <http://old.polit.ru/documents/517093.html>

<sup>7</sup> John Gooding, “Lenin in Soviet Politics, 1985-91”, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3. (1992), pp. 403-422. Nina Tumarkin, *The living & the dead: the rise and fall of the cult of World War II in Russia*, NY, Basic Books, 1994. Jutta Scherrer, “L’erosion de

authoritative reference to Master-signifier<sup>8</sup>. We can also draw on a number of focused and well-informed studies addressing specific aspects of the changes in the Soviet discourse, such as ecological problems or history of technology<sup>9</sup>. Surprisingly, there is no systematic study of the history of ideas or history of political discourse of perestroika based on a significant corpus of primary sources.<sup>10</sup> There are a number of collections of articles dealing with the changes in the political discourse of this period, and special sections on the ideological debates in the books on the history of perestroika in general.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the public debates on the Soviet and Russian history already became one of the privileged perspectives to study the political debates of perestroika.

The existing interpretations of the perestroika public debates overlook first the very specificity of the historical idioms used and abused by the protagonists and second ignore that this specific language had its own density – i.e. it framed the main ideological arguments by carrying on and reworking the presumptions on history-and-politics proper to the late Soviet mind. We presume that the historic idioms of *choice*, *path*, and *alternative* and some of their derivatives offered to the emerging intellectual community of this period their particular “ways the language *qua* paradigm encouraged, obliged or forbade its users to speak and think”<sup>12</sup>. The three related idioms were carrying on a number of often contradictory assumptions on history and politics with which most authors and actors had to agree or struggle when deploying *theoretical* arguments on politics in public.

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l'image de Lénine”, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1990 ■ Volume 85, Numéro 1, pp. 54-69. С. Кара-Мурза, *Антисоветский проект*, ЭКСМО, М., 2003, 409 стр.

<sup>8</sup> Alexei Yurchak, “Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Jul., 2003. А. Юрчак, «Если бы Ленин был жив, он бы знал, что делать», in *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough account of the emergence of the figure of the “public” in the ecological discourse see: Sonja D. Schmid, “Transformation Discourse: Nuclear Risk as a Strategic Tool in Late Soviet Politics of Expertise,” in *Science, Technology, & Human Values* Summer, 2004, pp. 353-376. Slava Gerovitch, “Perestroika of the History of Technology and Science in the USSR: Changes in the Discourse”, in *Technology and Culture*, Jan., 1996, pp. 102-134. John Gooding was probably one of the first Western scholars accurately pointing at the central and dysfunctional role of the humanist democratic ideology in the perestroika reforms by analysing Gorbachev’s vocabulary. See: John Gooding, “Perestroika as Revolution from within: An Interpretation”, *Russian Review*, Jan., 1992, pp. 36-57.

<sup>10</sup> The most extensive treatment in terms of focus and volume is given by Robinson studying “ideological discourse” of perestroika; however he mostly addresses the official speeches of Gorbachev and a number of articles in *Pravda* thus limiting his research to the CPSU’s internal evolution, which precisely excludes the evolution of the whole new and evolving context of the changes in the official discourse. Even the important role of A. Yakovlev or V. Medvedev within CPSU’s debate is almost excluded from sight. However, Robinson’s conclusions about positions taken by Gorbachev and his beliefs are much more interesting and stimulating. Neil Robinson, *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet system. A Critical history of the Soviet ideological Discourse*, Edward Elgar, Aldershot, 1995

<sup>11</sup> We review the scholarship of the Soviet ideology in a more detailed way in the first Chapter. way See the most significant collections of article and individual articles: P. A. Chilton, M. V. Ilyin, and J. I. Mey, (ed.), *Political discourse in transition in Europe 1989-1991*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1998, 278 p. Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988. Rachel Walker, “Marxism-Leninism as Discourse: The Politics of the Empty Signifier and the Double Bind”, in *British Journal of Political Science*, 1989, 4 p.161-189. Neil Robinson, “Soviet ideological discourse and Perestroika”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 1995, pp.161-179.

<sup>12</sup> We follow here and later Pocock’s now classic accounts of the multiple “languages” contributing to the vocabulary of the political debates in the official public sphere. Economic, juridical, religious and other species of sublanguages provide the public rhetoric with specific metaphors, idioms preparing “ways the language *qua* paradigm encouraged, obliged or forbade its users to speak and think”; “State of the art”, in J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History, Essays on Political Thought and History*, Cambridge University Press, p. 10; See also for the discussion, Donald R. Kelley, *The Human Measure: Social Thought in the Western Legal Tradition*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1990.

In this methodological perspective the examination of the hypothesis on the emergence and significance of the agency-centred idioms for the political debates of perestroika must aim at identifying the range of relevant political intentions, typical arguments and controversial paradoxes articulated in these common terms by different authors. The hypothesis can be more specifically tested using one of the Pocock's explicit methodological definitions. The existence of a language "or a mode of utterance available to a number authors" can be established on the ground of three related conditions: "a) that diverse authors employed the same idiom and performed diverse and even contrary utterances of it, b) that the idiom recurs in texts and contexts varying from those in which it was at first detected, and c) that authors expressed in words their consciousness that they were employing such an idiom and developed critical and second-order languages to comment on and regulate their employment of it..."<sup>13</sup>

#### *The selection of the primary sources and methodological limitations*<sup>14</sup>

These methodological guidelines framed our choice of the primary sources. The selection of the main and secondary corpus implies both inclusion and exclusion of the different genres of public speech and of the particular series of texts. We included into the main corpus two leading "thick magazines" roughly representing the two main ideological strains in the central press and each combining fiction, literary critique and publicistic essays – *Noviy Mir* and *Nash Sovremennik*; two leading academic reviews professionally addressing the theoretical problems of history, society and ideology – *Voprosy Istorii* and *Voprosy Filosofii*; and finally, the official theoretical and ideological outlet of the CPSU – *Kommunist* (*Svobodnaya Misl'* since September, 1991). The last title was a biweekly and the other four are monthly periodicals until now. These five reviews formally occupied the top ranks in the Soviet media hierarchy, but certainly had very different impact on the intellectual landscape ranging from the outstanding intellectual bestseller *Noviy Mir* reaching two million copies often passed from one reader to another, to the uncontroversial and narrowly-minded professional *Voprosy Istorii* loosing its few readers despite the great public interest to history. Together they can provide a reasonably large sample representing the diversity of genres of the *theoretical* public speech on society, history and politics during perestroika. They typically included articles and essays on economics, history, literature, philosophy, politics, political and social theory and on what we can call *historiosophy*. These genres and disciplines were most often mixed in the publicistic essays, theoretical articles and at the round-tables. The main corpus is constituted by approximately seven hundred essays and articles systematically reviewed in the five selected reviews. To this corpus we added on a more *ad hoc* basis around fifty articles in other reviews and journals such as *Nauka i Zhizn*, *Znamya*, *XX vek i Mir*, hard cover collections of essays in the series *Socialism and Democracy*, the official speeches at the

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<sup>13</sup> See J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, Essays on Political Thought and History, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.10. We discuss this approach more in details in the third section of the first chapter: "**Studying public speech: language, personal integrity and no public sphere**".

<sup>14</sup> We would like to thank Prof. Steven Smith and Prof. Alexey Miller for the valuable commentary respectively on the style of writing and the critical analysis of the methodological choices operated in this research. We tried to take them into account in the revised version of the introduction and conclusion.

political congresses, Politburo meetings and round-tables. The published memoirs of the perestroika politicians and their aides complete the main body.

The constitution of the corpus implied the exclusion of a number of sources potentially available for the student of the discourse of perestroika. The main criteria for this operation were relevance for the posed research questions, methodological reliability and practical availability of different materials. Among the excluded but certainly valuable sources we can in particular note the daily and weekly newspapers<sup>15</sup>, the multimillion mass of readers' letters<sup>16</sup>, the discussions in the multiple informal clubs of perestroika<sup>17</sup>, the retrospective interviews with participants<sup>18</sup>, the possible archival evidence of the administrative notes produced by the Politburo and the Secretariat around the appointments of the key editors or around the Nina Andreeva dispute<sup>19</sup>. Finally a number of socio-cultural groups, networks or milieux did not directly participate in the public debates in the central press, but their ideas and their ideological stances could constitute one of its implicit audiences. This includes independent-minded and upper professional strata of the Soviet scientists and intellectuals, non-Russian nationalists, traditional black-market or new economic entrepreneurs, new social and musical youth movements, or left-wing anarchists.<sup>20</sup> By this brief overview we try to outline the scope of materials left beyond our research focus and to delimit the field of the possibly valid conclusions.

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<sup>15</sup> As noted above, our earlier study of a number of newspapers generated our interest to the original historical idioms and their usage; in the present research we focused on the different disciplines within the more theoretical, reflexive and larger texts. The results of the earlier analysis of the newspapers served as the background.

<sup>16</sup> This potentially huge data offer a unique opportunity to look at and check the wider popular reception of the idioms and arguments dominant in the press. We mostly excluded it for its "secondary" and non-public character. See for example a small collection having no "history" section: *Dear Comrade Editor: Readers' Letters to the Soviet Press under Perestroika*, (trans. and ed.) Jim Riordan and Sue Bridger, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992, 235 pp.

<sup>17</sup> Most of these lively discussions will simply never be available to us. However, there are audio tapes available for the researcher in the private collections and archives. These sources will certainly enrich our understanding of the intellectual history of perestroika. In our research, a number of round-table transcripts regularly published by *Vorposy Istorii*, *Voprosy Filosofii* and *Kommunist* can give a partial sample of these discussions.

<sup>18</sup> The test-interviews conducted with I. Klyamkin, O. Khlevnuk or late O. Latsiss in 2006 showed the surprisingly big symbolic distance and irrelevance of the then taken precise intellectual stances. The low reliability of such retrospective reconstructions of the oral history coupled with the natural tendency of "self-justification" contrasts with the abundance of the written sources of the studied period. To use these sources in a more systematic way, one should develop particularly sophisticated methodological guidelines and still the reliability of the conclusions would remain rather weak. By contrast, we recur to the memoirs of the participants in order to get a better understanding of the way these people were thinking and writing in public in general, rather than in order to get a privileged retrospective "first-hand" insight into their intellectual stance during perestroika (most probably highly biased). We mostly looked and relied on what remained permanent in their intellectual style.

<sup>19</sup> By the time of our inquiry РГАНИ and ГАРФ restricted the access to the relevant sources. This line of research can bring more reliable evidence in the future and especially in case of the reopening of the archives. By contrast, we could benefit from the substantive collection of notes taken during the discussions at the Politburo sessions and published by K. Shakhnazarov, A. Cherniaev and V. Medvedev. *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991)*, М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006

<sup>20</sup> Although this wide and implicit societal context had contributed to the evolution of the intellectual debates we analyse, both its diversity and subtlety go beyond the scope of our research project and its primary target. In order to reconstruct the supposedly common assumptions, arguments and vocabulary we study mostly those who explicitly took part in the controversies of perestroika in the central theoretical press. The mere silence or the participation into public spaces other than the all-Union's intellectual press (especially the national press in the Union's republics) can be seen as a factor shaping the decay of the political speech in the last phase of perestroika. Although during 1988-1990 some of these republican editions printed in Russian got an all-union resonance such as the widely read Baltic journals such as *Rodnik*.

In other terms, this study is not meant to be a comprehensive history of the political debates, and even less it can pretend to recover the political and social history of perestroika. Belonging to the contemporary history, the intellectual history of perestroika can also be interpreted by scholars and actors from the vantage point of their personal experience; due to the controversial diversity of these perspectives we can not pretend to embrace their richness or variety. Our approach tends to underline what was common to different authors who otherwise would probably most often disagree about values, institutions and facts. By focusing on the specific idioms, related arguments and themes we try to reconstruct the intellectual community about which it was impartially said by one of its professional students that “it is something of a thankless task to present a series of highly divergent views which are rapidly evolving in all sorts of directions”.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the accent is placed more on the reconstruction of the common frames and on the examination of the full range of occurrences of the presumed idiom – deployed by different authors in the long and varied series of texts, and we pay slightly less attention to the divergences or intended moves against the opponents in a particular debate. This methodological bias is intended to balance the pervasive perceptions of perestroika as a clash between more or less radical reformers and diehard conservatives or as a chaotic and quarrelsome intellectual playfield; a study showing highly *concurrent* changes in the intellectual vocabulary, frames and assumptions widely shared by protagonists notwithstanding the ideological oppositions may help building a more accurate picture of the mental perestroika.

### *The general history of perestroika and its intellectual history*

Why did the USSR break down as a state and as a political regime after the long period of stagnation and a series of reforms? In the scholarship of perestroika we can distinguish two connected arguments around which a wide and yet not realized historiographical consensus seems to have emerged: the Gorbachev factor and the self-induced nature of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Gorbachev’s personal commitment to glasnost policy, democracy and his (less clear cut) commitment to non-violence are convincingly pointed as the major causes of the comparatively peaceful downfall of the USSR.<sup>22</sup> Arguably, there was no direct threat to the Soviet regime in 1984: its leadership was in control of politics and the military, rudimentary civil disobedience was well contained, and the economic situation was mediocre but not catastrophic, even in 1989; its main

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<sup>21</sup> See: Alec Nove, “New Thinking on the Economy”, in Archie Brown (ed.), *New Thinking in Soviet Politics*, London, Macmillan, 1992, p.35

<sup>22</sup> Among the positive accounts of the Gorbachev factor we refer first of all to the seminal work of Archie Brown who underlined the political skills, energy and commitment of Gorbachev to democracy, glasnost and non-violence as a major factors to the peaceful and rapid liberalization of Russia, which otherwise would not have happened. Most other authors, who underline the relative contingency of the reforms and by extension of the downfall of the USSR due to the personality of the last Soviet leader, evaluate the Gorbachev’s policies and his overall impact in a significantly more critical light and focus on the unintended results of these policies – we put them in the second group. See: Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, Oxford University Press, 1997. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, 2007; Stephan Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*, Oxford UP, NY, 2001; Stephen White, *Communism and Its Collapse*, Routledge, 2001.

ideological and geopolitical rivals were arguably getting stronger, but to the majority of players on both sides the situation did not look like an obvious defeat waiting to be recognized. The second related argument holds that perestroika policies had triggered rather than responded to the multiple crises in economy, politics and ethnic-national relations.<sup>23</sup> This logic is particularly convincing in the light of Weber's arguments on the role of monopoly of violence in maintaining the social order in the modern states – perestroika's policies undermined the state's capability to use and threaten to use violence.<sup>24</sup> In both perspectives, the central role of *glasnost* consistently but unconsciously advanced by Gorbachev is widely recognized as causal to the destruction of the CPSU's authority and the dissolution of the USSR. Irrespectively of the positive or negative evaluation of the outcome of perestroika, Gorbachev is seen as an unorthodox man, whose personal beliefs and decisions have precipitated the end of the USSR and major changes in world history. These two arguments can be complemented by (rather than contrasted with) the emphasis on the long-term structural or even "ontological" problems within the USSR and its world empire seen as the general inability to adjust to the historical changes and deliberately change itself due to the lack of self-understanding.<sup>25</sup> Reformers' main presumptions and beliefs arguably reflected this sociological lack of self-understanding. By studying the transformations of the theoretical political speech we would like to probe and if possible make more specific the general outlook on perestroika clearly formulated by Stephen Kotkin: "The monumental second world collapse, in the face of a more powerful first world wielding the market and liberal institutions, was triggered not by military pressure but by Communist ideology".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen Kotkin in the introduction to his clear and persuasive book on perestroika *Armageddon Averted* polemically states that "Virtually every one seems to think the Soviet Union was collapsing before 1985. They are wrong". This may be true concerning the public perception of these events, but most other specialists of perestroika (although, probably not all the specialists on the Soviet history) agree with this evaluation. Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*, Oxford UP, NY, 2008, (2001), p.1 Compare with the next note.

<sup>24</sup> The threats coming to the Soviet regime from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and parallel development during perestroika were certainly important factors; however, the Gorbachev's reaction to these challenges is more surprising and decisive; without perestroika the still-mate could last much longer. In 1986, Jan Pakulski has pointed out that the possible liberalization would lead to a rapid collapse of the Soviet-type states as they are mostly based on conditional tolerance motivated by the calculation of threats and benefits. Therefore, he argued the short liberalization would rapidly end up. In line with this Weberian perspective (but contrary to Pakulski's prognosis), *glasnost* and the refusal of the use of violence to protect the social order are seen as politically inconsistent and leading to the rapid deregulation with mid-level agents toppling the whole system in a vicious circle of disobedience and privatization. The rise of nationalism is pointed out along with the growing economic and political chaos. E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992; Jan Pakulski, "Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies", *British Journal of Political Science*, 1986, Vol.16, №1, p.35-56.; Ronald Suny, *The revenge of the past: nationalism, revolution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993, p.124. Rasma Karklins, "Explaining Regime Change in the Soviet Union", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1994, Vol.46, №1, pp.29-45; Michael Ellman, Vladimir Kontorovich, (eds.) *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System : an Insiders' History*, 1998. Jerry F. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR. 1985-1991*, Washington, Brookings Institution Press, 1997, p.251-254; Solnick, Steven Lee, *Stealing the state: control and collapse in Soviet institutions*, Harvard University Press, 1999; M.E. Sharpe, 352 p. Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, 2002, Cambridge, 520p. For the most recent version of this argument see: Marc Garcelon, "Trajectories of Institutional Disintegration in Late-Soviet Russia and Contemporary Iraq", *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 24, Sep., 2006, pp. 255-283

<sup>25</sup> Richard Sakwa advanced this formulation on the ontological flaws of the USSR. See: Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998. Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991*, NY, 1995. Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and the Death of Communism in the Twenty Century*, NY, Scribner, 1989.

<sup>26</sup> "... The KGB and to a lesser extent the CIA secretly reported that, beginning in 1970s, the Soviet Union was overcome by malaise. But even though Soviet socialism had clearly lost the competition with the West it was lethargically stable and could have continue muddling on for quite some time. Or it might have tried a Realpolitik retrenchment, cutting back on superpower ambitions, legalizing and then institutionalizing market economics to revive its fortunes and holding tightly to

### *The rise and fall of the political speech*

In a more tentative way, we would like to raise the question of the changes in the perceived social *status* of the political public speech between 1985 and 1991. The anthropological study of Nancy Ries on the private “kitchen” conversations, the theoretical parts of the two volumes of the socio-political dictionary of perestroika and of the 1990s in Russia by Gassan Gusseinov, and the ambitious anthropological study of Alexei Yurchak offer the pioneering approaches to this problematique which deserves to become central for the historians of perestroika, studying its political, social and cultural shifts. Ries showed the ritualized *demonstration* of helplessness of the average speakers in his daily conversations routinely lamenting on their private and social conditions, but secretly showing one’s ability to overcome the adversity.<sup>27</sup> Gusseinov comparing the evolution of a large number of Soviet idioms in the post-Soviet period emphasised the striking difficulty experiences by the “liberated” people to speak freely without the habit of subverting or mocking the Soviet ideological language. Even when deprived of its repressive authority, Soviet ideological idioms still provoked the phantom reaction of ideological resistance framing the linguistic experience.<sup>28</sup> Alexei Yurchak addressed the changing nature of the official late Soviet discourse in terms of the “pragmatic shift”<sup>29</sup>. These authors point at the recognizable patterns in public and private speech characterising perestroika’s period and attesting speaker’s weak *rhetoric* ability to emancipate from the official language and more generally, from the unfavourable circumstances; speakers strategies seem to replicate the situations where one is doomed to subjugate, finding the virtue not in stemming the unfriendly “fatality”, but in conditionally accepting, re-appropriating, denouncing, subverting or mocking it. This rhetoric arguably makes unlikely both legitimate domination and civic participation.

Our own attention to this relatively unexplored aspect of the political speech was brought by the review of the sociological and anthropological research on the *late Soviet man* in its relationship with ideology and public speech. The relevance of this issue was confirmed by the discovery of “anti-agency” idioms and arguments spreading since 1989, succeeding to the agency-centred pathos of *historical choices*. Human agency was suddenly declared harmful and opposed to the natural historical process. These historiosophical arguments, the second-order statements on the sense of miscommunication and the declarations of the supreme rights of each individual to judge on his own constituted the new

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central power by using political repressions. Instead, the Soviet Union embarked on a quest to realise the dream of “socialism with human face”. Stephan Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*, Oxford UP, NY, 2008, p.2. In a very general form, this is also the argument of Robinson and Karklins. See: . Neil Robinson, *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet system. A Critical history of the Soviet ideological Discourse*, Edward Elgar, Aldershot, 1995. Rasma Karklins, “Explaining Regime Change in the Soviet Union”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1994, Vol.46, №1, pp.29-45.

<sup>27</sup> Нэнси Рис, *Русские разговоры: Культура и речевая повседневность эпохи перестройки*, НЛО, М., 2005

<sup>28</sup> Г. Гусейнов, Д. С. П. – *Материалы к Русскому Словарю общественно-политического языка XX века*, Три Квадрата, М., 2003. Г. Гусейнов, Д. С. П. *Советские идеологемы в русском дискурсе 1990-х*, Три Квадрата, М., 2004.

<sup>29</sup> We refer to the excellent “thick descriptions” of the anthropological aspects of the late Soviet linguistic practices; we also critically discuss the stimulating and provocative interpretations A. Yurchak makes on the basis of his material, especially in the first chapter. Alexei Yurchak, *Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology and Culture of the Last Soviet Generation*, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Duke University, 1997. Alexei Yurchak, “Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, July, 2003, pp. 482-484. Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Princeton University Press, 2005.

intellectual context in which public political speech questioned its own basis. Throughout this study we look at the second-order statements reflecting on the shifts in the rules regulating public debates, at the changes in the prevailing definitions of the truthfulness of public utterances, and at the insiders' accounts of the subjective relation between inner convictions, actions and public speech. We would like to capture the changing intellectual modes in which perestroika authors were constructing, experiencing and positing the relevance of their own speeches and of the political speech as a *genre*.

In the first chapter we review the academic literature on the nature of the late Soviet political regime, the state of its ideology and the conventional rules regulating public speech. We also analyse the scholarship of the late Soviet *subjectivity* in its relationship to the status of political speech. In the second chapter we reconstruct the *moral* and *intellectual* context in which the reforms were launched by Gorbachev and his advisors, and analyse the ideological innovations, historical idioms and the *scientific objectivity illusion* dominant until 1987. In the third chapter, the seminal 1988 is analysed from the three complementary standpoints setting the background of the public debates: the evolution of the political agenda, the changes in the rules of public speech, and the central role of the *quest for integrity*. The fourth chapter identifies the new historiosophical idioms swiftly spreading in the public debates before, during and after 1988: *historical path*, *historical choice*, and *historical alternative*. We examine the three theoretical challenges widely addressed in these new terms: the revision of the world historiosophical map, the issue of political responsibility, and the unsolvable theoretical question of human agency Vs historical necessity. The fifth chapter looks at the new rules of public speech, such as an individualistic and relativist conception of truth, clash of values and the imperative of *non-violence* – and at the resulting *sense of miscommunication* gaining ground in 1989-1991. We also try to reconstruct some of the main ideological strains of perestroika in terms of their professed values. In the sixth chapter we first show the currency of the agency-centred idioms of choice, path and alternative for the ongoing debates in 1989-1991. Second, we detect and analyse two newly emerging idioms – the posited supremacy of the *natural-historical* or *organic evolution* over agency's wilful and self-confident plans bearing violence against history. The natural-historical turn in the political thought of end of perestroika is described in Pocock's terms as an *anti-Machiavellian moment*. In the final seventh chapter we highlight the process of the spontaneous privatization, the institutional changes leading to the dissolution of the USSR, and the August putsch. We then ask the Machiavellian question of whether it was possible to found a new republic on the ruins of the Soviet social order – respecting the imperatives of *non-violence* and *natural-historical evolution* born in the late theoretical debates of perestroika. We conclude this chapter by the analysis of the two significant theoretical texts reviewing the results of perestroika and the change in the status of the political speech assumed in December 1991.





## **CHAPTER I**

### **Public speech, subjectivity and the nature of the late Soviet regime**

In this chapter we address the question of the nature of the late Soviet regime in order to capture the specificity of the *status* or the meaning of genre of public speech. We consider the content and role of ideology, the rules of public speech and finally, the relations between public speech, actions and inner convictions of Soviet citizens in the three subsequent sections. The Soviet rules of public speech in a number of ways denied the individuals' ability to independently form firm beliefs on matters of public concern, but required full-hearted allegiance to the regularly "fluctuating" official ideology. The main argument is that this anthropologically contradictory requirements put in practice over generations had a number of subversive consequences on personal beliefs about public matters: people arriving at the top of the social hierarchy tended to be more cynical or more short-sighted than others, intellectually sharp people tended to be either sceptical or cynical, while virtuous people tended to develop alternative ideologies rather uncritically, as they had no opportunity to discuss or to test their ideas. This general state of mind and its constrained relation to public speech caused not only cynicism, but also a widespread humanistic malaise that we call quest for moral integrity in the late Soviet period. Ordinary youth (in contrast with the descendants of the Soviet establishment) was probably the only stratum of society taking most of the official promises and declarations seriously and trying to live up some of the proclaimed principles. Growing up in this milieu they were progressively softening their beliefs, stepping outside of the social pyramid, or uncritically developing humanistic expectations in their *for interieur*.

Thus, the Soviet regime had a low capacity to re-produce or renew firm principles and representations about the world that could stimulate strong adherence of its political and administrative establishment over generations. Public speech gradually turned into a ritual maintaining the allegiance to the hierarchy and *status quo* rather than personal allegiance to any particular set of beliefs or course of action. However, taboos such as "capitalist exploitation", "private property on large plants and land", or the demonized figure of Trotsky, and on the other brighter side, the sacred cults of forefathers and founders, such as Lenin's cult and the cult of WWII became deeply rooted both among the elites and wider public. These negative and positive beliefs, however strong, did not create a sufficiently strong bond to produce serious political re-action, when they were attacked or mocked in public – since 1988. Soviet conservative hard-lines proved both deprived of a sound ideological position and indecisive. We could say, the Soviet regime could inculcate some strong mental taboos and prejudices, but could not motivate or inspire its stakeholders to take strong position in its own favour once the competition for power was *de facto* accepted by reformers. As we will show in the seventh chapter, Putschists were not Soviet conservatives and actually had no Communist (or any other) ideological platform but the defence of the central authority and territorial integrity of the Soviet Union.

In the first section we overview the scholarship of the Soviet ideology and following the majority of scholars conclude that the late Soviet regime was passively tolerated, but illegitimate in the eyes of its leadership, party-state administrations and wider population. According to the analysed academic literature, the majority of the Soviet people in the 1950-1980s accepted the established social order in principle, but they saw it as rather inefficient, unjust and even corrupted, i.e. not fulfilling its own

promises. Sceptical about the rulers and practicalities of the Soviet administrations, most people valued social equality, welfare guarantees, and state ownership. On the top of it, scholars attested the vitality of the cult-building practices to the Soviet ideology, in contrast with its self-legitimizing historiosophical statements linking policy-making and scientific understanding of historical and theoretical claims in decline since the end of 1960s. The official late Soviet doctrine describing history and society could hardly account for world history and for the place USSR and its satellites occupied there: the natural question of a growing gap between the alleged Marx' predictions and world historical development was sometimes timidly addressed, but neither this gap nor the novelty of the official Soviet doctrine of "peaceful competition" of socialism and capitalism were assumed in public. Underneath and on the margins of the official interpretation, the research institutes [think-tanks] attached to the Central Committee of CPSU, as well as a few intellectually honest historians started the historiosophical revision of the official doctrine – preparing guidelines for liberalizing reforms.

In the second section we examine how the Soviet rules regulating public speech explicitly limited the right to voice critical opinions in order to enhance unity and avoid an organizational dissent within the party and society. On the other hand, the capability of individuals to form their independent opinion was conflicting with the required and desired loyalty to the common Bolshevik or later Communist cause, – loyalty based on the acceptance of a new kind of scientifically revealed but dialectically moving truth on society and history. We argue that along with collective micro practices of mutual supervision by peers, censorship and terror, there were explicit rules of social control over public speech. The *unity over dissent* rule, the *hierarchy* of public speakers and the presumed authority of Marxist *classics* progressively framed what and how people could say and write in public in the Soviet Union; these restrictive rules were considered as just and respected by most party leaders competing with Stalin in the 1920s and ultimately executed or murdered around 1937. The public speech regulation in the USSR evolved over time, but we can say that both personal and public opinion were seen as illegitimate if they persisted against the "majority", i.e. against the unity of the executive hierarchy.<sup>1</sup>

This frame substantially changed the meaning of personal opinions and the perceived meaning of public speech as a genre. In the third section, we try to relate the changes in the status of public speech with the evolution of the dominant forms of subjectivity. Drawing on the insights of the sociological and anthropological scholarship, the memoirs of the former party leaders, the best works

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to clarify the tripartite relation between the legitimacy of the regime, the capability to form and disseminate individual opinions and the public opinion. For instance, in the introduction to his book Wyman says that "socialist system had no room for public opinion", despite his conclusions about the overall legitimacy of the late Soviet regime and under perestroika. We can doubt if the two statements are compatible: when public opinion can not be formed, the meaning of the regime's legitimacy becomes in fact questionable; but regime can still benefit from public support. In fact, the most striking account of the unacceptability of any forms of public opinion in the USSR is given in the quote from Nadezhda Mandelshtam commented by Wyman. N. Mandelshtam discussed why in the postscript of his letter to Stalin Bukharin cautiously mentioned that Pasternak was upset by the arrest of her husband: "It was always necessary to personify 'public opinion' in this way. You were allowed to talk of one individual being upset, but it was unthinkable to mention the existence of dissatisfaction among a whole section of the community – say the intelligentsia or 'literary critics'. No group has the right to its own opinion about some event or other". Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p.3. We address this question in the first and third sections on the *Unity over dissent* rule.

of Sovietology, as well as the official late Soviet texts we argue that the Soviet leadership and socially active Soviet people oscillated between short-sightedness, inner duplicity and cynicism. More virtuous individuals still willing to climb the social ladder of the party-state developed a kind of a blurred conscience – too strong opinions, convictions and facing the disturbing reality were to be avoided not only in public but also mentally. As Inkeles and Bauer put it in 1959 relying on the systematic interviews with Soviet émigrés, Soviet citizens elaborated individual “mechanisms for suppressing both disloyal deeds and *thoughts*”.<sup>2</sup> Such a pattern can partly explain the weakness of any systematic beliefs opposing (or alternative to) the established political order. We can advance that the main covert opposition platform was entirely based on the official ideology. Thus, the alternative views of the majority of Soviet revisionists were reiterating the unfulfilled humanist promises of the official Soviet ideology: such as more democracy, more equality, more honesty or better conditions for the development of human personality [*lichnost*].<sup>3</sup>

#### *Why is the question on the nature of the Soviet regime appropriate?*

Alexey Yurchak once ironically noted that the question on the nature of the “American regime” was rarely raised and suggested that the question on the Soviet regime emerged out of didactic dichotomies in which one pole incarnated the bad-and-wrong (USSR), and the other the good-and-true (West): the Party – the people, truth-dissimulation, oppression-resistance, “official” self – “inner intimate” self.<sup>4</sup> We believe, this question is fundamentally justified and not only due to the “colonial regime of knowledge” relying on and enforcing the normative superiority of Western norms of subjectivity and authority over the local Soviet culture as Yurchak suggests<sup>5</sup>.

This question is appropriate because, unlike the American regime (described as liberal, oligarchic, representative democracy, mixed regime, even totalitarian etc.), the regime of regulation of public speech in the USSR first strictly limited access to relevant information of both internal and external observers and second prevented debate around its own nature. It excluded the situation when one

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<sup>2</sup> A. Inkeles, R. Bauer, and alias, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959. p. 286

<sup>3</sup> For a broad examination of the evolution of intellectual frames and officially endorsed practices framing the development of subjectivity in the USSR we refer to O. Kharkhodrin: O. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002, главы 5,6 и 8.

<sup>4</sup> “This study addresses a related concern: that much of the academic and journalistic writing about Soviet socialism and post-Soviet transformation is built on assumptions that socialism was “bad,” “immoral,” and “imposed,” and/or was experienced as such by Soviet people, and that the collapse of the Soviet system was predicated on that... The same assumptions are present today in the terminology used to describe socialism—for example, in references to the “Soviet regime” (how often does one hear about the “American regime”?) and in the use of particular binaries to describe Soviet reality, such as the Party and the people, repression and freedom, oppression and resistance, truth and dissimulation, official economy and second economy, official culture and counter-culture, totalitarian language and people’s language, public self and private self”. Alexei Yurchak, “Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Jul., 2003, p.482

<sup>5</sup> “In fact, the emphasis on the dichotomy has deeper roots: it is linked to Cold War and colonial “regimes of knowledge” within which such entities as “the West,” the Second, and the Third Worlds are produced. Therefore, critiquing isolated binaries does not necessarily deconstruct the underlying assumptions.”, *Ibid.*, p.484

could actually ask non-official questions in public, while official one-way replies were changing. The very questioning of the nature of the Soviet regime was outside of the official field of public speech; in this particular sense, the argument on the irreducible local specificity of the Soviet regime requiring to judge it according to its own standards holds, only if researchers accept that the question on the nature of the regime is an unacceptable anti-Soviet enmity. Most probably, this is not what Yurchak implies. Second, it is incorrect to assume that dissidents were the only ones who experienced the imposed duplicity in their behaviour and speech as an unacceptable and uncomfortable state (according to Yurchak, the question on the nature of the Soviet regime would expose the special perspective of dissidents, while the majority was supportive<sup>6</sup>); instead, we will later demonstrate that this non-satisfaction with duplicity, hypocrisy and even cynicism was a rather common feeling among the both disloyal and loyal Soviet intelligentsia, and one of the major triggers of perestroika reforms.

Finally, Yurchak formulates his third criticism questioning the foundations of the question on the nature of the Soviet regime and doubting the normative dichotomies: "Another problem in these approaches is their theorization of agency", understood within the Western tradition as autonomous ability to resist external pressure and deliberately induce progressive change.<sup>7</sup> Yurchak claims that the self-standing subject resisting to the external pressure is a Western normative projection – and thus, it is an inaccurate description of the anthropological evidence in the USSR. Researchers erroneously impose their own universalizing norms of "being an agent"; when doing so, they misunderstand and misrepresent the specificity of local cultural codes, norms and practices. Do we misunderstand late Soviet man when imply his will to become a self-standing subject? Or, indeed, as Yurchak implies most people were satisfied with the subjective state when they "did not know for sure whether they believed or not", what they were saying in public. This criticism should be taken seriously as it addresses the prevailing type of subjectivity of the Soviet man understood via its practices and norms – one of the central issues of historical research concerning the building blocks (and objects) of most social practices and theorizing.

What often seems to be contradictory, ambiguous, hollow, intricate, naïve, cynical, scholastic, moralizing or simply incomprehensible in the official speeches and practices of the late Soviet regime and during perestroika, can be better accounted for when considering the norms and practices of the self in their relations with the rules of public speech. Is this marked character of the official speech due to the specific norms and practices of subjectivity in the USSR? We could not identify in the scholarship or in our own research any significant *non-Western* norms of subjectivity manifest during perestroika. By contrast, the whole process can be seen as a longing for individual subjectivity

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<sup>6</sup> "These models are related to dissident moral critique of people's "conformity" with the state-socialist regime (e.g., Havel's concept of "living in the lie" [1986])", *Ibid.*, p.484

<sup>7</sup> There follows an interesting quote from Saba Mahmood: "Another problem in these approaches is their theorization of agency - they link agency with the resistance and subversion of norms... Saba Mahmood critiques the Western theory's tendency to make this link for its implicit assumption that a particular Western conception of agency is universal. In fact, Mahmood argues, "if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes 'change' and the capacity by which it is effected), then its meaning and sense cannot be fixed a priori. ... [For example,] agentive capacity is entailed not only in those acts that result in (progressive) change but also those that aim towards continuity, stasis, and stability . . ." *Ibid.*, pp. 483-484

understood (if not experienced) within the Western frame. Indeed, one of the most original aspects of the transformation of the public speech during perestroika seems to be sweeping claims of publicists, philosophers, Politburo members, and ordinary readers, including Nina Andreeva writing to the editors, to exercise their individual right to choose, make up their own mind, judge themselves and be true to what they think “in the depth of their heart” when speaking in public. The individual right to make one’s own judgement and make it public becomes the new norm of public speech – overruling traditional Soviet rules and conventions. We can gain in our understanding of this period if we analyse political implications of this general quest for personal integrity and human agency in the public debates.

In fact, what Yurchak does in his research is not meant to deny the validity of the question on the nature of the Soviet regime, but to reframe the answer. Namely, he first advances one heterodox claim which we can compare with similar arguments and independent empirical evidence collected by M. Wyman:

What may get lost in these [binary oppositions] accounts is a crucial and paradoxical fact that great numbers of people living in socialism genuinely supported its fundamental values and ideals, although their everyday practices may appear “duplicitous” because they indeed routinely transgressed many norms and rules represented in that system’s official ideology.<sup>8</sup>

This strong point on “genuine believers” is adjusted by a more nuanced point on the relation between people’s consciousnesses and public utterances in the USSR and similar political regimes: for Yurchak the post-Stalinist period is characterised by a pragmatic shift when the docile usage of the imposed official formulations is combined with a symbolic and practical re-interpretation of their meanings by individuals – people were investing the ritualized ideological formulas with their own views, tastes and practices, seeing there no contradiction.<sup>9</sup> The counter-reinterpretation of the dominant ideology by ordinary people as well as the pragmatic combination of mutually exclusive norms, practices and values seems to be an anthropological invariable, although its intensity may significantly vary. But does this mean massive support of genuine believers? Does the noted pragmatic shift translate the steadiness of convictions among the supposed true believers?

Matthew Wyman comes to a more straightforward conclusion on a large number of “sincere believers” in the USSR in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Wyman examined another type of sources in the bottom-up perspective –

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.484

<sup>9</sup> “This period [Late Socialism] began with a major shift in the discursive regime from a “semantic” to a “pragmatic” model (Mertz 1996) of ideological discourse. That is, the acts of copying the precise forms of ideological representations became more meaningfully constitutive of everyday life than the adherence to the literal (“semantic”) meanings inscribed in those representations. In the Soviet case, this emerging relationship did not necessarily preclude Soviet people from continuing to be invested in the ideals and ethical values of socialism.” Ibid., p.481

<sup>10</sup> “Whatever we are now told by violent anti-communists, there were many sincere believers in the system, who genuinely thought that society was on the road to communism. After the campaign of de-Stalinisation and the revelations about atrocities that took place after Stalin’s death, levels of idealism were hardly to return to the levels of the 1920s, but it never completely died out.. Such a belief was based on some undoubted achievements: victories in the Second World War and in the space race... were considerable sources of Soviet pride”. Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p.53

late Soviet and perestroika's sociological polls. Convincingly pointing at the high levels of acquiescence of the established system by the silent majority in the USSR before and even during perestroika, when constraints on expressing one's opinion were significantly lessened, Wyman does not pay attention to the quality of what he implies to be equivalent of legitimacy.<sup>11</sup> We would like to show that acquiescence or absence of the public protest did not mean legitimacy or genuine support of the system. We can rather speak about popular moods as NKVD and KGB reports did, but we hardly can speak about public opinion. Wyman makes a revealing proviso when presenting his thesis about the surprisingly high level of support of the CPSU and Soviet system registered by the polls in 1989: "In any event, what one is willing to say in public is the only part of one's opinions that can be reasonably considered as public opinion".<sup>12</sup> This cautious formulation seems to be logically correct. But by referring to the linguistic identity of "public opinion" and of "what one is willing to say in public" it skips the crucial question of the difference in the nature of public opinion in the tightly regulated and more open regimes of public speech.

Wyman's cautious formulation rightfully points at the absence of organized protest or public discontent assuming its publicity; but acceptance to voice the required public acquiescence does not imply support. On the other hand, for a great number, if not the majority, of the Soviet citizens, the ideals and promises of socialism seemed indeed attractive. However, this adherence did not uphold the regime because citizens were rather sceptical about the way in which these ideals were realized by the rulers. Max Weber's fundamental analysis of legitimacy might help better seeing this gap between acquiescence and support. Legitimacy considered in the neo Weberian perspective means deliberate support of an institution not only as acceptable, tolerable or inevitable, but as justly ruled, and actually based on just principles. In other words, if with Yurchak and Wyman we maintain that there was a large number of people adhering to the principles and values of "socialism", the strength of this adherence is to be fundamentally revisited in the light of the question on the nature of the public speech in the USSR; we also will see that the degrees of "pragmatism" and cynicism was significantly higher among the political and intellectual establishment than among ordinary citizens. The rise of the Russian Communist Party in the 1990s as the party of the popular protest against the old new elites is the consequence of this late Soviet asymmetry. We can recall that the majority of pro USSR votes on the Referendum in March 1991 and the general support of the socialist values until 1990 did not translate into any organized symbolic, civic or armed resistance to the dissolution of the USSR and to the Yeltsin's ban of the CPSU.

This preliminary discussion of the two recent contributions to the understanding of the late Soviet period helps us formulating some of the main arguments that we will develop in this chapter and in the present research. Studying the transformation of the political speech in its most theoretical expression we might keep in mind that there was no integrity or little effort to bring more coherence between the people's declared and even sincerely professed values, public representations of society and history

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Wyman, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-86

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.87



and people's actual behaviour.

## Ideology and legitimacy of the Soviet regime in 1984

We would like to make a short review and summarise some of the established scholarly views on the state of the Soviet ideology and political regime focusing on the pre-perestroika period. Scholars studying symbolic components of the Soviet regime have paid great attention to the role played by the *official ideological doctrine* in different areas of policy-making and to the issue of *legitimacy* of the regime in the eyes of the population. If since 1930s the discussions among Western scholars focused on the real content and functions of the changing ideology, after the WWII and especially after Khrushchev's report it did not seem as monolithic and Marxist-Leninist as before, and in 1970s the shift to the studies of political cultures reflected the attention to the historical backgrounds of the variety of socialist models under the cover of the seemingly rigid ideology.<sup>13</sup> The question of *reformability* of the Soviet Union arguably limited by its dogmatic but still changing ideology took the central place already in the academic discussions on Stalin's policies and with few interruptions this debate resurges until today.<sup>14</sup>

In early 1980s and after the end of perestroika the *cults* of historical events and leaders and the rituals of the regime have appeared as its original feature. The understanding of the Soviet regime as ideological in a narrow sense of one guided by an all-pervading doctrine was refined with the better account of the deliberate construction of the quasi religious public cults of individuals, places and historical events as efficient means of legitimating the factual monopoly on power of the ruling party leader or oligarchy<sup>15</sup>. Perestroika's radical transformations shortly brought scholars' attention back to political ideas and to the inconsistency of the Communist or Soviet ideology. The disappearance of the Soviet Union has suspended a newly rising discussion on this subject among Western scholars just around 1985-86<sup>16</sup>.

We divide the established approaches to the study of the symbolic and ideological aspects of the functioning of the Soviet regime into three categories: a) top-down and b) bottom-up approaches. Using these two categories and the third – combining both, we can review the methodological assumptions and the empirical findings of a certain number of recognized authors. The initially dominant top-down approach is common to scholars mostly studying the content of the Soviet ideological doctrine (although sometimes this could be better described as top-top approach) or the mechanisms of its diffusion and control over public communications such as propaganda, censorship,

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<sup>13</sup> As American and European political science evolved, studies on the *political culture* and alleged interest groups provided new methodological perspectives for Sovietology and historians studying Soviet history. See the account of this ideology-political culture alternative made by Michael Waller, "What is to Count as Ideology in Soviet Politics?" in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988 p.22-39

<sup>14</sup> See the recent discussion of Cohen's article Discussion of Stephen F. Cohen's "Was the Soviet System Reformable?" by S. Cohen, A. Brown, M. Kramer, K. Dawisha, S. Hanson, and G. Derlugian in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3, Autumn, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> See: E. A. Rees, Introduction to Apor, Behrends, Jones and Rees (eds.), *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, Palgrave, 2004, p.3

<sup>16</sup> We refer in particularly to two collections of essays which we analyse in this part : Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988 and selected papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet studies held in 1990 - Michael E. Urban, ed. *Ideology and System Change in the USSR and East Europe*, St. Martin Press, 1992

terror as well as the means of more indirect control over the scientific and artistic bodies<sup>17</sup>. The bottom-up approach gained ground in the second half of the century and is common to a number of scholars who looked at the ways Soviet citizens accepted, adhered, resisted or, what appeared as the prevailing strategic reactions, were accommodating to the top-down symbolic power. Both directions were explored by scholars who identified the deliberate cult-building policies, the social rituals and a sort of social contract between the Communist rulers and the Soviet population.

#### *Top-down outlook on the Soviet ideology by 1984: demobilization and degeneration*

The paradigmatic case of the top-down approach to the Soviet political regime and to the role ideology was playing in it was made by the protagonists of the political model of totalitarianism defended by C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski where the ideology was one of the defining features of the *totalitarian* regime, especially when mass terror had ceased after the death of Stalin: "(1) a totalist ideology; (2) a single party committed to this ideology and usually led by one man, the dictator; (3) a fully developed secret police; and three kinds of monopoly or, more precisely, monopolistic control: namely that of (a) mass communications; (b) operational weapons; (c) all organizations, including economic ones, thus involving a centrally planned economy".<sup>18</sup> Despite or rather due to its ultimate inflation, this theoretical frame was the most developed and sound as applied to Stalin's rule.<sup>19</sup> The strong political implication of the totalitarian approach beyond the academic community was that Western Communist parties and their sympathisers were preparing the same fate for the liberal democracies. The view that the USSR under Stalin was a new kind of dictatorship where ideology was more of an *instrument* for the leader rather than his guide remained a complementary alternative to and often within the main totalitarian interpretation<sup>20</sup>. For these authors, there was no bounding doctrine but a way to govern by denying public access to information, silencing any major criticism of the leadership, extinguishing non-policed social entities and randomly decimating the staff. In other words, this criminal setup was made possible by the ideological justifications, but not literally by the doctrine and its leaders had no intention to realise any particular doctrine.<sup>21</sup> Politically, this alternative view could sometimes imply that there was a better kind of Marxist doctrine that the one arguably applied in the USSR<sup>22</sup>. When terror

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<sup>17</sup> "There has been general agreement that the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism plays a central role in the Soviet politics". Stephen White, "Ideology and Soviet Politics", in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988, p.1

<sup>18</sup> Carl J. Friedrich, Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, [2d ed., rev. by Carl J. Friedrich], Cambridge: Mass., 1965, p.138

<sup>19</sup> See the exemplar presentation of this school as dominant in Leonard Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*, Praeger Publisher, 1972

<sup>20</sup> See: Robert C. Tucker "The Question of Totalitarianism", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1961, pp. 377-382

<sup>21</sup> Cassinelli maintained the term totalitarian while he denied the role of a doctrine or a coherent belief system in the functioning of the societies run by totalitarian party-movements. C. W. Cassinelli, "Totalitarianism, Ideology, and Propaganda", in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1960, pp. 68-95

<sup>22</sup> See as an example the review by Stephen Cohen of the Moshe Lewin's work *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates: From Bukharin to the Modern Reformers*: S. Cohen, "Politics and the past: The Importance of Being Historical", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (Jan., 1977), pp. 137-145

was arrested in the USSR, the role of the administrative elites and their bureaucratic powers over the whole society were seen as the prevailing mode of regulation in the Soviet political system<sup>23</sup>.

Yet, totalitarianism remained the most influential and fruitful way of understanding Soviet ideology seen as a relatively stable doctrine of total, deliberate and forced transformation of the society into a presumably wholesome but in fact arbitrarily imagined state of society through its atomization and its pervasive policing<sup>24</sup>. Applied to the 1970s and early 1980s, Friedrich's insistence on the still totalitarian nature of the USSR found an increased number of critics: the absence of the inner party terror and the *de facto* clear abandonment of mobilization as the radical tools of political control could not but affect the nature of the regime<sup>25</sup>. By then, already three key features of the totalitarianism were missing: terror, ideology and its fanatical servants. As later suggested by his co-author, the Khrushchev's removal marked a change in the Soviet Union's inner policies: the passage from the drive of the radical transformation of the society to the management of the established political and economic order<sup>26</sup>. Brzezinski forcefully argued that the post-Stalin era witnessed not the gradual liberalization and rationalization, but the degeneration of totalitarian society set for a slow decay<sup>27</sup>. Yet, the examination of the origins and of the outcome of Gorbachev's policies seems to give solid credit to both interpretations at once: there was a genuine liberalising momentum, but it proved unsustainable and destructive for the regime.

Once the utopian or ideological goals of radical social transformation were not on the real agenda and once the secret police was not systematically decimating the ruling bodies from within, the Soviet leadership dramatically diminished its pretension to control over a compartmented society, already reconsolidating on its own through informal structures of kinship, friendship and *blat*. This relaxation did not imply that the official Communist ideology was replaced; and the shadow of mass terror and

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<sup>23</sup> "The whole society is the bureaucratic command structure with all of the features familiar to the students of bureaucracy" Alfred G. Meyer, "USSR, Incorporated", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1961, p. 370

<sup>24</sup> "Totalitarianism is a system in which technologically advanced instruments of political power are wielded without restraint by centralized leadership of an elite movement, for the purpose of effecting a total social revolution, including the conditioning of man, on the basis of certain arbitrary ideological assumptions proclaimed by the leadership, in an atmosphere of coerced unanimity of the entire population." Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, Greenwood Publishers, Connecticut, 180p., 1976 (first edited in 1962) pp.19-20. In defence of the relevance of this approach for perestroika Odom argued in 1992 that view on the post-Stalin USSR as a degeneration of the totalitarian society was the best predictive and explanatory model elaborated by Western scholars – well accounting for its obvious non-totalitarian features wrongly understood as "liberalization", in fact being the degradation of the system. Andrei Amalrik independently made this argument in 1970. William E. Odom, "Soviet Politics and After Old and New Concepts", *World Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Oct., 1992), pp. 66-98. Andrei Amalrik, *L'Union Soviétique survivra-t-elle en 1984?*, Fayard, 1970. . Андрей Амальрик, *Просуществовет ли Советский Союз до 1984*. <http://www.vehi.net/politika/amalrik.html>

<sup>25</sup> For the discussion of the evolution of the totalitarian approach and of the criticism of its limitations by Barber and Curtis see: T. H. Rigby, "'Totalitarianism' and Change in Communist Systems", in *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1972, pp. 433-453

<sup>26</sup> For Brzezinski this passage indicated the transformation of the Soviet Union from totalitarian regime to a new kind of administration oligarchy ("Today the Soviet political system is again oligarchic, but its socioeconomic setting is quite different. Soviet society is far more developed and stable, far less malleable and atomized."). See Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Soviet Political System: Transformation or Degeneration?", in Zbigniew Brzezinski, ed., *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics*, Columbia University Press, 1969, p.20

<sup>27</sup> In a sense, Brzezinski still remained consistent in his views of the Soviet Union as anyway unacceptable. Ibid.

radical mobilization still remained implicit factors influencing the way the Soviet regime operated up until 1988, as it is still a factor of today's politics in Russia. But the demobilization of the top-down ideological and reformatory drive after the eviction of Khrushchev by the coalition of the top party and state officials had diminished the practical ability to impose the ideological goals on the society – the leader of the stagnation was a tacit ideologue of *status quo*, not nearly a revolutionary visionary<sup>28</sup>.

This plea for stability affected the ruling bodies of the CPSU and economic managers who were emancipating from the official ideology more rapidly than the rest of the Soviet population<sup>29</sup>. However, in 1980s, there were many scholars arguing that the USSR was pursuing its original utopian doctrine<sup>30</sup>. Alain Besançon in his polemical essay on the nature of the Soviet regime defined its “absolute originality” by the particular place occupied by the ideology which was “the principle and the goal of the regime, to which totalitarianism is subject as a means”. This new regime would be an *ideocracy*<sup>31</sup>. As we will try to show, the absence of the conservative ideological strain under perestroika as well as the memoirs of the party officials in 1990s attest that the totalitarian downplayed the crucial transformation of the political regime after 1953 where the remaining “potential for ideological mobilization” in fact proved to be democratic rather than totalitarian.<sup>32</sup> Thus, many sincere intellectuals entitled to develop the ideological doctrine of the USSR, as well as the two Party leaders who had the time to exercise their power, Khrushchev and Gorbachev, mobilized the Soviet society by a generally *humanising, democratic and reformatory* vision; by opposite, supposed “conservative” or “orthodox” Communists developed no significant political proposals before or during perestroika. We can formulate two weak points of the totalitarian interpretations: they could not understand the reasons of the ideological decline on the top, and they could not predict the sudden re-emergence of the communist ideological drive in its most naïve, democratic and humanist version.

From early 1970s onwards the application of *political culture* and interest groups approaches allowed escaping the temptation to take official Soviet ideology of face value in new ways stressing the

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<sup>28</sup> This point was well argued in 1966 by P. B. Reddaway against Meyer's assumption on the overall strong ideological convictions of the new leaders. The next twenty years confirmed this assessment. P. B. Reddaway, “Aspects of Ideological Belief in the Soviet Union”, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Apr., 1966), pp. 473-483.. Compare with Castoriadis: “Le renoncement, de tous, à tout espoir de modification et... attachement désespéré de presque tous au status quo et leur lutte pour sa préservation”, Cornélius Castoriadis, *Devant la Guerre*, Fayard, Bilbio, Tome 1, 1981, p.181

<sup>29</sup> We refer to the empirical conclusion made by Donna Bahry on the reversal of the initially positive correlation between the social status and the degree of acceptance of the Soviet regime by the respondents interviewed in the framework of the *Harvard project* and its continuation. Donna Bahry, “Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika”, *Slavic Review*, 1993, vol.52, №3, p.512-554

<sup>30</sup> M. Geller, A. Nekrich, *Utopia u Vlasti*, 2 vols., London, Overseas Publication Interchange, 1982

<sup>31</sup> Besançon had a more nuanced version of this thesis that we will discuss late in this section. The thesis on the ideological and totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime was generally shared by the leading French social scientist R. Aron. See: Alain Besançon, “De la difficulté de définir le régime soviétique”, in, Alain Besançon, *Présent Soviétique et passé russe*, Paris, Hachette-Pluriel, 1980, p.146-147. Pierre Manent, *Cours familier de philosophie politique*, Gallimard-Tel, 2001, pp.257-263

<sup>32</sup> We should distinguish here the macro political level of mobilization for great socio-economic projects and the social practices. What the analysis of the Khrushchev's period by O. Kharkhordin suggests is that at the societal level there was a new wave of intensification of the mutual surveillance and control of individual behaviours; however, without terror and with time, one can attest the growing “resistance” of the new Soviet individuals. O. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002, глава 7, глава 8.

“importance of long-term continuities in the political culture of the USSR and many other Communist states, continuities which stem from centuries of history and which are transmitted from generation to generation by the family, literature, churches, and social custom and in other ways”<sup>33</sup> as well as the “negotiation and conceptualisation, in general as well as in policy-specific terms, which in turn reflects the particular interests and objectives of the various institutions, groups and individuals”<sup>34</sup>. The new vocabulary of political culture reflected the attention to the variety of socialist models within the countries of the Soviet block and to the long-term historical patterns arguably superseding the current ideological justifications.<sup>35</sup> The most significant findings showed that the real functioning of Soviet ideology could be better understood if the “rules of the game, conventions and habits of mind” were taken into account as well as the content of official public utterances<sup>36</sup> – the gap between the two spheres proved so significant that it could not be ignored by researchers. The inner operations and decisions were more closely determined by the ambient political culture rather than by a distinctive doctrine. More specific attempts were also made to interpret the ideological dynamics in terms of the manifestation of group interests in a number of spheres ranging from central party apparatus to military stuff – identifying the ideologically more liberal and conservative subgroups within each of these elite groups<sup>37</sup>. The outcome here was limited, as Skilling and his colleagues could only trace the “tendencies of articulation” and networks or changing “subgroups” rather than any stable groups with publicly articulated interests. This absence confirms that the public representation of group interests was one of the explicitly and purposefully *prohibited* activities. Indeed, long term cultural patterns and preferences as well as implicit group interests were transpiring through official ideological unity; however, the formal impossibility to articulate and aggregate such views or preferences in *public* limited the impact of these factors to the cases of consensus or to basic anthropology level shaping customary institutions and behaviours, but not the “thin” political process.<sup>38</sup> We address these findings later on in our analysis of the rules and conventions of the political speech.

Thus, “non-totalitarian” scholars studying Soviet ideology top-down in the Brezhnev period pointed at the growing gap between Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and its pragmatic agenda, the gap filled by the cultural predisposition, beliefs and ideas, as well as by interests and by pursuit of personal power<sup>39</sup>. Accordingly, the Soviet leadership embraced a more or less coherent mixture of Marxist-Leninist and

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<sup>33</sup> Stephen White, “Political Culture in Communist States: Some Problems of Theory and Method”, in *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (Apr., 1984), p.363

<sup>34</sup>H. Gordon Skilling ; Franklyn Griffiths (ed.), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, NY, Princeton UP, 1971, p. 16

<sup>35</sup> See the account of this ideology-political culture alternative made by Michael Waller, “What is to Count as Ideology in Soviet Politics?” in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988 p.22-39

<sup>36</sup> Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007p. 254

<sup>37</sup> H. Gordon Skilling ; Franklyn Griffiths (ed.), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, NY, Princeton UP, 1971

<sup>38</sup> We address this central issue in the next section. See: R. Tiersky, *Ordinary Stalinism: Democratic Centralism and the Question of Communist Development*, Winchester, Allen and Unwin, Inc., 1985

<sup>39</sup> Cf.: “Perhaps, therefore, it will be useful to list at this stage a range of motives, some of which a Soviet politician might at different times possess. He might act out of a concern for: mankind (and/or, just possibly, God); world communism; the Soviet sector of world communism; the Soviet people (or the Russian people only); the CPSU; his faction of the CPSU; his advance to the top of the CPSU hierarchy; his survival in the apparatus; or the power and privileges desired by his (to use Prof. Meyer’s phrase) ‘compulsive, ego-weak, authoritarian personality’. Usually, of course, he will be moved by several of these often overlapping motives at once”. P. B. Reddaway , “Aspects of Ideological Belief in the Soviet Union”, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Apr., 1966), p.473

non-Marxist elements brought about either from the Russian past or by the current challenges the USSR's leadership was facing. Two main ingredients of this mixed ideological agenda were most noted: *modernisation* and *Great Russian power*. Barrington Moore Junior did the fundamental work in rationalizing Soviet politics by analysing Stalin's strategic dilemmas in 1950, when he defended the idea of the considerable transformation of Soviet ideology in response to the new challenges of political control and of needs of the industrial societies that forced it to modify or abandon many of the initially strong Bolsheviks' ideological maxims<sup>40</sup>. Stressing the surprising flexibility of the official doctrine Moore concluded that the leadership had made important agenda shifts to meet the requirements of modern industrial society, such as the need of the centralized state control over the economy or the introduction of unequal wages as opposed to self-management by workers and strict equality of incomes declared after the revolution. Similarly Moore noted the downplaying of the initial drive towards the imminent world revolution and the aspiration to the rapid passage into Communism in USSR, these ideals however remaining as "latent influences".<sup>41</sup> Alfred Meyer who initiated a long discussion by a series of thought-provoking and contradictory interpretations of the Soviet ideology in 1960s (we will often quote them), twenty years later formulated the industrial modernisation agenda in the following terms:

Thus understood, Soviet ideology is an ideology of modernization. Its adherent assume that becoming modern is desirable, and they would measure modernity by technological development, urbanization, the educational level of the population...including perhaps a rising gross national product.<sup>42</sup>

According to Roy Laird and James Ozinga, the modernisation agenda had acquired specifically Russian features of an authoritarian centralised rule of the economic and political life of the society: "In terms of Marxism and communism the Soviet Union had become an ideological Potemkin village – an apparently ideological facade held by state authoritarianism and bureaucratic management of the economy"<sup>43</sup>. The accent placed on the Russian authoritarian variant of modernisation stressed the specific non-Marxist feature of the Soviet model and indirectly could serve as an apology for the alternative socialist models. With a different ideological outlook, Anatoly Vishnevsky developed a

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<sup>40</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr., *Soviet Politics – The Dilemma of Power*, Camb. Mass. Harvard University Press, 1950

<sup>41</sup> Finally, Moor outlined the unsolvable dilemma between liberalization needed to revitalize the declining genuine support of the regime and the tight political control needed to secure its stability: "This loss of initiative and enthusiasm then tends to encourage various breakdowns in the system, which the leaders try to correct by the restoration of democracy in the Party, the soviets, the trade-unions, the collective farms and elsewhere. Re-democratization can not be carried too far, for fear of undermining the central controls... One of the reasons why the system does not break down is that the democratic elements in both ideology and practice have acquired the doubly useful function of furnishing the support for the authority of the top leaders and checking the recurrent growth of elements hostile to these leaders". *Ibid.*, p.404

<sup>42</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, "Political Ideologies in the Soviet Union: Reflections on Past Attempts to Understand the Relationship between Ideas and Politics", in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988, p.54

<sup>43</sup> James R. Ozinga, "The end of Ideology in Soviet Union" in Michael E. Urban, ed. *Ideology and System Change in the USSR and East Europe*, St. Martin Press, London, 271p.,1992, p.24. Roy Laird advanced that the official Marxist doctrine was *de facto* replaced by the combination of the Russian nationalism, few elements from the Marxist heritage and pragmatic lessons of the past. "The new Soviet myth : Marx is dead, long live communism", in *Soviet Studies*, vol 18, n#4, April 1967, pp. 511-18

similar argument on the harmful impact of Russian historic tradition on the Soviet catching-up model of modernisation only covered by a mixture of Marxist and nationalistic rhetoric<sup>44</sup>. In many cases, scholars point out the co-existence of both components, but there are also more pure cases such as Michael Voslensky, the former Soviet official defected to the West. Voslensky argued that Great Russia's patriotism was the most authentic ideological belief shared by the rulers<sup>45</sup>; but he was equally very specific in pointing out that the *official* Soviet propaganda of the late 1970s failed to convince the nomenklatura and in fact did not aim to convince but merely demanded to display in public linguistic and ideological conformism<sup>46</sup>. The absence of any major ideological innovations and the ostensibly lukewarm pursuit of the main goal of passing to Communism and accomplishing the world revolution confirmed this rather pragmatic turn.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the non-totalitarian mainstream highlighted the non-communist aspects of the late Soviet ideology and policy-making such as industrial modernisation and great power; they also noticed the growing decline in ideological convictions of the ruling elites. Once again, the reasons of this Soviet end of ideology and its sudden revival with Gorbachev remain obscure.

On the opposite side from the totalitarian approach to ideology one can situate the interpretations that focused on the actual flexibility of the official doctrine so that Mayer again could provocatively ask in 1966: what if Marxism-Leninism was a "nutshell", i.e. a hollow concept having no specific content?<sup>48</sup> Twenty years latter in the middle of perestroika, Rachel Walker replied with a straightforward yes: "Marxism-Leninism is an empty signifier."<sup>49</sup> The gist of this interpretation was that the way in which public speech was regulated in USSR, did not relate to its content or any set of political ideas but to a rhetorical and in fact political "trap" when one privileged source of the discourse successfully presents itself as the only beholder of true statements. To be sure, to make this trap work in real power negotiations this rhetorical affirmation is backed by a disciplinary and military apparatus supervising

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<sup>44</sup> Анатолий Вишневский, *Серп и рубль*, ОГИ, М. 429р., 1998, in particularly pages 195-204

<sup>45</sup> «Mais la composante fondamentale de l'idéologie officielle soviétique n'est pas le marxisme, c'est le nationalisme chauvin de grande puissance qu'est l'Union Soviétique. Une constatation s'impose : cette idéologie leur assure malgré tout un certain soutien populaire. La vitalité de leur nationalisme chauvin provient de ce qu'il est moins mensonger que les éléments marxistes ou léninistes de leur idéologie ». Michael Voslensky, *La Nomenklatura. Les privilégiés en URSS*, Belfond, 1980, p.332. For a very close formulation, let us cite Cornelius Castoriadis who in his further analysis denies any ideological ground for the "Soviet ideology" : « La seule « Idéologie » qui reste, ou peut rester, vivante en Russie, c'est le chauvinisme grand-russien. Le seul imaginaire qui garde une efficacité historique, c'est l'imaginaire nationaliste – ou impérial. Cet imaginaire n'a pas besoin du Parti – sauf comme masque... » in Cornélius Castoriadis, *Devant la Guerre*, Fayard, Bilibio, Essais, Tome 1, 1981, p.30

<sup>46</sup> "La propagande soviétique ne s'efforce guère plus d'expliquer ses formules et ses slogans aux lecteurs ou auditeurs de manières à les convaincre..." it only imposes "les contraintes linguistiques", or "conformisme idéologique." Ibid., p.338

<sup>47</sup> Cf.: As a Finnish expert Eero Loone, who used to work in the Soviet Union, put it: "The *nomenklatura* long ago abandoned Marxist phraseology for purposes of argument when real decisions had to be made, as distinct from on ritual occasions". Eero Loone, "Marxism and Perestroika", in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 4 (Oct. 1990), p.786. Cf: « La philosophie politique des dirigeants actuels de l'Union soviétique se caractérise plus par l'empirisme que par la recherche de voies nouvelles susceptibles de donner un nouvel essor au marxisme léninisme » Patrice Gelard, *Les systèmes politiques des Etats Socialistes. Le modèle soviétique*, Cujas, Paris, Tome premier, 1975, p.27

<sup>48</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, "The Functions of Ideology in the Soviet Political System", in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, No., 3 (Jan. 1966), p. 274

<sup>49</sup> Rachel Walker, "Marxism-Leninism as Discourse: The Politics of the Empty Signifier and the Double Bind", in *British Journal of Political Science* Vol.19, No. 2 (Apr., 1989) p.161-189



the actual conformity of all public utterances with the upper level statements: this includes censorship and ultimately the use of violence<sup>50</sup>. Pursuing Michael Urban's analysis of the "double bind" strategy in official Soviet rhetoric, Walker showed the consequences of the combination of two claims made by the top Communist Party leadership: their privileged position as the exclusive bearer of Marxist-Leninist thinking and the need of constant creative development of the theory. According to Walker this combination opened the field for the constant changes in the political doctrine closing all possibility to an independent intellectual challenge or critique of these changes from outside or inside of the CPSU: "it is logically impossible for anyone, except the source of the discourse, namely the CPSU itself, to specify in advance what these boundaries [between creation, dogmatism and revisionism] might be."<sup>51</sup> Richard Sakwa has advanced a similar argument in a more nuanced form taking it as one of the several themes of the Soviet ideology which could be actually described as its limits, e.g. dialectical materialism, Lenin's voluntarism, economism, late Soviet technocraticism, teleological beliefs in history and others, while for Rachel Walker the double binding trap imposed no limits on the content:

The role of the party was defined by the ideology but the party constantly modified ideology to take into account changing circumstances. The important point however is that, however much it might have changed, Marxism-Leninism was held to represent the truth at any particular time... The party alone could decode the process of history and interpret Marxist ideology.<sup>52</sup>

This anti-doctrinal reading of the Soviet ideology was prefigured in the earlier writings of Robert Daniels and Leszek Kolakowski and echoed by two distinguished Russian historians uncovering the Stalin's original stratagem combining the criticism against the dogmatism with an even harsher taboo on stepping outside of the cannon – used in public debates in which Stalin intervened as the ideologue.<sup>53</sup> We can note that the *CPSU* itself was not a source of discourse; the major modifications were operated by the party leaders in person: whether an idea was dogmatic or truthful to the doctrine, as whether it was revisionist or creative development could only be determined by the leader and this was the only stable solution. Daniels attributed this loss of the fixed content of *Marxism-Leninism* to

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<sup>50</sup> "As Urban has pointed out, a double bind to be completed requires not only paradoxical communication of this sort and the elimination of meta-communication, but also requires the very real threat of force and a relationship of active dependency between the super- and subordinate parties, to lock it into place." Ibid., p.184 See also M.E. Urban, *Conceptualizing Political Power in the USSR : Patterns of Binding and Bonding*, in *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 18 (1985), 207-226

<sup>51</sup> Rachel Walker, op. cit. p.179

<sup>52</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998, p.171, see the nine themes or bundles see: pp.: 170-174

<sup>53</sup> «Сталин не отверг в принципе примат марксизма над всеми остальными науками, но не давал никакого конкретного рецепта или примера пересмотра тех или иных марксистских положений в соответствии с изменившейся обстановкой. Получалось, что если советский ученый будет продолжать держаться за цитаты из классиков марксизма, то он будет обвинен в начетничестве... Любой же отход от буквы марксистского учения повлечет за собой кару за пренебрежение к марксизму... По каждому конкретному вопросу только он /Сталин/ мог дать ответ как единственный авторитет» Genadii Bordugov, Vladimir Bukharev, *Natsionalnaa istoricheskaa misl v usloviakh sovetskogo vremeni*, in Karl Aiermacher, Genadii Bordugov, *Natsionalnie istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskikh gosudarstvax*, AIRO-XX, Moscow., 1999, p.47

Stalin, and actually the very term was invented by the later.<sup>54</sup> But we can clearly see that this flexibility can be traced back to Lenin's radical innovations, probably more explicitly assumed as such by Lenin, but without abandoning the alleged total allegiance to Marx. Moreover, all socialist parties declaring their direct allegiance to Marx were structurally tempted by this trap.

R. Walker's radical view captured an important feature of the Soviet ideology; yet, focusing on this rhetorical *self-justification*<sup>55</sup>, she did not look at the real boundaries in the flexibility of the ideology arguably set not only by the logic of the trap and she did not consider the impact of such ideological flexibility for the convictions of rulers, their staff and the population. What about political values, integrity and innermost convictions in such a setup existing for several generations long? Second, if no real doctrine guided the Soviet leadership after Stalin, what beliefs informed them when they had to take political initiative or react to the historical changes of the global environment? It seems that the double-bind trap made any particular set of individual convictions and beliefs highly instable. Cornelius Castoriadis had drawn an even more radical conclusion from the understanding of the arbitrariness of the ideological top-down communication by claiming that no officials believed any more "in laws of history", but simply and only in "naked Power".<sup>56</sup> Hence, researchers studying the USSR had to leave the "concept of ideology aside" and accept that naked power can hold a society united. The cynicism according to Castoriadis infused the top leadership but spread downwards throughout the whole Soviet society, aware that public rhetoric did not matter.<sup>57</sup> The consequence of this desertion of the public speech was the impossibility of any policy co-ordination through public speech top-down or bottom-up – as neither the shared beliefs in the official discourse, nor the coherence of the real agenda held the actions of individuals or groups together.<sup>58</sup> Following Castoriadis, this practical destruction of the language and public speech in their role of co-ordination and unification in the long term was not sustainable, but still this model could ensure the relative stability for the society in the midterm<sup>59</sup>. Similarly, Amalrik's prediction of the fall of the USSR in 1984 was based on the observation of the moral and ideological *corruption* of the ruling groups formatted by the Stalin's negative

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<sup>54</sup> "The Soviet regime changed in its essence [in the 1930s]. The pattern of changes within the core of the official ideology, the official purpose system, cannot convincingly be written off as a series of mere tactical ruses or strategic zig-zags. The Stalinist regime could express no higher articulation of social purpose than in Marxist-Leninist ideology, but that ideology had been reduced to rationalization after the fact. It lost all long-run directing power, no matter what the direction. There was no fixed star for the Stalinists to steer by; they had no ultimate pattern which was not thus subject to reshaping over the years. Regardless of its labels, the Stalinist regime no longer represented the same movement that took power in 1917. This should be a basic premise for anyone who undertakes to establish what kind of a regime it actually was". R. V. Daniels, *Trotsky, Stalin, and Socialism*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991.

<sup>55</sup> "CPSU has explicitly and continuously to insist on its "Marxist-Leninist" identity" (which has no fixed content) in order to defend itself against alternative ideological challenges (pretending to be creative "Marxist" as the doctrine is not fixed)". Rachel Walker, op. cit. p.181

<sup>56</sup> Cornélius Castoriadis, *Devant la Guerre*, Fayard, Bilbio, Essais, Tome 1, 1981, p.251

<sup>57</sup> « La société russe devient – tend à devenir – une société *cynique*. Le Parti n'est plus que simple assemblage de carriéristes et d'arrivistes autocooptés. » Ibid. p.30

<sup>58</sup> "La réalité « officielle » n'est qu'un paravent de papier, réalité réelle disparaît, pulvérisée entre les points de vue partiels, uniquement orientés vers les intérêts particuliers des cliques et des clans qui les soutiennent", Ibid., p.271

<sup>59</sup> « Une société que rien ne tient ensemble, où les membres de la couche dominante vivent dans une guerre de tous contre tous sans foi ni loi, est-elle possible ? ... à la longue elle n'est pas possible. » Ibid., p.262

selection, which filled the growing ideological void with the Great Russia nationalism, expansionism and the cult of brutal force.<sup>60</sup>

Amalrik and Castoriadis' just appreciation of the moral decay of the political class overestimated the degree of cynicism and underestimated the hidden potential of the moral mobilization in the name of the regime's declared ideals. The arrival of Gorbachev and his popularity among party intellectuals contradict the presumption about the total cynicism and irrelevance of the official ideology on top. Although Amalrik mentioned the existence of the naïve ideology of *reformism* or *humanisation of socialism*, he did not see any future for it. Retrospectively, one can see that Castoriadis and Amalrik described the anarchy, cynicism, privatization of property and private violence in the post-Soviet Russia while missing the Gorbachev transition. The assessment of the USSR as a totally deideologized and brutal society in early 1980s was actually overstated – in a way, they foresaw too deeply, but missed a significant ingredient of the late Soviet reality; philosophy of history and humanistic values was the only *common* map of the Soviet reality despite the duplicity of individuals.

In contrast with this pessimistic outlook, the possibility to sustain the mid-term stability of the Soviet regime despite the cynical double-thinking was defended by Shlapentokh and reintroduced again by Alfred Meyer who contended that cynical “universal profession of the official ideology” actually enforced the established social order:

While one result of this double morality may be the general spread of cynical contempt for the official ideology, Shlapentokh seems to believe that in the long run it works very well for the regime, because it creates mass pressure for conformity to official ideological standards... Where everyone chimes in with the publicly proclaimed norms, and does it in all sincerity, it would be rash indeed to challenge them openly. Thus, the universal profession of the official ideology acts as a general enforcer of party norms and does it quite effectively.<sup>61</sup>

Alain Besancon noted this change too, but saw it as a sign of the totalitarian *strength*; although along with Brzezinski or Amalrik (and with hindsight) we can rather see there signs of a deep decline.<sup>62</sup> Formal “lip service” to the ideas no one really believes maintained by mutual supervision can hardly be

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<sup>60</sup> We can relate this assessment with the above mentioned Brzezinski's argument. The passage from the radical social engineering to the peaceful administration of the society was confirmed by the refusal of the massive terror against the party and society. The consensus of the top leadership on the need of stability (as opposed to the revolutionary mobilization) opened the possibilities for creeping liberalization, but the military power was used in the satellite Socialist countries in order to maintain the direct political control in the response to the rapid emancipation and liberalisation of these countries. The result of this conjecture was an establishment of a new consensus over the internal *status quo* in the public sphere: no open discussion should be allowed in the press and other media, however privately a plurality of views gradually gains the ground. The lack of conviction becomes the condition of political or scientific carriers, and this leads to more cynicism and alienation. Андрей Амальрик, *Просуцествует ли Советский Союз до 1984*. <http://www.vehi.net/politika/amalrik.html>

<sup>61</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, *Political Ideologies in the Soviet Union: Reflections on Past Attempts to Understand the Relationship between Ideas and Politics*, in Stephen White, Alex Pravda, ed., *Ideology and Soviet politics*, Macmillan, 1988, p.56

<sup>62</sup> “The strength of the Brezhnev regime lies in having understood that the ideology was no longer believed. All witnesses agree that, over there, no one 'believes' in it. Granted, but they do speak it.” A. Besancon, “Court traite de sovietologie a l'usage des autorites civiles, militaires et religieuses”, *Present sovietique et passe russe*, Paris, Hachette, 1976, p. 209.

considered as a sign of particular strength of such a social bond. Thus, the ritual profession of faith was not a mere *façade*, as it played a stabilizing role by sterilizing any intellectual or ideological challenges to the *status quo*, unless initiated from the top of the pyramid. Oleg Kharkhordin argued that this setting enforced the specific Soviet pattern of individualization through *feigning*.<sup>63</sup>

In general, the insights of the researchers adopting the top-down perspective seem to converge around the point that by 1985 the initial revolutionary Communist doctrine and its supreme goals ceded to the modernization agenda, implicit welfare contract and Great Russian patriotic convictions of the rulers. For a number of researchers, the loyalty to the *status quo* expressed as an obedient public invocation of the official slogans became the main virtue required by the authorities from the Soviet citizens speaking in public. In this perspective, scholars noted the growing gap between public rhetoric, convictions and agenda of the Communist party leadership. Cynicism and lack of convictions of the Soviet rulers was stressed by insiders and external observers alike. We can sum up that the spreading moral and economic corruption of the top and mid-range officials resulted from the fluctuations of the party line, its double-bind rhetoric and negative selection of officials by the bureaucratic system; finally, lack of convictions and even cynicism among the establishment signalled the ideological decline of the USSR. Still the sudden revival of the humanist aspects of the official Marxist-Leninist ideology that remained attractive and able to outline the reform policies of perestroika (granted, they were often inadequate, naïve or insufficient) confirms that under the cover of the ritual many people developed not cynicism, but malleability of their belief systems and, probably more surprisingly, uncritical reception of the mainframe of the official ideology in its democratic and humanistic aspirations.

#### *Bottom-up outlook on the Soviet ideology: interiorisation, accommodation and distortion*

The bottom-up perspective examines the reception of the official ideology by the Soviet population and the assessment of the popular support of the regime and its declared values. The first systematic contributions were based on the interviews with the Soviet émigrés conducted in the frame of the Harvard Project, which showed the relatively high degree of support for the established regime mixed with discontent with the concrete state policy failures or its perceived incoherence – findings synthesised in *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society*.<sup>64</sup> Most respondents accepted the Soviet values and at the same time coped with the powerful enforcement system by elaborating

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<sup>63</sup> Considering the evolution of the peer-to-peer mutual supervision in the 1960s-70s, Oleg Kharkhordin advanced that feigning as response to the collective mutual supervision in fact was the paradoxical technique of individualisation constituting the specific type of Soviet subjectivity. Kharkhordin also pointed out its connection with the Bourdieu's notion of the *collective misrecognition* developed to describe typical behaviours in Algeria that a Western observer could see as widespread hypocrisy. Indeed, this pattern of collective misrecognition was based on the *almost* genuine belief in what people individually could "guess" was not real. We examine this point in more details in the last section. О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002, стр. 360-361, стр. 432-433

<sup>64</sup> A. Inkeles, R. Bauer, C. Kluckhohn, *How the Soviet System Works*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1956. A. Inkeles, R. Bauer, and alias, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959.

the individual “mechanisms for suppressing both disloyal deeds and *thoughts*”.<sup>65</sup> These conclusions confirmed the insights of the totalitarian model indicating the degree of the enforced interiorisation of the propaganda. On the other side, Harvard Project showed certain distance that respondents kept with the official claims as well as their often critical opinions and moods. In the last decade before perestroika and in the decade after it, substantial academic work on the reception of the official doctrine by the population has been done addressing different periods of the Soviet history – basically confirming conclusions made by Inkeles and Bauer in 1959, with a stronger emphasis on the critical reception. Thus, in 1990s Stephen Kotkin’s influential book *Magnetic Mountains* based on the newly opened archives explored this theme in-depth: the re-appropriation and interiorisation of the official Soviet language, symbols and behavioural patterns by the workers of a typical Soviet industrial city in early 1930s<sup>66</sup>. Sheila Fitzpatrick has famously recovered the daily life and concerns of the ordinary Soviet workers and peasants more or less reluctantly adapting to the moulding of the Bolsheviks’ transformational policies<sup>67</sup>.

Donna Bahry made a stimulating effort to compare the evolution of people’s beliefs and values in the three different periods of the Soviet history from the last years of Stalin’s rule through late Brezhnev and to the last year of perestroika drawing on and refining the original findings of the Harvard Project; Bahry found a decline in the loyalty of the citizens with higher socio-professional status in the generations which socialised before and after Stalin era, while those who received high education under Stalin and born between 1910-1930 were more supportive of the regime and its basic values and norms<sup>68</sup>. We can note that Gorbachev was born in 1931 in a modest peasant family and started his degree in law in Moscow State University three years before Stalin’s death and graduated one year before Khrushchev’s report. This context has made Gorbachev one of the last representatives of the cohort of true believers who got tangible benefits from the regime for their excellence in studies and work, but also one really committed to improve the regime’s deformations (to be sure, one can not take this sketch as an exhaustive account of the Gorbachev factor). Further generations socialized earlier or later had different attitudes. Richard Sakwa accounted for the poor state of Agitprop socialization efforts in 1980s when it was loosing the competition to “other influences such as material life, careers and family interests”<sup>69</sup>. The post-Stalin generations were thus particularly disaffected, despite the numerical evidence of the new official texts published or lectures given; by then, the regime started noting this failure.<sup>70</sup> A. Yurchak in his anthropological study introduced the notion of the

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<sup>65</sup> A. Inkeles, R. Bauer, and alias, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959. p. 286

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, 1995, London, 639ps.

<sup>67</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick speaks about “strategies of resistance and survival” which corresponds to the passive resistance; the abundant documental evidence shows that the reception of the Soviet rule in 1930s was far from unanimous at the lowest levels of the society. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, Oxford University Press, 2000; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, Oxford University Press, 1996

<sup>68</sup> Donna Bahry, “Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika”, *Slavic Review*, 1993, vol.52, №3, p.512-554

<sup>69</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, p.176

<sup>70</sup> “The sheer statistical enumeration of agitprop activity said little about its effectiveness. Respect for ideology appeared extremely low; classes in Marxist-Leninist ideology were to be endured rather than enjoyed. The younger generation numbed by Brezhnevite crassness was a particularly alienated group”. *Ibid.*, p.176.

“cynical reason of late socialism” reflecting on the last Soviet cohorts socialised under Brezhnev – in partial contradiction with his later claims.<sup>71</sup> The subversive irony and empathic humour were ways to cope and accommodate one’s inner self to the official propaganda probably since 1920s and until early 1980s. We will take on these arguments for a more detailed discussion of the relationship between subjectivity and public speech in the third section.

Developing the Foucauldian perspective, Oleg Kharkhordin argued that hypocrisy or more precisely *feigning* constituted the most powerful technique of the self-moulding in the Soviet Union as a response to the imperative control and mutual supervision effectuated not only top-down, but mostly by peers.<sup>72</sup> This formation of the self by the techniques of feigning in the 1920s and 1930s is distinguished from the Western or pre-Revolutionary mundane hypocrisy in Russia, precisely because for the new urban population there was arguably no other structured sense of inner self, but the new one constituted by *feigning* conformity. The hidden individual resistance is here paradoxically understood as the main way of forming a distinct individual identity. As Kharkhorin shows, enforced “hypocrisy” gradually became the real social norm taken in a positive sense. Being true to one’s inner convictions is to betray the whole group of peers ultimately hiding the quite visible superiors. This rule was often explicitly stated and was often accepted by the people in the later period<sup>73</sup>. Thus, we can see that the principles of regulation of public speech and the techniques of the mutual control on the micro level of society match. An individual or a group of individuals should not publicly oppose the community, of which they are a part, when relying on their own opinion. The micro-analytical approach can be complemented by the analysis of the rules of public speech and their effects on the individual subjectivity(s) on the macro-level. The conclusions can be reviewed by stressing the historical malfunction of this pattern: this dominant type of individualisation was lived by many as a *deprivation* from their inner self, and criticised by the leading dissident intellectuals such as Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov before perestroika and by the Communist party leaders including Gorbachev, Ligachev and Yakovlev during perestroika.

These in-depth and multifaceted snapshots from different historical periods can be seen as converging on two central points: Soviet citizens generally adopted some forms of passive resistance to the ideological indoctrination (from the cognitive dissonance to the assumed duplicity), were sceptical about the unfulfilled promises of the rulers, and partly resisted the radical social engineering by forming their “feigned” subjectivity. But they exhibited an overall authentic support for the basic values and principles of the Soviet regime and in a variety of ways adhered to or adjusted the officially

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<sup>71</sup> Alexey Yourchak, *Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology, and the Culture of the Last Soviet Generation*, Ph.D. dissertation. Duke University. 388 p.

<sup>72</sup> «Реакцию на навязчивый внешний контроль и надзор в виде притворства и лицемерия трудно назвать исторической инновацией... Форма этого притворства в СССР была, однако, радикально преобразована: оно стало практиковаться индивидуально, для защиты от надзора со стороны равных тебе членов группы, а не с целью коллективного обмана, направленного против властей придерживающих... Иначе говоря, многие большевики, вступившие в партию после революции, «приватизировали» себя – в том смысле, что создавали и совершенствовали ни от кого не зависящий образ собственного «я» - прежде всего с помощью притворства». О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр.350-351

<sup>73</sup> «Говорить правду о своих взглядах – плохо. В зрелом советском обществе отказ от игры по неписанным правилам лицемерия рассматривается как отклонение от нормы, которое надо наказывать» *Ibid.*, стр. 360

endorsed identities and social rituals in their daily lives. People did not question the political principles to which the official propagandists and official speeches referred, but noted the unfulfilled promises. Multiple studies revealed the population's wide acceptance of the basic values and norms of the Soviet system: egalitarianism, state ownership and welfare guarantees. Thus, a combination of the acceptance of the basic values and norms, passive toleration of policies as well as the tacit distortion or unvoiced criticism of the official propaganda, education and intrusive enforcement in most spheres of private and public life characterised the state of Soviet society on the eve of perestroika. Shlapentokh and most scholars studying dissidents agree on the point that Andropov's policies have by this time "decimated" the embryonic groups of the civil right defenders and dissipated most ideologically motivated groups<sup>74</sup>. As for the active resistance and for the potential of protest within Soviet Union they were seen as low. Except Hough's hypothetical and unusual claims on growing civic participation in USSR<sup>75</sup>, most researchers looking bottom-up studied the *passive reception* and *re-appropriation* of the official ideology, and otherwise considered the reverse bottom-up ideological messages as covert (political advisors)<sup>76</sup> or as limited to basic grievances (public letter-writing to officials)<sup>77</sup>. No scholar witnessed or foresaw the emergence of a new *ideological platform* that could backup the ideological opposition and wide contestation of the regime or of the political system, if we put aside strong nationalistic claims – the most spontaneous and vivid ideology of the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In fact no new popular ideology systematically opposing the regime had emerged in the USSR; and the first significant nationalist organizations appeared with the direct encouragement of the perestroika leadership as the informal clubs backed by the republican Communist parties promoting perestroika. As we know, the change came from above. The new leadership was inspired by an ideological vision and tried to ideologically mobilize the whole country. Its humanistic and democratic vision saw glasnost as a necessary condition of the social and individual renaissance and fulfilment of the genuine socialist potential; in fact, the application of this vision destroyed the Soviet regime and accelerated the shift to a non-ideological, weak regime of domination in 1990s.

In the seminal 1984, Wayne DiFranceisco and Zvi Gitelman added probably one of the most imaginative contributions to the empirical study of the accommodation tactics used by the Soviet

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<sup>74</sup> Archie Brown accounted for the role of the academic party think-tanks and discussed the accuracy of the terms "intra-system dissidents" or "conformist reformers" – as for the open dissident resistance or other manifestations of the civil society, Brown noted arguing against Starr and Lewin: "the diversity of view behind the monolithic façade, did not however add up to the existence of civil society". Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, p.158. "On the whole the dissident movement – quite strong in the 1960s and 1970s, though it recruited only a few thousand intellectuals and was ignored by the masses – was almost totally decimated by the beginning of the 1980s", Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and how it Collapsed*, M.E. Sharpe, 2001, p.151. Л. Алексеева, *История инакомыслия в СССР: Новейший период*, М, Вильнюс, 1992

<sup>75</sup> Hough could actually take for civic participation the remaining practices of the horizontal mutual control and supervision identified and described by. O. Kharkhordin as the background practices for the Stalin's major transformation of the society. This participation however was strictly and purposefully limited to the local level and was a tool for controlling the mid-level bureaucracy. See: Hough, J. "Political participation in the Soviet Union", *Soviet Studies*, 1976, №28, pp. 3-20. О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002. глава 7, «Коллектив в зрелом советском обществе».

<sup>76</sup> See: Ronald J. Hill, *Soviet Politics, Political Science and Reform*, Oxford, M. E. Sharpe, 1980, 221p.; Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, chapter 6, "Institutional Amphibiousness or Civil Society? The Origins and Development of Perestroika"

<sup>77</sup> See: Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Suplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s", *Slavic Review*, 1996, Spring, pp. 78-105. Matthew E. Leno. "Letter-Writing and the State. Reader Correspondence with Newspapers as a Source for Early Soviet History", *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 1999, Jan. - Jun., pp. 139-169

citizens in the routinely invasive political regime – as seen earlier, already unable and unwilling to *massively* mobilize, repress and convince its officials and its population.<sup>78</sup> These authors used the same investigation method as in the Harvard Project – in-depth interviews with émigrés from the USSR with a theoretical question on whether Soviet political culture was “subject”, e.g. that in which citizens feel themselves deprived from the opportunity to influence political decisions, or “participant”, e.g. that in which citizens “believe that their actions to some extent affect policy decisions”<sup>79</sup>. Their findings encouraged them to go beyond this opposition and suggest that the Soviet political culture was based on the idea that while citizens could not (and should not) influence political decisions, they could modify and re-appropriate them on the stage of application – to their greatest individual benefits:

In the Soviet system, however, the "competent subject" is not content to demand fair play and the universal application of the law, for he does not expect that of the system. Rather he takes matters into his own hands when he is convinced that the routine workings of the system will not automatically confer upon him the benefits he desires. He does this by approaching those who implement policy, not those who make it, and by following traditional ways of handling administrators.<sup>80</sup>

If this diagnosis is at least partly true, then the “free-rider” behaviour became the *tacit norm* of the Soviet establishment in the late USSR – most active people focused their energy on *subverting* social rules in their own favour and they did this systematically, intentionally and self-indulgently. Gitelman and DiFranceisco emphasised that people with higher education and status were more aware and willing to distort the official policies using bribes, *blat* than the non-educated. This confirms the point made by Bahry on the more rapid erosion of the support of the system among the more educated and better served by this very system. The other implication of this academic account made just before the arrival of Gorbachev to power was that in general, Soviet people would not demand any fundamental change in the system, but were rather seeking to obtain more from its better functioning.<sup>81</sup>

This account and the contributions discussed above lead to the conclusion that neither was there expectation nor pressure from below to engage serious reforms in 1985. The retrospective accounts of the pressure for radical change rely on the public mood aroused by the young General Secretary, whose mandate was to rejuvenate the system – otherwise, pressures were latent and not articulate. The population mostly shared USSR’s general “socialist” values and principles, was rather sceptical about the official rhetoric and was adjusting to or subverting the official decisions and established formal rules to its own profit. In short, the gradual spread of moral corruption at all levels of Soviet society was tacitly accepted as a norm by the some of the most active and educated people. The

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<sup>78</sup> Wayne DiFranceisco and Zvi Gitelman, “Soviet Political Culture and “Covert Participation” in Policy Implementation”, in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, (Sep., 1984), pp. 603-621

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.607

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.608

<sup>81</sup> “We infer from our analysis of respondents’ evaluations of Soviet bureaucracies and their dissatisfaction with its operations, that much of the Soviet population would probably be more interested in increasing levels of performance by the present system than in fundamental systemic change. Until such time as either of these comes about, the citizen is left to grapple as best he can with those small questions of daily life that he and those who administer the system must solve together.”, *Ibid.*, p.619



contradiction between the cynical attitudes and the broad socialist values was veiled because behaviour and values of the active stratum remained separated from and not reflected in the official public sphere – which was abandoned as an inefficient field of the ritualized communication.<sup>82</sup>

*Legitimacy or illegitimacy: terror, ancestors' cults, welfare and historiosophy*

The late Soviet regime met no resistance or opposition in the USSR, but the meaning of this loyalty or acquiescence can be clarified by considering its legitimacy. The question on the degree of legitimacy of the Soviet rule can be seen as an inappropriate question mechanically asked from the context of Western democracies. This question would imply more radical ones: whether CPSU could win free elections or whether the Soviet Constitution would be voted on a free referendum? Of course, free multi-party elections could not be held in USSR unless it changed its very essence; and yet what we want to know is whether the Soviet regime was legitimate. If these two questions are not irrelevant, they may be confusing without certain clarifications. Soviet institutions were carefully although not always consciously framed by its leaders in order to exclude any possibility of such a free competition between rulers; but they were also carefully and not always consciously preserving the rituals of “elections” and “legality” on all the levels of the political pyramid with partial exception of its very top: the elections of the General Secretary were too obviously preceded by the under-carpet fight marking a brief pause or rupture in the established order and even the supreme role of the party leader was not explicitly stated.<sup>83</sup>

Taken in a more realistic perspective the legitimacy question could be seen as yet another question on the political *stability* of the regime. However, the proper application of the concept of legitimacy reveals that a regime can be stable and yet illegitimate. Moreover an attempt of legitimation can destabilize the regime. Why then the reformer destabilized the system? The Gorbachev's contingency suddenly revealed the tension between the self-presentation and the real functioning as a weakness of the system: as it might be argued, illegitimate regimes last longer, if they do not allow free elections. But Gorbachev's personal faith in free elections and critical debates was not contingent; it translated the failure of the Soviet system to pass its real but implicit principles to the new generation of leaders on top<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> See: Alexey Yurchak, *Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology and Culture of the Last Soviet Generation*, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Duke University, 1997

<sup>83</sup> The weak institutionalization of the supreme power in the USSR and the difficulties of the succession of the leadership were clearly pointed by Z. Brzezinski. See: Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Ideology and Power in Soviet Politics*, Greenwood Publishers, Connecticut, 180p., 1976 (first edited in 1962). Zbigniew Brzezinski, ed., *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics*, Columbia University Press, 1969

<sup>84</sup> This incapacity partly resulted from the specific setup of the public communication blocking the free public exchange and public awareness not only of the ruled, but in time also of the rulers. Archie Brown attributed this Gorbachev turn to his personal transformation and evolution towards West European social-democracy. What our analysis reveals is how deeply Gorbachev's general understanding of politics and history was tainted by the idealistic and liberal Soviet Marxism. We can naturally attribute the first part of this system's “genetic mutation” (as Gorbachev's press-secretary A. Grachev described his patron) to the built-in humanistic and democratic strains of the original Soviet ideology. See later discussion. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007

The role of political terror in the late Soviet regime can be revisited. Unlike the last Soviet leader, we must keep in mind that Post-Stalin's Soviet regimes operated in the shadow of mass terror, purposefully using or naively ignoring its functional role as a pending threat in maintaining the social and political order. As A. Amalrik wrote at the end of the sixties, "...even now the regime exists, perhaps not only, but mainly, on the interest from the capital of fear amassed in those [Stalin's] times."<sup>85</sup> O. Kharkhordin developed a similar argument analyzing the perception of campaigns against the "deviations" in personal behaviour relying on the mutual supervision of individuals and strengthened by the mass terror in 1920s, 1930s and by its vivid fears in 1960s and 1970s<sup>86</sup>. Thus, the machinery of the late Soviet regime looked so "mellow and pleasing", because it relied on the secret but vivid memoir of the mass terror.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the *inner-party* terror was convincingly identified by Ch. Armbruster as one of the main causes of the internal il-legitimacy of the Soviet rule for its own staff<sup>88</sup>. Gorbachev ignored the functional role of terror and its *after-taste* in the regime's stability, and once personally confronted with the historical evidence on terror he was himself terrified and unpleasantly surprised. The system allowed the ascension of a leader ignoring the mechanisms of its maintenance. In other words, not only the population was indoctrinated, but in the middle term, leaders starting from Khrushchev were taking self-deceptive aspects of the official propaganda at their face value, viewing some of the regime's fundamental traits as deviation from its proper social and political setup. From this functional and ever pending shadow of terror, we can go back to the question of legitimacy.

Was the Soviet regime legitimate around 1984? This question properly asked should help to identify the widely shared *normative reasons* to accept and maintain the established social order beyond the consideration of the individual costs and benefits.<sup>89</sup> In the Soviet context this question simultaneously allows to look both ways top-down and bottom-up as it checks whether the reasons advanced in the official public sphere exclusively by the rulers and the inner convictions animating people, did coincide. We can then distinguish first between the legitimacy of the *regime* in a narrow sense of its current leadership (and its particular policies) and the acceptance of *system's* supreme values and goals by the *population*; and second, between the *self-legitimizing* claims of the rulers made in the public space and the inner legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of its own officials. We distinguish and review these points taking on the reconsiderations of the Weber's outlook made by J. Pakulski, E. A. Rees, T.

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<sup>85</sup> A. Amalrik, "An open letter to Kuznetsov," in *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, p. 98.

<sup>86</sup> O. Kharkhordin developed this argument analyzing the late Soviet campaigns against the "deviations" in personal behavior relying on the horizontal mutual supervision of individuals and strengthened by the vivid fears of the mass terror. O. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002, с.378, 384

<sup>87</sup> «Машина советской власти временами выглядела так мило и благостно и употребляла так мало насилия в своей повседневной работе потому, что, после того как безумное количество насилия было использовано при ее сооружении, очень мало насилия требовалось для поддержания ее беспроблемного функционирования в дальнейшем». Ibid., p.200

<sup>88</sup> See: Chris Armbruster, "Soviet Relations Of Domination: Legitimate or Illegitimate?" (August 25, 2005). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=790508>. Armbruster, Chris, Explaining 1989 - Soviet Imperial Breakdown and Structural Stasis (August 25, 2005). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=790524>

<sup>89</sup> Most importantly, if the were reasons to comply beyond the threat of violence as the major incentive. See: Jan Pakulski, "Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies", *British Journal of Political Science*, 1986, Vol.16, №1

Rigby, C. Lane and C. Armbruster in application to USSR and other Communist states. These scholars came to the arguments and assessments significantly matching with the sociological findings based on interviews with the Soviet émigrés by A. Inkeles, R. Bauer, W. DiFranceisco, Z. Gitelman, and D. Bahry. Bringing together these results as much as they can match or complement each other helps us drawing the fuller picture of legitimacy of the Soviet regime in 1984<sup>90</sup>. Finally, the insights of the totalitarian approach and the findings of the political culture approaches fit this synthetic picture to a degree that one can see in this overlap the sign of its reasonable adequacy. On this basis, we can understand the impact that public history debates could have in legitimating or discrediting the regime.

We address first the issues of the endorsement by the wide population of the current *regime* and of the *system* in general.<sup>91</sup> These two layers of legitimacy did not coincide. The discussed above discoveries of the Harvard Project and the later applications of its methodology, as well as conclusions of the scholars questioning the legitimacy of the Soviet rule give strong credibility to the argument that the current Soviet regimes and its leaderships had a relatively narrow support basis<sup>92</sup> composed in particular of the few generations of the young activists making rapid careers or volunteering under Stalin, and otherwise were, in Pakulski's words, "conditionally tolerated" by the population probably since 1920s onward; Pakulski saw the regimes in Eastern Europe and USSR as illegitimate but conditionally accepted on the basis of calculation of the benefits and costs with a pending threat of violence<sup>93</sup>. At the same time, at least after 1945 the principles embodying the political and economic system, such as social equality, welfare, state control of heavy industry and full employment were widely taken as worthy and enjoyed "the support of the popular consensus" in USSR, but to a lesser degree also in other Socialist countries in Eastern Europe<sup>94</sup>. Pakulski compellingly used the Weberian concepts of legitimacy types, stable order, and domination and added his own term "conditional

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<sup>90</sup> We will try to show that the findings of Harvard Project and of the scholars addressing the issue of the legitimacy of the Soviet regime came to surprisingly converging and coherent results – while departing from different theoretical assumptions and using different research techniques. Harvard Project was conducted as a study of values and beliefs of the Soviet citizens. The revision of the types of legitimacy advanced by E. A. Rees stands in opposition to Weber's types, while Pakulski's and Armbruster's perspective is more that of re-establishing the original Weberian outlook. We aim to find a realistic matrix, which would not amalgamate the differences in these approaches.

<sup>91</sup> We follow here the distinction used by Donna Bahry. Donna Bahry, "Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika", *Slavic Review*, 1993, vol.52, №3

<sup>92</sup> Cf.: "The Soviet population in the 1920s and 1930s was in large measure alienated from the state. Stalin in 1930s was not a popular figure" E. A. Rees, Introduction to Apor, Behrends, Jones and Rees (eds.), *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, Palgrave, 2004, p.12.

<sup>93</sup> Pakulski: "...mass subordination in Soviet-type societies usually reflects 'conditional tolerance', i.e. it results not from the fact that 'obedience is recognized as a duty' or 'persons exercising authority are lent prestige', but from social perceptions of relative costs and benefits of (in)subordination". Jan Pakulski, "Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies", *British Journal of Political Science*, 1986, Vol.16, №1, p.48. Echoing Sh. Fitzpatrick Donna Bahry paid special attention to these Stalin's generations who got rapid access to the higher education, who saw the material progress of the USSR and could consider the negative aspects of life as remnants of the past. "Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika", *Slavic Review*, 1993, vol.52, №3

<sup>94</sup> Donna Bahry confirmed one of the main conclusions of Inkeles and Bauer: "Crucial change in the Soviet society is that now the main outline of the system seem to enjoy the support of the popular consensus". Donna Bahry, *Op. cit.* Also see: Geoffrey Evans, and Stephen Whitefield, "Political culture Versus Rational choice: Explaining Responses to Transition in the Czech Republic and Slovakia", *British Journal of Political Science*, 1999, January, pp.129-155

tolerance” to describe the quasi-legitimate and yet acceptable domination as applied to the relations between the Communist rulers and the masses<sup>95</sup>.

We can refer to other types of evidence on this ambivalent and atypical combination – mere toleration of the regime and strong support of its basic values in 1950-1970s. We can look at the peoples actual behaviours in regard to the established rules of the regime. Gitelman and DiFranceisco observed that the practical rules and institutions were not challenged or amended, but massively distorted by the active and educated Soviet citizens for their own profit. This is of course, another sign of illegitimacy of the Soviet regime or of its “conditional tolerance” by the population; and more significantly by its better-off layers. Bahry came to the same conclusion with stronger emphasis on the progressive disaffection from the regime but also some of its principles of the more educated and with higher status in the post-Stalin generations in late 1970s and early 1980s<sup>96</sup>. According to Bahry, the gap between the relatively high support of the Soviet system in general and the low support of the current regime was filled by the popular proto-ideological demands for less state control in the consumer sector of economy (some sort of NEP model) and looser political controls – constantly and consistently present since the WWII and until 1985. The acceptance of such official goals as building Communism or more exotic world revolution was not monitored in these studies; yet they are sufficient to confirm that if the population did not have any major set of values or political ideas competing with the officially claimed, it tolerated but did not support the current regimes. In Sakwa’s neat diction, the Soviet ideology “was believed by some and tolerated by many more”.<sup>97</sup>

On the eve of perestroika, Western scholars advanced the idea of a new social contract between the population and the rulers ensuring higher acceptance if not legitimacy of the established order: the regime claimed to guarantee the growth of welfare, while the benefiting groups supported the regime<sup>98</sup>. Resuming these approaches, E. A. Rees identified “performance attainment” as one of the legitimating strategies in the post-Stalin era<sup>99</sup>. The improvement of the living conditions for social groups such as blue collars in 1970s most probably insured more support; as the earlier protest in Novocherkassk and later perestroika’s failure have shown this support was short-term and conditional<sup>100</sup>. The implied logic of such a contract can be seen as the account of the immediate costs and benefits rather than the endorsement of the order seen as just, sacred, or proven by custom. To become a rational legitimating strategy this social contract also lacked an explicit free recognition on behalf of the people’s side. One

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<sup>95</sup> Jan Pakulski, “Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies”, *British Journal of Political Science*, 1986, Vol. 16, №1, p.35-56

<sup>96</sup> Donna Bahry “Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika”, *Slavic Review*, 1993, vol.52, №3, p.552

<sup>97</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998, p.171

<sup>98</sup> This was one of the conclusions of the Harvard Project supported by the further findings; we can refer in particular to the similar points made by Kotkin, Lane and Evans. See the Donna Bahry’s discussion on the use of this concept by Breslauer, Hauslohner and Cook, and in particular to account for the Gorbachev’s perestroika as an attempt to build a social contract with the neglected but growing white collars as opposed to the narrowing stratum of the satisfied blue collars. Donna Bahry, *Op. cit.*, p.551. Also: Alfred Evans, Jr., “The Decline of Developed Socialism? Some Trends in Recent Soviet Ideology”, in *Soviet Studies*, 1986, Vol. 38, 1-23

<sup>99</sup> E. A. Rees, Introduction to Apor, Behrends, Jones and Rees (eds.), *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, Palgrave, 2004, p.4, 22.

<sup>100</sup> The normal market contract between hired employees and company’s principals can fall under the same category of illegitimate domination unless special arrangements are made to secure the deeper community of interests.

can situate this level of support somewhere in between the conditional tolerance and legitimacy. If the regime's failure in this respect played a major role in the dissolution of USSR the reliance on such a consumerist contract indicated a setback in the *ideological* legitimacy of the regime. At the same time, the metaphor of the social contract allowed scholars to assess both ways top-down and bottom-up: the degree of popular support of the regime as a function of its economic performance and the self-legitimizing claims made in public on progress in social welfare, education and technology.

We can proceed with the self-legitimizing claims of the rulers who maintained the tight control over all public expression in the USSR and carefully policed the public critical utterances against the leadership, the regime and the system. This control gave to the official claims the overwhelming monopoly which did not mean efficiency. The advantage of Weber's outlook on such self-legitimizing claims is that it also allows identifying the explicit meaning of the official texts, speeches or rituals (even suspending the question of the reception of such claims as more or less valid by the audience). We can ask what the sources of authority to which the most significant official discourses appealed were? These manifest sources of the self-attributed legitimacy in 1970s were writings of Marx and Engels, texts, speeches and deeds of Lenin, the claim on the ultimate scientific knowledge of human history transmitted from Marx to the current party leadership, the heritage of the October revolution, the sacrifices of the forefathers, the Victory in WWII, generalized welfare, the public good of all the subjugated and knowledgeable men of the world, social and economic progress in USSR and finally, human kind and humanity. The interrelated although various sources of authority benefited from the presumption on their fuzzy mutual compatibility if not identity – in 1970s they were never opposed or explicitly put in a hierarchy of greater or lesser importance. Along with the social contract claims, scholars addressing the issues of legitimacy in the Soviet regime pointed out the cults of Lenin, October revolution and WWII as the most efficient or relevant. How one could classify the predominant self-legitimizing strategy? Rigby made a hypothesis on the goal-rational self-legitimation of the power relations within the Soviet executive apparatus presuming that the supreme goal of achieving Communism commanded the justification of the multiple tasks distributed across the whole “mono-organizational system” from its top; the mono-organizational character of the system would fit to the singular supreme goal to carry out and to the corresponding legitimation type.<sup>101</sup> Rigby specifically focused on the self-legitimizing *claims* within the executive apparatus suspending the question of their reception; however, even in the official party texts the articulation of the link between communism and the current policies became too loose after the demobilization following the Khrushchev's downfall<sup>102</sup>.

Drawing first on the anthropological literature and then introducing the Weber's ideal type of traditional legitimacy Christel Lane exposed ample empirical findings on the deliberate inscription of the public and private social rituals such as commemorations or rituals of the initiation, into the official ideology and daily practices of most Soviet citizens from the 1960s onwards. Lane argued that this emerging

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<sup>101</sup> T. H. Rigby, “Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Mono-organisational Systems”, in T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, (eds), *Political Legitimation in Communist States*, London, Macmillan, 1982.

<sup>102</sup> “Even in official statements the word 'communism' is rarely used outside the Soviet Union; instead the Eastern bloc media refer to 'developed socialism' or 'feasible socialism'”. J. Pakulski, *op. cit.*, p. 45

dominant type of legitimacy was “backward looking” as opposed to the initial future-oriented (in Rigby’s view “goal-rational”) drive for the Communist transformation.<sup>103</sup> This would be the case of the newly born traditional legitimacy; an eloquent quote from the Soviet manual would illustrate this turn: “Revolutionary traditions are our “Holy of holies”, a living spring from which we may draw life-giving strength and emotional health”. Lane’s qualification of this type of legitimizing the rulers’ authority as traditional is less convincing than the noted reversal of the temporal orientation towards the glorious past. The Weberian definition that Lane cited to justify her argument indicates that the source of the traditional type of legitimacy of the given institutions were their *long-term* existence and *continuity*. Yet, the central reference to the “holy of holies” got its sense not from the reference to the past event or from the *continuous* character of a tradition (the pure case of traditional authority loses its source in the undefined early times); its particular political sense mainly springs from the supreme Holiness of the event as the above mentioned passage clearly shows. In other words, we rather face the specific kind of charisma attributed not only to persons but to events explicitly considered as *sacred* and not only having supernatural powers or able to steadily achieve one’s aims as in the pure case of the charismatic legitimacy. The claim of continuity is of course significant, but secondary as compared with the insistence on the sacred character of the worshiped figure or event. The parallel with Christianity in this respect is telling. Protestantism saw itself as a return to the lost origin and could successfully rely on this ground; yet abandoning the privilege of the continuous transmission, led to an instable organizational diversity.<sup>104</sup> Thus, a stable religious legitimacy relies on both claims of continuity and holiness. We can speak of a quasi-religious type of legitimacy rather than about a traditional one.

Following the general interpretation of the *cult-building* practices in USSR and Eastern Europe advanced by E. A. Rees, we can understand systematic attempts of “investing ideas, events, institutions, particular offices and personalities with charisma” as the defining feature of this regime’s deliberate strategy of legitimization that which Lane had captured in the multiple late-Soviet official rituals and discourses<sup>105</sup>. The works of Nina Tumarkin covering the pre-perestroika period and the above cited contributions of Gooding, Yourchak, Scherrer and Brossart focusing on the public debates during perestroika confirm the significance of the *sacred cults* even when neither censorship nor terror protected them – this proves the viability of this legitimization means, although these sacred symbols

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<sup>103</sup> See: Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society-The Soviet Case*, Cambridge University Press, 1981. 308 pp. Christel Lane “Legitimacy and Power in the Soviet Union through Socialist Ritual” , in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1984, pp. 207-217. See in particular: “This system of socialist ritual, it will be argued, has come to be regarded by the political elites as one important means of maintaining and strengthening the legitimacy of the Soviet social and political system and of the position of the political elites within it. The performance of ritual, according to Soviet writers, creates value consensus and solidarity, and thus has the capacity to enhance legitimacy. Ritual inculcates the values of the dominant ideology, or of the current version of this ideology, more effectively than previous means employed.” *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>104</sup> Cf: “In 18<sup>th</sup>-century England, the dissenting Puritan tradition, blamed for the Civil Wars and continuing social strife, seemed proof that hermeneutics was politically divisive. English Protestant culture had tried to reproduce reformed versions of Catholic discipline” Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, Routledge, London and NY, 2002 (first edition 1996), p.48

<sup>105</sup> Compare: “What is unique and striking about them [Communist, Nazi and Fascist regimes] is the way in which they sought to construct legitimacy, by investing ideas, events, institutions, particular offices and personalities with charisma. Part of this strategy involved the promotion of leader cults, aimed at creating a bond between leader and subject”. E. A. Rees, *op. cit.*, p.3

were not strong enough to generate organized political or military defence of the system<sup>106</sup>. The vocabulary, arguments and emotions spontaneously deployed during perestroika as a reaction on the harsh criticism of the past crimes and bloodshed committed by Bolshevik leaders witnessed the quasi-religious attachment of many Soviet citizens to the sacred Communist symbols with Lenin, WWII and October standing apart as the most attractive and strong symbols. We can also note, that if the leader cult under Stalin played a role of creating a direct bond between subject and *leader*<sup>107</sup>, after Khrushchev's eviction the reactivation of the Lenin cult and the creation of the new WWII cult aimed at creating a bond between subject and *regime* both endorsing the same cult; this attachment did not imply any specific policies or ideology but one – official worshiping of the cult as sacred and central. In a slightly different perspective Sakwa, who denoted the extreme flexibility of the doctrine, concluded that “Marxism-Leninism remained the hegemonic force in cultural and political life, but its hegemony was not derived from its innate dynamism but from its institutionalization as the “state religion”.<sup>108</sup> Thus, the various Soviet cults were widely accepted as sacred and were meant to sanctify the established order.

The official worshiping of Lenin and forefathers' cults and Great Power pride probably were the most legitimate faces of the late Soviet regime. If we skip the non-Russian and Russian nationalisms, the main political mood in the USSR in early 1980s was probably the moderate support of socialism as an egalitarian, just and parenting society, and a passive distrust of the current regime and its leadership who were seen as unfulfilling the promises and principles of socialism. A distinct although related political mood arguably was “Soviet pride” for Great Power, which expressed both the latent Russian national pride and the Soviet supranational patriotism endorsed by the educational system. At the same time, the political and intellectual elites of the USSR were becoming increasingly indifferent, sceptical and often cynical about the official ideology; yet an active minority within the elite was looking for ways to improve the socio-political system. Their motivations were both pragmatic and moral – they sought to restore the declining Soviet power economically and to restore the moral integrity of the country. The main theoretical frame available for envisaging such an enterprise apart the short-sighted common sense of administrators and technical specialists was the Soviet speculative historiosophy.

#### *Marxist philosophy of history: self-legitimation or frame of reality for the leadership?*

The last aspect of this brief review concerns the legitimacy of the established order in the eyes of the ruling groups or within its *nomenklatura* and the question of the relationship between the official Marxist-Leninist historiosophy and the dominant representations of the leadership about the world and

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<sup>106</sup> Cf.: “A cult of the Great Patriotic War an organized system of symbols and rituals driven by political imperatives determined by its managers-was in its formative stage. Some aspects of the symbolic matrix-like the basic plot of the war and the Victory Banner as the cult's central symbol-had been fixed. Others - such as Stalin's role in the war-were in flux. The war against fascist Germany, which for the better part of a decade after its conclusion had been squelched as a topic of inquiry and public celebration, now became a focus of attention for many members of the intelligentsia”. Nina Tumarkin, *The living & the dead: the rise and fall of the cult of World War II in Russia*, NY, Basic Books, 1994, p.128

<sup>107</sup> See: E. A. Rees, *op. cit.*,

<sup>108</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998,, p.174

Soviet society. We advance that the late Soviet leadership (and its intellectual staff) was rather sceptical about the accuracy and validity of the Marxist-Leninist science of history. However, in the USSR the leadership and intellectuals formed no new shared and articulated world-view helping in the general orientation and in their policy-making. Strikingly, the dominant historiosophical assumptions of the late Soviet period such as creativity of the masses, law-governed character of history, wholesome nature of historical evolution, and the metaphor of the historiosophical map with binding paths guided political and economic reforms of the 1980s and were in part mirrored in the Yeltsin period. The factual interpretations and moral judgments of Marxism-Leninism lost their meaning, but the late Soviet historiosophical mode of thinking politics remained dominant. Presently, most *theoretical* reflections on the contemporary Russian politics recur to the recognizable historiosophical rhetoric and mental models of perestroika. We will examine how the emergent political philosophy was shaped by the inherited late Soviet historiosophy and its language.

Weber's original notion of legitimacy better serves us when applied to the executive apparatus around the leader rather than on the scale of the state and its population<sup>109</sup>. In this perspective, the relation of domination within the Soviet apparatus and within its imperial networks was *structurally* illegitimate due to the usage or threat of massive *inner-party* terror, universal secret police surveillance, and violent reprisals against the satellite countries that tried or envisaged socialist reforms not endorsed in Moscow. The domination within the centralized executive apparatus in USSR was guaranteed by fear and mistrust mostly blocking local initiatives – pushing the staff to divert resources and create protective informal networks of personal allegiance and kinship. This situation resulted in an organizational *stasis* – or the inability to carry major reforms. The insights from the empirical studies of Bahry and Gitelman on the evolution of the Soviet regime in 1970s-1980 witnessed the decline in the support of the system among the most educated and with higher social status as well as the widespread abuses on the level of policies' implementation by the officials. In other words, the illegitimacy of the order was strongly felt by the agents in the upper part of the political pyramid.

The historiosophical self-justification of the Soviet regime was widely taken by scholars as self-evident. But the real bond was made by worshiping the cults and not by the theoretical claims on history and its allegedly cognizable laws. Although most scholars routinely referred to the centrality of the Marxist historiosophy for the CPSU leaders, in the 1960s-1970s even the major changes in the presumably fundamental world-history mapping were noted by the scholars *en passant*. Thus, Francoise Thom had inadvertently noticed that the original Marxist claim that socialism was the superior historical stage for Western capitalist countries was replaced by the argument on the geographical expansion of the Communist world offering a non-capitalist alternative for the Third

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<sup>109</sup> We follow here the approach elaborated by Chris Armbruster. Pakulski stressed this original focus on the administrative staff, but then applied this notion to account for "mass compliance". Compare: "The Weberian idealtypes do not pertain to the political order of a state as whole, but rather to social relations within an association such as the CPSU, the Czechoslovak metalworkers' union, the Red Army, or the Kombinat VEB Carl Zeiss Jena. Weber's definition was that domination is the chance to find obedience from a finite and specifiable number of persons for a specific command". Chris Armbruster, "Soviet Relations Of Domination: Legitimate or Illegitimate?" (August 25, 2005). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=790508>.



World countries – the “liberation of Grenada” would counter even this revised Marxist claim<sup>110</sup>. Michael Waller indicated that the idea of “catching up with West” has successfully replaced other Marxist aspiration such as to overcome alienation<sup>111</sup>. The incompatibility between the founding texts, the current official rhetoric on history and the real beliefs of the party leaders and intellectuals was softened by the absence of any significant debate: the individual ability to reason sufficed to question the existing gaps in private, but not to bridge them. The true believers (both, those committed or rejecting the Soviet system) had to face the expulsion or to dissimulate their ideological convictions.<sup>112</sup>

Opening a new research perspective, Archie Brown in *Seven Years that Changed the World* has compellingly demonstrated the central role of the official Soviet “think-tanks” in the preparation of perestroika reforms – these were leading Soviet social science institutes and theoretical reviews, supervised by the Central Committee and called to serve the Party as the instrument of elaboration of the party general line. Brown shows that the functioning of these think-tanks resulted in what he calls *institutional amphibiousness* (the uncommon term borrowed from X. L. Ding writing on the contemporary “Communist” China): the informal networks of intellectuals around the party leaders including Brezhnev, Andropov, Grishin and later Gorbachev reflected the concealed diversity of opinions in the central *nomenklatura*’s ranging from Russian nationalists to social-democrats.<sup>113</sup> Refining the understanding of the how individuals can cope with such clear ideological contradictions between what they professed and what they believed in Brown referred to the psychological tendency to avoid the cognitive dissonance<sup>114</sup>. Another prominent author who developed the political culture approach, summarized this state of minds in 1979 describing the perceptions from below; but with the hindsight we can see how it fits the *nomenclatura*’ self-perception: “A blend of conformity and dissent, of genuine commitment to the Soviet system and pride in its achievements combined with considerable cynicism with regard to those presently responsible for its management”.<sup>115</sup> Arguably, many top officials saw the current regime if not the socialist system as inefficient and unjust.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> [“libération” de la Grenade] “Son impact fut immense sur les Soviétiques, car il signifiait que le socialisme pouvait être délogé par la “réaction”, que les de l’histoire ne fonctionnaient pas aussi infailliblement que le promettait la doctrine.” Francoise Thom, *Le moment Gorbachev*, Pluriel, Hachette, 1989, p.11. In general Thom manifested an extreme suspicion in the face of the Gorbachev’s “deception strategies” recycling the worst products of Soviet and Western propaganda.

<sup>111</sup> “[Soviet] Marxism jostles with other items brought from in from their particular experiences and perceptions. Thus, ‘catching up and overtaking the West’ has been much more active element in the CPSU’s ideology than have notions of the end of alienation, whilst the vast bulk of ideas concerning political organisation – what is the right way of doing things and what the wrong, and what constitutes the normal, in relation to which political leadership can call for ‘normalisation’ – stem directly from habits and practices that the party has itself generated over the years, investing them with the title of ‘Leninist principles’ which is not always strictly merited”. Michael Waller, *The End of the Communist Power Monopoly*, Manchester University Press, NY, 1993, pp.22-23.

<sup>112</sup> See the investigation on the fate of the young Marxists groups in the 1940s and 1950s: Juliane Furst, “Prisoners of the Soviet Self?: Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2002, May, pp. 353-375

<sup>113</sup> In particular Brown shows the importance of academic institutes such as IEMSS, IMEMO, reviews such as *World Marxist Review*, and of the departments within Central Committee such as “International” and “Socialist countries” departments as the fields of development for more or less significant ideological platforms for reforms. The members of these institutions have played the first roles in the public debates during perestroika and to a minor degree in 1990s. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, see in particular, pp.:157-191

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.292-293

<sup>115</sup> Stephan White, *Political Culture and Soviet politics*, MacMillan, 1979, p.111 cited in Rachel Waller, *Six years that shook the world*, Manchester University Press, 1993, p.64

<sup>116</sup> This includes Y. Andropov, E. Ligachev, E. Shevardnadze, M. Gorbachev and certainly his close associate, A. Yakovlev. Brown who did not use the terms of legitimacy and illegitimacy showed that Gorbachev pursued the policy of the radical

We can outline now these four aspects of the regime's legitimacy (skipping nuances and years): by mid 1980s, the Soviet population tolerated the regime and its leaders, but shared its overall principles and venerated the sacred cults professed by the official propaganda; growing stratum of white collars started doubting some of the basic principles; the rulers claimed their right to rule referring to constant improvement of living standards and by worshiping the ritualised cults of Lenin, October and Victory in WWII; the historiosophical claims on the superiority of socialism over capitalism were downplayed but not deserted; the administrative staff obeyed their superiors' not out of the meaningful conviction in the rightfulness of the established order, but out of the mixture of fear and opportunism, while integrating informal networks and diverting allocated resources and decisions to their personal or group profit<sup>117</sup>. The shadow of terror played the crucial role in making the regime both illegitimate and stable.

These well matching accounts shed light and provide the necessary context to the core beliefs of the General Secretary or most likely incumbents for this position and Politburo members. One could reasonably deduce that the gradual ideological demobilization manifest since Brezhnev (when invectives against capitalist imperialism hid the status-quo *within* USSR) and the double-thinking and cynicism among the Soviet establishment should reach its very top. This deduction proves partly correct. With the hindsight of the memoirs of the top CPSU and KGB officials, we find no firm convictions, a fantastic syncretism and actually no theoretical conjectures – quite an astonishing absence for the former rulers of an ideological superpower; those remaining truthful to the USSR or its ideology exhibited Soviet pride, but little theory or ideology.<sup>118</sup> Memoirs *ex post* validate the arguments on the likely loss of firm socialist beliefs at the very top in the 1960s replaced by conventional and changing attitudes; the perimeter of the legitimate measures and institutions at the top was kept more by the inertia and conventional mutual supervision, rather than by strong quasi-religious faith or well articulated principles and arguments. But ideology re-infiltrated the very top of the political hierarchy after the death of Leonid Brezhnev.

Vigorous supporters *and* reformers of the Soviet system, Y. Andropov and even more so M. Gorbachev appear as exceptional figures. Like their peers, both had no clear political vision for the

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transformation of the currently established "system"; if we hold to the distinction between current regime and general system, it seems more accurate to say that on the eve of perestroika Gorbachev held the regime as illegitimate, but supported the system. Cf.: Archie Brown, *op. cit.*, p.212

<sup>117</sup> "Instead, the important role is played by personal links, clientelism and informal arrangements, all of which could be described as a sort of 'second polity' analogous to the 'second economy'. This was well-documented by Rigby and Willerton, who pointed to the importance of client-patron relationships in Soviet politics, and by Hough who provided an excellent description of what he termed the 'prefectoral' system in the Soviet administration. Similarly Grossman, Nove, Kemeny and Lewin described the operation of the 'second' ('grey') economies". Pakulski, *op.cit.*, p.40

<sup>118</sup> We develop this argument in the third section of this chapter. See: Лигачев Е. К. *Предостережение*, Газета «Правда», М., 1999. Юрий Прокофьев, *До и после запрета КПСС*, Алгоритм, М., 2005. А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003. Леонид Владимирович Шебаршин, *Рука Москвы: записки начальника советской разведки*, М., Центр-100, 1992. Владимир Крючков, *Личное ДЕЛО*, М., «ЭКСМО», 2003, Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева, Взгляд изнутри*, М., «Былина», 1994. Григорий Арбатов, *Моя эпоха в лицах и событиях*, М., Собрание, 2008. Николай Рыжков, *Трагедия великой страны*, М., Вече, 2007.

USSR, but, they had a taste for the revitalization of political theory or ideology as means to reform the USSR and understood their significance. This rare quality could help them to mark their difference and take hold of the supreme power when the need of reforms was acknowledged by the key figures in the political class. In sum, if the *majority* of Politburo members who could qualify as the country's leaders had no well articulated ideological beliefs and had relatively weak convictions, a few more atypical figures raised on top and benefited from the enthusiastic public support of the reform-minded intellectuals working in the party's official academic institutions and entitled to promote the ideological integrity of the Soviet political system. In which sense, then, other Politburo members could be seen as conservatives or even orthodox? We can partly account for this "conservatism" considering not the *content* of the late Soviet ideology but its sacred *cults* – bearing no policy implications, and established *rules* of communication ensuring the stability of the regime. As we argue in the second part of this chapter, the lack of ideological leadership of Brezhnev compounded with the preservation of the hierarchical rules of public communication *inhibited* the ideological mobilization, both from above and from below. Thus, the late Soviet regime was inhibiting ideological mobilization rather than based on it.

More specifically drawing on the reflections on the sources of self-legitimation of the Soviet political regime, we would like to distinguish three specific aspects of the relationship between the critical reappraisal of the Soviet history and the legitimacy of the Soviet regime, as they could be applied to perestroika public debates: a) the religious legitimacy relied on the Lenin, October revolution and ancestors *cults* appealing to the popular and partly establishment's attachment; b) the new issue of symbolic *responsibility* for the crimes of the past and for the roots of the Soviet economic backwardness; c) the self-proclaimed *historiosophical* legitimacy of the regime's leadership: its right to rule and guide, its consistency in accounting for the course of the world history and its ability to give an adequate orientation (not only justification) for the reform policies.

We are addressing these three aspects separately as they relate to different symbolic resources and were producing different political consequences: the disenchantment of the cultic dimension mostly weakened the acceptance of the Soviet Union and of the social order by the population and it confused most reform-minded intellectuals and politicians loyal to the Soviet system attached to the image of Lenin disconnected from his real policies and views; the issue of responsibility for Stalinism and economic deadlock had to do with the level of public support for the CPSU, its ideology and leadership (which were held responsible for crimes and errors); finally, the historiosophical claims had less to do with the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of the population, but with its self-legitimation and with the ability of the rulers and their advisers to define the benchmarks of what was possible to achieve and what was realistic to expect.

The new historiosophical language spreading in this period contributed to the imputation of historical responsibility and to the disorientation of the policy-makers by endorsing wrong assumptions on the possible social setups, and hiding political reality and its challenges. This intellectual frame also

contributed to the peaceful dissolution of the USSR. Focus on the “natural-historical” or organic evolution and the imperative of non-violence were probably the most significant lessons learned in the perestroika public debates and applied in practice. We explore each of these political aspects of the historical debates in separate chapters and sections of the present research.

In short, sacred cults were undermined by the factual revelations on history disabusing intellectuals loyal to the reformed socialism; the responsibility for the past crimes was attributed to CPSU and its ideology; perestroika’s drop in economic welfare was mostly attributed to the past ideological choices. In general, the specific historiosophical claims of the Soviet ideology were dismissed as its least sound aspects, however, the historiosophical language and the corresponding way of debating and thinking politics proved its main mental remnant. The rapid revitalization of the philosophic-historical arguments serving to promote new political ideas reflected the lack of other intellectual resources needed to think, discuss and convince others. Thus, the study of the historiosophical idioms can account not only for the de-legitimation of the Soviet system, but for the surprisingly tenacious and shared assumptions which framed the *new* political vision of an attractive and rational social order once the debates were liberated from censorship or political influences. The legitimating function of the Marxist-Leninist historiosophy was already undermined on the eve of perestroika, but it stood as the main intellectual ground for the shared worldview and set the unrealistic but real benchmarks in policy-making of the reformers.

## Conventional rules of the public speech before perestroika

Pursuing our overview of the studies on the Soviet ideology and its reception, we will consider this often omitted aspect of the politics in the USSR. In this section we address the rules regulating of the use of public speech in the USSR.<sup>119</sup> We would like first to consider a few scholarly accounts of the reasons given in the official documents of the CPSU to factually deny freedom of expression, recovering both the inner theoretical *principles* (or self-justification) and the specific political *mechanisms* of regulation. We argue that the unawareness of this issue has made the wall between the adepts of the broadly defined totalitarian school and the “normalisers” of the Soviet politics invisible if not intractable: why indeed could not the obvious competition and differences between leaders and interest groups as well as the more or less constrained and liberalized ideological debates turn the USSR into a vibrant pluralist society? Why “institutionalized pluralism” remained unattainable even when the leader seemingly had called for it? The emergence of a reformist general secretary contradicted the narrow totalitarian model; yet his failure in pluralising the polity could be seen as proof of the non-reform-ability of totalitarianism. The lasting rules of public communication not less than the ideology were the vivid heritage of Stalin’s model – but a heritage deprived of self-awareness. We argue in this section that the Bolshevik and Soviet political tradition traceable from Lenin to Gorbachev privileged the unity and hierarchy over ideological and organizational pluralism (and this despite Gorbachev’s reintroduction of this term). Putting it shortly, late Soviet political wisdom and post-Leninist leaders alike saw free debates and political factions as dangerous and closely connected.

Totalitarian approach tended to ignore hidden resistances and the factual plurality of interests, while many revisionists were too eager to see in these manifestations the birth of a civil society or the emergence of the pluralistic political regime. As Richard Sakwa described the evolution of the Soviet regime in 1970s, “growing ideology flexibility did not signify the reconstitution of the public sphere”.<sup>120</sup> We can rely on these findings trying to highlight why the growing ideological flexibility and pluralisation did not lead to the *institutionalised pluralism*. While the plurality of interests and various degrees of resistance to the official ideology indeed existed at all the levels of Soviet society, they could not bring the political pluralisation of the regime; and the limit was not ideological in a narrow sense. There were short periods of relatively intensive public debates and discords, and in due proportion Stalin favoured and encouraged public criticism of the mid-level authorities as did Khrushchev and later Gorbachev or Ligachev. But this was not enough to overrule the central ban linking public debates and organized factions. The established rules of public communication, the arguments in their favour, and the social mechanisms of this regulative pattern prohibited the intensification of public debates in the name of political unity – those in disagreement should not form the autonomous bodies – this would threaten the unity of the party. In practice this general maxim implied a coherent set of three rules regulating the use of public speech. We can see this setting as *hierarchical public speech*.

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<sup>119</sup>We outline the premises of our understanding of the public speech in the last section of this chapter.

<sup>120</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, Second edition, 1998, p.179

Freedom of speech and freedom to form groups were guaranteed by the Soviet laws, but they were denied by the party rules in the name of superior norms. According to A. Mayer, there were just two ideological bans: “on lifting censorship and permitting citizens to form associations freely. In other words, the Communist Party is firmly committed to fairly tight control over the organized activities of their citizens and over the ideas they might express.”<sup>121</sup> Moreover, the associations, groups and organizations were under the double control of the Communist party and secrete services – the genuinely independent formal organization did not exist; citizens’ ability to form them had dramatically diminished. While the public sphere in Habermas’ sense virtually did not exist, the sphere of public speech was of a great significance for the regime and it was tightly regulated. Propaganda, censorship and repression formed the backbone of public speech regulation in USSR. The unity over dissent rule coherently underpinned this machinery as a morally just and pragmatic *meta-political* rule shared by the post-Stalinist Soviet leaders and officials. The new political generation born around 1930 and later assumed the unity rule, but thought that it could and should be compatible with free public debates. The incompatibility between these two principles was the subject of constant reflection in the Western political and legal thought, while it is not fully accepted in the contemporary Russian political thinking.

We attempt to draft the origins of this unity principle and related conventions shared by the first cohort of the Bolsheviks and the ways it was historically transposed from the post-revolutionary phase to the late Soviet public sphere until 1984. The remnants of this general belief in the superiority of the unity rule played a significant role under perestroika until its very end. At first, Gorbachev mobilized the old rules of public speech: he attempted to take benefit from the power they gave to the chief while liberating public debate from the most constraining aspects of these very rules. The new leader as most of his revisionist advisors and peers took the political order for granted. As in other macro-policy areas, Gorbachev took the rational, democratic or humanistic principles stated by Soviet ideology at their face value, while ignoring the violent nature of the state-party domination and of its limits. This gives new credit for the ample formula: “Soviet ideology is not so much deceptive as self-deceptive”.<sup>122</sup>

#### *Rules of public communication in USSR and polity’s Unity: an Early Modern problem?*

Archie Brown opened the research perspective in which one can account for both the reform’s unexpectedly successful initiation and its partial failure probably with an overemphasis on the success side<sup>123</sup>. Richard Sakwa who asked if Soviet ideology did not “mask the domination of the ruling class”, has defended the need to overcome the competing academic views on Soviet ideology as either instrumental or inspirational by arguing that the effective impact of the ideology was less in policy-making and much more in maintaining the “structure of authority”, or in our terms “hierarchy”, in a

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<sup>121</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, “Political Ideologies in the Soviet Union”, Op. cit., p.45

<sup>122</sup> Alfred G. Meyer, “The Functions of Ideology in the Soviet Political System”, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, Jan. 1966, p.280

<sup>123</sup> We refer in particular to: Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, Oxford University Press, 1997. Archie Brown, “The Soviet Union: Reform of the System or Systematic Transformation?”, *Slavic Review*, Vol.63, 2004, №3. Арчи Браун, «Перестройка и пять трансформаций», in *Прорыв к свободе. О перестройке двадцать лет спустя*, Альпина, 2005. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007

number of ways. This “neo-Marxist” explanation of ideology in terms of masking the power-relation may account for both, the flexibility and stability of the content of the official doctrine by looking at its functions and its rules on the eve of perestroika. In a more ideologically neutral way, we can identify the “rules and conventions” regulating public politics along three lines in order of decreasing importance: the explicit ban on factions as a limit on debates (unity over dissent rule), the superiority of the political over ideological hierarchy (conventional hierarchy), and the authority of the founding fathers’ scriptures (priority of classics historiosophy).

These special rules applied in a long term cycle could generate both Gorbachev’s idealist reformism and his extreme ideological flexibility, if not relativism. They equally produced the ambient cynicism and the latent and naïve hopes of rapid recovery provided the leader is honest. The generational experiences were of noteworthy importance and determined the different reactions on this mode of regulation of the public speech: arguably, Gorbachev’s generation remained more loyal and faithful to the content of official ideology and its potential for mobilization than those before and after. Those elder generations who survived Stalin’s purges were much more cautious: in most cases, they intuitively relied on the stabilizing side of the rules rather than on the mobilizing ideology. Those younger were also more cynical about the rules and the content of the official speeches. The Gorbachev’ cohort situated just in between saw *liberalization* as a means of *ideological mobilization*, but was not ready to face its real impact and clout in a cynical but naïve society. In the memoirs of Gorbachev’s allies from his own generation who later turned into his bitter critics, all retrospectively stand in favour of glasnost and democracy, but criticise the outcome of reforms from what we can call now “conservative stance”.<sup>124</sup> Gorbachev stands out from his peers by his optimism and decisiveness but not in his basic political orientation.

We can identify three original sets of beliefs held by Bolsheviks and their Communist heirs justifying the rules of public communication that explicitly limited the freedom of debates: the possession of the revealed truth on society, the availability of the modern scientific truth on history and polity, and the ambition to liberate the people and humanity from organized social oppression. The presumptions to possess the revealed and yet scientific truth liberating mankind from oppression triggered the active “enlightening” policies in a traditional rural country undergoing rapid urbanization. This aspect was best captured by the classic totalitarian model of the mobilizing ideology in power. To refine this view we must take into account the rules and conventions of the public speech along with the structure of political authority based on the two sides of Soviet ideology: its goals and its rules. The evolution of the rural society into a still non-civil but urban and educated society exposed official claims to more individual doubts and criticism. The rules made these doubts latent and half-thought. Thus, the late phase of Soviet history requires an additional theoretical frame to account for the particular long-term effects of and actors’ reactions to the earlier ideological mobilization and control of the public speech.

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<sup>124</sup> This contradiction attests the low degree of reflexivity of these late Soviet politicians and accurately translates their initial beliefs of moderate reformers remaining intact despite thirty dramatic years and one revolution. See: Юрий Прокофьев, *До и после запрета КПСС*, Алгоритм, М., 2005. Лигачев Е. К. *Предостережение*, Газета «Правда», М., 1999. Николай Рыжков, *Трагедия великой страны*, М., Вече, 2007

The idea of the diffusion or dissemination of the official mobilizing doctrine top-down through the multiple channels into society found its empirical confirmation in the well informed studies made in 1980s. They examined the origins and the actual functioning of the institutions that regulated communication in two ways: through the censorship machinery and through a network of institutions of propaganda<sup>125</sup>. A. Blum has distinguished five levels (!) of censorship formed by 1930s: self-censorship, editors' censorship, control of Glavlit, supervision of the specialised departments in the secrete services, and finally, the "dictator-censor" who had the supreme right of allowing or banning any public text or author<sup>126</sup>. Propaganda was both omnipresent and visible, openly assuming the self-designation of a congregation of the Catholic Church, while the censorship despite its equally omnipresent character, was not recognized by Bolsheviks. Even in its daily application it was presented as a form of persuasive *collaboration* of the entitled party-state representatives with the "unconscious" authors who could not fully understand their own interests or fully understand the correct views<sup>127</sup>. This approach to censorship was expressing the pretension to diffuse the fully revealed truth – be it the truth dialectically changing according to time and context. The nebulous apparatuses of propaganda and censorship had to be instructed with the properly updated messages and tightly controlled. But formally, readers, journalists, trade-union leaders, scientists and even party officials kept their right to freely publish their views; in 1920s, and to a minor degree in 1956-64 many of them were using their right to publicly criticise and shape others' views. For the rest, critical public debates were downplayed. Perestroika opened this possibility once again, and this time the state and its ideology collapsed. The triangle formed by the simultaneous acceptance of the scientific quest for truth, the reliance on the authority of the revealed truth and liberty was in constant tension. Though free critical debates were accepted, the Soviet elites experienced them as a source of turmoil. As it was noted by Archie Brown, the leadership had an explicit mandate to establish the frames for public discourse and the political culture praising *unity over factions* laid a good basis for such an authority<sup>128</sup>.

The distant comparison with the Early Modern context in Europe and America, can bring some light on this seemingly exaggerated, but in fact, "untimely" concern about factions. It can be revealing to quote at some length the passage from the *Federalist Papers* addressing the issue of factions where these worries are explicitly faced in a recognizably balanced, neat and also grandiloquent account:

The instability, injustice, and confusion introduced into the public councils, have, in truth, been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have everywhere perished... Complaints are everywhere

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<sup>125</sup> Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.. Thomas F. Remington, *The Authority of Truth: Ideology and Communication in the Soviet Union*, Pittsburgh University Press, 1988. Angus Roxburgh, *Pravda: Inside the Soviet News Machine*, New York, 1987. Michael S. Fox, "Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural affairs", 1922-28, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol.44, N°6, 1992 H. Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet literature, 1917-1991*, Boulder, New York - London, 1997

<sup>126</sup> See: Блюм А.В. *Советская цензура в эпоху тотального террора 1929-1953*. СПб.: Академич. проект, 2000

<sup>127</sup> See: Michael S. Fox, "Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural affairs", 1922-28, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol.44, N°6, 1992

<sup>128</sup> See: Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, pp.174, 254, p.276



heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties, and that measures are too often decided, not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and overbearing majority... It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.<sup>129</sup>

Claude Lefort defended on the theoretical level the view that the temptation of the totalitarianism is born out of the democratic idea to achieve the People-oneness and overcome selfish divisions on ruling bands<sup>130</sup>. Dominique Colas argued that the desire to unite the civil society without political mediation or, in the original Augustinian terms, to abolish the frontier between the Celestial and earthly cities created a constant temptation of both religious and political fanaticisms in the European history.<sup>131</sup> Looking back at the formation of Modern public politics the worry over disunity, the rejection of factions and the emphasis on the benefits of the polity's wholesome unity comes as no surprise; as independently shown by Skinner and by Ozouf it had a solid history well beyond Rousseau – before and after his death, in France, but also in Great Britain and in America.<sup>132</sup>

Thus, the Soviet model presented a belated version of the early Modern anti-faction arguments. It powerfully related unity with the regulation of the public speech and quasi-religious adherence; the Bolsheviks almost unanimously adopted the new organizational pattern applying the unity over dissent rule as the supreme principle overruling other considerations. The mid-term effects of this regulation were paradoxical: the first generations socialised in the Soviet schools under the mobilization phase of the regime kept the candid attachment to the official ideals – disconnected from reality and masking it, while the next generations were becoming more and more disabused. In contrast, adaptability and double-thinking characterised Soviet men across generations, as total inner conformity to the official statement was an impossible virtue despite special psychological, social or physical practices: in the

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<sup>129</sup> *Federalist*, no. 10, Madison for *The Independent Journal*, "The Same Subject Continued (The Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection)".

<sup>130</sup> C. Lefort, *L'invention démocratique*, Paris, Fayard, 1981, p.174-175. Cf.: Pierre Manent, *Cours familial de philosophie politique*, Gallimard-Tel, 2001, pp.262-263

<sup>131</sup> D. Colas, *Le glaive et le fléau: généalogie du fanatisme et de la société civile*, Paris, Grasset, 1992, 381p.

<sup>132</sup> The political philosophy of Rousseau is not an exceptional case – this is one of the many attempts to overcome the haunting spectre of disunity. Compare three distinguished examples: "Those princes who permit factions do as much as if they received an enemy within their walls: which is contrary to the subjects' safety. And therefore also against the law of nature". T. Hobbes, *De Cive*, XIII-13. Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume One, The Renaissance*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp.: 42, 57, 61, 64. Mona Ozouf, "Public Opinion" at the End of the Old Regime", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 60, Supplement: Rethinking French Politics in 1788 (Sep., 1988), p.18, p.20

face of collectivist unity the true believers as well as the pragmatic opportunists alike accumulated the techniques of *feigning*.<sup>133</sup>

### *Democratic centralism taken seriously*

The academic studies looking at the ways CPSU leaders and official documents accounted for the need to control free debates within and outside the party in the name of unity have appeared mostly since 1980s.<sup>134</sup> This part of the Soviet doctrine was previously often dismissed because the party's pretension to speak the whole truth, its military discipline and/or its cynicism would imply a ban on free speech anyway. We should consider an intermediary level linking the unconditional claims of the Bolsheviks to possess the truth and their claim for power with the actual organizational arrangements and practices in regulating the political speech: first we can account for the surprisingly steady formal defence of the *freedom of speech* in the USSR from 1917 onward, and second to get a better idea of their real *arguments* in favour of the limits set to public speech. Drawing in particular on the studies of R. Tiersky and M. Waller we can identify certain ideological arguments in favour of such limitations and the resultant rules, which were articulated throughout 1920s as *democratic centralism*. Both authors departed from the methodological requirement to understand it from within and take it seriously. Their opening move consisted in showing the historical and contested character of democratic centralism thus providing both its orthodox and alternative versions a political and polemical meaning – as opposed to its alleged doctrinal continuity with the Marxism proper. Waller's aim was to show that different forms democratic centralism were in fact defended by Bolsheviks and other leading figures of the social-democratic movement at the beginning of the XX century and implicitly, that some genuine dialectical unity between democracy and centralism could be possible once Stalinist alleged orthodoxy was deconstructed. Waller showed how Lenin changed his position with circumstances oscillating between more democracy and more centralism, stressing that his moves to centralism were forced by crises. Indirectly revising and sharpening Waller's account, Tiersky pointed on the ban of factions declared in the resolution "On Party Unity" at the X Party congress under Lenin's rule as the cornerstone of democratic centralism in its Stalinist classical or "Gothic" version<sup>135</sup>:

The logic of the ban on faction, for two kinds of reasons, became the bridge between monolithism and totalitarianism, between enforced political unanimity on the one hand, and the absolute regimentation of economy, social relations, culture, and conscience on the other hand.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> We discuss this question in the next section.

<sup>134</sup> There were a few earlier studies addressing this issue: Volume 18, Numéro 3, pp. 458-459. Henri Chambre, *L'Union soviétique, introduction à l'étude de ses institutions*, Paris, 1967, 239 p. Georges Lavau, "À la recherche d'un cadre théorique pour l'étude du Parti communiste français", in *Revue française de science politique*, 1968, Klaus von Beyme, "A Comparative View of Democratic Centralism", *Government and Opposition*, Vol.10, N3, 1975, pp.259-277

<sup>135</sup> "Orthodox communism is, so to speak, a "Stalinist Gothic" political edifice: in this architecture democratic centralism is the Gothic arch, and the prohibition of factions is the keystone". R. Tiersky, *Ordinary Stalinism: Democratic Centralism and the Question of Communist Development*, Winchester, Allen and Unwin, Inc., 1985, p.172"

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45

This formalization of the ban on factions as the essence of democratic centralism supported the quest for “absolute consent” and absolute voluntary unity. According to Tiersky, before 1928 the meaning of democratic centralism was loose and implied elections of party officials at all levels, and strict internal discipline and unity in action once elections and debates were over and decisions taken by the leaders<sup>137</sup>. Tiersky convincingly argued that the way Bolshevik principles and practices were codified by Stalin, contributed not only to terror but to the long-term decay of the regime<sup>138</sup>. For Waller and partly for Tiersky, both writing in early 1980s, the rediscovery of democratic centralism had the potential for Soviet renewal, as they felt there the lively original convictions and open-ended principles contrasting with the picture and practice of the ideological “orthodoxy” of the late USSR. Tiersky saw the rejection of the ban on factions as the best way for reformation of Italian and French Communist parties, while Waller implied that historical pluralism of the views on democratic centralism constituted the source of vitality for the USSR and other Communist countries. If anti-democratic trend was framed by the aspect of the doctrine which was historically conditioned then democracy could be won back. Democratic centralism was seen as a way to democratize Communist parties on their own terms.

This later reading of the democratic centralism seems wrong as applied to the CPSU. The only way democratic centralism helped in reforming and in fact dismantling the system was that the conservative majority saw itself obliged to follow the too reformatory leader in the name of this superior norm. Otherwise, when the leader had no ideological drive, this set of rules ensured long term stagnation. In this research we will try to show with a number of examples that Soviet officials and intellectuals genuinely endorsed the ban on factions until the end of perestroika, while they critically deconstructed its consequences. Even a partial credibility of these rules in 1990 attest that they were manifesting not only the hypocrisy of a cynical power (pretending to be democratic, but in fact only seeking to dominate), but partly reflected the *accepted* order regulating public communication in the USSR. However, the empirical account of the inner acceptability or legitimacy of these imposed limitation on the freedom for party members and intellectuals should not be taken even as its partial apology. Rather, we can better see the inner reasons which brought many Bolshevik leaders and their Soviet heirs to willingly restrict their liberty to speak and involuntarily – to know, think and act on their own.

R. Tiersky focused first on the formational period of the doctrine of democratic centralism as the inner Bolshevik party’s theory and practice, and second on the way, in which this pattern, ossified under Stalin in its most known form, was applied in the non-ruling Communist parties – in France and Italy. This perspective identifies the continuity between the democratic centralism first established within the

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<sup>137</sup> “Until the Russian Revolution became a single-party dictatorship dominated by an internally monolithic communist Party in the decade of 1917-1928 the idea of democratic centralism implied a small set of vague and self-contradictory notions of party life, which could as circumstances demanded justify more democracy or more centralism”. Ibid., p.17

<sup>138</sup> R. Tiersky, *Ordinary Stalinism: Democratic Centralism and the Question of Communist Development*, Winchester, Allen and Unwin, Inc., 1985, p.170

party and the doctrines of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* on the national scale, and finally *proletarian internationalism* on the world scale. Showing the plurality and changes of the original formulations of democratic centralism under Lenin, this approach questioned the universal validity of its “ordinary” Stalin’s formulation not only in the historical retrospective but also on the more contemporary material which attested the attempts of the non-ruling western Communist parties to reform this established model.<sup>139</sup> However, Tiersky did not consider the contemporary practice of CPSU or other ruling parties, but hoped in the emancipation of the Western Communist parties from the doctrinal and organizational tutelage of “Ordinary Stalinism”. We would like to take on Tiersky’s accent placed on the ban of factions in the name of unity as the doctrinal principle and to probe the validity of this principle in the context of perestroika – attesting its surprising longevity. The unity over dissent principle arguably remained one of the widely accepted beliefs of the Soviet rulers and many more ordinary party members. To the typical Modern fear of destabilizing factions Marxism-Leninism added the theorization of the bond between ban on factions and the need to limit the free discussion. Approximately at the same time as the ban on faction in the Soviet Russia, the first Amendment law was voted in America. In accordance with the Soviet understanding of the causal link between unrestricted debate and factionalism, but drawing the opposite conclusion, American Supreme Court said in 1945 commenting this law: “It was not by accident or coincidence that the rights to freedom in speech and press were coupled in a single guaranty with the rights of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition for redress of grievances. All these . . . are inseparable.”<sup>140</sup> In fact, the ability to freely debate and group was seen as essential for the proper functioning of the American political institutions in the legal and political tradition drawing on the defence of Religious liberties by Founding fathers and on the theories of the First Amendment.<sup>141</sup> We will pay a closer attention to the unity rule and its genesis

### *The two hierarchies*

The next feature of the regime’s rules of public communication was more implicit but still widely recognized. Thus, the totalitarian approach took the coincidence or *fusion* of power and ideological hierarchy as its departure point in defining the specific nature of the Soviet political system. The coincidence of the two hierarchies indeed was crucial for maintaining the mobilization and the constant

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<sup>139</sup> “The communist political development in West European countries can be read as an internal struggle waged essentially over the reform of democratic centralism, in its large rather than narrow meaning”, R. Tiersky, *Ordinary Stalinism: Democratic Centralism and the Question of Communist Development*, Winchester, Allen and Unwin, Inc., 1985, p.95

<sup>140</sup> 323 U.S. 516, 530 (1945), quoted in Morris L. Ernst, Arthur Joel Katz, “Speech: Public and Private”, *Columbia Law Review*, 1953, April, p.622

<sup>141</sup> For a review see: Robert Post, “Reconciling Theory and Doctrine in First Amendment Jurisprudence”, *California Law Review*, (Symposium of the Law in the Twentieth Century), 2000, Dec., pp. 2353-2374; R. Allan Horning, “The First Amendment Right to a Public Forum”, *Duke Law Journal*, 1969, Oct., pp. 931-957; Compare: “They [the founding fathers] believed that freedom to think as you will and to speak as you think are means indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth; that without free speech and assembly discussion would be futile; that with them, discussion affords ordinarily adequate protection against the dissemination of noxious doctrine; that the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people; that public discussion is a political duty; and that this should be a fundamental principle of the American government”. Justice Brandeis, *Whitney v. California*, 274 U.S. 357, 375 (1927) quoted in Morris L. Ernst, Arthur Joel Katz, “Speech: Public and Private” *Columbia Law Review*, *Columbia Law Review*, 1953, April, p. 620p.621.

re-uprooting of society in the name of the creatively evolving supreme doctrine announced by the leader-and-ideologue. But in apparent contradiction with totalitarian assumptions on the essential fusion of power and ideology, the function of the leader as a supreme ideologue was barely fulfilled by N. Khrushchev and clearly abandoned by L. Brezhnev. Revising the initial model in 1969, Z. Brzezinski unlike Friedrich was aware of this change taking it as a sign of the degeneration of the system:

The top leader was no longer the top ideologist, in spite of the occasional attempts to present Khrushchev's elaborations as a "creative contribution to Marxism-Leninism". The ruling body now contained at least one professional specialist in ideological matters, and it was no secret that the presence of the professional ideologue was required because someone had to give professional ideological advice to the party's top leader.<sup>142</sup>

The influence of the specialised advisors and speech-writers on the General Secretariat has been increasing since Khrushchev, but as Andrey Kolesnikov pointed out Stalin already had used them<sup>143</sup>. Allegedly, Brezhnev confessed in a private conversation with one of his aides that "anyway no one would believe that I read Marx".<sup>144</sup> The weakening ideological convictions, cynicism and conservative agenda of the ruling establishment in 1970s and early 1980s responded to this initial loss of the ideological drive on the very top. We can relate this change with the regime's gradual bureaucratisation taken in a non-Weberian sense<sup>145</sup>. In this context, the official party ideologues such as Suslov under Brezhnev, Gorbachev under Chernenko, and for a period Ligachev and Yakovlev under Gorbachev were seen as №2 in the party, while the №1 was partly discharged from the function of supreme ideologue<sup>146</sup>. But, Andropov and Gorbachev reclaimed the status and the real functions of supreme ideologues and innovators – still respecting the custom of the previous decade to appoint a close Politburo member in charge of ideological issues. Their ability to reclaim this function back

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<sup>142</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Soviet Political System: Transformation or Degeneration?", in Zbigniew Brzezinski, ed., *Dilemmas of Change in Soviet Politics*, Columbia, 1969, p.6

<sup>143</sup> See: Ronald J. Hill, *Soviet Politics, Political Science and Reform*, Oxford, Sharpe, 1980. А. Колесников, *Спичрайтеры*, АСТ, М., 2008, с.29

<sup>144</sup> «Начнем с брежневского курса. В период переосмысления застойного режима сложилось мнение, что никакого курса, в общем-то, и не было. Дела шли самотеком, экономика перестала быть экономной, общество погружалось в бездну цинизма, а перевалившая за пенсионный рубеж верхушка уже "готовилась" к той "гонке на лафетах", которая началась в декабре 1980 года со смерти председателя Совета министров СССР Алексея Косыгина. Пожалуй, с мыслью об отсутствии сознательно избранного курса можно согласиться. Брежнев даже с грамотой был не совсем в ладах, а уж в теориях развития общества вообще ничего не понимал. Причем сам не стеснялся признавать свою необразованность. "Все равно никто не поверит, что я читал Маркса", - заметил однажды этот верный продолжатель великого дела основоположников марксизма-ленинизма». Дм. Травин, «Пролог: встреча четырех генсеков», *Звезда*, 2006, №1.

<sup>145</sup> As it was well argued by Pakulski, the Soviet bureaucracy had little to do with Weber's rational model; however an important aspect of Weber's view in this respect holds: bureaucracy can not insure the political leadership. This point was equally made by Brzezinski. Jan Pakulski, "Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-Type Societies", *British Journal of Political Science*, 1986, Vol.16, №1. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Soviet Political System: Transformation or Degeneration?" *op.cit.*

<sup>146</sup> Michael Waller called them "overlords", while missing to note their second best status as opposed to Stalin or Khrushchev combining the leadership in both hierarchies. Michael Waller, "What is to Count as Ideology in Soviet Politics?", Stephen White, *Alex Pravda*, ed., Ideology and Soviet politics, Macmillan Press, 1988, p.39

indicates that the Brezhnev's pause in ideological leadership resulted from a default on top, arguably matching the needs of the post-Stalin elite, but not from a deliberate decision to break this *hierarchy*, which was still respected by ritual references to Brezhnev's half-hollow texts. In the phase of stagnation the mere formal recognition of the leader's ideological superiority played as a conservative safeguard against the possible ideological mobilization unsanctioned at the top of the pyramid. This stabilizing function should be taken seriously as it was by its protagonists in the USSR. What was missing under Brezhnev was not the respect of the ideological hierarchy, not its reliance on the political hierarchy – it missed the very ideological *message* to send or the mobilizing goal to set up, as well as it missed the verisimilar account of reality replaced by self-references.

The second unspoken convention required the observation of the supremacy of the politicians over the theorists and the observation of the hierarchy of positions in the public debates within each professional domain by all public writers. The closer we get to the core questions defining the political or economic strategy and fundamentals within a social science, the more strictly the rule was observed. A prominent historian specializing on the highly politicized history of the Soviet period provides us with interesting retroactive evidence on this convention looking from the perspective of 1988. When under the fire of new criticism during a round table the academician M. P. Kim tries to justify the conservatism of senior academics in the social sciences and history, he speaks about the rule which served him well as a practical guide in his successful academic carrier:

There is a well known accusation which is widely addressed to historians that for the long years they played one single role – as the commentators of the authoritative statements and judgments without ever discussion or debating them, dogmatically receiving these statements. Accepting this criticism we should clarify why this situation actually happened. Marx, Engels, Lenin were not only great organizers and practitioners, but also genius thinkers. Their authority as theorists was unbreakable. After Lenin's death the tradition to see in the leader of the Party the theorist remained, but the leaders themselves have changed, manifested certain theoretical weakness, they have forgotten Lenin's heritage and autocratically imposed, especially under Stalin – they only thing that left to historians was to comment.<sup>147</sup>

Kim who started his carrier under Stalin pinpointed the key link between the political and theoretical hierarchies, and suggested that Lenin's intellectual charisma was transferred to his successors "by habit" and hence historians conserved a minor position of "commentators" while in the absence of Lenin a historian should have spoken more actively. But, this was not a question of Lenin's intellectual capacity, but of the systemic coherence of the Soviet regime. This convention was the only guarantee for the stable reproduction of the ideological and organizational unity – in the face of inevitable debates and discords over the definition of current policy with regard to the official canon. Kim rightfully pointed out the founding experience of Lenin's comprehensive leadership in this respect. Lenin successfully combined the role of party leader and that of authoritative theorist, a rare combination which at least partly secured the Bolshevik party from inner and external challenges of ideological sedition or competition. However, we can recall, that the formalization of the unity over

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<sup>147</sup> М. П. Ким, «Смотреть в будущее, помня об опыте прошлого», in *Вопросы истории*, 1988, №3, с.8

dissent rule in 1921 testified that by this time Lenin's arguments and charisma were not sufficient to avoid an inner split. Thus, already Lenin needed an organizational argument elevated to the rank of a political principle to enforce the unity of the Party under *his* political and theoretical leadership, while allowing the free debates *within* the party. Ultimately, historical experience showed how difficult it was to combine the principles of the implicit hierarchy with the formal acceptance of free speech. This difficulty was intuitively felt by the moderate Soviet reformers like Ligachev while it was ignored by the more optimistic and intellectually developed reformers like Gorbachev who relied on their own historiosophical vision where power relations were not a problematical issue.

The most explicit formalization of this conventional rule we can find in 1988, when a critical and retrospective reflection already could articulate the rule, which no longer functioned and therefore could be revealed in its more crude and anti-rationalist formulation. Four sociologists from the newly formed All-Union Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (ВЦИОМ) wrote a joint, agenda-setting article on the essence of the bureaucratic regime established in the Soviet Union:

The bureaucratic ideology is "hierarchicized", each higher level is granted a larger mandate in respect to the theoretical truths and moral judgments, and the ultimate level of hierarchy is granted with the total monopoly on truth in the last instance... [from the inferior levels] they expect not understanding and agreement with formulas, but demonstrative loyalty towards the authority, which sanctions the formula<sup>148</sup>

The conclusion on the total monopoly on truth is probably exaggerated here, as the superior level of hierarchy did not necessarily have the *capability* and later the *willingness* to set up the right positions in all the spheres of public expression. This left empty spaces or slots where freethinking, new opinions and even relatively free debates could legitimately manifest itself. Remington precisely formulated this point when analysing the functioning of the Soviet mass media, but more vaguely referred to "state priorities" as limits of debates – the real limits were imposed by the respect of political unity and consequent ban on public challenges to the established oligarchic or personal authority and its ideological claims:

As a result, official public communication is hierarchical and compartmentalized. The party allocates access to information according to the ideological sensitivity of the information and the rank and responsibility of the recipient. In our own bureaucratic realm these principles are familiar under the headings of level of clearance and need-to-know, but the principle of selective exposure applies to all authorized media in the Leninist system...

... An organ of the media may take a major part in forming a consensus around a controversial issue of local or even national significance. For this to occur, the strength of the political interests on either side

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<sup>148</sup> "Бюрократическая идеология "иерархизирована", каждый более высокий уровень наделяется и большими полномочиями в отношении теоретических истин и моральных оценок, а предельному уровню иерархии приписывается и вся монополия на истину в последней инстанции" от низших требуется не понимание или согласие с формулами, а "демонстративная показная лояльность" "по отношению к санкционирующему формулу авторитету" in Г. Гудков, Ю. Левада, А. Левинсон, Л. Седов, "Бюрократизм и бюрократия: необходимость уточнений", *Коммунист*, 1988, №12, с.79

must be evenly balanced so that the resolution of the issue is not prejudiced by the precedence of state priorities. Under these circumstances, more than incidental participation by unchartered voices may occur. A case in point is the formation of an environmental movement in the 1960s, a process chronicled recently by Donald R. Kelley.<sup>149</sup>

Second, the convention on hierarchy in the *longer run* stimulated hidden criticism or subversion of the official line making public adhesion to any particular set of beliefs uncertain: an author could only formally endorse or even ignore the official position of his superiors, when advancing counter-arguments without naming his target openly. Aesopian language traditionally emerges in the situation of the formal intellectual control which is not backed by a socially adequate, persuasive intellectual doctrine or by massive repressions and terror. In the periods of the authoritarian leadership within the Politburo (Stalin, Khrushchev, Gorbachev), this convention of the double political and intellectual hierarchy legitimated and strengthened the general line personally defined by the leader. In the late period of “collective rule”, the same convention opened a wider field for manoeuvres between ideological positions or sensibilities of different leaders, each having their own ideological aids and scientific clientele – still no *open* debate between positions was acceptable. When there was no leader-ideologue, this very set of rules logically caused stagnation, subversion and alienation instead of mobilization.

We can thus see here not the fusion of power and ideology implied by the mainstream totalitarian model but rather (historically more accurately) the accepted superiority of the political over ideological hierarchy. Soviet ideology was not an agency or a program carried on by its fanatical executioners. When as in late 1970s, the leader did not practice his ideological power this convention ensured that the initially mobilizing and forceful Soviet ideology turned into a keystone of the conservative wall. If no changes were made from the top, no major changes could be legitimately made from below without breaking the hierarchy and in case the hierarchy was successfully challenged – putting public unity under the threat of an ideological split when pro and contra entities could form around a hot issue.

The explicit principle of unity exemplified in the ban on factions along with the implied superiority of the political hierarchy over the ideological one, can help us reconsider the peculiar interpretation of Soviet ideology given in 1989 by Rachel Walker. Exasperated by the ever changing content of the official doctrine, she stated that Marxism-Leninism was an *empty signifier* allowing the CPSU to be the only master of its own words<sup>150</sup>. The real master of the ideology in such a regime was the recognized party-state *leader*. As long as he held his political position, the leader could impose supreme goals, galvanize and significantly change the canon and its vocabulary or refrain from novelties and slow the ideological evolution – no individuals or groups would publicly challenge his discursive action or non-action. Half-publicly the criticism was voiced only against the former leaders. This hierarchy could not guarantee the political invulnerability for Khrushchev, but his political removal *preceded* any public or

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<sup>149</sup> T. Remington, “The Mass Media and Public Communication in the USSR”, *The Journal of Politics*, 1981, Aug., p.810, p.812

<sup>150</sup> Rachel Walker, “Marxism-Leninism as Discourse: The Politics of the Empty Signifier and the Double Bind”, in *British Journal of Political Science* Vol.19, No. 2 (Apr., 1989) p.161-189



ideological criticism. This pattern reflected the idea that the rulers and the ruled made on the conditions of stability of the regime. It can be separated from other Communist beliefs and linked to their idea of a leader-ideologue: open debates not respecting the pre-established political hierarchy tend to destabilize the political order.<sup>151</sup> On the other hand, in this regime of regulation of the public speech personal convictions of the leader could suddenly acquire the status of a doctrine.

#### *Holy Scriptures Vs Democratic centralism*

Now we can reconnect this organizational emphasis in our account with the presumed allegiance of the Communist party rulers to the ideological doctrine, the allegiance claimed by the most vocal Western academic opponents of the Soviet Communist model adopting the totalitarian frame, as well as by the leadership of the party. By contrast, R. Tiersky's neo-totalitarian arguments and M. Waller's more empathic account of the democratic centralism lead them to the estimation that Marxism played a negligible role in the Soviet policy-making providing an "honorific" theory of history<sup>152</sup>. How can the two perspectives be united from a vantage point of the observer aware of the outcome of perestroika?

Although probably not binding, the referential authority of Marx and later of Marxism-Leninism should be understood first of all as an inner rule or convention in the debates giving priority in case of discord. But, in its turn, this declared subjugation to the authority of the Scriptures in fact gave priority to the unity and hierarchy principles. The officially sacred founding texts of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and (in the virtue of the temporal superiority of the political hierarchy) the writings of the current chief constituted a would-be coherent and cumulative corpus encompassing the main areas of social life and politics. The claim of ideological continuity was not dogmatic or binding the current leader by the previous texts. What was transmitted from chief to chief was not only the doctrine, but its very lively and free spirit operating in the new context:

Lenin was, and remains, the most loyal and consistent pupil of Marx and Engels, and he wholly and entirely based himself on the principles of Marxism. But Lenin did not merely carry out the doctrines of

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<sup>151</sup> The continuity with contemporary political regime in Russia in this respect is manifest. There are no more ideological premises and no more serious claims to translate a scientific doctrine into political and social reality, but free public criticism is banned on the TV and circumscribed in press. The period on 1990s when such criticism was recurrent are remembered and indeed can be accurately described as the period of anarchy and chaos. The difficulty to cope with the destabilizing impact of the free public debates is still not resolved. The present analysis may at least make this problem visible: the real practice of free public debates can be based only on the acceptance and on the management of its effects on political regime, and otherwise it will be more of a wishful thinking.

<sup>152</sup> "Marxism has little to do with the real politics of twentieth century communism" it only provided "an honorific theory of history and an ideological, quasi-religious inspiration derived from its compelling legend of the implications of class and class conflicts" R. Tiersky, *Op. cit.*, p.47 "[Soviet] Marxism jostles with other items brought from in from their particular experiences and perceptions. Thus, 'catching up and overtaking the West' has been much more active element in the CPSU's ideology than have notions of the end of alienation, whilst the vast bulk of ideas concerning political organisation – what is the right way of doing things and what the wrong, and what constitutes the normal, in relation to which political leadership can call for 'normalisation' – stem directly from habits and practices that the party has itself generated over the years, investing them with the title of 'Leninist principles' which is not always strictly merited". Michael Waller, *The End of the Communist Power Monopoly*, Manchester University Press, NY, 1993, pp.22-23.

Marx and Engels. He developed these doctrines ... in accordance with the new conditions of development, with the new phase of capitalism, with imperialism.<sup>153</sup>

The coherence of the whole body of canonical text was not affected by its creative evolution. When completing the forging of “Marxism-Leninism”, Stalin claimed in 1936 that “Marxism-Leninism is a unity which cannot be broken. It’s impossible to split Marxism-Leninism into parts. The new “Concise history” – is a book remarkable by the fact that it brings all this together. The whole trick, the whole secret is here”<sup>154</sup>. Yet if with every new leader the official Soviet ideology was significantly changing too, while its alleged all-embracing coherence was recomposed and often the same intellectuals or ideological staff remained in place. These regular transformations along with the claim of their perfect continuity and pupil-teacher relation with the original doctrine made both the population and the officials gradually more and more doubtful, cynical or suspicious in regard to the “general line”. This effect was indeed very profound – people were losing their capacity to form independent judgements on public issues, while they thought they were able to oppose the indoctrination by craftiness, irony or subversion.

The wide access to higher education and rapid social mobility under Stalin shaped one relatively loyal generation of genuinely committed careerists, but its secondary socialisation and the rules of public speech made some of them more cynical and some more idealistic. M. Gorbachev, A. Yakovlev, E. Ligachev or V. Medvedev represent various types of top officials ranging from sophisticated duplicity as in case of Yakovlev to seemingly plain integrity in the case of Ligachev. But both publicly complied with views of their superiors and both struggled for the right to express one’s critical view, and both made their careers under Brezhnev’s rule. Was it a paradox? Taking this paradox into account how could their personal convictions and beliefs relate to Marxism-Leninism? These beliefs were often contradictory and unspecific although echoing Marx or Lenin’s writings. For instance, Gorbachev’s fidelity to Lenin declared long after 1991 never brought him even to question the incompatibility of Lenin and Kautsky’ views on the social-democracy and Bolshevism, while he arguably was inclined to social-democracy.<sup>155</sup>

Despite its self-declared evidence, the principle of the direct intellectual authority of the corpus of texts (canon) received little attention of the scholars who were frequently tempted to compare the current doctrine with the original insights of Marx or Lenin rather than question the very idea of legitimating political positions by claiming continuity with Marx, as did Marx’s many competing and arguably

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<sup>153</sup> J. Stalin. "Interview Given to the First American Labor Delegation, September 9, 1927," in J. Stalin, *Works*, Moscow, 1954, volume 10, p.27 – quoted in English in Marietta Stepaniants, “Teaching Philosophy: Reflections on the Soviet Experience”, *Philosophy East and West*, 1996, July, p. 381

<sup>154</sup> “Марксизм-ленинизм – это единство, которое нельзя разрушить. Нельзя расщеплять марксизм-ленинизм на части. Новый «Краткий курс» - это книга, замечательная тем, что она все это объединяет. Весь фокус, весь секрет состоит в этом». Quoted from Рой Медведев, *Социализм в России?*, АИРО-XX, М. 2006, с.127

<sup>155</sup> The social-democratic tendency in Gorbachev’s evolution is stressed in: Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, p.291-293

illegitimate sons<sup>156</sup>; indeed, the explicitly accepted *ultimate authority* of some texts beyond their historical context is, to say the least, puzzling for a presumed modernist and scientific ideology.<sup>157</sup> The central issue in this respect is the claim to possess the exclusive and valid *interpretation* of the Scriptures and not to demonstrate the truthfulness of statements by other available means. This claim witnessed on the non-empirical and non-legalistic structure of the Soviet ideological authority. Along with cultic practices and rituals, the authority of the original scriptures interpreted by the leader-ideologues confirms the sociological argument of the quasi-religious nature of Soviet ideology by the similarity of the tools used for regulating the public speech. Historically, both Catholic censorship and propaganda were born out of the conflict for authority and correct interpretation of the revealed Scriptures, exacerbated by the invention of the press. The supreme authority of the founding texts, i.e. their status as the revealed truth beyond criticism, first indicates the lack of other institutional means of intellectual cohesion (for instance, based on persuasion, toleration, contract etc.) and second gives a *favourable* basis for two other rules we discussed above – the unity and the supremacy of the political hierarchy.

The inevitable political struggle between the true believers over the correct views led Catholics to the elaboration of the concept of *heresy*, then the superior infallible position of Pope consolidated, and finally this pattern led to the considerable impoverishment of theological innovations; incidentally, Catholic Church carefully selected and codified the founding texts along with the codification of the doctrine. Protestants who claimed to refer to *scriptura sola* denied both organizational and theological hierarchy.<sup>158</sup> The pyramidal structure and the key role of the Pope as the current interpreter of the scriptures and guarantor of the unity of the Church in this sense can be seen as a relatively stable institutional solution structurally similar to that adopted under Stalin.<sup>159</sup> This basic structural and

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<sup>156</sup> We refer to the ironical and sophisticated account of Jaque Derrida dwelling on this principle in his book *Marx & Sons*: « Ce livre est un livre sur l'héritage, bien qu'il ne doive pas s'enfermer avec des 'fils de Marx'. C'est plus précisément un livre sur ce que 'hériter' peut non pas vouloir-dire, de façon univoque, mais, peut-être, enjoindre de façon contradictoire et contradictoirement obligatoire. Comment répondre, comment se sentir responsable d'un héritage qui vous lègue des ordres contradictoires ? ». Jaque Derrida, *Marx & Sons*, coédition PUF et Galilée, 2002, 110 p.

<sup>157</sup> The status of the above cited Federalist Papers in this respect is a revealing comparative benchmark. They share the common aura of public veneration, but their functional usages were different. In case of the Soviet canon, we have to deal with the status of the founding texts close to a religious revelation; in case of *The Federalist Papers*, we are close to the status of a law with the implied apparatus and techniques of its interpretation. As Lenin's writings they constitute the ultimate authority reference but in a narrowly defined sense of a commentary to the American constitution. This status of a commentary of a law implies the interpretative procedures proper to the courts' rulings. The Soviet interpretation of the scriptures' authority implied their direct validity and under Stalin explicitly stated the exclusive right of the ruler to interpret the sense of the texts as applied to the present situation. See: Lupu, Ira C, "The Most-Cited Federalist Papers", in *Constitutional Commentary*, 1998.

<sup>158</sup> See this line of arguments developed in: Paul Hamilton, *Historicism*, Series "The new Critical Idiom", Routledge, London and NY, 2002. "A major tradition in social theory from Max Weber to Ernst Gellner concedes the connection between the disenchantment or demystification of ecclesiastic authority, the rise of democratic hermeneutics, and the advent of nationalism... In 18<sup>th</sup>-century England, the dissenting Puritan tradition, blamed for the Civil Wars and continuing social strife, seemed proof that hermeneutics was politically divisive. English Protestant culture had tried to reproduce reformed versions of Catholic discipline" pp.47-48

<sup>159</sup> The codification of the Marxist and Bolshevik writings into Marxism-Leninism went in parallel with the consolidation of power in the Bolshevik party after Lenin's death. If J. Stalin won this battle of codification he also set the actually opposite principle of the "changing party line" liberating him even from any limitations in policy-making, while Trotsky, Bukharin, or Kamenev accepted the principle of the *supreme authority* of Marx and Lenin and attempted their own doctrinal versions.

historical *analogy*<sup>160</sup> may suggest the existence of a causal link between the principle of the truth revealed in a text and the unfolding organizational and discursive pattern including: ban on factions, strict pyramidal hierarchy with an infallible leader-interpreter and doctrinal attachment to codified founding texts. We can see how tightly these structural “blocks” of the Catholic pyramid correspond to the three Soviet rules. The structural analogy between Marxist-Leninist movement and Catholic Church can be summarized as follows<sup>161</sup>:

- a) Leader-ideologue on top of hierarchy with the non-hereditary quasi-democratic inner mobility
- b) Universal doctrine outlined in canon describing the ultimate goals and rules of human existence
- c) Single authoritative interpretation of canon responding to evolving context and rejecting heresies
- d) World expansion with a need to insure the organisational and intellectual unity across borders

Protestantism rejected the hierarchy of interpretation and ended up in a multitude of competing organizations losing the unity of the Church. This seems to confirm the validity of the analogy between the hierarchy of the unitary organizational structure and the ideological hierarchy. On the other hand, both Jewish and Muslim monotheisms respect the revealed divine scripture, but remain pluralistic in terms of their religious organizations. This indicates that between the common acceptance of the revealed truth and the pyramidal structure of the Church or of the whole society there is no simple logical or causal implication; the scrutiny of the arguments on the accepted or rejected ways of arguing in public about what is right and truthful may help recover the additional links. The passage from the collective veneration of the revealed text to an organizational-ideological hierarchy seems to be paved by the explicit idea stating that there should be one interpretation of the Scriptures accepted as correct by all the community of believers. In the Soviet case, this idea was first enforced by two parallel arguments: there is one truth because Marxism-Leninism is a sort of a science, and there should be one truth accepted by the collective, as it is a condition of successful action and struggle with enemy. Later, the political unity became a self-evident supreme value that needed no justification.

As we have seen, the Soviet politico-organizational setup realised the widespread temptation of unity proper for Early Modernity. It was endorsed by the quasi religious claim to draw on the truth revealed in the canon and interpreted by the leader; simultaneously it also relied on a more Modern reflection on ideology and related psychological techniques. We refer in particular to Marx’s original analysis of

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<sup>160</sup> The analogy here is rather structural and sociological than historico-genetical: Stalin’s background in Georgian Orthodox theology as well as the religious education of the Russian people may have played a role, but the status of Pope is crucially absent in the Orthodox tradition. Several authors suggested that Stalin’s personal propensity to the doctrinal codification could spring directly from his basic theological studies before he joined the Social-democratic party. But our argument here pinpoints on the *structural* similitude between challenges posed by the aspiration to the organization *and* theoretical unity. Cf. for the analogy between Soviet ideology and religion: Hans Maier (ed.), *Totalitarianism and political religions, concepts for the comparison of dictatorship*, Routledge, London and NY, 2004, 1<sup>st</sup> volume (translation); in particular see: Hans Buchheim, “Despotism, ersatz religion, religious ersatz” p.224-227

<sup>161</sup> This is not intended as a hidden criticism of Catholicism (or, say indirect rehabilitation of Protestantism which was also instructively studied in parallels with Communist ideology) or a rehabilitation of Communism. The purpose is more to recover a relatively stable pattern of relation between the revelation in the text, organizational hierarchy and interpretation of the holy text by the community. This pattern clearly tends to identify the political hierarchy with the hierarchy of correct interpreters and de facto gives the priority to the former over the later; and thus, limits the freedom and the significance of a reasonable debate.

*ideology* which beyond its eristic power, allowed discounting objections to Marxism as deliberate or structural partiality and expression of class antagonism (prefiguring Freud's interpretation of its patient's unwillingness to accept psychoanalysis as a subconscious resistance witnessing in favour of and actually confirming the psychoanalytical interpretation), and to its Stalinist sharpened version identifying the objective vanguard party's interests as *expressed* by its current leader with both Marxism and workers interests, and one's disagreement or doubts – as objective betrayal, the pattern brilliantly described by Koestler. This Marx's invention found its counter-part in an original Russian tradition. On what we could conventionally call the anthropological level, O. Kharkhordin provided an iconoclast analysis of Bolsheviks new techniques forming the subjective sense of the self through collective public practices in the period of 1920s-1960s, taken from the old Orthodox Christian matrix. As Kharkhordin showed, the individualisation techniques passed through both, symbolic and practical inscription of individuals into political and local *communities* – *kollektiv*.<sup>162</sup> This refined level of mental control deprived the individual of intellectual reliance on his inner sense of right and wrong or conscience, and privileging the public repentance or remonstrance to such individualistic techniques as intimate dairies, confession or introspection. We get here an idea of the radicalism of the transformation in the name of unity set in 1920s before we get to its limits.

There was arguably an institutional match between the loyalty to the Holy Scriptures, the emphasis on organizational unity and the often unnoticed supremacy of the political hierarchy over ideology. As the above discussed scholars findings and memoirs of the actors attests, the ideological gaps or discontinuities within and between Marx, Lenin, Brezhnev and his mid-range official, senior academician, unsophisticated first secretary of the Moscow party committee, independent-minded intellectuals and wider popular beliefs were quite significant. The ban on free debate did not allow clarifying or “returning to the sources”: but it placed in the hands of the political leader the universal ideological sword he was almost free to use. There were two major limitations narrowing the way in which the Soviet leader could modify or preserve the established ideological canon: first, his own *background* and education within the Soviet system (according to Bahry, statistically those born between 1910-1930 with higher education were more loyal) and second, his *perception* of ideas or concepts which could be seen by his staff and wider population as ideologically unacceptable and thus placing his power under potential threat in case he would openly endorse them. When the leader left his supreme ideological functions unfulfilled it allowed more grass-root intellectual diversity, but excluded any prospect for an organized opposition or any kind of publicly institutionalized pluralism.

In case of an ideologically innovative leader the system ran serious risks of unpredictable changes as J. Stalin, N. Khrushchev, and M. Gorbachev attested, over-projecting their personal beliefs, hopes and fears. There were no good ideological strongholds against the leader-ideologue but the conservative oligarchy. This political system implied that the conservatives happy with the *status quo* had to preserve only one thing: the established rules of public communication. Thus, despite the double-bind

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<sup>162</sup> О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The collective and the individual in Russia: a study of practices*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, 406 p.

strategy Marxism-Leninism in early 1980s was neither an “empty signifier” (R. Walker), nor a meaningless façade for a cynical fight for power (K. Castoriadis), nor was it a doctrine imposing on its servants the idealist mobilizing agenda (C. Freidrich). Rather, we can summarise, the rule of *unity* and the superiority of the political *hierarchy* gave to the recognized party leader a significant ideological freedom guaranteed by custom, propaganda and censorship institutions and limited mostly by his own background and his perception of others ideological expectations and ideals, in the middle term determined by the stabilizing but debilitating impact of this regulative pattern. The stratum of reform-minded aides was not a factor limiting the leader but considerably influencing him. As in other cases, the leader-ideologue was in the end limited by the reality of nature, society and politics. Thus, when free public debates suddenly became the superior norm over unity and hierarchy, the illegitimate domination became unstable.<sup>163</sup>

### *Tracing the origins of the Unity principle*

Historical evidence on the established conventions and rules of public expression in the USSR naturally comes from various sources. In the frame of our research we can not systematically study the formation and the evolution of the rules and conventions regulating the use of public speech. We relate to a number of more or less explicit formulations of these rules from the Civil War onward trying to show that the understanding the functioning of the Soviet regime and its crisis requires the consideration of these formal rules and informal conventions. “Rules” are more concise, explicit and codified, while “conventions” are more subtly inscribed in the established practice of public communication. Together they refer to something close to the established customs which, as it may be suggested, can bind the ruled and the ruler. The official stakeholders in the Soviet intellectual and political hierarchy and those who subverted the fluctuating general line for their own purposes respected a common set of rules and conventions. Schematically we can represent our argument in the following terms: Bolshevik elites, first voluntary endorsed certain rules of public communication and only then this resulted in the massive restriction for public liberties, restriction which was neither fully assumed, nor openly claimed.

The most visibly articulated rule of public communication in the Soviet political tradition was the supremacy of political unity over public dissent leading to organized opposition. This rule specified that any debate or discussion on the relevant issues between Party members and by extension between citizens of the Soviet Union should not lead to a possible *organizational dissent* within the communist party (or “spawn” alternative organizations outside of the communist core). The attitude towards freedom of speech, propaganda, or censorship was secondary to the superior norm formalized as a rule of unity and confirmed in the official “Rules” or “Charters” of the Communist party:

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<sup>163</sup> In the fifth chapter, we analyse and develop the arguments pointing at the simultaneous liberalization of public debates and on deliberate limitation of the use of force by the political leadership as the best account of the rapid and peaceful dissolution of the USSR and its political system.

A free and constructive discussion of the questions related to Party policy... is the unalienable right of every party member... But a large discussion, especially in the scale of the whole country, should be organised in such a way as to avoid that an insignificant minority could impose its point of view on the party majority, and to prevent the formation of factions, breaking the unity of the party, the attempts of sedition endangering the power and the stability of the socialist system.<sup>164</sup>

When a new issue is debated there is no possibility to determine who represents the minority and who represents majority, or else who is revisionist or dogmatic, or else what is the general line and what is a dangerous deviation from it – who is loyal and who betrays the unity. As most Bolsheviks insisted that Marxism was to be applied concretely to every historical situation (otherwise, they most probably would agree with Kautsky or Plekhanov rather than with Lenin who argued that as historical situation evolves, so the doctrine can legitimately change and, say, a revolution can start in a backward country). The application of the Scriptures needed an appropriate *mediation*. And the soundest translator insuring the accord of the group of people defined by its loyalty to Scriptures is their chief. In fact here lies “the whole trick and the whole secret” that was understood by Stalin before his rivals.

One of the most puzzling aspects of Soviet politics lay precisely in what is usually considered as its self-evident and actually wicked essence: the continuation of the inner terror 30 years after – and the factual denial of freedom of public speech and gathering 70 years after the political victory. None of these principles such as human rights, free speech, democratic representation and freedom of political organization were denied by or in the “doctrine”. Most of them were positively stated in the two subsequent Soviet Constitutions and confirmed by the international treaties signed by the Soviet Union in 1970s<sup>165</sup>. In different circumstances the Bolsheviks and later the Communists both attacked and defended public freedoms: during 1920s they *de facto* accepted the principle of pluralism and free debate within the Party, while gradually banning free press outside of the party<sup>166</sup>. Moshe Lewin defends in his retrospective book, *The Soviet Century*, that Bolshevik leaders such as Osinsky, Radek, Riazanov and Lenin at different stages were openly defending the right for free debates for Party members; he also showed a series of cases between 1920 and 1923 when Lenin, Trotsky and other leaders were challenged, criticised and sometimes even taunted with “We told you so” by the juniors when their policy proved to be mistaken<sup>167</sup>. Lewin concluded that even after the X Congress, Lenin claimed that the free discussions within the party were the condition of the successful rule:

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<sup>164</sup> We translate here one of the variations of the recurrent, classic passage on the freedom of debates from the successive Charters of the Communist Party. *Текст измененного устава партии*, Госполитиздат, М., 1952, p.13. (Section “Structure of the Party. Inter-party Democracy”)

<sup>165</sup> Already in the famous Decree on Press, issued right after the military cease of power in 1917, Lenin clearly affirms: “As soon, as the order will be established, all administrative measures against the Press will cease, and the full freedom of press shall be granted within the limit of the legal responsibility before the court, according to the most open and progressive law in this respect”. Our translation from the text quoted in Z.K. Vodopianova (ed.), *History of the soviet political censorship*, ROСПEN, Moscow 1997, p. 26. Moreover, free debates *within* the Bolshevik party before, during, and after Revolution were fully accepted as rule and practice until late 20s.

<sup>166</sup> See Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century*, Verso, 2005, Cf., “Differing approaches did indeed produced a kind of de facto pluralism; but this is hardly the same as officially sanctioned pluralism, fully endorsed in party policy.” Michael S. Fox, *Glavlit, Censorship and the Problem of Party Policy in Cultural affairs, 1922-28*, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol.44, N°6 (1992) p. 1047

<sup>167</sup> Moshe Lewin, *Op. cit.*, p.302-307

The key point we are seeking to stress here is the following: Bolshevism was a political party that offered its members the right to express their opinions and participate in the development of its political line, and Lenin was eager to preserve it as such...<sup>168</sup>

Indeed, in its design the ban on factions did not imply and was not meant as the ban on free discussions, but as Stalin perfectly understood and made clear to those who wanted to see it, liberty of public debates was practically incompatible with the ban on factions. The Bolsheviks as a ruling group did not deliberately reject the right for public criticism and the right for free speech. The Bolsheviks accepted other principles which they held to be superior – Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Bukharin along with Stalin, Voroshilov and Kaganovich, in 1925 actively endorsed the principles which were going to kill the former three in 1937.<sup>169</sup> After Lenin's death the unity was constantly praised and referred to by all protagonists in order to advance one's ideological position and discount the opponent. Bukharin's anti-Trotsky presentation of unity as the "main tradition of Leninism" was contra factual, as most of his career Lenin was a dissenter, i.e. he could ensure unity around him by splitting with all those who disagreed. Bukharin wrote in 1926: "I have to tell you, that we always thought that our party – and this is one of the main aspects of Leninism – is unitary, monolithic, organized fortress producing a perfect (sic) unity of will etc. This we proved in our polemic with Trotskyites by shouting ourselves hoarse".<sup>170</sup> Trotsky was notoriously the first and the most powerful "scapegoat" of this mortal logic, who actually complied with the rule and stated that "it is impossible to be right against the party".<sup>171</sup>

A. Selishchev studying the linguistic practices in 1920s gave the following account of the established pattern: "The unity of the party – is its essence. This unity should be firm, iron, steel-like. The comparison of the party with the steel is very popular. The most popular adjectives for the party are monolith, monolith-ness".<sup>172</sup> Arch Getty identified "the fanatical sense of elite unity" as "a fatal flaw" making the newly consolidated rulers' stratum – anxious about its authority in the radically and ruthlessly transformed country and about the hostile international surrounding – defenceless in the face of the inner-party purges of 1937-1938: "These officials feared disunity and splits more than they

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 306

<sup>169</sup> See for instance Bukharin accused Trotsky for forgetting the "main tradition of Leninism – unity" while his peers endorsed this claim with a number of formulations. Н. Бухарин «Оппозиция отступает от основной традиции Ленинизма – единства» in *Хрестоматия для комсомольских политшкол I ступени*, М.-Л., 1925 г. Compare: "Да, 10 — 15 лет тому назад вопрос о фракциях ставился по-иному, чем сейчас. Мы были тогда партией, деятельность которой на девять десятых исчерпывалась пропагандой и агитацией, а сейчас мы — партия, которая управляет государством. Сейчас диктатура пролетариата поставлена в порядок дня в международном масштабе, а у нас в России она есть факт. Допустить фракционность и группировки в нашей партии теперь означает допустить в зародыше два правительства, т.-е. допустить раздвоение пролетарской диктатуры, т.-е. подготовить гибель пролетарской диктатуры". Г. Зиновьев, "Фракции и группировки", in *Хрестоматия для комсомольских политшкол I ступени*, М.-Л., 1925 г. «История нашей партии наполнена длинным рядом идейных битв, которые вел Владимир Ильич за чистоту партийной идеологии. Нельзя написать историю нашей партии без того, чтобы не описать ряд блестящих сражений, которые Ильич давал всем, кто пытался хотя бы в малой доле отклонить партию от ее правильно намеченного пути.» Л. Каменев «Почему наша партия рабочая?», in *Хрестоматия для комсомольских политшкол I ступени*, М.-Л., 1925 г.

<sup>170</sup> А. Селищев, *Язык революционной эпохи, Из наблюдений над русским языком последних лет (1917-1929)*, Издание второе, М., Работник Просвещения, 1928 (Reprint, Leipzig, 1974). Стр.98

<sup>171</sup> XIII съезд РКП (б), *Стенографический Отчет*, М., 1963, стр.167 Quoted in E.A. Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin, Revolutionary Machiavellism*, Palgrave, 2004, p.130

<sup>172</sup> А. Селищев, *Язык революционной эпохи*, стр., 99



feared the spreading terror and voted themselves into prison one after another ironically out of group solidarity and self-protection".<sup>173</sup>

Oleg Kharkhordin offered an anthropological account of the unity principle pointing at the similarities between the Josef Volotsky's monastic regulations aiming at the total and cordial unity-in-thought between monks and the later Bolshevik norm and their "constant preoccupation" with the unity of the party.<sup>174</sup> The regularly undertaken internal purges of the party were explicitly motivated by the need of genuine unity and fusion of all its members at the level of every party's local cell. This implies the quest for an intimate and psycho-physiological unity between members of smaller and bigger "collectives" forming the Bolshevik party. The preoccupation with the unity of the collective organism adds to the political and theoretical arguments in favour of unity over dissent rule a micro-practical norms and individual experience of the early Bolsheviks and arguably of the Russian peasantry.<sup>175</sup>

The articulation of the unity over dissent rule as the superior argument first emerged in 1921 at the X Party Congress. During the Kronstadt uprising of sailors and workers against the Bolshevik centralizing policies which had followed the series of spontaneous strikes on the factories of Moscow and St-Petersburg, the Bolshevik party run the risk of losing control over its supposed core political basis – urban workers in the large cities. The debates on the self-government opened by the "Workers opposition" headed by A. Kolontai equally endangered the newly acquired centralized political power of the leading core of the Bolshevik party over the country. The resolution "On party unity" reflected the centrality of this question for the Bolshevik leadership and had officially banned factions on the X Party Congress<sup>176</sup>. Although factions continued to exist until the end of 1920s, this decision has for the first time enforced and fully legitimated the unity rule as a supreme norm securing the survival of the Bolshevik party. Geoffrey Hosking points out the crucial importance of this resolution and quotes Radek's commentary on his carefully meditated vote in its favour:

When the vote on this resolution was started, I was aware that it could be turned against us. Nevertheless, I supported it... Let the Central Committee in the moment of danger take the strictest measures even against the best members of the party, if it thinks it is necessary. This is not as dangerous, as our hesitations and this is obvious<sup>177</sup>.

Perestroika saw the unity principle often invoked, mobilized in the Nina Andreeva case against the "Conservatives", and at the end broken. Still as late as April 1990, when the Communist party was under extremely heavy criticism in the context of basic food shortages and numerous ideological challenges to the central power, the Central Committee issued a letter against the "so-called Democratic Platform" using the classic unity over dissent formula:

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<sup>173</sup> J. Arch Getty, "Samokritika Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-38", *Russian Review*, 1999, p.66

<sup>174</sup> О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002, стр.134, 154-163

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., стр.152-153

<sup>176</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, *History of the Soviet Union: 1917–1991*, Final edition, 1992, Fontana; See the Russian edition: Джефри Хоскинг, *История Советского Союза 1917-1991*, «Русич», Смоленск, 2001, p. 80-84

<sup>177</sup> Geoffrey Hosking,, *Op. cit.*, p.84

The time has come when, while not giving up the freedom of discussion and while strengthening its constructive basis, it is essential to get to the bottom of the question of what is to be done with those members of the party who insistently and purposefully lead matters toward a split... Drawing the line between those who have entered upon the path of struggle against the party is not a purge and not a repression for dissent. It should be directed against those who organize fractional groups<sup>178</sup>.

This bitter and powerless condemnation of factionalism was already deprived of its sting – and it had to justify itself. The freedom of discussion was accepted as the *superior* principle and could not be subjugated to the need of unity, which was however a clear requirement of the party Rules since 1920s and until 1991. The idea that freedom of discussion and unity rule were compatible was a blunt kind of wishful thinking. Loyal reformers such as Gorbachev and Soviet Puritans such as Ligachev both considered that freedom of debate was compatible with a wholesome unity. The obvious practical failure of unity was seen as failure of the leadership or resulting from a betrayal, but not as an institutional logic.

In this respect, the nuanced defence of Gorbachev by Archie Brown actually signals his weakest point, when Brown argues that Gorbachev unambiguously stood in favour of the freedom of speech *and* maintained that one-party system was not necessarily a bad thing (provided glasnost, political culture and workers' deputies were well in place).<sup>179</sup> In other words, in 1989 Gorbachev's view on the relation between public freedoms and organizational unity was not in line with European social-democracy or liberal tradition as Brown suggests, but he rather stood there, where the first sincere Bolsheviks stood in 1921. Brown recalls that we must remember that Gorbachev readdressed another key lesson from the Leninist heritage – violence.<sup>180</sup> But here again Gorbachev misunderstood the central problem Lenin faced. Gorbachev did not reflect on the institutional issue of unity, dissent and liberty, but he was disturbed and disappointed when learning that Lenin used terror. Bolsheviks' massive terror was first ignored and then rejected, the belief in the superiority of political unity over public dissent persisted without any attempt to confront the two. We argue that being a skilful and pragmatic bureaucrat and gifted communicator Gorbachev held unrealistic macro-political views on how society could hold together and be run; we must also see that he shared these views with his influential contemporaries. The Russian political evolution in the 2000s and even the title of the quasi monopolistic bureaucratic party-club *Unitary Russia* confirms that this institutional lesson is not easy to learn, and the wisdom of the *Federalist papers* is either ignored or insufficient in the Russian context. Yet, we would like to avoid a too expedient answer to this dilemma, but to point out its significance.

### *The unity of the general party line and the lacking knowledge of society*

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<sup>178</sup> Quoted and translated in English in G. J. Gill, *The Collapse of a Single-Party System*, p.120

<sup>179</sup> See: Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, pp. 284-290

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 291

The unity over dissent principle seems to be simple to apply. However, already during the 1920s we can see the inner limitations or undesired consequences of the principle surfacing: if all members of the Party agree to avoid the dissent, it is never clear who is actually responsible for breaking unity when different opinions emerge between different party leaders<sup>181</sup>. And it is not clear how to collectively decide who is telling the truth in the interest of the whole if precisely the splitting debates are to be banned. The principle of “*the general party line*” endorsed by the majority of Bolsheviks in 1920s has dissimilated these simple questions from both internal and even most of the external observers of the inner party struggle. As we saw, the most stable solution to this paradox was to follow the party chief as its supreme ideologue formulating the general party line which would translate the concretely and correctly applied Scriptures to the current political agenda. The leader becomes the one who expresses the general party line and *vice versa* – there should be identity which in practice could only be maintained by respect of the rules along with recourse to censorship and repressions. The most difficult moment in this framework was an uncertain succession in the leadership: any public rallying around the future or potential leader was suspicious until the death or dismissal of the current leader<sup>182</sup> (The Catholic Church found a somewhat more democratic procedure for the Pope’s elections widely known as a *papal conclave* – “the oldest ongoing method for choosing the leader of an institution”).<sup>183</sup> In other words, the unity over dissent principle can properly function only when the principle of the organisational hierarchy is observed in the debates between the members of the party.

Quotes from the writings of K. Marx, F. Engels, V. I. Lenin or the current leader incorporated under the title Marxism-Leninism provided both a necessary and sufficient ground in public and scientific debates and for any public utterance having political or social overtones. But we should consider the actual application and the practical meaning of this declared veneration of the founding fathers’ texts. For example, in July 1934 Stalin wrote an article in *Bolshevik* presented as a note to the Politburo members concerning the publication of Engels’ article on Tsarist Russia where Stalin spoke about the “three main shortcomings” [*nedostatki*] of the Engels’ text.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, the most important practical limitation of the legitimating references to the founding texts was set by the first two conventional rules overruling allegiance to Marx, Engels and Lenin’ writings. In practice, the references to the founding texts could not be used by authors in a way that could provide grounds for dissent within the party or create an opposition outside of the party claiming the Marxist or Leninist heritage as his own. The references to the classics equally could not justify the break in the academic hierarchy or justify the supremacy of the theorists over the politicians. Moreover, within these founding texts we can distinguish a deeper and subtler hierarchy. If historically Marx had pre-eminence over Lenin and by extension over his successors, *de facto*, the conventions regulating the political speech provided much

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<sup>181</sup> See Moshe Lewin on the proliferation of the small circles, fractions and discussion clubs; see also Lenin’s defence of Riazanov’s fractional activity, *The Soviet Century*, Verso, 2005, pp. 302-303

<sup>182</sup> One of the most convincing analysis of the problem of succession in the Soviet politics remains Z. Brzezinski’s account in *Ideology and power in Soviet politics*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1976

<sup>183</sup> F. J. Baumgartner, "Creating the Rules of the Modern Papal Election", in *Election Law Journal*. 2006, Nov., pp. 57-73

<sup>184</sup> И. В. Сталин, «О статье Энгельса «Внешняя политика русского царизма» (Письмо членам Политбюро ЦК ВКП (б))», *Большевик*, 1934, №9

grater significance to the quotes from the latest discourses of the General Secretary than to the quotes from earlier writings of the “classics” especially in case of their open contradiction. Similarly, substantial pieces of Marx such as *Revelations of the Diplomatic History of the 18th Century* were never translated or published in the USSR<sup>185</sup>. The passages from “The German ideology” specifying that Communism was only possible on a world-historical scale<sup>186</sup> could not be cited to oppose the later modifications of Marxist teaching which was synthesized in Stalin’s formula on the possibility of building socialism “in one country”. The passage on the world-scale communism actually was not to be cited at all. Such selective use of Marx’s, Engels’ and also Lenin’s embarrassing passages in the longer run created zones of non-discussion – after Stalin’s death these issues were abandoned, but they attracted bold and independent-minded social scientists inevitably turning into heretic revisionists.

The Soviet rules required vigorous and regular sanctions against the potential, occasional and few persistent trespassers of any rank and it provided considerable freedom of legitimate intellectual manoeuvre to the occupant of the highest position of General Secretary of the Communist Party. Thus, the theoretical and political innovations under this regime of regulation of the public speech became over-dependent on the personal beliefs and preferences of the top leader who, by the very design of the system, had the exclusive legitimate right to suggest major changes, but *only* once he occupied the supreme position. The periods of rule of the self-made leaders such as Stalin and Khrushchev, and the rule of the collectively designated Gorbachev confirmed the importance but also showed the vulnerability of this overdependence of the whole system of communication from the personal ideology of the new leader. The Soviet regime did not fully exclude certain freedom of speech and it actually accepted it in principle; the regime did not exclude innovation and local variations. In its conservative phase it could not block constant testing and probing of the boundaries of the legitimate public discourse by Aesopian authors. The polity has been applying its vision of political efficiency, namely, the organizational unity of the ruling party backed by the heavy limitation of the expressions of public discord. Unity considered as the only possible guarantee of the party’s political power and therefore for the implementation of the Communist ideology correctly understood only by the party in turn incarnated by its leader and expressed in the current general line. In fact, there was less irrationality here, once the special quality of the leader-ideologue was recognized. But as the special quality of the leader could not be objectively tested we can see this approach to public debates as dominated by a *political* conception of truth and opposed to the *rational-critical* one.

The intellectual space where reliable information could be gathered and the realistic self-understanding of the society could be shaped was crucially absent in the USSR, once, after Stalin, the mindset of the leader-ideologue was historically formed and framed *within* the new regime. Exceptionally gifted individuals such as Andrey Amalrik or Andrey Fadin could have acute insights and an accurate global picture, but this knowledge was isolated and could not be “used” by the society and

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<sup>185</sup> The main Soviet historiographical review *Вопросы Истории* initiated the publication of this work as late as 1989 expecting a higher print runs and interest from the wider readers’ audience. This proved to be a miscalculation as the Marx’ formerly forbidden texts suddenly became irrelevant together with the “sacral power” of the founding texts.

<sup>186</sup> К. Маркс, Ф. Энгельс, *Избранные произведения*, М., 1983, том 1, с.28

decision-makers. Except the naturally biased reports by the KGB services on the popular opinion and on the moods of the population, the Soviet leadership had neither reliable experience nor data and no adequate theoretical concepts to understand the evolution of the complex society they dominated. This cognitive role was partly played by literary fiction and arts having an important social and even political overtones – but they could not palliate for the lack of public debates and conceptualization of the social reality, its political constraints and opportunities. The party officials knew well the logic of the inner-party power relations, discipline, patronage and exchange of favours, but they had only partial and accidental understanding of the *macro* political level. The absence of serious reforms after Khrushchev's failure masked this lack of self-understanding along with the ritual and self-deceptive declarations on the original unity of practice and theory proper to Marxism-Leninism.

The modest stimulation of the “new” social sciences other than historiography such as sociology and political science was limited first by the nature of the political regime excluding public access to information on the contemporary society and second by the fact that its classics did not make specific contributions to these disciplines that emancipated in the first half of the XX century and were justly suspected to be bourgeois sciences, based on bourgeois freedoms and the corresponding conceptual framework<sup>187</sup>. But the very attempts to create the new research institutes of sociology and political science in 1960s and 1970s attested that the establishment was reflecting on its lack of information and its conceptual void. The famous confession of Y. Andropov on the June Plenum in 1983 and then an article in *Kommunist* formulated this problem (as the later evidence suggested drawing on the drafts already made by Chernenko's, Brezhnev's and Suslov's aides which makes the argument even stronger<sup>188</sup>): “Speaking frankly, we still do not know well enough the society in which we live and work, we have not fully discover its law-like regularities, especially the economic ones. Therefore, we have to act so to speak empirically, in a very irrational way of trial and error”.<sup>189</sup> Andropov gathered a team of social scientists and intellectuals such Arbatov, Bovin, Shakhnazarov and Bogomolov, but despite this deliberate effort he himself offered only the agenda of a tighter discipline in factories and research institutions.<sup>190</sup> The striking confession on the factual lack of information and knowledge of society also revealed the symptomatic idea that pragmatism of “trial and error” is a bad method of government and reforms as opposed to the reliable “scientific” approach based on the perfect theory – which was, as Andropov accepted, currently unavailable. Considering the established rules of public communication we can conclude that the long term effect of the limitation imposed on free critical debate and on access to social and political information significantly cut off the Soviet rulers and intellectuals from reality; but the idea that political practice should be firmly guided by scientific theory was accepted as

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<sup>187</sup> See: С.С. Новикова, *Социология: история, основы, институционализация в России*, М.: Московский психолого-социальный институт, Воронеж, НПО «МОДЭК», 2000.

<sup>188</sup> В. Печенев, “Интервью. Голова у Черненко оставалась светлой”, *Власть*, 2001, №38

<sup>189</sup> «Если говорить откровенно, мы еще до сих пор не знаем в должной мере общество, в котором живем и трудимся, не полностью раскрыли присущие ему закономерности, особенно экономические. Поэтому вынуждены действовать, так сказать, эмпирически, весьма нерациональным способом проб и ошибок». «Речь Генерального секретаря Центрального Комитета КПСС товарища Ю. В. Андропова на Пленуме ЦК КПСС 15 июня 1983 года», *Коммунист*, 1983, №7. Also see Ю. В. Андропов, “Учение Карла Маркса и некоторые вопросы социалистического строительства в СССР”, *Коммунист*, 1983, №3.

<sup>190</sup> See: Дм. Травин, «Пролог: встреча четырех генсеков», *Звезда*, 2006, №1

a default frame for any reforms. We address the issue of aspiration for a scientific rule in the next chapter.

Summing up this schematic review, we can conclude that the principles of unity, hierarchy and the classic's authority contributed to the growing cynicism and alienation from the official ideology. In the absence of a *leader-ideologue*, this set up blocked most reforms and the ideologically driven mobilization, as upper-middle and lower strata had no right to innovate and propagate ideas on their own; the Marxist-Leninist claim to possess scientific knowledge of society and history as well as the humanistic and democratic values forming the core of the Soviet ideology (once its rhetoric of the struggle, treason and hatred underpinning the terror was downplayed) nurtured unrealistic expectations and the institutional amphibiousness, i.e. the elaboration of the concealed reformatory program from within the leading ideological think-tanks created to support and refine party policies. While the next generation was more cynical and lacking any shared positive worldview, the criticism of the established socio-political system by the cohort socialised under Stalin, known as *shestidesyatniki*, turned into the uncritical revival of the theoretical frame and declared values of the official ideology.<sup>191</sup> The elder ones could imagine no reforms but tighter discipline as did the earnest Andropov and Ligachev. Double- or half-thinking, idealistic naivety and cynicism were by-products of the same setup.

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<sup>191</sup> Archie Brown brings the testimony of Gorbachev on his belonging to this generation and argues on the importance of this generational logic. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, p.282-283

## Studying public speech in the USSR: language, feigning integrity and no public sphere

In our research we examine the emergent theoretical and ideological debates as public speech in the double sense of this expression. First, we take public speech in quasi legal terms as an *utterance* spreading one's message to the public "by print, the air-waves, celluloid or the vocal cords", and which relates to "all matters of public concern".<sup>192</sup> Free public speech defines the limits of what is considered to be of public concern within the given political community as well as it defines the rules of debates based on certain visions of politics, history and society; the hierarchical public speech defines "public matters" top-down and imposes the limits of what and how can be debated in public. Second, by public speech we mean the entire *genre or body* of public utterances on issues of public concern, which includes established rules and conventions of communication, the dynamic body of related utterances, and finally the status of the public speech in its relation with identities and practices. Finally, we mostly focus on the theoretical aspects of public debates – in other words, we address the intellectual frames, prevailing arguments, and modes of justification expressly used in public communication.

Free public opinion relies on free circulation and access to information, free dissemination of people's views, people's effective ability to understand each others' utterances and relies on what we could call reflexivity of public speech. The reflexivity of the public speech amplifies its significance by a sort of an echo, when people hear or discover that significant others think likewise or otherwise they change their minds or get firmer in their views and opinions – the fact that public opinion is not a mechanical aggregation of people's answers or attitudes is famously although indirectly argued by Bourdieu<sup>193</sup>. When public speech seems disconnected from reality this gap is noted and reflected in a variety of subtle but objective ways: in the vocabulary, syntax, irony and even in the official *langue de bois* (as in the Soviet expression "gap between words and deeds" – see the previous section). The built-in reflexivity reveals to the actors the status of public speech defined by the relation between public speech, binding political decisions and inner convictions of those who constitute the public. In the late Soviet settings not only people had no access to information, but they used to unlearn forming firm opinions related to their values and could not consolidate their views through public debate, opposition and alliances. Therefore, one can meaningfully speak about moods of the population and personal

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<sup>192</sup> We use here a part of a typical American formulation describing the publicity of speech, but instead of referring to the public utterance as an expression of *thoughts* as in the original case, we use the term "message" in order to avoid the presumption that what is expressed is necessarily an individual thought. In the Soviet context, this presumption may be wrong from both its internal and external perspectives. See: Morris L. Ernst and Arthur Joel Katz, "Speech: Public and Private" *Columbia Law Review*, 1953, April, p. 620. Robert Post, "Reconciling Theory and Doctrine in First Amendment Jurisprudence", *California Law Review*, (Symposium of the Law in the Twentieth Century), 2000, Dec., p.2367

<sup>193</sup> Wyman noted that the Soviet political leadership was particularly reluctant to the "dissemination of the little [sociological] research that did take place" namely to avoid the consolidation of the public opinion by its mirroring in the polls. Referring to the same phenomenon Bourdieu argued that public opinion in the liberal democracies was the artifact of its representation by the polls that serve to manipulate and produce opinions; accepting the significance and inevitability of biases analysed by Bourdieu we can stress that the public polls are not the only institution mediating the formation of the public opinion. The competition between polls and research centres allows greater and more genuine reflexivity as well as the publication of each new result contributes to the gradual consolidation of the genuine public opinion. See: Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p. 3-4. Pierre Bourdieu, "Public Opinion does not exist" in *Sociology in Question*, London, Sage, 1995.

attitudes, but not about public opinion proper, as well we can examine public speech in the USSR, but not its public sphere in the narrow sense.

### *Public speech without the public sphere and public opinion in the USSR*

We consider public speech in the functional and value neutral sense of a realm of speaking in public on matters of public concern defined within its realm and according to its rules, rather than in the normative sense of bourgeois public sphere as it was outlined in the fundamental research of Jürgen Habermas.<sup>194</sup> The later connection of this term with that of “civil society” proved equally misleading when applied as frame of understanding perestroika and post-Soviet Russia.<sup>195</sup> Both public sphere and public opinion were crucially absent in the USSR. The Soviet ideological conventions and rules backed by repressions and by censorship *deliberately excluded* what Habermas, reinterpreting the Western liberal and legal traditions, saw as the essence of the public sphere emerging in between the realms of the official state and the private life: bourgeois-citizens’ capability to freely form deliberating public bodies and associations, freely express individual and group opinions and thus influence state policies. In the Soviet history, both independent property owners and the twin civic rights of free speech and free association were missing; moreover, the underlying legalistic traditions underpinning the practical significance of an autonomous public speech in the Western Europe and America were also absent in the USSR.<sup>196</sup>

The Soviet rules of public communication directly granted the political leadership with the monopoly to publicize not only the *opinions* (within the conventional hierarchy identifying power positions with the authority and correctness of one’s opinion), but also *information*. As opposed to the traditionally praised and traditionally unapplied glasnost, the regime of secrecy was dominant throughout the Soviet history. The functioning of the most important party and state institutions rested on the compartmented and multi-level regime of secrecy personally cultivated by Stalin who at first referred to the external and internal enemies.<sup>197</sup> The secrecy was maintained by subsequent administrations until perestroika when the original justification already lost its sense. An internal instruction of the apparatus of CC secretly published in 1980 distinguished four levels of secrecy for the party documents: “Top secret of high importance”; “Top secret”; “Secret”; “For internal use only” or “Not for print”. The official taxonomy excluded this candid genre of party documents which should be situated in-between a secret document and a document *due* to be published. The level “Secret” was described in the following self-defeating terms: “The qualification “Secret” is attributed to the documents *not* containing information qualified as party and state secret, but exposing the methods of the work of the apparatus

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<sup>194</sup> See: Jürgen Habermas, (1962 trans 1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, Polity, Cambridge.

<sup>195</sup> See in particular S. Kotkin: Stephan Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*, Oxford UP, NY, 2001

<sup>196</sup> However, as noted, there was a certain affinity between the resolution “On Party Unity” and “The First Amendment” in the *framing* of the problematic of free public speech and unity; the two different solutions to a similar problem replied to the significantly different intellectual and institutional situations and traditions.

<sup>197</sup> See: См. Л. Оников, *КПСС: Анатомия распада*, Республика, 1994.



of CC".<sup>198</sup> No places, spheres, forums or even officially entitled research institutions could gather too much significant information in one hands – the circulation of information was compartmented in the 1920s, so that only the rising dictator could have the exclusive access to the global picture, while his rivals, the society and the administration were exposed to its official and significantly biased copies; however, gradually even the privileged position of the leader did not guaranteed the access to the accurate information on the society. This unchecked bureaucratic coverage of information along with the hierarchical regime of public speech limit the validity and the utility of a direct transfer of the two related notions of public opinion and public sphere into the studies of the USSR – they indicate what was missing and not what was present.<sup>199</sup>

When studying “public letter writing” to newspapers and officials in the 1930s, Sheila Fitzpatrick simply noted that she “was not using the term ‘public sphere’ in the special sense associated with Jürgen Habermas”.<sup>200</sup> On the other hand, Sarah Davies used the evidence from NKVD reports of the same period to show that Stalin’s propaganda and repressions “failed to extinguish the autonomous current of public opinion” among the common people.<sup>201</sup> Stephen Kotkin questioned whether this was “public opinion” in fact reported by NKVD as “mood of the population”, and whether it could not be better understood if not discounted as “grumbling”.<sup>202</sup> Several Sovietologists also suggested that some sort of public opinion and a public sphere were emerging in the USSR in the 1970s.<sup>203</sup> But as it became manifest in a recent series of studies applying the Habermasian framework to the Soviet-type societies, the public sphere in the sense somehow close to the original interpretation existed in the Communist satellites such as Poland, Hungary and GDR where traditional local Churches and arts played the role of an alternative public sphere where actors could maintain certain autonomy from the regime’s supervision.<sup>204</sup> For the rest, the authors of the collective book edited by Rittersporn, Rolf and Behrends went further away by distinguishing and studying a range of narrow “public spheres” taken in a more functional sense of distinct spaces or forums of expression and action: official public sphere,

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<sup>198</sup> Л. Оников, *КПСС: Анатомия распада*, 177-178

<sup>199</sup> Compare with Habermas’ emphasis on the historically singular constellation framing the public sphere: “the bourgeois public sphere is a category that is typical of an epoch. It cannot be abstracted from the unique developmental history of that civil society originating in the Europe High Middle Ages; nor can it be transferred, ideal typically generalised, to any number of historical situations that represent formally similar constellations”, *Ibid.*, p.xvii

<sup>200</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter-Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930s”, *Slavic Review*, 1996, Spring, p.81.

<sup>201</sup> Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin’s Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934- 1941*, NY, Cambridge UP, 1997, p.183

<sup>202</sup> One can argue that “grumbling” was sometimes described as the sign of the ruler’s illegitimacy in the Weberian perspective; Mona Ozouf saw grumbling in the pre-revolutionary France of the *ancien régime* as one of the signs of the emerging public opinion. The real passage from the negative moods to the public opinion requires however much more than discontent and grumbling – namely the actual consolidation and aggregation of individual opinions into an influential factor. For identification of grumbling with emergent public opinion see: Mona Ozouf, “Public Opinion” at the End of the Old Regime”, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 60, Supplement: Rethinking French Politics in 1788 (Sep., 1988), p.9. For the critique of S. Davies see the review by S. Kotkin: *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1998, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 739-742.

<sup>203</sup> Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union Is Governed*, Harvard University Press, 1979, pp. 286-293.; Zvi Gitelman, “Public Opinion in Communist Political Systems,” in Walter D. Connor et al. (eds.), *Public Opinion in European Socialist Systems*, ed., N.Y, Praeger, 1977.

<sup>204</sup> Gaibor T. Rittersporn, Malte Rolf, and Jan C. Behrends (eds.), *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs: Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbst-inszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten, Public Spheres in Soviet- Type Societies: Between the Great Show of the Party-State and Religious Counter-Cultures*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2003, 457 pp.

as well as cultural, religious and communal public spheres.<sup>205</sup> The most useful of these notions seems to be “official public sphere”, although it has an ambiguous significance in the Habermas’ perspective, in which public sphere is situated precisely in-between the state and society and is characterised by unrestricted discussion between autonomous peers.<sup>206</sup> Probably, the most promising equivalent of the bourgeois public sphere in the USSR could be identified by the analysis of the personal *networks* of friends and relatives forming discussion clubs in nucleus as independently suggested by Thomas Remington and Oleg Kharkhordin.<sup>207</sup> The innovative study of the *Russian talk* undertaken by Nancy Ries tested *one of the aspects* of this hypothesis on the materials of perestroika and her answer was negative. Private talks about public matters turned into the ritualized *lamentations* cultivating the shared sense of powerlessness in front of the general corruption and implicitly promoting the virtues of the imaginative techniques of survival in such a difficult environment. This Russian talk about public matters does not trigger political opposition or consolidate political position of peers – instead, it implicitly strengthens the border separating people’s private networks from public politics.<sup>208</sup> Systematic studies of the most powerful networks of the perestroika period are needed in order to get a more accurate answer in this respect.

Public speech is crucially related to both political decisions and to the individuals’ sense of inner self. The deliberate transformation of the public speech during perestroika, thus, can be understood as a radical change in the rules and content of public communication affecting vocabulary, status, and meaning of public speech for the individual and groups. The articulation and the sense of the individual and group identities were also radically affected by this change in public speech<sup>209</sup>. In this section we review the relevant academic literature on the official Soviet discourse, the status and functions of the public speech on public matters, and the relation between public speech and people’s personal experience and convictions.

Studies of the language of the official public speech in the USSR form a relatively autonomous area. Probably, the first comprehensive work on this subject, *The Language of a Revolutionary Epoque*, was

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<sup>205</sup> Authors speak about their ‘...inquiries focusing on social spaces and communicative structures as the public sphere are likely to enlarge our vision not only of Soviet-type regimes but also of regimes which succeeded them’. Ibid., p.35

<sup>206</sup> For the discussion and introduction of “official public sphere” approach as an empirically more grounded approach than “civil society” for accounting for 1989 in the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, we refer to the paper presented by M. Killingsworth in the seminar lead by E. A. Rees in EUI, 2004-2005.

<sup>207</sup> “Casual and overlapping networks of friends, acquaintances, relatives, co-workers, and neighbors often pass along information of a public nature. Such networks supplement the official media by extending information further into face-to-face conversation, but they also take up some of the searching and screening functions performed by the media in an open society.”, T. Remington, “The Mass Media and Public Communication in the USSR”, *The Journal of Politics*, 1981, Aug., p.812. Cf.: О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр. 412, 424-425

<sup>208</sup> Yet, one could explore the hypothesis that a few private networks of intelligentsia and young entrepreneurs in Moscow and Leningrad could turn into a sort of proto-public sphere during the final stage of perestroika in 1990-1991 by analysing the transcripts of the discussions in the clubs of *neformaly* and conducting interviews with participants. Нэнси Рис, *Русские разговоры: Культура и речевая повседневность эпохи перестройки*, НЛО, М., 2005.

<sup>209</sup> We address this question in the fifth and sixth chapter when discussing the rise of nationalisms and the debates around the allocation of responsibility for the Communist terror.

written inside the Soviet Union by an independent-minded scholar A. Selishchev in 1927<sup>210</sup>. The main theoretical frame of Selishchev was the view of the language as an impersonal authoritative system produced by changing social relations. Language as a moving system of meaning engages individuals beyond their wills and speaks *through* them; his own academic language was substantially depersonalized and surprisingly value-free which translates a certain critical stance towards the revolutionary processes.<sup>211</sup> In large part, this observation about the impersonal power of language holds for the period of perestroika when the major changes occurred in the vocabulary and rules of usage; moreover, this time the innovations were disseminated without additional impetus of terror, censorship and organized propaganda. One of the prominent revisionist historians Arch Getty examined the show trials of 1930s as public rituals following “mutually understood rules, forms and genres of speech, although the outcome could be unpredictable”.<sup>212</sup> A classic book written for RAND Corporation by Nathan Leites in 1951, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, attempted to capture the underlying rules guiding the Bolshevik leaders, by a careful and non-prejudging consideration of the statements and vocabulary of Lenin and Stalin.<sup>213</sup>

The study of Patrick Seriot published in 1985 was an attempt of a systematic *linguistic* analysis of the late Soviet official discourse; and another example of a research on the Soviet language carefully avoiding any political judgments.<sup>214</sup> Seriot’s main finding concerns the proliferation of “nominalization” of the official language, as much as possible, replacing verbs and adjectives replaced by nouns and long combinations of nouns along with other stylistic particularities such as long sentences, accumulation of adjectives, active use of affirmative verbs, or seemingly neutral markers (“It is well known”), the tendency in which Seriot sees a covert rhetorical struggle with an invisible opponent of the discourse. We interpret these findings as the signs of the structural self-doubt of the official speechwriters looking for a more persuasive style, but instead “implying” and “counting as if” rather than openly arguing against or for. Simply put, deprived from the impetus of polemic, the official language lacked candour, tended to avoid descriptions of tangible reality, was complex and difficult to grasp for the reader or hearer, while producing an impression of “scientificity”. Indeed, the meaning of the official speech was gradually eroded and its social function dissociated from its meaning. This recalls that in a more open communication context, speech carries significantly more meaning and influences men by the quality of its meaning, and not solely by its place within the social hierarchy. Freedom of speech and plurality of hierarchies seem to mutually enforce each other if the threshold of public politics is successfully passed.

### *Feigning subjectivity: integrity and rules of public speech*

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<sup>210</sup> А. Селищев, *Язык революционной эпохи, Из наблюдений над русским языком последних лет (1917-1929)*, Издание второе, М., Работник Просвещения, 1928 (Reprint, Leipzig, 1974).

<sup>211</sup> Selishev cites E. Durkheim, G. Tarde, and Polish linguists for backing this approach. *Ibid.*, pp.5-22

<sup>212</sup> J. Arch Getty, “Samokritika Rituals in the Stalinist Central Committee, 1933-38”, *Russian Review*, 1999, p.66

<sup>213</sup> Nathan Leites, *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, McGraw-Hill, 1951

<sup>214</sup> Patrick Seriot, *Analyse du Discours Politique Soviétique*, Institut d’Etudes Slaves, Paris, 1985

Drawing on the comprehensive and challenging study of the Soviet subjectivity carried on by Oleg Kharkhordin we can try to reconsider the relationship between public speech, non-official private sphere and individuals' inner self. Kharkhordin demonstrated that the collective practices of mutual surveillance of peers within the ubiquitous cells of *kollektivny* and public self-revelation by personal deeds were the dominant practices of individualisation in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. Revising the insights of Jowitt, Kharkhordin advances a paradoxical thesis that *feigning* under the external pressure of *kollektivny* became the dominant Soviet practice of individualisation and self-production beyond the political and societal control.<sup>215</sup> Being oneself meant consciously deviating from the imposed norm and dissimulating this deviation from others. Thus, in reply to the officially imposed distinction of the wholesome public and private life of the self-conscious individual, most active individuals developed or rather realized their own but dissimulated private life.<sup>216</sup> The essence of this argument is that there was no prior "self" or "individual" – the self is actually constituted by the experience of feigning, i.e. most individuals rediscovered their spontaneous behaviour (such as sexual appetite, alcoholism or corruption) as an individual self when confronted to the pedagogical censure of peers. According to Kharkhordin, the practice of deliberate dissimulation of spontaneous but forbidden behaviours turned into a powerful instrument of massive self-fashioning. The infiltration of the potential opposition networks with secret agents broke the collective or organized dissimulation, but the individual *dissimulation* proved unbreakable even for the omnipresent terror in the Stalin era and the omnipresent mutual supervision in the Khrushchev era.

Yet, dissimulation did not mean resistance or autonomy of those who joined the party *after* the revolution. The code of honour accepted by the old guard of Bolsheviks who freely joined the risky venture requested two virtues: authentic commitment to the party's cause *and* readiness to abandon one's opinion, when it differed from that adopted by the party (or its authoritative leader as in case of Lenin in October 1917<sup>217</sup>). As E. A. Rees noted, the second connected virtue was the radicalization of Machiavelli and Jesuits' ethics by Bolsheviks who openly absolved the autonomy of the individual conscience of the party member: "The true Bolshevik submerged his individuality into the party; he would swear that black was white, and white was black, even abandon his personality for the party's sake".<sup>218</sup> This subjection to the authority of the party as a supreme *ethical* norm was developed in the 1920s in the writings of E. M. Yaroslavsky and E. A. Preobrazhensky<sup>219</sup>. A. Koestler empathically described this mortal logic of self-abnegation often embraced by the old guard. But systematically abandoning one's own opinion *and* remaining truly loyal in the depth of one's heart, is a difficult virtue for anybody who happens to have opinions – thus, facing inevitable divergences with the "party line"

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<sup>215</sup> О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр.348-362

<sup>216</sup> O. Kharkhordin, "Reveal and Dissimulate: a Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia", in J. Weintraub and K. Kumar (eds.), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Reflection on the Grand Dichotomy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997.

<sup>217</sup> However, Lenin considered these rules pragmatically rather than literally. Even the factual betrayal of Lenin's plan by Zinoviev and Kamenev on the eve of the coup was not duly punished; the repentance and active collaboration after the Revolution was enough.

<sup>218</sup> E. A. Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin. Revolutionary Machiavellism*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p.130

<sup>219</sup> Preobrazhensky openly claimed that "“duplicity, deceit, and lying were an essential part of the armoury of the revolutionary party”" Ibid., p.130

people had different reactions: they heroically accused themselves of betrayal, quitted the party, unlearned to have firm opinions, or became cynical. The first attitude characterised the old Bolsheviks (joining and remaining with the Bolshevik party before 1917 was a challenging and risky personal commitment). But the last two prevailed in the following generations, when joining the party did not require an individual commitment, i.e. sense of integrity. The didactic emphasis on *deeds* rather than on one's inner *consciousness* helped attenuating if not evacuating the doubts by diminishing the authority of such individual judgment of the *for interieur* replaced by the external judgment of the hierarchical circles of *kollektivny*.<sup>220</sup>

We can attest the affinity of this discovery with the findings of DiFranseisco and Gitelman on the subversive type of civic participation in the USSR in the 1970s: the sense of authentic self was typically constituted by the virtue of individual *subversions* of external rules. Hence, to the early Bolshevik's and Western Christian ideal of integrity, i.e. identity between convictions, words and deeds, late Soviet regime opposed the practices of subversion, feigning and duplicity. These mechanisms were operating at several societal levels: "official" public speech in print or in other media, individual private talk and behaviour observed by the peers within the formal *kollektiv*, and at the level of one's subjectivity constituted by the deliberate dissimulation or by the virtue of ironical subversion. The Soviet dissimulation or duplicity of those actively participating in the official communications was markedly different from the conventional *hypocrisy*.<sup>221</sup> These conclusions provide the theoretical ground for the penetrating empirical assessment made by Reddaway in 1966 about the Soviet rulers, although we can wander if he was right in qualifying this cynicism as "less unpleasant, than its western equivalent":

In suggesting, however, that the Soviet ruling group is more cynical than Prof. Meyer believes, we might speculate that Soviet cynicism in general is in some ways less unpleasant than its western equivalent, even if far more widespread. Whereas the western cynic professes one set of beliefs while usually possessing another, the Soviet cynic professes a set of beliefs which he instinctively feels to be false, but which, because of totalitarian conditions, he can usually replace in private only superficially and not with any coherent alternative set.<sup>222</sup>

In the absence of public debates the double-thinking as a social institution proved to be half-thinking. Most people had no subjective certainty on whether they believed or distrusted certain principles, ideas or policies. Arguably, O. Kharkhordin and A. Yurchak addressed the same surprising phenomenon from two different theoretical perspectives: the difficulty to grasp what Soviet people were "really thinking" in the depth of their souls.<sup>223</sup> This aspect seems to be crucial for the appropriate understanding of the relationship between public speech, behaviour and individuals' consciousness in

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<sup>220</sup> See: О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр. 317-322

<sup>221</sup> О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр.351

<sup>222</sup> P. B. Reddaway, "Aspects of Ideological Belief in the Soviet Union", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Apr., 1966), p.482

<sup>223</sup> See: О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002. pp. 347-362. Alexei Yurchak, "Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, July, 2003, pp. 482-484

the late Soviet period. The fundamental research program realized by the leading post-Soviet sociologist Youry Levada outlined the lasting features of the *Homo Sovieticus* similar to the anthropological repertoire we just described in terms of feigning, hypocrisy and cynicism: the high adaptability of behaviour and malleability of beliefs.<sup>224</sup>

A. Yakovlev who had the most acute theoretical sensibility among the Politburo members in 1980s, later confessed his disdain of Soviet ideology. Yet, even in his case we can not speak about hypocrisy in the Western sense. In his memoirs we can find no positive vision of politics, but generic liberal values and bitter moral criticism against Soviet and Russian past. Strikingly, the ideological architect of perestroika confessed in 2003 that along with other members of establishment he “had no views, but the firm illusion that he had them” and overcoming this disturbing state of mind he came to his own new principle – “doubt everything”<sup>225</sup>. This reasonable sceptical principle is surely not enough to ground reformatory policies in a complex ideological empire; his political project remained loose and defined in negative terms. Moreover, Yakovlev convincingly argued that in the given intellectual context where the speech was tightly regulated there could be no underground plan for reforms within the CPSU and (less convincingly) denounced the idea of planned reforms as Soviet archaism.<sup>226</sup>

Another example of this ideological “duplicity” may be even more striking. Recalling that he had no clear vision of reforms Yakovlev confesses that he probably deceived himself when he thought that democracy could *strengthen* the Soviet state socialism. But few paragraphs later he implies that in fact he was very cautious in revealing to the hostile environment his design to *destroy* the system by glasnost; but in between we find the formula concealing the two interpretations on the same page:

This kind of duplicity was not a well calculated game, but it became a norm of life, conditioned by the specific context of this period and by the dangerous illness of the consciousness... And when sometimes people ask me if it was not disgusting to feign and play the full? Yes, it was. But probably someone can indicate a more efficient path leading to the desired result under the conditions of the bureaucratic unanimity? I state that there was no other path in those concrete circumstances – if one stands on the position of evolutionary transformations – to overcome mono-ideology, mono-power and mono-property without physical violence.<sup>227</sup>

Memoirs and theoretical arguments of other political leaders show that late Soviet ideology had no followers after 1991. Writing in 2000, Vadim Medvedev, the last Politburo member in charge of ideology, favourably saw Soviet history as a path to industrialization but claimed that it should have been dropped in XXI century as the global challenges of post-industrialism demand a new synthesis

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<sup>224</sup> For the author’s summaries of this research see: Левада Ю.А. «Человек советский» пять лет спустя: 1989—1994 гг. (предварительные итоги сравнительного исследования)», *Экономические и социальные перемены. Мониторинг общественного мнения*. 1995. № 1; <http://www.polit.ru/lectures/2004/04/15/levada.html>

<sup>225</sup> А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.373

<sup>226</sup> In the last two chapters we will examine how this discredit of planning understood as the expression of dogmatism and patronising justified the absence of a plan of reforms in the eyes of reformers. Ibid., p.374-375

<sup>227</sup> А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, стр.469-470

beyond capitalism-socialism.<sup>228</sup> In their memoirs, the supposedly conservative Communist politicians of this period such as Kryuchkov, Prokoffiev or Ligachev argued in favour of democratic reforms, and did not offer even an approximate defence of their conservative stance, while they actively used the rhetoric of betrayal to accuse Gorbachev and Yeltsin in the disastrous results of reforms. The highly problematical issues of pondering the then available political options (once the democratization, cooperatives, and anti-alcohol campaigns gave unexpectedly bad results) and their own then erroneous perceptions of these options are typically evacuated by pointing at others' betrayal and by the lamentations on the breakdown of the USSR. This betrayal is however understood in terms of evil intentions, rather than ideological criticism; moreover, it is accompanied by the striking approval of the measures offered by the reformers-traitors, i.e., more democracy, more glasnost and even more autonomy for enterprises. What we point out here is not some nuanced logical contradictions unnoticed by the authors; but an *indifference* to plain contradictions when statements, facts and ideas are juxtaposed along the pages, but never confronted. We see no individual efforts of integration of their lives and ideas, and in fact no *integrity*.<sup>229</sup>

For internal and external observers alike, the late Soviet speech seemed increasingly solemn, meaningless, overcharged with scientific verbiage, self-references and self-praise. Yourchak showed

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<sup>228</sup> В. Медведев, *Перед вызовами постиндустриализма: Взгляд на прошлое, настоящее и будущее экономики России*, М., Альпина, 2003, 440 стр.

<sup>229</sup> Egor Ligachev is in this respect an exceptional and most interesting person at the top. Let us first use the anthropological evidence and quote a late Soviet anecdote brutally expressing the local popular wisdom: "God created three human virtues [*kachestva*] – honesty, intelligence, and party membership [*partiynost'*] – but he gave to every one only two of the three virtues. Thus, if one is intelligent and honest, he is not a party member. If he is in the party and he is honest, then he is not intelligent. And if he is intelligent and he is a party member, then he is not honest". In the memoirs of Ligachev *chestnost* and *poriadchnost* are the highest praise for a politician – for example, in his praise of A. Kosygin as a prime-minister. He also was genuinely opposed to corruption, alcoholism and fought against both evils as well as he stood for the right of open-hearted critique. This indicates his high esteem and practice of moral integrity, as we actually use this term. Yet, it is noteworthy that Ligachev lacked any elaborate theoretical worldview accomodating him to the challenges the late USSR encountered in 1980s and especially in the course of perestroika. The only integrity one could keep in the late Soviet conditions required avoiding disturbing questions about the Soviet Union as a political system and about the systematic reasons of the ambient conformism, alcoholism, cynicism or the lack of candour, sane critique, and democracy – these facts genuinely revolted him and were attributed to the lack of virtue among others. Ligachev saw the only remedy to the USSR's problems in leaders' and managers' integrity and devotion to the just socialist cause, because he saw the only systemic problem in the lack of moral integrity. Before and after perestroika he kept more coherence between his behaviour and his views than most of his peers, and hence we find appropriate his qualification as Soviet Puritan. However, he did not want to face the reality of the Soviet system: its reliance on illegal force, its systemic although hidden negation of democracy and free speech, the economic limits of the long-term planning etc. But his a-theoretical mind was not the only support for his integrity. Ligachev loyally obeyed the rules of the bureaucratic games and never challenged them, even when they contradicted his personal convictions. In the Chapter 3 we analyse his position in the central episode of the Nina Andreeva case. In other words, Ligachev had and kept firm political convictions, had no elaborated theoretical views and actually pursued his personal vision of politics until the conventional limits, and never going beyond. His docility and lack of vision limited his political capabilities, but allowed him to keep his sincerity at the top of the Soviet hierarchy. See: Е. Лигачев, *Предостережение*, М, Газета «Правда», 1999. A. Yurchak gives interesting self-accounts of people in charge of the ideological work in the local party committees – easily combining commitment, conformism and blindness. Yurchak aptly described this phenomenon as *pragmatic* but *sincere* attitude to Soviet ideals. We argue that their conformism and blindness should be noted as the basis of their integrity. Alexei Yurchak, "Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, July, 2003, pp. 497-498. See: "The text that Andrei translated seems to represent Andrei's genuine passion for bourgeois rock music and its decadent culture... At the same time, Andrei's Komsomol speech seems to appeal for an uncompromising attitude against them. Yet, Andrei and his young audiences did not seem troubled by this apparent contradiction between the two discourses. In fact, Andrei claims that both texts were equally important to him because they represented major activities in which he was engaged during that year of his life." *Ibid.*, p.501. For the anecdote on honesty, intelligence and party membership see: Роман Трахтенберг (сост.), *Тонна советских анекдотов от Трахтенберга*, 2008, Издательство «АСТ», стр.38

that the late Soviet speech was composed of interchangeable “blocks” of the text regularly used at different occasions and by different authors – they conveyed no specific meaning but the expression of loyalty to the hierarchy and its code. In an (unconvincing) attempt to show Soviet people’s endorsement of the regime in 1970s, Yurchak forcefully pointed at the pragmatic shift in the use of the ideological content, i.e. the loss of the literal *semantic* meanings of official utterances re-appropriated by individuals for their own purposes, but formally paying loyal tribute to their authority. The provocative comparison with the American legal practice of overtly contradictory uses of precedents in this respect seems to be misleading: the lawyers constantly strive to make sense of their pragmatic stretching of precedent-setting decisions in front of the judge via competitive interpretations, while late Soviet citizens had no willingness and were institutionally discouraged from doing just that.<sup>230</sup> The reference Yurchak makes to Bakhtin’s dialogical approach implying multiple voices that “hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other” is also in striking dissonance with the late Soviet personal experiences of the ritualized and deaf communication with no clear audience. In fact, Yurchak provides the accurate “thick” descriptions of this hollow genre of public communication:

The process of collective writing and cross-imitation cancelled out individual styles, pushing ideological texts in the direction of greater anonymity, replicability, and increasingly cumbersome norms – ideological discourse became *hyper-normalized*. The CC writers had their own slang term for the new style of composition “block-writing” (blochnoe pis'mo). The fixed “blocks,” explains the speech-writer, “consisted not only of single phrases but also of whole paragraphs. You could read these texts top to bottom and bottom to top with similar results” (F. Burlatskii, author’s interview, A. Y.). In many cases the form of blocks became more meaningful than any meaning they were designed to convey.<sup>231</sup>

The counter examples of the innocent re-appropriation of the official discourse by young people such as Nikolai, who wrote to his friend that contemporary Western rock-music was equivalent of classic music and thus should be equalled to Sputnik and other great achievements of humanity, witness not to the “lively and dynamic relationship” between young people and Soviet ideology in the 1970s; rather, this shows that Nikolai did not yet expressed his views *in public* and did not yet experienced the milder or stronger punishment for his candour.<sup>232</sup> Elsewhere, more consistently with his stimulating anthropological findings Yurchak asserts that “the average Soviet subject neither believed, nor disbelieved, official ideological messages, while the duplicity of the privately shared interests

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<sup>230</sup> “That is, the acts of copying the precise forms of ideological representations became more meaningfully constitutive of everyday life than the adherence to the literal (“semantic”) meanings inscribed in those representations. In the Soviet case, this emerging relationship did not necessarily preclude Soviet people from continuing to be invested in the ideals and ethical values of socialism.”, Alexei Yurchak, “Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, until It Was No More”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Jul., 2003, p.481

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p.491

<sup>232</sup> Cf.: “Nikolai’s passionate belief in communist ideals, and his use of prescribed ideological forms to formulate them in his discourse, did not preclude him from disagreeing with some official interpretations of these ideals and from sending these thoughts across the country through the official Soviet mail. Comparing an ideological version of the communist aesthetics to a religious dogma, Nikolai argues for a need to reinterpret Communism in more flexible, humanistic, and non-dogmatic terms, terms that allow he and his peers to see many aspects of “bourgeois” culture as compatible with Communist values.” *Ibid.*, 504



of the last Soviet generation and the official ideology made this generation “cynical”.<sup>233</sup> In other words, Alexey Yurchak without specifying it refers to two different *stages* in the socialization of the young Soviet people under the regime of hierarchical speech: when they first try to creatively inhabit the proposed official formulae and second, when after several reprisals of their individual and necessarily heterodox opinion, they learn to accommodate to the established rules and tend to lose the very ability to form an independent ideological opinion.

### *Propaganda, science and arts in face of reality*

In the late Soviet period the disturbing social phenomena and negative information were typically avoided or euphemistically veiled in the official documents and speeches. Yet, recognizing and accounting in public the individual experiences of people and framing them as a shared social reality is one of the main criteria of the credibility of public speech. The other one is a meaningful engagement with competing views, interpretations and positions. In order to convincingly advance a new ideological message (unlike the ritualized repetition of the ready-made blocks) at least a potential credibility of opposite or alternative views has to be both acknowledged and demonstrated, or else the social reality recognizable from the personal experience of the audience has to be credibly addressed. But this fundamental means of successful communication were downplayed. As in both cases, the official message could be potentially challenged by the relatively well-educated urban citizens making up their own mind: the gap between what was declared and how things were in the USSR was constantly big. Hence, the credibility of the official speech was backed neither by the judgments based on audience’s personal experience (officials felt, knew about and feared the big gap between reality and public speech), nor by the confrontation with the competing views or symbolic realms (an overt competition was prohibited by the hierarchical rules of public speech). Drawing on the *description* of the pragmatic shift by A. Yurchak rather than on his interpretation, we conclude that public speech was not designed to convince or express one’s real convictions, but mostly to express loyalty to the *status quo*. The second implicit function was to inform society about the changing weights at the top of the hierarchy.<sup>234</sup>

Surprisingly, the official rhetoric had specific (and ritualized) formulae recognizing “the gap between words and deeds”, “low self-consciousness”, “formalism” etc. but this seeming touch with reality had no practical consequences. David Benn made a careful comparison of the advancement in persuasion, communication, propaganda and advertising techniques in the USSR and in the West in

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<sup>233</sup> “In that period the average Soviet subject neither believed, nor disbelieved, official ideological messages, which, due to their particular structure and to the conditions of their production and dissemination, were experienced first and foremost as omnipresent and seemingly immutable... the non-official sphere [of private interests and practices such as exchanging audio tapes of rock-groups] was not easily observed by the state and was often experienced by the late Soviet subject as contradicting the official ideological messages. In these conditions the relation of subjects to the dominant ideology became “cynical,” as manifested in diverse behaviors of pretense and simulated support within the official sphere. This relation in turn provided the inner dynamics of change in the late-1980s.” A. Yurchak, *The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology, and the Culture of the Last Soviet Generation*, Ph.D. dissertation. Duke University, 1997, 388 p.

<sup>234</sup> Thus, Remington analyses the two media campaigns in order to compare the relative weights of Kosygin and Suslov. See: Th. Remington “Policy Innovation and Soviet Media Campaigns”, in *The Journal of Politics*, 1983, Feb., pp. 220-227

1969 reflecting on a book published by the new head of the Propaganda Department. For a while a top KGB official and the editor-in-chief of *Izvestia*, Vladimir Stepakov was appointed at this high position soon after the Khrushchev removal and represented the then new modern hard-liners' strand (surprisingly, the future ideologue of perestroika, Alexander Yakovlev was several years his first deputy)<sup>235</sup>. After reaffirming the new post-Khrushchev doctrinal foundations and moderately praising Stalin for his efficient propaganda during the WWII, Stepakov condemned several shortcomings: the lack of emotional touch in propaganda, the distance often separating it from the real life, and criticized social scientists' inability to honestly examine the causes of the still lasting social illnesses in the contemporary socialism such as corruption or alcoholism: "The trouble obviously is that scientists, carried away by the formulation of general truths, are not doing enough to investigate the concrete causes of concrete phenomena; they do not put forward any valuable scientific recommendations for the practical work". This lack of scientific boldness – Stepakov argued – comes from the fact that social scientists *erroneously* presume that their candour will lead to "the criticism of socialism as a science"<sup>236</sup>:

The task consists in profoundly and systematically studying the causes and manifestations of survivals [of capitalism]. No matter how unpleasant the facts and conclusions that we arrive at, only such an approach will help us effectively to build up our entire policy and our entire propaganda.<sup>237</sup>

More radically, Stepakov made a warning about the "boomerang effect" of statements which conflict with the *personal experience* of an audience; to address this problem he insisted on the Leninist principle stating that propaganda must be linked with life.<sup>238</sup> The vigorous recognitions of the Propaganda head could not change things and were most probably not intended for changing things that much. Because the hierarchical conventions of the public speech restricted the scope of the conclusions one could actually make at his own level – no serious institutional or philosophical conclusion challenging the statements of the higher ideological instance were allowed; the recognition or non-recognition of disturbing facts and the analysis of the social illnesses obeyed the same logic. In 1987, Gorbachev and Yakovlev will repeat the same criticism addressed to the social scientists lacking candour and giving no innovative practical recommendations. Unlike their predecessors, they will change the content and the rules of public speech acting from the very top of the hierarchy, and yet, the practical recommendations of the scientists will remain uncertain.

Did the new head of Propaganda mean what he wrote? We know that until 1987 things did not really change: propaganda did not become more persuasive and social sciences did not dare to challenge the official statements of their party-state supervisors and mutual supervision. Most probably, by showing some vividness and realism Stepakov positioned himself as both a modern and trustworthy

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<sup>235</sup> After an unsuccessful attempt of Stepakov aligned to Shelepin to attack the positions of Suslov, he was sent as an ambassador to Yugoslavia, and Yakovlev succeeded him in 1969. В. И. Степаков, *Партийной пропаганде – научные основы*, [Scientific Principles for Party Propaganda], М. 1967, 287 стр.; See: David Wedgwood Benn "New Thinking in Soviet Propaganda", *Soviet Studies*, Jul., 1969, pp. 52-63; А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, стр.323-324.

<sup>236</sup> D. W. Benn "New Thinking in Soviet Propaganda", p.61

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52

hard-liner. Even if he wanted, from his relatively high position Stepakov could not alone change the fundamental rules of communication. Within the established rules and under the supervision of censorship he could only try to formulate his own vision of the causes of social illnesses and advance his own “practical recommendations”. Following their superior within the ideological hierarchy, social scientists could confirm or elaborate these more or less bold innovations and add some nuances. But by doing so, Stepakov would assume the ideological initiative way above his rank in the hierarchy; after all, his function was not to renew the ideological content but keep the rules respected. For instance, the future reformer Alexander Yakovlev succeeding to Stepakov as the head of Propaganda was removed from his position in part due to his eager intervention against the Russian nationalist writers. Having no new agenda, the Politburo under Brezhnev was first of all preoccupied with the *status quo* and was suspicious about any ideological initiative breaking the hierarchy.<sup>239</sup>

Indeed, as D. W. Benn notes, the real changes introduced by the new head of Propaganda did not concern the stimulation of bold research on the persistent problems of socialism and enigmatic causes of “capitalism’s viability”. They concerned the correction of the non-ideological, “narrowly professional” bias of the Khrushchev’s inner-party propaganda. The novelty consisted in the introduction of the compulsory studies of such ‘ideological’ subjects as the *history of the party*, *political economy*, *scientific communism* and *Marxist-Leninist philosophy* by the “overwhelming majority” of students of the party educational system (*Partpros*). From Stepakov’s book we also learn that according to a survey, half of the group of 250 people attending political education courses reported to the interviewers that they attended them “unwillingly”; only 62% said they believed what propagandist was saying, 13% replied negatively and the remainder did not reply at all.<sup>240</sup> Benn concludes by first cautiously stating that he does want to deny that Soviet regime “enjoys popular support” and then goes against the then dominant cliché about the efficiency of the Soviet propaganda: “...one is sometimes tempted to think that any success the regime has had in getting popular support is as much despite its propaganda methods as because of them. It is hard to believe that censorship, coupled with the repetition of jargon, enhances credibility among those not already converted.”<sup>241</sup>

Aesopian language of art and fiction was the only domain whereby social reflection really took place. Literature and movies could reframe values and capture certain non-recognized aspects of the changing social reality such as growing consumerism or cynicism; but they could not formulate any articulate political ideas except making bold hints. For instance, the superiority and attractiveness of the Western consumer goods, pop and rock music, blockbuster movies, as well as the possibility to travel abroad exercised a growing influence on the social stratification in the USSR starting from 1950s. Western consumer goods occupied the top of the implicit hierarchy of consumption and served as means of *social distinction*. In 1960s “the use of consumer goods as a means of self-expression

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<sup>239</sup> А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, стр.322-326

<sup>240</sup> D. W. Benn “New Thinking in Soviet Propaganda”, 59

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 63

was a novelty”, but already accessible for the wider Soviet population.<sup>242</sup> Numerous movies, novels, plays and literary critics have addressed this issue, but within the established system of communication there could not advance better moral foundations for one’s identity without crossing the conventional borders of the ideological hierarchy.<sup>243</sup> Recognizing that Soviet men, Communist officials and non-party members alike, were literally striving to obtain blue jeans, perfume or whisky was simply impossible, without drawing radical political conclusion (to eradicate this tendency, to accept it as inevitable and surrender, or to allow a honest and open debate about these phenomena). Reality could only be publicly recognized as real by a decision from above; and from there it looked quite differently. For instance, consumerism and cynicism were seen as temporal deviations from the Puritan state socialism or from its social-democratic versions, both underpinned by vague historiosophical assumptions rather than by the reflections on the actual political and social experience. Public speech had no autonomous intellectual room to evolve and hence formed no new theoretical language to express and frame reality of the social world and of personal experience.

#### *Studying the language of perestroika: the frame of reality and impetus for action*

For the perestroika period there are several interesting and systematic studies of the rapid and even wonderful linguistic changes<sup>244</sup>. Scholars examine the explosive usage of the new idioms and terms helping to designate the past and present social realities which had previously not subject of public debate, with both negative and positive connotations, such as *Stalinism*, *stalinshchina*, *administrativno-kommandnaya systema*, *apparatchik*, *sovok*, *pokoianie* [repentance], *dukhovnost* [spirituality], *ochishchenie* [purification] as well as the emergence of the renewed or new idioms directly promoting or stigmatizing new institutions or practices such as, *perestroika*, *glasnost*, *alternative*, *alternativeness*, *consensus*, *dialogue*, *reform*, *opposition*, *mafia*, *nefromaly*, *demokraty*, or *referendum* and finally *putsch*. From an anthropological angle, Nancy Ries accounted for what she called *Russian Talk*: studying the daily conversations in trains, shops, on the streets, with relatives, and within networks friends and colleagues, etc. mostly registered during her two years in Moscow in 1989 and 1990.<sup>245</sup> Ries’ main conclusion about the daily Russian talk under glasnost concerns the transformation of the emergent rational discussion of public matters in the private talks into a specific genre of *lamentations* around the deplorable Soviet past and present.

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<sup>242</sup> О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр.453; also see: Alexey Yurchak, *Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Language, Ideology and Culture of the Last Soviet Generation*, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Duke University, 1997

<sup>243</sup> Ср. «Неудивительно, что подобное развитие событий вызывало отвращение и у сторонников и у критиков режима, которые все вместе вдруг стали обеспокоены дезинтеграцией морального оснания личности. Самоутверждение через потребление, а не через обличение себя морально-значимыми делами осуждалось и теми, и другимию В 1960ые гг. эта общая обеспокоенность вылилась в дискуссии по поводу «ядра ореха». О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, стр.455

<sup>244</sup> А. D. Dulchenko, *Russkii iazyk kontsa XX stoletia*, Munich, 1994; В. И. Максимов и др. (изд.), *Соварь перестройки*, С.-Петербург, 1992; L. Ryazanova-Clarke, Terence Wade, *The Russian Language Today*, London, 1999, Mikhael Gorham, “Natsiia ili snikerizatsiia? Identity and Preservation in the Language Debates of Late and Post-Soviet Russia”, in *Russian Review*, 2000.

<sup>245</sup> Нэнси Рис, *Русские разговоры: Культура и речевая повседневность эпохи перестройки*, НЛО, М., 2005.

The thousand-page *Socio-political dictionary of the language of XX century*, collected and edited by G. Guseinov, provides the most comprehensive panorama of the official and non-official idioms of perestroika and its immediate aftermath.<sup>246</sup> On the theoretical level, Guseinov pays attention first to the long-lasting effects of the established Soviet idiomatic expressions and second to the twin-like existence of the official and subversive non-official idioms continually exercising their influence over the post-Soviet Russian speaker. Guseinov argues that ideological “polarization” of language affects both official and non-official idioms mirroring or resisting the official ones. The last Soviet generations have interiorized the official ideology not only as the official ideological discourse, but more profoundly as their non-official and subversive language setting the most intimate mental reactions. In fact, the meaningfulness of this intimate layer of subjectivity depended on the existence of the unified and regulated official speech. Once the rules regulating public communication disappeared, the resistance and subversion previously organizing the private language lost their constitutive function, but people could not rapidly unlearn their own (anti) ideological language:

... Accepting external rules of public speaking, people inevitably change inside themselves. Those internal changes were so profound, that the cancellation of the external conditions of the ideological unity provoked the break up of all the established ways of communicating. The very appearance of free discourse shocked people; it confronted each speaker to himself as to an *Alien consciousness*... The totality of the old linguistic experience of functioning in an ideological society became now an *Alien consciousness*.<sup>247</sup>

When freely discussing about public matters Soviet and post-Soviet people suddenly lack the [negative] standard previously set by the official ideological idioms in the era when they were socialised – on the other hand, people tried and failed to build the sense of integrity and cultivate virtuous convictions which could enable them to form and share individual judgements with other virtuous citizens. The unitary public speech practiced by the new generations socialised in the USSR and the malleability of ideological convictions mutually and progressively enforced each other; the subjective autonomy was experienced as one’s ability to dissimulate, escape or subvert, rather than resist, oppose or openly assert inner convictions.

We can relate the phenomena of ironic subversion and mirroring of the official public speech in the non-official idioms (Guseinov), individualisation by the techniques of feigning (Kharkhordin), the denial of the individual’s right to form its own opinion (Kostler, Dostoevsky), and the half-thinking or amphibiousness of the Soviet elite (Yakovlev, Reddaway, Brown). Thus, perestroika was not simply the liberalization of the concealed voices, but more dramatically an experience of *new kind of subjectivity* required by the escalating changes in the rules of public speech, vocabulary, and social practices – all driven by the quest for moral integrity at the different levels of the Soviet regime from its General Secretary to the local activists. Perestroika showed that behind the veil of the “lip service” to the official unity most people had little convictions, ideas or wisdom about the society to reveal in

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<sup>246</sup> Г. Гусейнов, Д. С. П. – *Материалы к Русскому Словарю общественно-политического языка XX века*, М., 2003.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, стр. 6

public; and still many people genuinely experienced the end of censorship and liberalization of public speech as a long expected *personal* liberation.

Studying public speech during perestroika, we draw on the methodology developed by Cambridge school of intellectual history. As it is widely recognized, language serves as the mainframe of human interactions with reality, i.e. common space of action, experience and meaning. The significance of the *shared* idioms for public politics is crucial because shared idioms construct what we can call the shared reality. If a solitary man and even an animal can perceive reality and efficiently act without the mediation of words, deliberate anything like deliberate *collective action* or public politics rely on the shared view of reality constructed and mediated by the shared language.<sup>248</sup> We would like to make another methodological note on the relationship between language and reality. What Paul Ricoeur called *voluntary subjugation* of historians to reality constitutes the foundation of a scientific discourse allowing mutual exposure to criticism and competition between interpretations of the [same] reality.<sup>249</sup> Similarly, when historian reconstructs the past of human communities he can not limit himself to the reconstruction of the language, he has to posit as a principle and interpret the historical reality that men were facing, debating and changing, deliberately or spontaneously.<sup>250</sup>

As pointed by Skinner and Pocock, the introduction of the new idioms or most often the subversion of the conventional ones enables authors to successfully communicate with readers, while serving their own political purposes – i.e. to convince the audience, using idioms as a sort of hooks<sup>251</sup>. The new

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<sup>248</sup> For the analysis of Bolshevism as the paranoiac desire to abolish any representation and mediation between conflicting interests see: D. Colas, *Le glaive et le fléau: généalogie du fanatisme et de la société civile*, Grasset, 1992, pp.: 297-314

<sup>249</sup> “Une conviction robuste anime ici l’historien : quoi qu’on dise du caractère sélectif de la collecte, de la conservation et de la consultation des documents ... le recours aux documents signale une ligne de partage entre histoire et fiction : à la différence du roman, les constructions de l’histoire visent à être des reconstructions du passé”. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit*, III-ème tome, *Le temps raconté*, Seuil, Paris, 1985, p.203

<sup>250</sup> Subjection to reality is mediated by different languages, methods of investigation and of exposition according to the historical period and historical contexts. Even the question to know *what* is to be reconstructed as the reality of the past is not predefined and the replies change over time. The possibility to refer to the unique past presupposes a linguistic and non-linguistic reality, which is effectively *accessible* through the language and action in such a way, that each member of the community is subjected to the past in the significantly similar or comparable manner. The serious denial of the possibility to reconstruct the past as opposed to the reconstruction of the languages makes senseless any argumentation and discussion “about the past”. By contrast, when the metathesis of reality is accepted, there is an open and meaningful discussion even if no pre-established method of proving was agreed upon in advance. The single historical reality of co-existences beyond any particular language is not a conclusion and it can not be proved or proved wrong. The acceptance of reality defines the very genre of historical, sociological or geographical research. Cf.: This is not to doubt for a moment that the past actually existed, of course, but rather that in respect of what is at issue in historiographical disputes... ‘it may be allowed to go its own way – as it surely has’. In this perfectly straightforward way of seeing things, then, the ‘real past’ doesn’t actually enter into historiography except rhetorically – except theoretically – so that in this sense we can understand in quite a matter of fact way some of what Derrida is driving at in his (in)famous remark that ‘there is nothing outside of the text’, there is no ‘extra text’. Keith Jenkins, *On “What is History ?”*, Routledge, London and NY, 1995, p.18. Bennett considers as sufficient for historical investigation the “orientation to historical records *as if* they comprised a referent. That this referent proves to be intra-discursive and so mutable does not disable the historical enterprise... without the question of its relations to ‘the real past’ ever arising” T. Bennett, *Outside Literature*, Routledge, London, 1991, p.50

<sup>251</sup> The mutual dependency of the author and the shared language is carefully and playfully described by Pocock: “an author is himself both the expropriator, taking language from others and using it to his purposes, and the innovator acting upon language so as to induce momentary or lasting change in the way in which it is used. But as he has done to others and to

idiom in order to be accepted and used by others has to operate a certain shift in the meaning of an old idiom or empower neutral words and has to refer to a new social or mental experience better *captured* by the idiom or sometimes *induced* by it (as in case of Hobbes' *Leviathan* or Rousseau's *Social Contract*). The power of an idiom relies on its familiarity for the community and on the newly shared experience on the top of which the author intends to add his own message. The existence of a language "or a mode of utterance available to a number authors"<sup>252</sup>, following Pocock's formulation can be established on the ground of three related conditions: "a) that diverse authors employed the same idiom and performed diverse and even contrary utterances of it, b) that the idiom recurs in texts and contexts varying from those in which it was at first detected, and c) that authors expressed in words their consciousness that they were employing such an idiom and developed critical and second-order languages to comment on and regulate their employment of it..." Thus, Pocock stresses the diversity and the number of authors using a given set of idioms, the diversity of the socio-linguistic contexts of their occurrences and the existence of the second-order languages. There are three implications of this approach we can note as applied to perestroika's debates: the relative unimportance of the "great texts" as opposed to the "minor" texts<sup>253</sup>, the special attention to the recurrent and controversial *idioms*<sup>254</sup> and finally, the apprehension of both individual texts and common idioms through the reconstruction of the widely shared assumptions and shared experience – implied by the idioms and revealed in the texts.<sup>255</sup>

Indeed, during perestroika there appeared no recognized "great political thinker"; rather there were between thirty and a hundred influential minds and pens. Second, this methodological approach also implies the need to consider the conventional usages of the historic idioms at the beginning of perestroika and sometimes make some excursion to the earlier periods and to follow the evolution of the usages and meanings implied by the idioms we can thus identify. We have to show that an important number of authors used the same idioms in different contexts and types of texts. These texts should represent different disciplines, such as literary criticism, historiography or political economy, as well as different genres such as articles and essays, books, public speeches, scientific contributions, discourses in public forums so that we can identify the diversity of the uses<sup>256</sup>. The third requirement is probably the most puzzling and intriguing. The idea is to track the passages in the texts

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their language, so shall it be done to him and his", J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History, Essays on Political Thought and History*, Cambridge University Press, 1983 p.6

<sup>252</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History, Essays on Political Thought and History*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.10

<sup>253</sup> The sliding from the study of the big towards minor texts was initiated by the Cambridge school of the Intellectual history and was epitomized in Skinner's conference on "The unimportance of the Great Texts". Iain Hampsher-Monk, "Speech acts, Languages or Conceptual history", in Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree (eds.), *History of concepts : comparative perspectives*, Amsterdam : University Press, 1998 p.46

<sup>254</sup> In a sense, the main unit of our research becomes the idiom rather than a given text as whole.

<sup>255</sup> This aspect of the analysis is less thematised by the authors of the Cambridge school, but it plays a significant role in accounting for the past vocabularies and strategic linguistic moves: understanding these usages relies on the unveiling the assumptions and paradigms. Pocock in his self-accounts actually moved from the vocabulary of *paradigms* to a more linguistic description of his main units of analysis as *idioms*.

<sup>256</sup> In Quentin Skinner's vocabulary this corresponds to the enquiry in minor texts, as opposed to classic texts. See his contribution to Skinner, Quentin, Tully, James, (ed.) *Meaning and context : Quentin Skinner and his critics*, Polity Press : Cambridge, 353p., 1988

where authors explicitly refer to an idiom as given, thus giving a self-assertive evidence of its social existence and relevance. Pocock also suggest that these moments when the authors are trying to catch an established meaning of the expression they are intending to change its sense in order to better serve their own intentions. The task of the historian is to reconstruct the shared meanings and patterns of use of an idiom through the study of the first and second-order languages (describing the current meanings of idioms), while keeping in mind its inevitably polemical and contested character.

The most appropriate empirical corpus for the verification of our hypothesis are large series of texts – mostly theoretical articles and essays - published in the different socio-linguistic genres: professional historical reviews, thick literary magazines, specialized political periodicals, magazines of political theory and philosophy, and finally, speeches of acting politicians. The analysis of the public utterances has then to shift from the exclusive focus on the individual interpretations of national history and their political implications to hunting for common historical expressions in the writings on history, philosophy, politics or literature. Thus, we will try to demonstrate the emergence of the new political language in the discussions on history and witness the transfer of this language from purely historical problematic to most other political, economic and national-policy's issues. Studying the evolution of the political agenda, the rules of public debates and the way people typically related their inner self with their public utterances we can reconstruct the frame within which politicians were making reforms and publicists developed their arguments and revealed their assumptions for historians of perestroika.

Mikhail Gorbachev and his associates represented the pivotal generation in touch with the fanatical self-denial of the first Bolsheviks, careerism of the Stalin's ambitious administrators, as well as the late Soviet pragmatism and cynicism of the nomenklatura. Most other representatives of the Soviet establishment on the eve of perestroika were either cynical or lacked well articulated ideological convictions: they respected the established rules of public speech, worshiped the official cults and tried to fit what they saw as the ideological mainstream. Their mental horizon was limited by the official propaganda, but they learned to easily adapt to any new ideological and social circumstances. More virtuous and reform-minded men around Andropov and Gorbachev also had a track record of moral compromises and cautiously avoided the risk of open claims; intellectually most of them relied on the humanised variants of the Soviet ideology and historiosophy with their idioms as the main way to discuss politics and guide policies or otherwise, lacked any theoretical views on society and history.<sup>257</sup> Soviet politicians after Stalin had no experience in making judgement and adjusting one's views on how society is working and how it can be changed. Their beliefs in this respect were poorly developed

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<sup>257</sup>For instance, this was the case of Ligachev, who despite this striking limitation for a while was Yakovlev's rival for the position of the party's main ideologue. As noted, his speeches and especially his memoirs exemplify the absence of any *theoretical* worldview. Ligachev was honestly insensible to the grave theoretical challenges posed to the official ideology under the new regime of free public speech; his main line was the defence of the Soviet cults, non-capitalism and discipline.



and their ability to make individual judgement was low – the social reality they knew and could handle best was the interplay of formal and informal relations within the administrative apparatuses.

Thus, the real significance of the late Marxist-Leninist historiography was *not* to backup the popular support of the regime (this function was in fact partially carried by the Soviet cults of virtuous ancestors), but it consisted in giving to its reform-minded politicians and intellectuals the utopian policy-making benchmarks and setting unrealistically positive expectations from reforms. Those in the party establishment who were disgusted by the imposed duplicity were looking for ways to recompose their selves and implicitly favoured purifying change from within the party. They relied on the general historiographical assumptions, but they had no real opportunity to test or at least discuss their validity; the ambient resistance to reforms was perceived as an extra proof of their correctness by those who favoured change. The only commonly available map of historico-political reality guiding the new generation of Soviet leaders was defined by the Soviet ideology with its humanist and collectivist values stripped from the apology of terror against the enemy. We argue that the combination of the long-term effects of the hierarchical speech on people's subjectivity and the dominant historiographical idioms of the Soviet ideology can explain the gap between expectations and behaviour – the positive expectations of the Soviet reform-minded leadership and opportunistic and non-virtuous behaviour of the elites and people during perestroika.

In the early 1980s the rules and conventions regulating the use of public speech were one of the pillars of power exercised by the Politburo and CPSU's establishment over the party, official state institutions in the fifteen republics, army, economics and social life. The threatening shadow (rather than souvenir properly speaking) of mass political terror, along with still vigorous multi-level censorship and socio-economic pressure against the trespassers underpinned the functioning of the conventional rules of public speech under the late socialism. When the Communist leader had no new agenda to promote, this pattern of hierarchical public speech blocked the ideological mobilization, rather than served to galvanize the party and the "masses". Confronted with the need to formulate a new political agenda at the demand of the new General Secretary, Soviet intellectuals had to "invent" a new language of free public politics while the rules and status of public speech were rapidly changing. We will show in the following chapters that the main intellectual medium available for this purpose were the variations of the socialist humanistic (as well as nationalist and liberal) philosophies of history in which agency's role was to choose the right path at certain crucial moments, and then rely on the naturally beneficial forces of history. **Present difficulties and past tragedies were mostly seen as the result of an error in choosing our historical path in the more or less distant past.** The changes in the dominant historiographical schemes went in parallel with the changes in the status of public speech: as if historiography provided the theoretical ground for the self-understanding of public speech.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Scientific revolution from above: truth, morality and historiosophy [1985-1987]**

In this chapter we review the reasons of the changes in the conventional rules of the public communication and in the official political language between 1985 and 1987 considering them in the context of reformers' policy making. We advance that the general quest for personal integrity and the quest for a scientific basis to reform policies were the two intimately connected triggers of reforms and of the historical optimism of reformers. We then review the main reasons of the "return to history" operated by the reformers in their communicational strategy around 1987 in order to "cover" the ambitious economic and political reforms. On this major point Gorbachev seems to have followed Alexander Yakovlev who was personally convinced in the need of a radical purification and repentance for the terrifying millennium of the Soviet and Russian history, but could not openly advance his position. Gorbachev initially held more positive view on the Soviet history and saw no reasons to dig out the spectres of the past; until he faced objective difficulties and resistance to reforms. We also examine more in detail a few significant publicistic essays published in this period; they outline the direct link between broad historiosophical considerations and reform policy.

In 1987 the general public atmosphere defined by the wide Soviet intelligentsia stratum already gained in significance, as the new General Secretary actively sought public support for his undertakings and initiated the unprecedented glasnost, claiming that leadership had no more monopoly of truth. Inviting publicists and the reading public to share and elaborate his vague humanist vision, Gorbachev opened the way for its multiple reinterpretations he could not later control and unable to counter with any alternative interpretation – Gorbachev, like most of his less educated peers, had elaborated a crucial inability to formulate and stand for a political position. Their real and only language of politics was personal relations of authority, loyalty or cooperation within the Soviet rules. The official political theory was historiosophical in its nature, claimed its scientific basis and its moral superiority, but lacked the later two. In fact, the revisionist semi-dissent historians from the Gefter's circle provided the missing vocabulary and theoretical depth for the perestroika debates around reforms.

## **Gorbachev mobilizes the old rules of public speech undermining their meaning**

The identification of the Soviet rules regulating public speech gives a possible benchmark for analysing new aspects of the ideological evolution under perestroika. The period lasting from 1984 to 1987 can be identified as its first stage. During these years, Gorbachev produced a series of innovative idioms, arguments, and themes – albeit the rules regulating the public debates did not yet fundamentally change as well as the real practice of speech. The changes operated by Gorbachev strategically undermined the coherence of the rules, while in the immediate future he relied on their potential for top-down mobilization. The *unity over dissent* rule was mobilized; the convention of the political hierarchy was subtly questioned as well as the authority of the Marxist canon. This unexpected challenge came from the greater emphasis on the standards of scientific rationality applied to Soviet ideology and public speech which otherwise relied on the political conception of truth. We naturally focus on Gorbachev's initiatives and their context in this respect. As it might be argued, if the new General Secretary expressed the beliefs of a number of his peers and aides, his resolution and his great optimism in application of the new norms of communication set him apart in this history. His position gave him the undefined, but potentially wide field for the realization of his political vision.

Scholars agree that Gorbachev considerably relaxed the controls and encouraged more open debates, but they probably partly ignore or misunderstand the reasons and the expectations linked to his firm commitment to liberalization. We argue that the main reason was his *uncritical reception of the Soviet ideological formulas* such as scientific guidance of reforms, democracy, self-management and glasnost underpinned by his personal taste and ability to convince and engage others – which was a genuinely political instinct although deprived of the theoretical vision and practical experience of how public politics relate to political power, legitimacy and nationalist claims in the Soviet republics. His admiration of Lenin's ability to convince and guide through conviction nurtured the aspiration for a vanguard ideological leadership beyond the institutional and repressive mechanisms. In his aspiration the leader was endorsed by a number of Soviet ideologues and scholars, whose advice he asked for, and who joined his staff – such as A. Yakovlev, V. Medvedev, A. Chernyaev or T. Zaslavskaya. The personal background of Gorbachev and his University friendship with Zdenec Mlynar, one of the ideologues of the Prague spring with firm socialist convictions, favoured his orientation to pluralistic and open communication. In the third chapter we argue that along with scientific and humanistic aspirations the search for personal integrity was probably the most powerful *moral* factor determining the climate in which the demand for liberalization of the public sphere were current on top, among the official intellectuals and amid the multimillion stratum of the Soviet intelligentsia.

### *Scientific and political truths: plurality, debates and the question of unity*

In autumn 1984, Gorbachev in his position as the number two in CPSU in charge of ideology made an important ideological move, which remained almost unnoticed and could have no further

consequences if it remained an isolated event. This concerned the definition of the supreme criterion of truth and the public role of the social scientists. Gorbachev summoned social theorists not only to “comment on the decisions already made”, but also to “creatively think” over new perspectives, discussing different options and critically analyzing facts and ideas<sup>1</sup>. If accepted, this invitation would break the second and the third rules (political hierarchy could be broken and canonical texts could be found wrong) and finally threaten the unity over dissent rule. At that time, the question remained open how serious one of the most influential Politburo members was about his proposals and whether he actually has meant that social theorists should contradict, oppose or guide public policy statements.

Gorbachev’s training in law in Moscow’s State University and his wife’s PhD in sociology probably favoured this sensibility to the authority of the social sciences, exceptional for other Politburo members of the late Soviet period (but Yakovlev, who was personally co-opted by Gorbachev). Less than two years later and still at the dawn of perestroika, he insisted in two significant passages from his “Political report” of the General Secretary openly and deliberately re-connecting the ideas of unity, hierarchy, and truth with the idea of “plurality” and social practice of “discussions and disputes”:

We believe that plurality of our socialist movement – is not a synonym of disunity. Similarly, unity has nothing to do with homogeneity, hierarchy and with the aspiration of one party to the monopoly of truth...

The times set a question on the wide need for social sciences to address practical needs, to react to the changes, to keep track of the new phenomenon, to make conclusions oriented towards practice... Scholasticism and dogmatism always were the strings stopping the real accumulation of knowledge. The truth is found not in the declarations and prescriptions, the truth is born in scientific discussions and disputes; it is tested by practice. The Central Committee stands for this way of development of our social sciences... (*Applauds*)<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, after Gorbachev’s promotion of in 1985, more and more writers discussing social, historical or political issues were basing themselves on the scientific or rational argumentation, calling for a critical evaluation of any authoritative statement. Naturally, this rational-critical concept of truth was not entirely new in the Soviet Union as far as mathematics, medicine or physics were concerned; in history and the embryonic social sciences too these rational and critical claims possessed a rather well established status. However, the dominant rules of public debates relegated this criterion of rational argumentation to a secondary role. Claiming to defend rational truth (whether positively in a

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<sup>1</sup> This Gorbachev’s appeal was quoted several times in *Вопросы Философии’s* editorial in January, 1985: “еще медленно и робко берутся за решение ключевых теоретических проблем нашего развития”; “еще появляющийся в нашей литературе “комментаторский” стиль мышления, когда внимание преимущественно уделяется комментированию, разъяснению... решений по крупным вопросам общественной жизни”, “еще медленно и робко берутся за решение ключевых теоретических проблем нашего развития”. Редакционная статья, *Вопросы Философии*, 1985, №1, с. 5-6, 26

<sup>2</sup> “Схоластика, начетничество и догматизм всегда были путями для действительного приращения знаний. Они ведут к застою мысли, мертвой стеной отгораживают науку от жизни, тормозят ее развитие. Истину обретают не в декларациях и предписаниях, она рождается в научных дискуссиях и спорах, проверяется в действии. Центральный Комитет – за такой путь развития нашего обществоведения, позволяющий выйти на весомые теоретические и практические результаты. (*Аплодисменты.*)”, М. С.Горбачев, «Политический доклад центрального комитета КПСС XXVII съезду коммунистической партии Советского Союза», *Избранные речи и статьи*, Т. 3., М., Политиздат, 1987. с.249, 254

statement, or in a critical stance against someone else) was not enough to publicly uphold one's own position when the party's unity was at stake, when the hierarchy was broken, or when Marx, Lenin or the current leader's ideas could be thus dismissed. This superiority of the political conception of truth reflected both a well established custom and a deliberate rule formulated by Bolsheviks in the 1920s.

"Open discussion" and especially "creative thinking" were standard tropes of Soviet rhetoric announcing major changes in the *content* of ideology, but not implying changes in the modes of public discussions. Thus, the invocation of the necessity to reconsider new historical realities, to discuss or innovate typically signalled that the new leader was changing the general line compulsory for other party officials, stakeholders in social sciences and most publicists. The praise of the non-dogmatic attitude towards the "classics of Marxism-Leninism" was also a traditional idiom used by Lenin, Stalin, or Khrushchev when an obvious contradiction between classical texts and current politics emerged. Indeed, was Gorbachev really asking researchers and intellectuals to *show him* new ways for reforms instead of *giving them* new instructions? Was he inviting them to criticise his own proposals, or did he expect social scientists to follow him out of genuine convictions? Because no one could predict for sure that Gorbachev was going to break the established rules and conventions, this question actually remained open during the first stage of perestroika – precisely until March 1988, when the Nina Andreeva dispute almost openly split the Communist establishment for two weeks<sup>3</sup>. But, this summons of the number two and then number one in the party-state provided the ground for a much greater openness in criticism and innovations which was translated into reality by the editors and essayists.

Let us try to follow the implied logic of the Soviet rules of public speech. In theory, as far as the political and intellectual hierarchy reflects well the individual theoretical skills, no substantial dispute could emerge about the *creative development* of the doctrine – in case of any dispute the superior instance could indicate the correct and better defended position to be held for all the members within the hierarchy. Once such a statement was formulated, the responsible publicist or scientist should discard or adjust previous, wrong ideas and align them in the name of a higher regulating principle as the party observing the set of conventional rules, had more wisdom than any individual (that is the claim of most Christian Churches too). In this sense, Soviet political thought carried two alternative conceptions of "truth" taken as a norm regulating the discussions<sup>4</sup>:

A) Scientific conception of truth: free critical discussion and plurality of competing positions results in the most perfect knowledge – this incidentally left no privileged status for the original scriptures

B) Political conception of truth: the unity, hierarchy and collective wisdom of the Party provided the best guide for an uncertain individual – it was well compatible with the authority of the scriptures

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<sup>3</sup> Nina Andreeva and her supporters in Politburo were condemned by Gorbachev and Yakovlev precisely *for breaking the unity of the Party*; but the trespassers were not duly punished for this grave political error. The famous Nina Andreeva letter and the consequences it had for the evolution of the Soviet public sphere we discuss in detail in the fourth chapter.

<sup>4</sup> This clear analytical distinction was suggested by C. Armbruster in his commentary to one of the presentations at the research seminar conducted by E.A. Rees in the European University Institute.

In Soviet political tradition the line between these two conceptions had never been drawn, while the political conception had a superior stance in case of discord as it corresponded to the dominant regime of public speech and Soviet political regime in general. Following Lenin's and Stalin's rhetorical claims in defence of their own revisionisms, the party leaders and stakeholders routinely condemned the extremes of both "dogmatism" and "revisionism" in dealing with Marxist heritage. Publicists regularly used this double formula along with the representatives of the ruling class<sup>5</sup>; the other rules matched this double formula allowing (when there was a need) condemning either "innovators" or "conservatives" from the vantage point of the current party leadership – the only agency able to *rightly* apply Marxism-Leninism in the given historical circumstances. This pattern overruled the critical-scientific argumentation, which was thus limited but not disqualified. The mandate for orthodox revisionism (*creative development*) since Stalin's codification of Marxism-Leninism was reserved to the General Secretary or Politburo, while the condemnation of dogmatism and revisionism by others acquired a plainly routine character in the 1970s. In 1984-1986 we can trace more frequent criticism against "dogmatism" without its pending "anti-revisionism" counterpart, and the gradual *leaning* to the scientific conception of truth. These shifts potentially threatened not only the first two rules, but also the third rule of public debates, namely the legitimate use of the references to Marx, Engels and Lenin. As we have seen, in 1984 Gorbachev has already questioned the basics of the Soviet regime of public speech at the time, when the official aides of Chernenko were publicly referring to the "sharpening of the ideological struggle on the world arena" in order to call for greater ideological discipline within the political and media hierarchy<sup>6</sup>. The consistency of Gorbachev and his associate in promoting free critical debate gradually paid off beyond their expectations.

Let us recover and analyze typical examples of the new critical attitude directed against the dogmatic use of quotes and citations from the classics. Sociologist and philosopher V. Shevchenko addressing several non-orthodox issues such as the Asiatic mode of production in July 1985, condemned the "superficial attitudes towards the classic heritage" as being a shield for the "personal point of view of the author"<sup>7</sup>. What is openly condemned thus is the abuse in citations and the ambition to promote

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<sup>5</sup> Candidate to Politburo members, and a "conservative" ideologue B. Ponomarev reiterated this formula reacting to the call for more innovation made by Gorbachev; he first condemned both heresies: "the revisionist denial and dogmatic emptiness" (ревизионистское отрицание и догматическое выхолащивание) before concluding that thanks to Lenin's ideological innovations the honor Revolutionary Marxism was saved by Russian Bolsheviks: "Честь революционного марксизма была спасена русскими большевиками", «Об исторических судьбах рабочего класса», *Коммунист*, 1985, №1, с.31; Compare it to S. Zemlayano's commentary on Lenin's ideological achievements: "Непривзойденный триумф классического марксизма, свободного как от перекосов ревизионизма, так и от всякой догматической закостенелости" С. Земляной, «Действенность принципа партийности», *Новый Мир*, 1985, № 11, с.245

<sup>6</sup> К. У. Черненко, Обращение к участникам всесоюзной научно-практической конференции «Совершенствование развитого социализма и идеологическая работа партии в свете решений июньского (1983) пленума ЦК КПСС», *Вопросы Философии*, 1985, №1, с.3. "...Чтобы решительно поднять идеологическую работу на уровень больших и сложных задач, решаемых сегодня партией и народом, лучше учитывать реальность современной международной обстановки, обострение идеологической борьбы на мировой арене".

<sup>7</sup> "Актуальной остается и борьба с поверхностным отношением к классическому наследию, когда оно используется в виде отдельных изъятий из текста цитат единственно для подтверждения личной точки зрения автора, которая в таких случаях нередко излагается вне всякой связи с современным состоянием философской теории, исторического материализма..." В. Н. Шевченко, «Некоторые итоги исследований в области исторического материализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1985, №7, с.26

one's own "personal" views. The criticism still refers to the political conception of truth in unity and not to its critical and scientific alternative, but the questions set are clearly challenging the canon. A young historian M. Sverdlov entering a lively discussion on the genesis of feudalism in Ancient Rus' also condemned the "battle of [Marxist-Leninist] citations". Affirming the right to discord and different tendencies in historiography backed by different interpretations of Lenin's quotes about Russian history, he claimed that Soviet science had already overcome the "childish disease of automatic citations"<sup>8</sup>. In this example, the author more openly relied on the scientific conception of truth and directed it against those who would defend their positions with references to Lenin's or Marx's ambiguous remarks. The attack on the abuse of authoritative citations from the standpoint of the scientific conception of truth was not yet fully overt so far as it concerned only the quotes from the too short passages taken out of context and not the very principle of authoritative quoting. Thus, the rhetoric authority of the classics remained beyond open criticism, while many cases when quotes were used were dismissed as abusive citation.

Studying the articles published in the leading reviews during 1986, we can see a more explicit defence of the principle of plurality and criticism as a necessary condition for the *scientific* quest for truth. Historian of political thought Kamensky claimed the right of social scientists "to serve the un-dogmatic truth", "its right for the quest, even the right to get lost in the labyrinth"<sup>9</sup>. Another famous scientist, historian of culture and later one of perestroika's leading publicists, L. Batkin disqualified the very idea of the "original context" and therefore "original meaning" with an open reference to hermeneutics proposing instead the "infinite of contexts corresponding to infinite of history"<sup>10</sup>. A critical assessment of the above mentioned quotes representing a Soviet variant of "cultural studies" can discount them easily as the expression of few marginal voices having no real impact on the evolution of public rules – still it marked an important shift – announcing the third (relativistic) conception of truth spreading in the last phase of perestroika. In 1986 the accent was on the critical debates and creative development as conditions of truth. Thus, one of the most prominent and well-established historians, academician S. Tikhvinsky radically changed his public position on scientific pluralism, ideological enemies and the free quest for truth during 1986. In his article dated January 1986 and consequently written probably a few months earlier – as for an academician the period of pre-publication could be slightly shorter, than normal six months delay for other authors – Tikhvinsky was unambiguous: "Eclectics lead to ideological surrender to the mercy of our enemies, and to the loss of ability to formulate the uniquely correct and truly scientifically evaluate the perspectives of the world social development"<sup>11</sup>. By the end of the same year Tikhvinsky, who might have felt that the wind was turning, started praising "open criticism and creative discussions". He then also deplored that there were still some historians who "...even worse [than dogmatism], defend their monopoly of the truth in

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<sup>8</sup> «Марксистско-ленинская наука преодолела "детскую болезнь" цитатничества, восприятия творческого учения марксизма-ленинизма как догмы", "битва цитат" [Ленина]; М. Б. Сverdlov, "Современные проблемы изучения генезиса феодализма в древней Руси", *Вопросы Истории*, 1985, № 11 с.75

<sup>9</sup> З. А. Каменский, «Введение к афоризмам Чаадаева», *Вопросы Философии*, 1985, №1, с. 121

<sup>10</sup> Л. М. Баткин, «Два способа изучать историю культуры», *Вопросы Философии*, 1986, №12, с. 105

<sup>11</sup> Translated from Академик С. Тихвинский, «Советская историческая наука в преддверии XXVII съезда», *Коммунист*, №1, с.98



the interpretation of several questions, abusing with accusations against those who defend different points of view”<sup>12</sup>. We can skip the moral judgments about the likely duplicity of the renowned Soviet specialist of Chinese history – the main argument here is to register a clear shift between the two alternative and coexisting conceptions of “truth” as the model of regulation used in public debates.

In a much more nuanced way another academician and future prime minister of the Russian Federation, E. M. Primakov, marked his distance concerning superficial references for Lenin as reverence to an established tradition. When citing Lenin’s ideas, Primakov claimed to refer to the classic analysis of the founding father “not merely as a duty to the tradition” or “as a gratitude to the founder”, but out of the recognition of the genuine intellectual actuality of Lenin’s analysis of imperialism; also suggesting that many other authors used to do otherwise<sup>13</sup>. And finally, one of the most prominent politicians of perestroika and Gorbachev’s close ally vigorously called the research institutes’ directors and the deans of the social science departments for more “*pluralism, discussions, boldness and risk taking*” against “*dogmatism, boring reiteration of the basic truths*”, “timid thinking” and “collective self-indulgency” in social and political sciences. This political leader would become known as the leader of the conservative fraction – and member of Politburo responsible for the ideology – E. K. Ligachev. In 1986 he not only encouraged social scientists to be bolder, but also criticized the indecisive editors who “it is no secret tend to reject any bold, innovative texts”. Ligachev concluded his passage with an important remark attempting to establish a balance between criticism, innovation and the socialist achievements: “Every thing which is directed towards the reinforcement of socialism and exploration of its strengths should see the public light”<sup>14</sup>.

The unanimity of M. Gorbachev, A. Yakovlev, E. Ligachev, E. Primakov, S. Tikhvinsky and L. Batkin all claiming more pluralism, criticism and free discussions should be addressed as a significant shift in the assumptions underlying the rules of public debates. But one should be cautious. In respect to the general Soviet rules of public debate, this common shift may result from two possible causes: Soviet intellectuals accepted the primacy of the scientific conception of truth over the political one, or they obeyed the summons of the General Secretary who prepared the ground for compulsory changes in Soviet ideology as this was the case before. In the first case, we see the real change, but in the second the old pattern persists. The real change resulted from these two logics simultaneously. The reformers most probably did not distinguish between them very well and implicitly presumed that the two logics were compatible, unlike Christian thinkers who explicitly argued about the compatibility of Revelation and Reason. This ambiguity characterised the radical reforms carried out under Gorbachev’s leadership which we can call at this stage “scientific humanist revolution from above”. Indeed, when the country’s political leader asked for pluralism and public discussions, which implied breaking the intellectual hierarchy, most of the loyal stakeholders supported this call in practice but at

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<sup>12</sup> Translated from Академик С. Тихвинский, “Некоторые вопросы работы советских историков”, Доклад на Общем собрании Отделения истории АН, 21.10.86, *Вопросы Истории*, №12,

<sup>13</sup> Е. М. Примаков, «Ленинский анализ империализма и современность», *Коммунист*, 1986, №9, с.102

<sup>14</sup> Е. К. Лигачев, Доклад на всесоюзном совещании завкафедрями общественных наук, *Коммунист*, 1986, №15, с.13-15

first sparing the very top from open criticism (until Nina Andreeva unwillingly made it possible for more progressive writers). The differences of motivations, nuances made and corresponding adjustments are striking when we compare different protagonists of this shift towards rational and critical conception of truth. The real benchmark for perestroika's evolution was how this amendment of the established conventions was working in practice. Soviet audience (as well as the researcher of this period today) could only judge on real precedents, when the two conceptions contradicted one another and actors had to choose, which conception of truth is *de facto* superior in the public space. By the end of 1986 there was a consensus led by Gorbachev and supported by liberal socialist reformers from the research institutions of the Central Committee, sincere Communist puritans like E. Ligachev<sup>15</sup>, well established careerists such as S. Tikhvinsky or apt opportunists like V. Korotich, concealed radical reformists like A. Yakovlev and independent-minded scientists such as L. Batkin or M. Geffer: priority should be given to the scientific and critical conception of truth and – this was crucially not understood by most protagonists – at the expense of political unity and stability. Some of the brightest representatives of the new generation of Soviet political and intellectual elite did not consider these two conceptions as conflicting or in tension. Gorbachev personally assumed that they were compatible with each other and with the project of the humane socialism seeing no ground for accusations in “contradictions”, which were dismissed as an abstract criticism<sup>16</sup>.

#### *The Scientific truth and the new generation of editors-in-chief*

In 1987 the emphasis on the primacy of the scientific conception of truth became more widespread and gradually acquired the status of a common place – actively defended and promoted. Thus, rational and critical conception of truth bore the taste of fresh fruit it was. We will cite but a few most telling passages: “we should not receive truth as a gift”, “let us loose our ideological innocence which actually exists only on the front pages of the newspapers”, “...the contemporary reader wants to understand himself who is right and why. He wants to see the plot of the ideological drama and not only its outcome”<sup>17</sup>, “the competition of ideas and approaches should become a norm in social sciences”, “dogmatic approach based on a few quotes which are not subject to discussion”, condemnations of “hiding behind the authority”, and finally an interesting pirouette: “In Lenin's words,

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<sup>15</sup> This is an original and precise characteristic of Ligachev's political position by A. Shubin, which can be automatically identified with conservatives or radical reformers. In 1949 he was fired from his first important position as Trotskyst and therefore raised up again. See A. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы Перестройки. Упущенный шанс*, М., «Вече», с.29

<sup>16</sup> Compare the way Gorbachev reflected on his innovation in his memoirs: ««Противоречия» подобного рода можно обнаружить без особого труда и в других местах доклада. В нем присутствует общепринятый в те годы тезис, что, «опираясь на преимущества социализма, страна в короткий исторический срок совершила восхождение к вершинам исторического и социального прогресса». А буквально через два абзаца обосновывается «необходимость дальнейших изменений и преобразований, достижения нового качественного состояния общества, причем в самом широком смысле слова. Это прежде всего научно-техническое обновление производства и достижение высшего мирового уровня производительности труда. Это совершенствование общественных отношений, и в первую очередь экономики. Это глубокие перемены в сфере труда, материальных и духовных условий жизни людей. Это активизация всей системы политических и общественных институтов, углубление социалистической демократии, самоуправления народа». Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, Книга 1, М., 1995, «Новости», глава 9, часть 2

<sup>17</sup> И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №10

socialism will give a million times greater diversity of opinions than capitalism”<sup>18</sup>. Within this trend plurality of opinions could even appear as the proper feature of the Soviet state socialism. The majority perceived the shift towards the critical pluralistic conception of truth as no threat and as an unproblematic norm. But this rapid alignment to the pluralistic nature of socialism was lightly weighed.

Three out of the five reviews we surveyed in 1987 reflected this trend with one and a half exceptions. The articles published in the Russian nationalists review *Nash Sovremennik*, and (during the first few months of the year) in the leading official theoretical bimonthly *Kommunist* with more than 2 000 000 copies print run, did not reflect the growing support for pluralistic and critical search of truth in contemporary politics, social sciences or history. The authors publishing in the *Nash Sovremennik* remained simply tacit about this methodological novelty, while the editor-in-chief of the *Kommunist*, I. Frolov at least at one occasion even tried to downplay the new move in order to defend the established political conception of truth. We refer to an exchange during an international round-table in the presence of the leading reformist ideologue A. Yakovlev, and his Bulgarian colleague, N. Irbidjakov who invited the audience to re-consider the theoretical richness and novelty of the sixty years of historical experience after Lenin’s death. In other words, Irbidjakov suggested that Lenin’s account of history and politics may have become less relevant today in the new historical context<sup>19</sup>. The editor of *Kommunist* cautiously reacted to this revisionist proposal: endorsing the search of “all the new approaches in social sciences”, Ivan Frolov in his position as host suggested the following question to address at the round-table: “Which new forms of discussions, of exchange of opinions, of collective forms of debating shall we identify exploring the advantages of our collective thinking in order to deliver massive strikes against anti-communist bourgeois propaganda?”<sup>20</sup>. Frolov represented the liberal wing of the Soviet ideological establishment, was Gorbachev’s close ally and for a certain period his aide on ideological questions. Thus, an open-minded academician I. Frolov, who battled against the infamous orthodox Trapeznikov when editor of *Voprosy Filosofii*, now tried to recall the necessity to counter-balance pluralism with the principle of ideological unity in the face of the ideological enemy. As noted earlier, this political conception perfectly obeyed to the genuine Soviet pattern regulating the public speech – reified in the unity over dissent rule and probably more intuitively perceived by the political and academic stakeholders.

The previous chief editors of the leading theoretical and literary reviews such as *Novyi Mir*, *Voprosy Istorii*, *Voprosy Filosofii* from our main corpus and the chief editors of less “theoretical” weekly reviews such as *Ogonek* and *Moscow News* – had been removed between 1985 and 1986 and new editors were appointed with A. Yakovlev’s brokerage facilitated by his official responsibility for overseeing

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<sup>18</sup> "Социализм, по словам В. И. Ленина, даст в миллион раз большее разнообразие мнений, чем капитализм" В. Г. Алтухов, «Октябрь и современные проблемы диалектики общественного развития», *Вопросы Философии*, 1987, №11, с.19

<sup>19</sup> Н. Ирбиджаков, Выступление на международном круглом столе «Новые теоретические проблемы современности» в редакции журнала, *Коммунист*, 1987, №1, с.19

<sup>20</sup> "Какие мы должны искать новые формы дискуссий, обмена мнениями, коллективные формы обсуждения, чтобы на основе коллективной мысли наносить массированные удары по антикоммунистической буржуазной пропаганде?" И. Фролов, Выступление на международном круглом столе «Новые теоретические проблемы современности» в редакции журнала, *Коммунист*, 1987, №1, с.20-21

ideology in the mass-media, while another official ideologue E. Ligachev controlled the propaganda apparatus and ideology in national education. Ivan Frolov has just recently replaced Richard Kosolapov, a close ideological aide of the previous General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko and a very “agile” conservative<sup>21</sup>; but still Frolov did not fully endorse Yakolev’s new theoretical approach. His attempt to neutralize the pluralistic conception of truth in the format of the political language referring to the supremacy of the ideological struggle against political enemies, proved to be a short-term tactical move. In the first half of 1987 Frolov was replaced from his position as *Kommunist’s* editor-in-chief and moved to the editorial board of *Pravda*. Finally, *Kommunist* opened its pages for more pluralist vision of Soviet politics and society. The first issue of the review with the new and an even more liberal editor-in-chief, N. Bikkenin, opened with Alexander Yakovlev’s benchmark article:

It is extremely important that our social sciences recover their good name, critically and self-critically analyzing the errors of the past. This will be a healing step. To say the least, not often our philosophers, political economists, historians and literary critics took the leading role in promoting what is new and progressive. The habit of self-criticism was lost... We now set a new beginning. There is no way back. Who, if not creative Marxism-Leninism, can and must ensure the breakthrough into the unknown... There is no alternative.<sup>22</sup>

This example shows that despite the fact that reformers undertook a strong reformist move towards a pluralistic and critical conception of truth during the first stage of perestroika they have seized control over the public sphere following the established Soviet rules of intellectual discipline and hierarchy.

Among the five reviews from the corpus only *Nash Sovremennik* retained its editor-in-chief Vikulov in place until 1989, and it was actually the only review, which did not catch up with the shift to the pluralistic conception. However, this review did not overtly oppose or criticised the novelty. The systematic consideration of the articles published in *Nash Sovremennik* between 1985 and 1987 shows that the move towards the pluralistic conception of truth was simply ignored; this was a tolerable, nuanced reaction to Gorbachev’s initiative for a second rank journal of the All-Russian-Union of Writers. The Soviet conventional rules prohibited open public opposition and confrontation of the position advanced by the higher level in the political-ideological hierarchy, while they allowed certain re-interpretations and individual emphases. However, the Soviet model started to suffer from a mild rhetorical distortion of its two other rules: respect of the political and intellectual hierarchy and legitimate references to the founding texts. The practical question was whether the new leadership

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<sup>21</sup> Gorbachev in his memoirs positively notes the new appointment of Ivan Frolov whom he counted among honest and open-minded Communists. «Фролов стал главным редактором «Коммуниста», и очень скоро уровень журнала резко повысился, он активно включился в разработку и пропаганду перестроечных идей. В это время я поближе узнал Ивана Тимофеевича, оценил независимость его суждений...» Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, Книга 1, М., 1995, «Новости», гл. 10

<sup>22</sup> "Очень важно, чтобы наши обществоведы побыстрее восстановили свое доброе имя, критично и самокритично проанализировали просчеты в прошлом. Это будет целительный шаг. Мягко говоря, не часто наши философы, политэкономы, историки, литературоведы выступали в роли застрельщиков и защитников нового и передового" с.5 Начало положено. Назад пути нет. Кто, как не творческий марксизм-ленинизм, может и должен обеспечить прорыв в незнание... Другого - не дано" с.20, А. Яковлев, «Достижение качественно нового состояния советского общества и общественные науки», *Коммунист*, 1987, №8, с.5, с.20

seriously intended to back up not only new idioms but also the practical implication of the scientific quest for truth. We argued that the three conventional rules and the political conception of truth shared by the Soviet political class formed a relatively stable and viable pattern over almost six decades accommodating both mobilization and stagnation, but in the long term contributing to its intellectual decay. As Gorbachev and Yakovlev supported by like-minded aides and by the intelligentsia were serious about rational, pluralistic and critical truth, then the stability of the Soviet public regime was in fact endangered. Incidentally, the generational shift of the top leadership coincided with the gradual abandonment of the established model of the regulation of public speech. However, socialism as the main framework of the reforms was never publicly questioned. The new generation setting its reform agenda mostly ignored the built-in reasons and constraints of the established political model, while the officially declared humanist, scientific and democratic aspects of Soviet ideology seemed to them both just and reliable. Moreover, as the unfolding of perestroika will show they relied on the hierarchy and leadership ensured to the central leadership by the Soviet conventions. Andropov was probably a unique man from the previous cohort in power willing to reform the USSR and aware of the political constraints – but his own vision of reforms needed was extremely limited by the lack of glasnost. Yet once applied glasnost and promoted a public quest for scientific truth, this openness was of the most important factors triggering the dissolution of the Communist regime and its state infrastructure.

## Scholarship of the ‘ferment concerning Soviet history’ at the beginning of perestroika

Situating our research within the academic literature we first review the major contributions to the study of perestroika’s public history debates: their central arguments and conclusions. We will also try to explore the possibility of contributing to the current understanding of the public history debates during perestroika with the hypothesis on the formation of the new political language essentially historiosophical in its idioms and metaphors. This politico-historical language with its intellectual limitations, accents and referential experience served as the main media for political discussions and thus can be studied as one of the likely factors influencing the course and the outcome of perestroika.

### *Main contributions, converging conclusions and themes*

As a whole, the number of existing studies and the width of the accounts on the perestroika’s “ferment concerning Soviet history” and its specific aspects indicate the relevance of the subject and may encourage further exploration (but it also discourages from doing so, by its quality and breadth).<sup>23</sup> The most extensive studies on the subject in terms of coverage and depth belong to R. W. Davies who wrote two important volumes as well as several articles on what he specifically called perestroika’s *mental revolution*, that we will extensively use along the following pages, and to Maria Ferretti who published a substantial book in Italian and several connected articles in French and Russian in a psychoanalytical perspective of the traumatized national memory; Stephan Wheatcroft was the first to discern the political energy unbound by the historical debates already in July 1987, and later thoroughly reviewed the evolution of the importance of the popular and academic historical subjects in the Russian press, TV and including the administrative decisions such as change in the names of the streets<sup>24</sup>. Japanese researchers along with several European colleagues brought together by Takayuki Ito covered the major changes in the Soviet historiography and public history between 1985 and 1988 setting the major questions and using rich documentary data<sup>25</sup>. Most other scholars writing after 1991 addressed more specific aspects of the perestroika’s debates on history providing focused thematic

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<sup>23</sup> We borrow the expression “ferment concerning Soviet history” from R. Byrnes’ contribution to an important collection of articles addressing this subject in a systematic way: Robert F. Byrnes, “Some Perspectives on the Soviet Ferment Concerning Soviet History”, in Ito Takayuki, *Facing up to the Past: Soviet Historiography under Perestroika*, Slavic Research Centre, Sapporo, 1989, pp.11-21

<sup>24</sup> The first book of R. Davies covers the period between 1985-88 and the second 1988-93, thus exceeding perestroika’s timeframe. R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, London & Indiana, 1989 and Robert W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, St Martin’s Press, London and NY, 264p., 1997. Maria Ferretti, *La Memoria Mutilata*, La Russia Ricorda, Corbaccio, Milano, 491 p., 1993. S. G. Wheatcroft, «Unleashing the Energy of History : Moscow 1987», Australian Slavonic and East European Studies, Vol.1, №1, July, 1987, pp.85-132. Stephen G. Wheatcroft, “History in Russia Since the Unleashing of the Energy of History (January 1987) and the Fall of the USSR (December 1991): Ten Years on the Archive and Historical Front, 1987-1996”, in Vladimir Tikhomirov ed. *In Search of Identity Five Years Since the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Centre for Russian and Euro-Asian Studies, University of Melbourne, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Takayuki Ito, *Facing up to the Past: Soviet Historiography under Perestroika*, Slavic Research Centre, Sapporo, 1989, 292p.

accounts. We refer mainly to a detailed and stimulating account of the reception of Stalinism during perestroika by Elaine McLarnand and a complete and meticulous reconstruction of the process of Bukharin's rehabilitation made by Marc Younge<sup>26</sup>. The central themes of history debates until 1988 revolved around the events in Soviet history with several hot spots. They were analysed by R. W. Davies in his first book *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution* and in the collection edited by T. Ito (both books were published in 1989): Stalin and Stalinism, NEP, mass terror and repression in 1937-1938, Lenin's figure, collectivisation, and the two Revolutions of 1917. Beyond, the reforms of the Tsarists government at the beginning of the XX century, and especially Stolypin's reform, was the period of the Russian (pre-Soviet) history, most extensively discussed in the central perestroika press.

### *Revising the role of the Soviet historians in the public debates under perestroika*

The public significance of history debates makes unanimity among the researchers addressing this theme. In the general accounts of perestroika too, public history debates and the reappraisal of the Soviet history are extensively treated – often in special sections and chapters devoted to this subject<sup>27</sup>. Students agree that the rise of the public interest in history was politically motivated from above and had a major political feedback from below that was unexpected by the reformers. The intense, passionate and sometimes morbid interest in the past was not just an enlightened or nationalistic curiosity of an educated public for national history; for perestroika the past exercised a quasi magic attraction as the realm of hidden facts, names, lessons, crimes and high culture, the past served first as the main theoretical matrix for understanding present-day politics and turned into a de-legitimizing and disuniting mirror. Most scholars agree that the real stakes were the coherence of the official ideology and chiefly the legitimacy of the Soviet regime in the eyes of wide strata of the population.

The public significance of the historiographical debate manifested itself first in the fact that, as R. W. Davies, M. Ferretti and N. Shiokawa have pointed out, the initiative in the debate belonged not to professional historians but to politicians and then was taken on by publicists with different

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<sup>26</sup> Elaine McLarnand, The Politics of History and Historical Revisionism: De-Stalinization and the Search for Identity in Gorbachev's Russia, 1985-1991, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Feb., 1998). Marc Younge, *Strax pered proshlim*, AIRO-XX, Moscow, 2003, 334p.

<sup>27</sup> We refer in particular to the several authoritative books and synthetic reviews of perestroika made by the leading British, French and Russian scholars: Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1998. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007. Арчи Браун, «Перестройка и пять трансформаций», in *Прорыв к свободе. О перестройке двадцать лет спустя*, Альпина, 2005. E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992. Nicolas Werth, *Histoire de l'Union soviétique, De l'empire russe à l'Union soviétique 1900-1991*, PUF, 1992. Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *La gloire des nations, ou la fin de l'Empire Soviétique*, Fayard, 1990. А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки, упущенный шанс СССР*, «Вече», М., 2005. Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, 1985-2005, АСТ-Астрель, М. 2007. А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 1996. И. Стародубровская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Варриус, 2004 (2ое изд.)

backgrounds, mainly in social sciences such as sociology, philosophy and economy<sup>28</sup>. Professional historians became involved in the public debate only after a certain delay, while they could not catch up with the pace of the ongoing debates. The “notorious” exception of Yuri Afanassiev, who was critically addressing the most politically loaded aspects of the official historiography already in 1986, does not contradict this general assessment. Indeed, Afanassiev was a unique case and he positioned himself as an acerbic critic of the Soviet historiography and its mandarins. The connected argument implied that the state of the historical science in USSR was particularly poor in that field, as almost all innovative and independent research on the Soviet period in history was banned a few years after the end of Khrushchev’s rule; and up to the time of perestroika historians lost the intellectual initiative: “Indeed, historians are waiting for somebody to come and restructure... They simply cannot work without new guidelines because they have always been used to party directives”<sup>29</sup>.

Thus, the independent minded historians simply tended to escape this field and found “refuge” in more distant and less politically significant periods of history<sup>30</sup>. In a more balanced review, R. W. Davies noted the professional quality of the articles published by a number of the Soviet historians such as V. Danilov, P. Volobuev, or V. Buldakov; however, Davies also implied that historians could not compete with publicists for public influence<sup>31</sup>. Haruku Wada radically put it: “The Brezhnev system which may be called the last and highest stage of Stalinist model of socialism was a system without historical memory or a system based on the ban of studies of historical past.”<sup>32</sup> In similar terms, Byrnes affirmed that “Soviet professional historians have played a minor and tardy role for a number of reasons”.<sup>33</sup> In particular, the role of Prof. Trapeznikov, the head of the Department of History in the Academy of Sciences USSR during 1970s, was widely acknowledged as very negative by both Russian authors during perestroika and Western and Japanese specialists. The conjunction of the poor state of academic discussion and active public debates created a situation when the crucial historical questions were addressed in the most appealing and new ways by publicists setting the political agenda.

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<sup>28</sup> As an example, we can cite Shiokawa’s critical remark: “Some writers in the field of belle-lettres, instead of historians, took the initiative in taking a new glance at the history of the Soviet 30s. But they tended to concentrate on such sensational events as the mass repression or the collectivization and only occasionally touch upon the problems of broader social structure.” Nobuaki Shiokawa, “Perestroika and the New Perspective on Soviet History: the Case of the History of Industrialization”, in T. Ito, *Facing up to the Past*, 151

<sup>29</sup> Hans-Joachim Torke, “The History of the pre-Revolutionary Russia in the Current Debate of Soviet Historians” in T. Ito, *Facing up to the Past* p.98

<sup>30</sup> “In the 1970s independent-minded historians went into other disciplines or at best into other periods”, R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.178. Compare: А. Я. Гуревич, *История историка*, М., РОССПЭН, 2004, cc.93-111. R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.178

<sup>31</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.29

<sup>32</sup> Haruki Wada, *Perestroika and the Rethinking of History in the Soviet Union, 1986-88*, in Ito Takayuki, Op. cit., p.35

<sup>33</sup> Robert F. Byrnes, “Some Perspectives on the Soviet Ferment Concerning Soviet History”, in Ito Takayuki, Op. cit., p.17



The account of the first years of historical glasnost made by R.W. Davies showed the internal struggle within the official academic Institutes such as *Institute Marxisma Leninisma*, *Institut Vseobshei Istorii* etc. between the office holders and independent-minded historians or semi-dissident professional historians such as Volobuev, Danilov or Gefter<sup>34</sup>. Haruku Wada also suggested that even the elections to the academic institutions in 1988 confirmed the dominance of the old guard trained in the 1940s and 1950s, with the exception of individual appointments backed by the direct and mighty political support from Gorbachev's team, such as the nomination of a respected specialist of Japanese history Iskenderov as a head of *Voprosi Istorii*, the main historiographical journal. The mandate of Iskenderov was to reverse the falling interest of readers and increase the audience of the journal by addressing a larger professional and non-professional public and competing with highly successful thick journals, but also weeklies and daily newspapers extensively covering the controversial historical issues for tens of millions of keen Soviet readers. There is no evidence that Iskenderov and his journal somehow succeeded in this enterprise – it seems to confirm the general consensus on the failure of the professional historians to impact on the public history debates. This appraisal is incomplete if not wrong. The chapters IV, VI and VII of the present research might provide the ground for overturning the picture of the passive or reactive role of the professional historians in perestroika's public debates on history. The analysis of the political language formed in 1985-1991 attests the role of the historiographical circle of M. Gefter and P. Volobuev in articulating *the idioms and questions* which were to become *the major intellectual frame of perestroika*. This confirms the key argument of R. Markwick, who convincingly showed the “*catalysing*” function of the Sector of methodology run by M. Gefter (1964-69) in 1960-70s and has pointed at the continuity with perestroika's historiographical debates, and allows us to extend this thesis to the political thought of perestroika<sup>35</sup>. In this sense, Markwick's studies consolidate the background for the present thesis.

#### *Why did reformers and reading public readdress the past?*

Most scholars agree or are complementary to each other on the political motivations of the reformers who addressed the potentially controversial aspects of the Soviet past. Most scholars also note that the public welcomed the return to the past by its high interest for these historical revelations and debates. Behind the first texts expressing new revisionists view on the Soviet history between 1986 and 1987, we can distinguish several logics, which together made public history so important for perestroika: a) [search for national identity]: Long term interest of the large Soviet intelligentsias for the pre-revolution national pasts; b) [revival of memory]: Spread of the personal accounts of the Soviet repression coming to surface mainly through arts and literature at the margins of the official public

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<sup>34</sup> Robert W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, London & Indiana, 1989, pp.167-180

<sup>35</sup> Roger D. Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography, 1956-1974*, Basingstock and New York, Palgrave, 2001, 327 pp. Roger D. Markwick, “Catalyst of Historiography, Marxism and Dissidence: The Sector of Methodology of the Institute of History, Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1964-68”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4, Soviet and East European History, (1994), pp. 579- 596.

sphere; c) [political uses of the past]: Political agenda of Mikhail Gorbachev and more significantly the agenda of one of his closest allies and advisers, Alexander Yakovlev, who encouraged a series of historical publications arguing the need for significant reforms in USSR presented as the return to the Leninist principles altered by his successors; d) [historiosophy]: The perceived inadequacy of the official historiography still formally underpinning the official party-state ideology created a long-term temptation of a major historiographical revisionism. The exploration of the logic of the political uses of the past by politicians gives us more clear answer to the question, why the debate on history sparked in the public sphere precisely in the second half of 1987 while the other factors – the interest towards the national pasts, memoirs on repressions and revisionism existed well before. As was first shown by Davies, the discussion on Stalin and NEP was authorized by the sudden decision of Gorbachev's, (who at first discounted "Stalinism" as an unfriendly anti-Soviet concept and the return to the past as untimely for perestroika), and strongly pushed by his closest ideological ally and newly promoted Politburo member – Alexander Yakovlev<sup>36</sup>. Gorbachev's team prepared this discussion first through a series of personal changes in the direction of the several magazines, artistic unions and in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, then by a few "bold" non-official publications commanded by the reformers in 1986 and 1987, and most decisively, by the official release of the movie "Repentance" in January 1987. The first historical publications dealt with the economic problems and the missed historical opportunities of the NEP.

In a closely controlled but extremely large media system, the signal to start a broader discussion naturally came from above and the message was gradually channelled and altered through several levels and cycles before *History* became the main theme and the main language. We can note that Marc Junge in his analysis of the political mechanisms of the rehabilitation of Bukharin showed that Gorbachev's team was very sophisticated and accurate in the preparation of this event to counter the hidden inner party tensions and resistance to this symbolic process timidly engaged already since 1960s<sup>37</sup>. To complete the understanding of the motivations of the leadership using historical revision as an ideological cover for reforms, we should turn to three other logics accounting for perestroika's historical ferment beyond the direct promotion of the reform-policies as in case of NEP: nostalgia for the past from below, reformers' next step in promoting glasnost, and reformers' tactical move to get political support of intelligentsia.

As Robert Byrnes, Eleine McClarnand and Maria Ferretti independently suggested, this political move "from above" was joining a more long term and spontaneous trend "from below" expressed in the general interest for the national past(s) and the individual and group quests for the lost or repressed *memories or identities*:

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<sup>36</sup> We mainly follow here R. W. Davies's extensive account of the preparation phase of the history revision in *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, op. cit. pp. 27-47

<sup>37</sup> Marc Younge, *Strax pered proshlim*, AIRO-XX, Moscow, 334p., 2003

Gorbachev in part has been responding to these powerful concerns and popular interest to the past, which include some liberal nationalist, and some conservative nationalist overtones as well as other negative attitudes towards communism and communist rule.<sup>38</sup>

According to Shubin, the emergent interest in the distant national past, its monuments, spirituality and texts, as a source of more vivid and rich identity than the late Soviet ritualized public speech clearly marked the end of 1970s.<sup>39</sup> This evidence confirms the strong popular and wide intelligentsia's interest in the Soviet, Russian and national republican pasts as witnessed by the unmatched *success* of novels, plays and movies addressing the central historical problems and gradually made public since 1986. These artistic works continued the literature-centric Russian and Soviet cultural traditions carrying significant political overtones and messages under the carapace of political censorship. Among the most influential apparitions in this genre we can note the movie *Repentance* announcing the issue of the moral responsibility for the terror and Stalin's dictatorship, the Shatrov's revisionist plays on Lenin implying the return to the true although hesitating leader facing the dilemmas he could not always resolve and the autobiographical novel by Rybakov *Arbat's Children* staging the life of the first generation of the leading Bolsheviks' children in Moscow city and Stalin, who's wicked but banal thoughts were for the first time pictured in fiction. These previously forbidden or self-censored pieces opened the floor for repressed reflections and memoirs on the bitter personal and generational experiences. The next wave of publications brought to the interested Soviet public the writers, philosophers, poets and painters of the so-called Russian Silver age, also from the White Russian emigration as well as the Soviet artists whose works were put under softer or stricter censorship. After 1989, the notorious dissidents and opponents of the Soviet rule were allowed to publish in the leading reviews: including V. Grossman's harsh philosophical novel *Everything Flows* and in 1990, the monumental documentary evidence against the Soviet Union's inner terror and labour camps brought together by Alexander Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*. The significance of these literary publications strengthening and diffusing the implied political ideas with strong emotional and aesthetic appeal – are well understood and documented in the academic literature<sup>40</sup>. In the present research we do not cover this aspect of the public history debates giving priority to *theoretical* and *publicistic* texts. We account for this fictional wave only when literary critics were turning into political observers and

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<sup>38</sup> Robert F. Byrnes, *Some Perspectives...* op. cit., p.16; “При этом дореволюционная Россия становится предметом ностальгической идеализации (напомню, что и тот, и другой процесс были подспудно начаты еще в 1970-х гг., как в подцензурной публицистике, так и в текстах самиздата)”. Мария Ферретти, «Расстройство памяти: Россия и сталинизм» [www.polit.ru](http://www.polit.ru), <http://www.polit.ru/publicism/world/2002/11/20/474876.html>

<sup>39</sup> We would like to refer to the evaluation of this process by M. Gefer in 1979: «Сейчас же, скорее, иное привлекает и вселяет надежду – заново растущий интерес к прошлому, ближнему-дальнему, ко всему, что содержит память, позволяя вступающим в жизнь новым поколениям разобраться в наследстве, вновь ощутив себя наследниками». А. Шубин, *От застоя к реформам, СССР в 1917-1985*, стр.343, см. стр.336-410

<sup>40</sup> See in particular: R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, London & Indiana, 1989, R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, St Martin's Press, London and NY, 1997. Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны, 1985-2005*, АСТ-Астрель, М. 2007. А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 1996.

when the major articles written by G. Popov, I. Klyamkin or Y. Afanassiev were inspired by novels, plays or movies.

Despite the large convergence on the *political* motivation of the leaders in launching the historical discussions, the concrete interpretations of the political meaning of the Gorbachev's "return to history" were more diverse. Patrick O'Meara saw the main Gorbachev's motive in his desire to gain *public support* of the intelligentsia against the Party bureaucracy who were showing an increasing resistance to his project of political reforms<sup>41</sup>. In this sense the concrete political content of the historical message did not really matter for Gorbachev as far as the main goal was to attract intelligentsia' support in general by speaking on the subject intelligentsia would recognize as intimately familiar. Shlapentokh made a similar point when stressing that Gorbachev was the first General Secretary seeking the support of the liberal wing of the intellectuals. According to Shlapentokh this support was especially needed to back the criticism on the existing political and economic regime through the denunciation of Stalinist past as its direct background<sup>42</sup>. In other words, the political meaning of the return to the past had priority over the support of intelligentsia as such. To complete this picture R. W. Davies suggested that the debate on the past was first instrumental for Gorbachev to legitimise the policy of Glasnost against the Conservative majority in the Politburo: "the debate of 1987-8 was intertwined with Gorbachev's successful struggle for glasnost' against Ligachev and conservatives in the party"<sup>43</sup>. Beyond the search of the new type of public legitimacy in the support of the intelligentsia, Gorbachev was ensuring the favourable reception of his major *economic policies* by the rehabilitation of NEP as a possible socio-economic model for the future development of the Soviet Union. Thus, Shiokawa critically noted that in the discussion on the NEP and industrialisation "the arguments on 1920s and 1930s are meaningful to them [the participants of the debates] only as means to know the historical roots of the present diseases, of which they wish to cure their homeland." Mark Junge has provided the systematic evidence in favour of the conclusion that the rehabilitation of Bukharin in 1988 followed a carefully prepared initial discussion on NEP which was started in 1986, two years before the rehabilitation, and had an overall political meaning – the support for the new economic policies (also launched in 1986):

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<sup>41</sup> Patrick O'Meara, "Glasnost, Soviet culture and the debate on history", in Ed. R. J. Hill, Jan Ake Dellenbrant, *Gorbachev and his Perestroika*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 1989, p. 233

<sup>42</sup> "For the first time, the political elite considered liberal intellectuals its allies and encouraged their political activism. Intellectuals responded with almost unrestrained support of the regime, and performed many important tasks, including the denunciation of the country's Stalinist past and the present bureaucracy...", Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power. The post-Stalin era*, Tauris&Co, NY, 1990, p.279

<sup>43</sup> R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, St Martin's Press, London and NY, 1997, p.2

Despite all the disputes among historians about the role of Bukharin... Bukharin was transformed into the symbol of the inherent systematic possibility to reform socialism; and the story went first of all about economic reforms of the socialist system and about creation of “socialism with a humane face”<sup>44</sup>.

In her account Elaine McClarnand erroneously presented the first stage of perestroika’s debates on Stalinism and NEP as a more spontaneous and anonymous process with only some cues from Gorbachev and some new ideas from intellectuals; nevertheless, she understood the political meaning of the debate on history as building ideological support of the “leadership’s effort to reform the Soviet bureaucratic command economy”<sup>45</sup>. Despite the potential public interest, the political regime and the state of mind of the Soviet intelligentsia in 1986 excluded any possibility of *non-sanctioned* and coordinated publications forming a “media campaign” from below<sup>46</sup>. Gorbachev’s reliance on public support in his quest for the new socialist recipes in politics and economy and A. Yakovlev’s focus on the repentance for past crimes as a means to dismantle the rotten Soviet ideological and political systems arguably converged with wider public expectations and allowed the surfacing of this concealed interest to the hidden past. Thus, the “spontaneous” interest of the Soviet and republican intelligentsias in the national and family pasts, and reformers’ intentions to use history to advance their political and economic agendas triggered the debates on the Soviet past, which were both, intended and emerging. The motivations attributed by scholars personally to Gorbachev in his call for a public reassessment of Soviet History were arguably threefold: a tactical move to attract the liberal intelligentsia as a new kind of political ally, a step towards glasnost as political norm, and probably most consensually, a way to promote the new economic and political reforms. The three motives underpinning Gorbachev’s historiographical agenda fitted together well. The situation seemed to be under the full control of Gorbachev rapidly establishing his personal power against the rapidly vanishing collective “oligarchic rule” of the late Brezhnev’s system. But the nationalistic aspirations behind the nostalgia for the past and the unsolved ideological questions opened by the reappraisal of Soviet history in the context of the rediscovery of the prosperous and civilized outside world fuelled the mental revolution in the public debates, which were steadily liberated by the reformers from any control.

In general, most academic studies of the historical debates of perestroika focused on the rapidly changing *attitudes* towards Stalin, Lenin, NEP, and October revolution which resulted in the cumulative loss of the state-party political legitimacy. These aspects are well documented and studied

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<sup>44</sup> “Несмотря на разногласия в научных учреждениях относительно роли и значения Бухарина... Бухарина превратили в символ возможности реформирования социализма, имманентно присущей системе, причем речь шла прежде всего о реструктурировании социалистической экономической системы... и создании социализма с «человеческим лицом». Marc Younge, *Strax pered proshlim*, AIRO-XX, Moscow, 2003, p.211

<sup>45</sup> Elaine McClarnand, “The Politics of History and Historical Revisionism: De-Stalinization and the Search for Identity in Gorbachev’s Russia, 1985-1991”, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Feb., 1998) p.154

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Shlapentokh consistently asserted that after the onslaught on the dissidents undertaken by Youri Andropov, most of the intellectuals abandoned their hopes to influence the regime through a public dissent or sophisticated and hidden criticism. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power. The post-Stalin era*, Tauris&Co, NY, 1990, p.224. Vladimir Shlapentokh, *A Normal Totalitarian Society: How the Soviet Union Functioned and how it Collapsed*, M.E. Sharpe, 2001, p. 151

although the theoretical frame applied to the questions of the legitimacy and illegitimacy may be refined. We would like to pay particular attention to the seemingly neutral arguments and language used by different protagonists; reconstructing the assumptions, arguments and the implications of the prevailing idioms used in this period, rather than reproducing them in the second-order descriptions, can allow us a slightly better understanding of perestroika debates. Our research is based on the hypothesis that public history debates during perestroika constituted its most vibrant and effective *political philosophy*. We will try to demonstrate how peculiar historiosophical assumptions influenced the strategy of reforms, fuelled public debates and gave *common* theoretical arguments for the peaceful dissolution of USSR to the authors with different political values, implicit suppositions or else declared views on history. This approach reveals the unity of historiosophical assumptions and of the idioms framing the public debates, which was not previously presumed or demonstrated by the scholarship of perestroika.

## Key themes, agenda and historical idioms

The period between 1985 and 1987 is clearly marked by the character and language of M. Gorbachev who also shaped the key policies and appointed new men to key positions in politics and the media. We do not intend to represent in-depth individual ideas of the most distinguished authors or outline more or less coherent stance shared by a number of authors. The task of this section consists in identifying the key idioms shared by a number of authors – and as public communication still was regulated by the Soviet rules the new idioms and new arguments in use were mostly springing from the mouth of the leader-and-ideologue renewing and galvanizing the official ideology in order to mobilize people for change. First significant intellectual innovations were made public by the non-official authors mostly in 1987, but these were still rare interventions; the real impact of these innovations became evident only in 1988.

Confirming the established accounts of perestroika, we have identified several important and stable patterns and few emerging idioms in circulation in the Soviet theoretical reviews and political speeches between 1985 and 1987. The particularity of this first period as we described it above is that the public sphere globally functioned within the traditional Soviet framework, which restrained free circulation, competition and above all – any spontaneous galvanization and polarization of public debates. The ideological initiative legitimately belonged to the General Secretary or his close collaborators – and therefore, the new idioms framing the most important public discussions emanated from the top Party leader. Like Khrushchev's bold and haphazard ideological innovations, Gorbachev who had a particular personal taste for mobilizing ideological rhetoric<sup>47</sup>, introduced a series of slogans and renewed Soviet concepts promoting an active reformist agenda. We start our review from the examination of the way in which Gorbachev's new vocabulary of *uskorenie*, *perestroika*, and *glasnost* circulated in the upper (or "arcane" and theoretical) stratum of the official public sphere, which we focus on in this research.

The most remarkable common feature of the second set of idioms spontaneously appearing as a development and refinement of perestroika's new vocabulary was their historical and historiographical connotations. These key idioms spontaneously emerging during the first stage can be seen as responses to the two favourite historical references: 1937 purges and NEP. They contributed to the diffusion of Gorbachev's ideas while giving them slightly different accents and thus preparing the background for possible future moves. M. Gorbachev did not actively use these historical idioms and in this sense they appeared spontaneously, however they were initially meant to support perestroika's agenda. For the widening intellectual discussions from 1985 to 1987 Soviet history as a subject occupied the dominant position, which is particularly well manifested by a number of idioms forged to describe the Soviet past: *repentance*, *choice of historical path*, *administrative system*, and *historical*

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<sup>47</sup> See a detailed biographic account of this Gorbachev's propensity in Олег Давыдов, *Горбачев. Тайные пружины власти*, Гелеос, М., 2002

*alternatives*. This “historical turn” in public consciousness characterizes the whole period of perestroika and this issue is of central importance for our thesis. Therefore, the question of a possible trigger of general public interest towards historical problematic should be addressed while studying the emergence of these historiographical idioms and topics. The personal role of A. Yakovlev appears to be crucial in this respect; we would also like to explore the intellectual context, which proved to be extremely receptive to Gorbachev and Yakovlev’s vision.

In summarising this emerging “debate”, we would like to highlight the generic theme and the very term of *humanist socialism* and the widespread belief in the ability of human agency to understand history and society *scientifically* in order to project a more humane and socialist society.<sup>48</sup> This aspiration was grounded in the belief that a scientific understanding of society and history was only hindered by the dogmatism and moral corruption of the previous period. This belief in the possibility of both humanist and scientific social engineering marked probably the most striking and fundamental feature of late Soviet political thought at the moment when it attempted to formulate a new political project freed from administrative, repressive and doctrinal constraints of Stalinism – still keeping its emotional attachment to Lenin’s personal cult. Humanist social engineering without violence and without *a priori* defined doctrine was a new ideal. In the last chapters we argued that this aspiration to know and direct history around 1989 ceded place to the reliance on the wholesomeness of the natural-historical process. Both were moved by some sort of chiliastic reliance on the pace of History and disconnected from political experience.

#### *Gorbachev’s new agenda and new vocabulary*

Perestroika meant first of all a new vocabulary and new style in Soviet public politics. The now well established idioms from this vocabulary have gradually appeared as the key words of the new reform policy promoted by M. Gorbachev: *glasnost* was announced as early as December 1984 in an address to party workers. *Uskorenie* was the first Gorbachev slogan and corresponding policy he drawn from Andropov’s heritage as soon as he assumed the Communist Party’s top position in March 1985<sup>49</sup>; and he announced *perestroika* as the generic name of his strategy of reforms already in the April theses in 1986. As often noted, the word perestroika itself was not invented by Gorbachev and since Lenin’s

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<sup>48</sup> In his political report for XXVII party congress pronounced on 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1986 Gorbachev used the words *humanist, humanism and humane* ten times characterising the nature of socialism in USSR. In the report for 70 years of October revolution we again count ten occurrences linking humanism and Soviet socialism. «М.С.Горбачев. Политический доклад центрального комитета КПСС XXVII съезду коммунистической партии Советского Союза 25 февраля 1986 г.», in М. С.Горбачёв, Избранные речи и статьи. Т. 3. М., Политиздат, 1987. Горбачев М.С., Октябрь и перестройка: революция продолжается. Доклад на совместном торжестве, заседании ЦК КПСС, Верховного Совета СССР и Верховного Совета РСФСР, посвящён 70-летию Великой Октябрьской соц. революции, в Кремлевском Дворце съездов, 2 ноября 1987 г. М.: Политиздат, 1987

<sup>49</sup> More precisely, Gorbachev and Ryzhkov started preparing this policy of acceleration under Andropov’s short rule and with Andropov’s personal backing, See Р. Г. Пихоя, *Советский Союз: история власти. 1945-1991*, Сибирский Хронограф, Новосибирск, с.408-410;



latest articles such as “On the perestroika of the work of SNK, STO and minor SNK”<sup>50</sup> perestroika meant a reform, an improvement or a minor reorganization. In the Soviet Union this word constantly reappeared with this meaning in official political documents and speeches in the Soviet history from mid 1920s to early 1980s<sup>51</sup>. Gorbachev’s key innovation consisted in gradually conferring on this routine Soviet word a more ambitious scope of an all-embracing set of reforms or Reformation. The elevation of these words in the rang of concepts and even the reification of their meaning served Gorbachev by insuring a better reception of his new policies seen as historically inevitable; but to a certain extent it blinded himself and most of his supporters about the real difficulties they were facing.

The need of reforms, first of all economic reforms, was accepted by the majority of Politburo members since the rise of Andropov, whose initiatives Gorbachev directly continued – as it is well established, several key members of the Gorbachev reform team including Ryzhkov and Ligachev were first promoted and designated by Andropov who asked them to prepare a blueprint for wider economic and later political reforms.<sup>52</sup> As David Kotz summarized it, “When Gorbachev took the office, the theme of economic reforms was already well established. Andropov had called for it and Chernenko had done nothing to discourage it”<sup>53</sup>. As far as the presumed plan of reforms, there is convergent evidence that there was no plan of reforms, but certain accepted ideas on the need for democratisation and more autonomy in economic management.

We can try to resituate the political and economic context of the reform policy on the eve of perestroika. The economic stagnation of the Soviet Union in early 1980s was not officially recognized; but Politburo members were aware that the Eleventh Five-Year plan (1980-1985) remained largely unfulfilled and in several key areas the Soviet economy registered negative growth<sup>54</sup>. The decrease in oil prices in 1986 made the economic stagnation even more disturbing as oil and gas revenue constituted the main source of foreign currency. This revenue allowed the Soviet Union to keep up its heavy military spending, maintain the pro-Communist regimes around the world, purchase the necessary technological equipment and finally to massively import grain<sup>55</sup>. Soviet economist and

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<sup>50</sup> “О перестройке работы СНК, СТО и Малого СНК”, В. И. Ленин, *Полн. собр. соч.*, Политиздат, М., 5 изд., т. 36

<sup>51</sup> Let us provide few examples: “Величайшие задачи второго пятилетия потребуют от нас быстрой и крутой перестройки системы работы и методов руководства” Речь товарища Ларина, 5 февраля 1934 г, XVII Съезд ВКП(б); A title of an official document from 1941: “О перестройке народного хозяйства на военный лад”, ГАОПДФ Архангельской области, A title from the “minutes” of Viatka’s regional party organization in 1930s: “Докладные записки, информации, сводки по организационно-партийной работе: о работе партячеек, борьбе с правым уклоном, проведении партдней, перестройке работы”, Центр документации новейшей истории Кировской области, Ф.100, 474 ед.хр., 1930-1934 гг., оп. 1-7,

<sup>52</sup> See: Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, p.50

<sup>53</sup> David Kotz, *Revolution from Above*, Routledge, 1997, pp. 54-55; See also, Ilya Zemtsov, *Chernenko: The Soviet Union on the Eve of Perestroika*, Transaction publishers, 1988, pp.144-147

<sup>54</sup> This is partly recognized during the XXVIIth Congress of the Party: the official statistics claimed 17% growth instead of 20% as it was planned. See Ilya Zemtsov, John Farrar, *Gorbachev: The Man and the System*, Transaction Publishers, 1989, p.54-55. The Gorbachev’s chief adviser, Abel Aganbeguyan confessed that between 1980 and 1985 there actually was zero growth and following Archie Brown, the political leadership probably operated with embellished data, “which in any event, showed a sufficiently discouraging trend”. Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, Oxford University Press 1997, p. 134-136; According to V. Selyunin and A. Khanin, the first phase of the negative growth stated as early as in mid 1960s. Also see: Peter J Boettke, *Why Perestroika Failed*, Routledge, 1993, p.23

<sup>55</sup> “Agriculture is the most dramatically troubled sector of the Soviet economy. Over the past five years alone, the USSR has had to import more than 30 million tons of grain annually”; “As we already noted, for many years now the USSR has had to

liberal reformer E. Gaidar in his recent book in a similar way outlined the crucial importance of the financial imbalance of the foreign trade of USSR and the almost total ignorance of this financial problematic by Politburo members and ruling Soviet elite in general<sup>56</sup>. This later emphasis actually signals that if the general economic slowdown was noted by and worried the Politburo and its advisors, the financial imbalance and the fall in oil prices were not the *motivation* or the *trigger* for policies of perestroika, but a factor worsening its chances for success.

Gorbachev in person was optimistic about the state of the Soviet economy at least until the end of 1988 when he faced the gravity of economic shortfalls – and by this time most dramatic of them partly resulted from his own policies. In this sense, the economic slowdown worried the Soviet leadership as a sign of decay contrasted with the perceived vigour and growth of Western capitalist economies. Leading Western economies demonstrated an unprecedented rapidity in the implementation of new military and civil technologies and this threatened first of all the geopolitical positions of the USSR in the world<sup>57</sup>; its positions in the Eastern Europe were already threatened by the stalemate in Poland, and accumulated discontent in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. By contrast, in the Soviet Union there was not even a shadow of organized protest, but an acute sense of growing moral and economic corruption. Thus, reviewing the really perceived political motivation for reforms in USSR in 1985 we can retain the gradual loss of geopolitical competition with the West and the inner sense of moral decay rather than economic factors such as fall in oil revenues or growing financial debt.

The growing economic, technological and socio-cultural lagging of the Soviet Union from its geopolitical and ideological enemy, supposedly representing the historically doomed economic formation (i. e. capitalism), was the most tangible challenge. The last influential Soviet statesman who made his career under Stalin, Andrei Gromiko arguably felt more than others the gradual weakening of the empire's influence in the world since the post-war period<sup>58</sup>, but the absence of public debate operating on the basis of real information made this challenge less perceivable and difficult to publicly face even for Gorbachev, while the grave financial problems were the least relevant issue for the Politburo members. This point is often overlooked by commentators looking back at perestroika with the knowledge of its major consequences. Archie Brown and Stephen Kotkin provide a more sober evaluation on this point – reforms precipitated the crisis, but there is no ground to say that the perceived crisis produced the reforms<sup>59</sup>, although one can convincingly show that the Soviet Union

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import vast quantities of grain and other foodstuffs just to meet minimal population needs. Moreover, acquisition of advanced Western industrial goods and technology, already long important to Moscow, is now a central element in Gorbachev's revitalization program" Ilya Zemtsov, John Farrar, *Gorbachev: The Man and the System*, Transaction Publishers, 1989, p.54, p.59,

<sup>56</sup> Е. Гайдар, *Гибель Империи. Уроки для современной России*, М., РОСПЭН, с.203-204

<sup>57</sup> V. Grechko warned Soviet leadership already in 1981-82 pointing at the growing gap in military technology.

<sup>58</sup> Compare: "Громыко не был тайным реформатором, да и сам Горбачев к марту 1985 г. еще не стал таковым. Но ситуация в Москве становилась с каждым годом все более неприличной. Министр иностранных дел, по долгу службы обязанный блюсти честь державы за рубежом, понимал это как никто другой. Начав трудиться на ниве международных отношений еще в сталинские времена и став главой МИДа аж в 1957 г., Громыко видел, что при подобном развитии событий мы можем вскоре перестать быть великой державой." Дмитрий Травин, «Пролог: встреча четырех генсеков. 1985: Московская весна», *Звезда*, 2006, №1

<sup>59</sup> Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World*, p.5-6

was facing serious problems on the world scene and with its socialist satellites. Strikingly even when Gorbachev sought to justify the “objective necessity” of perestroika he merely referred to the “pre-crisis” situation.<sup>60</sup> So what were the motivation and the understanding of the situation by the reformers? We argue that the second assumed motivation of the reformers after the geopolitical challenge can be best understood as moral dissatisfaction with corruption, apathy and lack of integrity: this description accounts for the perceived need of reforms and also for the surprising optimism of the reformers. “We can not live this way any more” – these allegedly were the words of Gorbachev to his wife on the eve of his election as General Secretary and Eduard Shevardnadze recalls the similar words he heard from Gorbachev before perestroika in a frank private conversation. In his book *Perestroika* published in 1987, Gorbachev for the first time spoke about the “braking mechanism” blocking the country’s economic growth (“The country began to lose momentum”) multiplying the examples of the slowdown, and second he spoke about moral corruption:

... This [slowdown], unfortunately, is not all. A gradual erosion of the ideological and moral values of our people began... Decay began in public morals; the great feeling of solidarity with each other that was forged during the heroic times of the Revolution, the first five-years plans, the Great Patriotic War and post-war rehabilitation was weakening...<sup>61</sup>

Two issues were at the top of the official agenda – economic acceleration (as means to regain geopolitical stability) and moral revitalization. What kind of reforms was best suited to address these two problems? How to win the genuine national support for reforms and mobilize people as well as party and managerial staff in the state economy? Gorbachev personally privileged the second question and showed himself a skilful communicator: mobilizing Soviet establishment, intellectuals and ordinary people who would find the right strategy was his own strategic bet.

Gorbachev’s closest ideological adviser was A. Yakovlev. Recalled from his Canadian exile, he played the crucial role in setting perestroika’s communication strategy in the Soviet press and media<sup>62</sup>. Yakovlev selected the key editors-in-chief, coordinated the preparation of all Gorbachev’s official speeches, regularly wrote theoretical articles and even retrospectively received the title of the “architect of perestroika”. In addition, Gorbachev regularly collected advice and opinions of the best specialists available in the Soviet economic and social sciences: A. Aganabegian, T. Zaslavskaya, G. Arbatov, O. Bogomolov, L. Abalkin, and others, who at different stages framed the law projects or

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.5

<sup>61</sup> See the English translation in: Richard Sakwa, *The Rise and the Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991*, Routledge Sources in History, p.425

<sup>62</sup> The memoirs of the key Gorbachev’s assistants and aides, and mid-rank executives of the CC apparatus independently and univocally certify the centrality of A. Yakovlev’s activity in the media coverage and ideology of perestroika. Yakovlev controlled the appointments of the key editors, regularly met and supervised their work, prepared the official speeches of Gorbachev and at several occasions influenced Gorbachev’s personal positions on the top political issues. See: В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995; Виктор Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, «Жизнь и Смысл» М., 2005; Черняев А.С., *1991 год: Дневник помощника президента СССР*, М., ТЕРРА, Республика, 1997; Медведев В.А. В команде Горбачева: взгляд изнутри. М.: Былина, 1994

conceived specific reforms<sup>63</sup>. The initial strategy of economic reforms was designed by a number of scientists and by two indirectly competing men within the executive power: Gorbachev's aide Vadim Medvedev, who very early proposed radical price liberalization, and prime-minister Nikolai Ryzhkov who decided to invest in the heavy machinery plants, remaining loyal to his background and following the advice of academician A. Aganbegian<sup>64</sup>. The anti-alcohol campaign actively run by Ligachev can be situated as the reply to both concerns for the economic growth and the moral corruption. It failed on both fields, caused a serious budget deficit, stimulated the black market (yet, during the campaign the life expectancy increased as also did the birth rate), and undermined the top position of E. Ligachev.

### *Nothing new: uskorenie, perestroika and glasnost*

In his first public speech as General Secretary Gorbachev proclaimed that the country's main goal was *uskorenie*, or acceleration of the then deficient economic growth. In his famous April theses on the Party Plenum (by his title recalling Lenin's call for peace and for the preparation of the socialist revolution in April 1917) he announced the major reforms under the name of *perestroika*. We shall cite the two passages from the two key speeches pronounced in March 1985 and April 1986:

The strategic line, developed by the XVI Party Congress, subsequent Plenums CC with an active participation of Y. Andropov and K. Chernenko was and remains unchanged. This is the line of rapid social-economic growth... We have as a task to achieve a decisive breakthrough in putting the national economy on rails of intensive development. We should take the most advanced scientific and technical positions, and achieve the highest level of productivity of collective labour in the shortest term.<sup>65</sup>

In 1985 Gorbachev stressed the continuity of economic reforms with his predecessors. In February 1986 in his *Political Report* to the XXVII Party Congress, *uskorenie* remained the central focus and was mentioned more than 50 times and featured in the headings, while he used the term *perestroika* over 30 times along with the word *rekonstruktsia* (literally reconstruction as *perestroika* is often translated in English); the idiom *perestroika* still played the traditional role corresponding to the established Soviet usage, e.g. a administrative change or improvement<sup>66</sup>. In the subtitle of a section of

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<sup>63</sup> Despite the rightful criticism of Gorbachev's personal wavering and indecisiveness in taking radical economic measures, there is evidence, that under his leadership Soviet policy makers attracted the best specialists and attempted to follow their guidelines. As two prominent contemporary economists V. Mau and P. Sutela suggest: "Economic perestroika was based on the best advice that Soviet economics could offer. The failure of policy was also a failure of doctrine", Pekka Sutela, Vladimir Mau, "Economics under socialism: the Russian case", in Hans-Jurgen Wagener (ed.), *Economic Thought in Communist and Post-Communist Europe*, Routledge, 1998, p.36

<sup>64</sup> See a well informed and non-stereotyped account of Dmitry Travin: Дмитрий Травин, «1986: "Съезд победителей". 1987: Третий рубеж», *Звезда*, 2006, №2

<sup>65</sup> Речь Генерального Секретаря М. С. Горбачева на Пленуме ЦК КПСС 11 Марта 1985г.; quoted in *Вопросы Истории*, №4, с.8

<sup>66</sup> Cf.: "участившиеся экономические кризисы и очередная технологическая перестройка производства изменили обстановку", "перестройки хозяйственного механизма, системы управления"; М. С.Горбачев, «Политический доклад

his Report Gorbachev spoke about the “reconstruction of the national economy”. Perestroika was officially announced as a more general term during in the spring 1986 in Gorbachev’s April thesis. In July, he already suggests that his plan is wider and even more ambitious when he compared the design of perestroika to a genuine revolution, a comparison evident in its purposeful ambiguity:

Today’s perestroika embraces not only economy, but all other spheres of public life: social relationships, political system, spiritual and ideological sphere, style and methods of Party work, of all our cadres. Perestroika is a word which contains a wealth of meanings [*emkoe slovo*]. I would equate the word perestroika and the word revolution... this is a genuine revolution in the whole system of social relations in our society, and first of all in the solution of the new tasks generated by the spurring technical and scientific progress.<sup>67</sup>

This passage shows how consciously and aptly Gorbachev promoted the idiom *perestroika* encouraging other authors to reproduce it in different contexts, when he suggests that “perestroika is a word which contains a wealth of meanings” before equating perestroika and revolution. An attentive commentator of this comparison tried to neutralize the ambiguity of this strange kind of revolution in an already socialist country: “Perestroika does not address the question of political power: 70 years ago this question was irrevocably solved by the October revolution. Perestroika changes the power relationships not in the sense of new classes but in the functional sense”<sup>68</sup>. The more common phrasing would however avoid mentioning this delicate issue. A. Yakovlev formulated this interpretation very clearly: the idea of continuity between perestroika and the October revolution refers to two periods of radical change sharing the same ideals and goals<sup>69</sup>. The fate of the two close and at first interchangeable<sup>70</sup> concepts designed to symbolize the new strategy of the Party differed: *uskorenie* with its clear economic connotation and direct link to economic growth (which did not follow as expected) offered little space for rhetorical manoeuvres, while *perestroika* with its all-embracing reformist drive finally came to stand as the name of the whole period of Gorbachev’s leadership and also as a positive label for the “triumphal collapse” of the Soviet Union. Already during the first stage, we find very few occurrence of the use of *uskorenie* in public debates and it mainly appears in official

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центрального комитета КПСС XXVII съезду коммунистической партии Советского Союза», *Избранные речи и статьи*, Т. 3., М., Политиздат, 1987. с.124, 156

<sup>67</sup> “Нынешняя перестройка охватывает не только экономику, но и все другие сферы общественной жизни: социальные отношения, политическую систему, духовно-идеологическую сферу, стиль и методы работы партии, всех наших кадров. Перестройка - емкое слово. Я бы поставил знак равенства между словами перестройка и революция... это настоящая революция во всей системе отношений в обществе и, прежде всего, задач порожденных бурным научно-техническим прогрессом”; М. С. Горбачев, Речь Генерального Секретаря в Хабаровске, *Правда*, 1986, 31 Июля

<sup>68</sup> В. Миронов, «Идея революции во всемирной истории», *Коммунист*, 1987, №16, с. 89

<sup>69</sup> Thus, A. Yakovlev provides a well balanced decoding of Gorbachev’s key metaphor: “Октябрь и современная перестройка, между которыми пролегло семь десятилетий, преемственно и неразрывно связаны, едины в главном. Перестройка - время фундаментальных перемен, продолжение в новых исторических условиях дела Октября”. А. Яковлев, «Достижение качественно нового состояния советского общества и общественные науки», *Коммунист*, 1987, №8, с.3

<sup>70</sup> Again A. Yakovlev in his role of the responsible for ideology defines the essence of perestroika’s doctrine as *uskorenie* still in 1987 although deploring certain lack of precision in the conceptual elaboration of the reforms; А. Яковлев, «Достижение качественно нового состояния советского общества и общественные науки», *Коммунист*, 1987, №8, с.4

documents<sup>71</sup>. The competition between the two terms did not last long-time; *uskorenie* more closely associated with the continuity line from the previous period yielded priority to *perestroika* rhetorically elevated by Gorbachev to mark the new and all-embracing strategy of reforms. However, beyond the official documents, in 1986 the term *perestroika* regularly appeared on the pages of the official theoretical review *Kommunist*. However, scientific and “thick” literary reviews did not yet use it; this delay can be explained by the delay between the submission and publication of articles varying from several months to one year. The leading theoretical Party review *Kommunist* naturally could and should react more rapidly to political innovations and the emergence of the latest idioms in official speeches. The situation changed dramatically in 1987 when *perestroika* becomes the buzzword in all public discussions. Since, *perestroika* also became the proper name of the historical period and symbolized the inescapable reformist movement of the Soviet history – as “there was no constructive alternative to *perestroika*”.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the idiom of *perestroika* acquired a rich and ambiguous set of meanings.

We encounter the word *perestroika* in a variety of contexts: *perestroika* as a “general process”<sup>73</sup>, “*perestroika* of economy”, “*perestroika* of public thinking”<sup>74</sup>, “*perestroika* of the electoral system”<sup>75</sup>, “*perestroika* of social sciences”<sup>76</sup>, and “*perestroika* of the way to study October revolution”<sup>77</sup>; an academician even praises the October revolution for “opening a great perspective of *perestroika* of the social life of humanity on a new basis”<sup>78</sup>. Not only *perestroika* became revolutionary, but the October revolution was now understood as *perestroika*, which indicates an occurrence of a reversed hierarchy between these two idioms. At the same time, during 1986 and 1987 we can often register combined references to *perestroika* and Lenin stressing the continuity between them. The diffusion of a popular idiom allows a variety of usages and combinations conferring to all of them some additional suggestive power. The constant repetition of an idiom may threaten however its freshness and gradually erode its meaning, if the spectrum of application becomes too wide. In the case of *perestroika*, this spectrum remained limited to two families: a) positive and radical reform and b) the current historical period. In addition to the first “family” of meanings, the second one developed following its own logic. Thus, the idiom *perestroika* rapidly acquired a specifically historiosophical meaning of an inevitable, objective, revolutionary, progressive, reformatory movement of the whole Soviet society. In *Kommunist*, V. Mironov defined *perestroika* as a new stage in the chain of succeeding historical formations: “As a

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<sup>71</sup> We can situate somewhere in between the use of the term *uskorenie* by the academic Tikhvinsky: “Советские историки с партийной принципиальностью обязаны подойти к выполнению этого социального заказа с тем, чтобы авторитет, реальная “отдача” исторической науки соответствовали современным требованиям, задачам ускорения” “Выработанная партией стратегия ускорения нашего движения вперед основана на взвешенном анализе современного положения дел. Она опирается на знание закономерностей общественного развития”, С. Л. Тихвинский, «Некоторые вопросы работы советских историков», *Вопросы Истории*, 1986, №12, сс.3, 5

<sup>72</sup> Cited by Archie Brown from the unpublished manuscript of Gorbachev: Archie Brown, *Seven Years*, p.5

<sup>73</sup> Сергей Залыгин, «Поворот», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №1, с.3

<sup>74</sup> С. А. Никольский, «Перестройка общественного сознания и преодоление административно-бюрократического типа управления», *Вопросы Философии*, 1987, №12, с.111-119

<sup>75</sup> В. Г. Алтухов, «Октябрь и современные проблемы диалектики общественного развития», *Вопросы Философии*, 1987, №11, с.18

<sup>76</sup> И. Фролов, «Новые теоретические проблемы современности», *Коммунист*, 1987, № 1, с.17

<sup>77</sup> И. И. Минц, «О перестройке в изучении Великого Октября», *Вопросы Истории*, №4, сс.3-21

<sup>78</sup> В. Г. Трухановский, «Декрет о мире и современность», *Вопросы Истории*, 1987, №3, с.5

whole, *perestroika* is a passage from one stage of the development of socialism to a higher one. It affirms the most advanced type of socialism in the present time – socialism of the age of scientific-technical revolution”.<sup>79</sup> This rhetorical nuance expresses a wider historiosophical strand of late Soviet political thinking, which tended to see and situate politics in the context of a global historical frame.

Like *perestroika*, *glasnost* as an idiom belonged to the well established Soviet political vocabulary; already Russian publicists used this term before 1917 referring to the Russian conception which represents an analogue, but not an equivalent to the concepts of the freedom of speech and publicity. First, a rather nuanced distinction should be made between the idioms of *glasnost*, publicity or freedom speech. *Freedom* and *liberty* are among the founding idioms of the Western political tradition, when the word *speech* is attached to a more significant idiom. German term *Offentlichkeit*, as well as its English and French translations *public sphere* or *espace public* – refer to the spatial metaphors of openness, free space and transparency. The idiom *glasnost* does not contain reference to freedom or openness of the space. Literally, *glasnost* refers to the public and loud voice and thus could be translated as voiceness or public voicing, *oglasit'* meaning publicly announce. More significantly, *glasnost* signified the possibility for subjects to raise their voices publicly and also the obligation of the power holders to voice their plans and decisions as opposed to secrete proceedings or through a tacit decision of the bureaucracy. In other words, unlike in the case of *Offentlichkeit* or *freedom of speech*, the political hierarchy was not under the direct challenge – it should rather become more transparent and healthy. The absence of clear rules setting the limits of the down-top criticism implied by *glasnost* did not worry the reformers who counted on the overall loyalty of their subjects and their respect of hierarchy.

This term was broadly used during the first years after the Civil War to signify the transparency of Party decision-making process for all Party members – this supported the inter party democracy. The circulation of documents, all the decisions of all the Party organs were regularly published and distributed through the Party network from top to bottom<sup>80</sup>. The special role played by the “Izvestia of the Central Comitee”, *Известия ЦК*, publishing until the very end of the NEP the main documents and decrees in the format of a magazine, all volumes of which were compulsorily collected by all party entities, including the smallest local *ukomi*. This policy together with regular elections constituted the essence of « inter-party democracy » and *glasnost* policy established from above by the unchallenged leadership of Lenin and his close guard. The gradual but steady changes in internal Party regulations and rules were made by Stalin in order to transfer almost all official exchanges of the party information into régime of multi-level secrecy<sup>81</sup>. After the WWII, Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his address to the

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<sup>79</sup> В. Миронов, «Идея революции во всемирной истории», *Коммунист*, 1987, №16, с.91

<sup>80</sup> The persuasive account of this issue, however demanding a further documentary research, is given by Leon Onikov in Леон Оников, *КПСС: анатомия распада*, Республика, Москва, 1996, p. 25-37

<sup>81</sup> We may cite the party's « Instruction on the proceedings with secret documents » defining three level of secrecy for all the Party documents. The lowest level quoted simply « secret » was applied to documents « not containing State's secrets, but describing the structure of the party ». Full text in Леон Оников, *КПСС: анатомия распада*, Республика, Москва, 1996, p.177

Union of writers claimed the right to glasnost as a main means of improving the wrongdoings and dysfunctions:

Full and honest glasnost – this is the first condition of the healthiness of any society... And the one who does not want to accept glasnost in our country, thinks only about his own limited interest. The one who does not want glasnost – he does not want to purify our society from illnesses, but to let them becoming rotten deeply inside<sup>82</sup>.

The double meaning of the concept (a possibility for the subjects and an obligation of the power holders) fitted well the Soviet political context: phrased in this way the claim of liberty of speech did not challenge the deeply rooted separating line between the governed and the governors. To put it in other words, *for* Gorbachev and his team glasnost did not mean total freedom of speech but rather certain accountability of the political regime especially in its middle stratum which could also rely on the resources of pluralism; pluralism guided by the charismatic top leader and not directed against him. These features appear as Gorbachev articulated the meaning of the term already in 1984:

Glasnost is an integral aspect of socialist democracy and a norm of public life. Extensive, timely and candid information is an indication of trust in people and of respect of their intelligence, feelings and ability to comprehend various events on their own... Glasnost in the work of Party and state agencies is an effective means of combating bureaucratic distortions and obliges people to take a more thoughtful approach to the rectification of shortcomings and deficiencies. We respond promptly and effectively to questions posed by the world development... and promptly make adjustments of one sort or another in our ideas and practice when life so requires<sup>83</sup>

The reception of the glasnost policy slightly differed from this initial design. Gorbachev first meant to employ glasnost as a tool for improving the bureaucracy's accountability and for ensuring more realistic socialist response to the ideological challenges and practical needs of policy-making. Rather slowly publicists and writers started using the *glasnost* idiom as a rhetorical figure to back their arguments. Beyond the speeches of Party officials, we have found almost no occurrences of such use of *glasnost* in the public discussions of political and social issues until 1987 when this term gradually acquired its practical meaning in addition to that initially intended by Gorbachev's speech: authors mainly refer to and identify glasnost with widening field of free discussions in the general context of economic and political reforms:

It is impossible to transform the economic mechanism, economic structures, without a perestroika in the social sphere, without the affirmation of the atmosphere of glasnost and discussions, without a free and

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<sup>82</sup> «Честная и полная ГЛАСНОСТЬ - вот первое условие здоровья всякого общества... И кто не хочет нашей стране гласности - тот равнодушен к отечеству, тот думает лишь о своей корысти. Кто не хочет отечеству гласности - тот не хочет очистить его от болезней, а загнать их внутрь, чтоб они гнили там». Quoted in, *Из истории общественно-литературной борьбы 60-х годов*. Октябрь. 1990. № 10, с.195

<sup>83</sup> Quoted from Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, Routledge, 1991, p.53



open comparison of different points of view; the later in its turn cannot realize itself without a perestroika of the electoral system.<sup>84</sup>

The second connotation of *glasnost* which was perceived by different authors as its negative or positive function was criticism. *Glasnost* was understood as the right to criticize or negatively seen as the abuse of criticism. Gorbachev overtly called for more criticism in the public sphere suggesting that the country was fed off with the self-indulgent satisfaction of the late 1970s. Most of the authors greeted this critical stance of *glasnost* understanding this was a necessary condition for pluralism and open discussions. However, the growing criticism frightened both the Communist party bureaucracy and Russian patriotic publicists and writers who saw in this an all-embracing criticism, an attack on Russia and/or Soviet Union as their patria. Similarly, the classical study by Koselleck recalled and examined the socially and politically destructive aspects of the Modern appropriation of rational criticism exposing the well established social institutions to the presumably neutral but acid deconstruction, instead advancing new pseudo rational utopias and new unnoticed prejudices.<sup>85</sup>

A well known and popular writer, Y. Bondarev in his speech in March 1987 at the Secretariat of the Union of the Russian writers very hyperbolically accused the one-sided and abusive charter of *glasnost* which only served to criticize: "Pseudo-democrats from literature have lightened on the verge of an abyss a torch of *glasnost* stolen from justice. This stolen *glasnost* is given to our media and press and only to one of its sides – the offensive and destructive one"<sup>86</sup>. As this very critical statement implied, the reviews, which enthusiastically supported the critical drive of *glasnost*, benefited from the growing interest of readers welcoming their critical stance. Bondarev's desperate criticism testifies that the offensive and destructive turn of *glasnost* has been supported by both authorities and public audience. As a matter of fact, the only important review which did not fully endorse the trend was *Nash Sovremennik*, the official outlet of the Union of Writers of the Soviet Russian Federation, where since 1971 Bondarev held the post of vice-Chairmen. The criticism of the "criticism", "blackening" or "denigration" of the social reality became constant as *glasnost* was gaining ground. The standard Soviet tool against this negative side of criticism was the call for unity and Soviet pride.

Thus, we can underline that *glasnost* was perceived and valued by most authors as an authorized pluralism of opinions and as a possibility to express criticism. McNair makes a very close conclusion: "In the sphere of *glasnost* and information policy this general project can be encapsulated under three closely interrelated headlines: *criticism*, *access* and *socialist pluralism*"<sup>87</sup>. We should stress here that the terms liberty, or free speech were not in active circulation and this reflects well the way in which

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<sup>84</sup> В. Г. Алтухов, «Октябрь и современные проблемы диалектики общественного развития», *Вопросы Философии*, 1987, №11, с.18

<sup>85</sup> R. Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis. Enlightenment and The Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, MIT Press, 1987

<sup>86</sup> Выступление Ю. Бондарева на секретариате СП РСФСР март 1987; цитата по Марк Любомудров, «Как слово наше отзовется», *Наш Современник*, 1987, №7, с.174

<sup>87</sup> Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, Routledge, 1991, p.54

glasnost was understood, welcomed or sometimes criticized for excesses of criticism. The idiom of the *new thinking* originally meant a new agenda and philosophy for the world international system after a long period of the dominant *detente* doctrine<sup>88</sup>. The Soviet Union and its leadership invited the leaders and elites of other countries to reconsider the traditional geopolitical and ideological oppositions in favour of a more unified and peaceful international system in face of common ecological and social problems and the nuclear threat. The underlying objective motivation of this move was a clear necessity to agree on the hold in the arm race which was unaffordable any longer for the USSR and to secure future massive credits to cope with the declining oil revenues. One can note, that this covert but heavy and objective reasons although sometimes mentioned, are well underestimated in both Western and Russian accounts of the *new thinking*. Gorbachev's taste for humanist rhetoric and his personal charisma ensured for his initiative a good public reception in the West and all over the world; Western political leadership was much more cautious in taking the new thinking deal at face value, as they were aware of the internal economic difficulties in the Soviet Union and remained ideologically suspicious<sup>89</sup>. Indirectly the *new thinking* idiom stressed the importance of intellectual and ideological renewal within USSR, and thus it contributed to the call for glasnost policy and for perestroika in the Soviet ideological sphere and social sciences in particular. If the new idioms were unevenly successful we can reasonably accept the decisive impact that Gorbachev had in shaping the new reform agenda and setting new values via the revitalization of the rather traditional Soviet vocabulary and symbols.

The overview of Gorbachev's new idioms and their immediate reception in the key theoretical reviews between 1985 and 1987 shows that the rhetorical innovations as a whole were carefully crafted and proved to be successful during the first stage of reforms. The idiom of *perestroika* allowed advancing the idea of radical economic reforms in continuity with the established Soviet canon, its vocabulary and its semiformal rules on the regulation of public speech:

- a) The ideological initiative came from the top political leader,
- b) The idiom belonged to the traditional Soviet vocabulary,
- c) Its new meaning was linked to the most valuable and sacred idiom – October revolution,
- d) The idiom rapidly became the designation of the whole contemporary period,
- e) Finally, it was seen as an objective and irreversible movement of history.

This last shift testifies to a successful performative move made by Gorbachev who conferred to his reforms a global historiosophical meaning of a historical stage, well in line with the Marxist taste for periodization and identification of the necessarily successive formations and phases of historical development. Perestroika ultimately stood for a scientific and humanist reform-revolution-evolution.

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<sup>88</sup> See: Geoffrey K Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution and Cold War, 1945-1991*, Routledge, 1999, pp.86-90

<sup>89</sup> See for example a reconstruction of the Soviet-American relationships during this period Miroslav Nincic, "America's Soviet Policy: Patterns of Incentives" in the collection of articles edited by William Zimmerman, *Beyond the Soviet Threat: Rethinking American Security Policy in a New Era*, University of Michigan Press, 1993

The accent made on *glasnost* and *new thinking* suggested that the reforms would embrace not only economy but they also supposed major political and ideological changes. This ideological emphasis grew from 1985 to 1987 when the discourse evolved from the announcement of ideological continuity and economic acceleration to an all-embracing set of economic, political and social reforms announced as a literal revolution. Gorbachev together with his two competing allies responsible for ideology, A. Yakovlev having an upper hand on the media and Gorbachev's own speeches, and E. Ligachev controlling the workers of propaganda, fully maintained the ideological initiative and controlled the public agenda which received a wide and enthusiastic support of people and intelligentsia in particular; finally, the key editors-in-chief were replaced with loyal supporters of the new course and almost no dissenting voices were raised against the major reforms announced as an upcoming historical revolution equal and true to the ideals of October 1917. This first stage indeed was a consensual revolution from above aiming at the moral renewal and mobilization through more democratic and public participation. Gorbachev saw this democratic wave as no danger to his power.

The announced economic reforms of *uskorenie* and a more vague and wide set of economic and organizational reforms of *perestroika* did not produce the results that were expected – the increase in the economic growth promised and registered in 1986 did not follow in 1987 and the pick of the sharpest decline in oil prices in economic history created a potentially alarming combination (although once again unnoticed by the leadership) with the poor harvest and increase in grain import paid for with hard currency<sup>90</sup>. These gradually growing economic difficulties demanded better public communication and called for new reforms embracing the economic and political system as well as ideology. Gorbachev's personal charisma and his image as an innovative leader of a new generation after 20 years of contemplation of ageing Politburo members, contributed to the sharp rise of wide popular expectations and hopes. Most observers spoke of a growing enthusiasm of the Soviet public about Gorbachev and his ability to reform the country after twenty years of stagnation. On top of this widespread popularity, Gorbachev was consciously seeking for intellectual and political support of the Soviet intelligentsia which played a significant role in shaping *perestroika*'s agenda and outcome; as Vladimir Shlapentokh puts it: "The intellectual community and the political leadership enjoyed unparalleled unity in 1986-1988"<sup>91</sup>. The decision to bet on the political alliance with intellectuals and the Soviet intelligentsia matured in 1987, when Gorbachev made important steps to attract this middle-class-like stratum of the Soviet political regime<sup>92</sup>. The key idiom Gorbachev fashioned to ensure this

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<sup>90</sup> For the account of the economic policies (most of which were actually not implemented) and economic indicators during *perestroika*, we refer to Peter J Boettke's account: "The program of *perestroika* was filled with ambiguities and inconsistencies and on several levels never did get at the real problems confronting the Soviet economy... The basic economic institutions remained intact", Peter J Boettke, *Why Perestroika Failed*, Routledge, 1993 p.39-40 Also see the acute analysis of the monetary and financial crisis of the USSR during *perestroika* in Е. Гайдар, *Гибель Империи. Уроки для современной России*, М., РОСПЭН, сс. 153-190

<sup>91</sup> In general this account shows the importance of the alliance between (in Shlapentokh's terms) "political elites" and "liberal intellectuals"; Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power. The post-Stalin era*, Tauris&Co, NY, 1990, p.231

<sup>92</sup> Similar account is given by A. Shubin and A. Varsenkov; А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы Перестройки. Упущенный шанс*, М., «Вече», с. 88-89; А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю. 1985-1991.*, М., 2002, с.81

successful alliance between the political leadership and the influential stratum of Soviet knowledge workers was *glasnost* and to a certain extent, the other idiom *new thinking* played a role in this alliance. This calculation worked out well in the short term as the intelligentsia massively and enthusiastically supported Gorbachev's initiatives at least until 1988.

*Perestroika looks back to the Soviet past: Yakovlev and Afanassiev*

The second level of the communication strategy backed by A. Yakovlev consisted in launching the debates on Soviet history in order to revise the whole ideological framework established under Brezhnev's collective rule. Yet, history did not become the *central* public issue until approximately the last months of 1987. Gorbachev at first dismissed the backward looking attitude, but several intellectuals and A. Yakovlev officially in charge of ideology gradually advanced this historical agenda along with advancement of and actually extending the limits of *glasnost*. In *Perestroika and New Thinking* published after the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of October revolution (when the past naturally came to the fore), the historical topics took a very modest place; probably, more modest than it was supposed by the late Soviet rhetorical tradition. However, *perestroika* itself was described as a part of history and as a historical movement; Gorbachev mentioned the need to look back at the origins of the present difficulties and made a brief reassessment of the Soviet past – stressing such victories of socialism as collectivization, industrialization, literacy and objective backwardness of pre-revolutionary Russia, he pointed out that the “system of administration” [*sistema upravleniia*] still in operation in USSR was initially formed during the WWII and since became a “brake” slowing down economic development, imposing taboo on the “money-commodities relations”.<sup>93</sup> We can also note another innovation – the recurrent description of the October revolution as a “historical choice made by our people” and as resulting from a “socialist choice”.<sup>94</sup> Speaking about the Soviet Union's commitment *not to impose* its socialist values on others, but also *not to compromise* on those values, Gorbachev advanced another formula: “Let everyone choose, and then history will put everything in its right place”.<sup>95</sup> This positive emphasis on free will was dissonant with the late Soviet “objective laws”, and it prefigured serious changes. The manifest historical optimism was thus deprived from its “firm” scientific pillar, instead announcing free choices and redesigns of the historiosophical world map.<sup>96</sup>

The reformers intended to focus public attention on two historical periods: NEP and 1937-1938, as well as to re-contextualize Soviet history into a global world perspective, i.e. reintroduce a more adequate comparison between developed capitalist countries and the countries of the Socialist block. This move supposed a revision of Soviet history as a necessary ideological backing for the political

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<sup>93</sup> М.С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление. Для нашей страны и для всего мира*, М., Издательство политической литературы, 1987, с.34-43

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., с. 12, 32, 33, 35, 39, 146

<sup>95</sup> «Говоря это, я хотел бы, чтобы меня точно поняли: мы, советские люди, - за социализм (и я уже объяснил выше почему), но свои убеждения мы никому не навязываем. Пусть каждый выбирает, а история все поставит по своим местам». Ibid., с.33

<sup>96</sup> The idioms of “historical choice” and “socialist choice” are considered in the two central chapters dealing with the evolution of the idioms in 1988 and 1989-1991.

and economic reforms, which Gorbachev was preparing along with A. Yakovlev and V. Medvedev. As noted, Gorbachev started addressing historical issues in his official speeches at the end of 1987. Yakovlev wrote benchmark-setting articles in the leading periodicals and brokered the publication of the first articles addressing new historical questions through the network of his associated editors<sup>97</sup>. The Soviet political establishment outside Gorbachev's closest associates first considered this historical revisionism as a mild ideological coverage for reforms. There were few public reactions against this revisionism which were either blocked by administrative pressure or had little resonance as in the case of Bondarev, Gorbachev's and Yakovlev's communication plan worked out well.

The role of A. Yakovlev is often presented in contemporary Russia as that of a "gray cardinal" of reforms aiming to destroy the system rather than to change it, a cunning manipulator and most significantly an agent of Western influence – or even a spy recruited during his stay at Colombia University. We would like to consider this complex and influential figure in the context of the late Soviet stagnation, perestroika policies and its ideology. In the words of the KGB ex-chief V. Kruchkov who was rather close to A. Yakovlev until 1989, Yakovlev was "one of the most ominous figures in our history". Attesting his own professional weakness, Kruchkov confessed that "at the beginning I did not manage to understand" whom he was dealing with; and this despite the early warning characteristic privately given to A. Yakovlev by Kruchkov's chief and mentor, Y. Andropov in 1983.<sup>98</sup> Starting from 1989 he received more reliable information on Yakovlev from different sources within KGB. In 1990 Kruchkov made a report to Gorbachev specifying that "according to the intelligence services A. Yakovlev took a pro-Western position and firmly countered the "conservative ones", but the Western side would seek to contact Yakovlev and ask him to be more insistent.<sup>99</sup> Beyond this passage, Kruchkov referred to the personal duplicity of Yakovlev (in the light of the earlier analysis it may seem

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<sup>97</sup> Yakovlev witnessed about his under-carpet struggle for covering and advancing glasnost against Ligachev and the party apparatus: he protected in particular the editors of *Ogonek*, *Moscow News*, pressed for the publication of the *Dety Arbata* and realisation of the movie "Repentance". See: А.Н.Яковлев, *Сумерки*, М., Материк, 2003, с.389-390. In addition to boards of the five theoretical reviews, we analyse in this research, there is similar accounts from V. Korotich, the editor of the most popular perestroika's weekly magazine "Ogonek", on the way Yakovlev personally invited him to accept this position and softly followed him afterwards; Виталий Коротич, *От первого лица*, Издательство: АСТ, Фолио, 2000, р.154; R.W. Davis describes the episode between Yakovlev and another renowned publicist, A. Tsipko, when the former pushes the latter to produce a "bold" article on the given subject; Robert W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution*, London & Indiana, 1989; An insider from the Central Committee, V. Ryabov notes the under carpet victories of Yakovlev over the control of the key positions in the ideological sphere; Виктор Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, «Жизнь и Смысл» М., 2005, с.113

<sup>98</sup> «Мне думается, что лиц, называющих себя демократами и убежденных в том, что они таковыми являются, можно разделить, по крайней мере, на две категории. Первые по характеру своей деятельности относятся к числу разрушителей. Они охотно критикуют историю, настоящее и добираются даже до будущего. Никаких созидательных программ при этом не предлагают: главное — сокрушить! К числу таких «ярких» представителей можно смело отнести А. Н. Яковлева. Разрушающий подход в последние годы прослеживается во всей его деятельности... Не сразу удалось мне разобраться в этой одной из самых злобещих фигур нашей истории. Тут и моя вина, и моя беда». В. Крючков, *Личное дело*, М., 1996, книга 1ая, с.314-315

<sup>99</sup> "Смысл донесений сводился к тому, что, по оценкам спецслужб, Яковлев занимает выгодные для Запада позиции, надежно противостоит «консервативным» силам в Советском Союзе и что на него можно твердо рассчитывать в любой ситуации. Но, видимо, на Западе считали, что Яковлев сможет проявлять больше настойчивости и активности, и поэтому одному американскому представителю было поручено провести с Яковлевым соответствующую беседу и прямо заявить, что от него ждут большего." *Ibid.*, с. 329-330

a meaningless accusation as it could be applied to most of the Politburo leaders – symmetrically, Yakovlev in his memoirs accused Kruchkov of deceit and manipulations and confessed that he himself *had* to be sly and often he doubted if he knew what his inner convictions were) as well as to his public deeds and words supposedly witnessing against Yakovlev. The cited cautious formulation of the KGB report is self-defeating as it is presented as the central piece of a heavy accusation; he was qualified as an “agent of influence” objectively acting in the “interests of the USA” and “having contacts”. Most probably, Yakovlev was indeed hostile to the Soviet regime already at the beginning of perestroika, but before he made a brilliant career within the Soviet establishment and served it as the head of Propaganda apparatus. In fact, the hostility of A. Yakovlev to Soviet ideology and to USSR openly expressed since 1991, as well as its bitter attitude to the Russian history gives an additional indication on the profound erosion of the beliefs of the Soviet elite unable to promote loyal and ideologically responsive members at the heart of its propaganda apparatus. On the other side of this front, we can point at Alexander Solzhenitsyn who openly challenged the Soviet political regime as criminal opposing it to the pre-revolutionary Russia, while Alexander Yakovlev gradually came to the same belief in Soviet history, but along with Andrey Sakharov, he saw the whole Russian history as “thousands years of slavery” – the culture to overcome through repentance and moral purification. A system cultivating the widespread double-thinking while promoting the ideal of ideological and moral integrity, and a system *bringing up* its own intimate foes and allowing them to take the leading positions was well rotten rather than betrayed.

A. Yakovlev made a successful career in the ideological apparatus of the CPSU in the post war period; between 1969 and 1973 he was the head of the propaganda department of the Central Committee of CPSU before his forced “honorary exile” as Soviet ambassador in Canada. Gorbachev called Yakovlev back to Moscow, then promoted in the Politburo making him responsible for the ideological control of the mass media – from this position he could significantly shape the evolution of the debates by appointing key editors, backing up bold publications and in several cases personally stimulating certain authors to go further. In between the occupation of the two top ideological offices, he was sent into an honorary exile to Canada after his sharp public criticism against Russian nationalist tendencies in contemporary fiction promoted from the positions of the primacy of the class struggle and of the Soviet internationalism over the idealization of the national Russian past<sup>100</sup> – both sides of the quarrel were punished for the non-sanctioned discord by Brezhnev who did not like this disturbing ideological exchange. Brought back to the USSR by M. Gorbachev already in 1983, Yakovlev headed the influential research institute IMEMO (studying the world economy and international relations) with foresight to provide the intellectual backup of reforms. The concealed political program that Yakovlev only partly revealed to Gorbachev in mid 1985 included: real elections at all levels of party and state, “priority to the development of autonomous and creative personality” [*lichnost*], active participation “of all and everyone in the improvement of life at the local and state levels”<sup>101</sup>. In his private notes and discussions of this period Yakovlev considered the need to split the

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<sup>100</sup> А. Яковлев, «Против антиисторизма», *Литературная газета*, 1972, №46, 15 ноября.

<sup>101</sup> А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, М., Материк, 2003, с.376

CPSU, glasnost, market economy “with its pay-for-work-output principle” [*oplata po trudu*], and saw “owners as subjects of freedom”. This vision combined liberal and socialist values and overtones with an implicit reference to one of the richest welfare states in the world where he had spent almost a decade. The first point of his program prepared for Gorbachev was the “extinction of the gap between words and the deed of the ever tighter unification of the interests of the individual [*lichnosti*], groups and society as a whole”. Democracy understood as free elections and glasnost along with the market seen as a just exchange would ensure that the active “masses would be responsible for what happens to them including for what is missed or not done”. Concluding, Yakovlev argued that by meeting the “needs of the time” the reforms and political struggle would go smoothly and without barriers. “Political culture of our society will grow and so will its real stability”.<sup>102</sup> As he later noted, “of course not everything went on so smoothly”.<sup>103</sup>

Most of the Soviet authors as well as scholars, who tried to summarize the sense of the virulent public discussions, conclude that history played the central role organizing the agenda of ideological debates on other subjects<sup>104</sup>. This evidence on the centrality of history in overall public discussions suggests that the outcome seems to be in line with the intentions of the reformers. As a matter of fact, the broad interest towards the historical problematic had spread in the USSR well before 1985 and the creation of VOOPK (the largest association after CPSU, it was first initiated from below and then accepted by authorities) is one of the most telling examples of Soviet public's quest for its historical roots<sup>105</sup>. The task of reformers was to channel this underlying interest and to focus it on the issues closely related to the design of perestroika. The intended reassessment of the Soviet history had to provide for the legitimacy of reforms justified by the systemic errors of the past, explain possible difficulties in their application, and it should allegedly help in designing the very framework for very ambitious economic and political reforms. As we will attempt to show, reformists had several historical facts and revisionist ideas, which they successfully put in the focus of public attention in 1987; however, they could not control new suggestive idioms and could not control the impact they were going to have. New idioms instead arose spontaneously, emerged out of the debates and in the process reframed the discussion.

In late autumn 1985, half a year after Gorbachev's election, professional historian and member of the board of the journal *Kommunist*, Y. Afanassiev published there a long article with a suggestive title “The past and us” which passed almost unnoticed by scholars. Filled with a multitude of fresh references and quotes ranging from Engels and Hegel to the then exotic Paul Valery and Russian patriotic writer Vassili Belov, this pioneer text advanced three themes undermining the established

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., cc.376-383

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., c.383

<sup>104</sup> We reviewed the scholarship on the public debate of perestroika in the first chapter in the next chapter and we offer in the next chapter a wide range of quotes testifying the centrality of history in the eyes of the publicists reviewing the hot public issues of the moment starting from 1988.

<sup>105</sup> In particular, we refer to the analysis P. J.S. Duncan on the “cultural Russian nationalism” with its widespread historical references: Peter J. S. Duncan *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Holy Revolution, Communism and After*, Routledge, 2000; Richard Stites offers a detailed account of the mass culture and their propensity for the historical novels and their political backgrounds in the Brejnev's period. Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.148-178

balance between the official ideology and historiography. The evolution of the public debates fully revealed the potential of these three ideological shifts to the new themes. First, Soviet people should turn their attention from the futurist expectations and hopes towards their past, as far as their present and even their future should be understood as the consequences of the past which remains active but unknown:

The recognizable feature of the psychology of the Soviet people is their focus on the future, on the upcoming changes... it is necessary, first of all, to deeply realize the seemingly simple truth: the past did not pass, it became present and will become future...we must realize the time, which runs through us<sup>106</sup>

Second, the Soviet people should not consider Soviet history as a mere source of national or ideological pride, but look at the darker pages:

The idealization of the past, historical omissions, ignorance of the inner logic of the past – all this is disrespect and a form of oblivion... We experienced a period of historical nihilism, of destruction of monuments, - and today as "return" and reaction we observe the extreme veneration and idealization of the past<sup>107</sup>

Finally, the Soviet people should take more global picture of their historical path in the context of the world history:

Of course, there is no need to prove that historical science, which would focus on a narrow field of the world history, will inescapably become theoretically and empirically poor... The appropriation of the past is called to meet the most important requirement of the XX century – humans must possess global thinking, in order to be a conscious and active inhabitant of the planet.<sup>108</sup>

In 1985, the board of *Kommunist* hosted the most orthodox representatives of the Soviet ideological hierarchy. Both the lively intellectual form and the significant ideological shifts operated in this Afanassiev's article were very unusual for that time; its publication in the main theoretical organ of the official Communist ideology made this originality more noticeable and allowed to see it as a signal from above<sup>109</sup>. Moreover, outlining the new research program and ideological agenda for Soviet historiography, Afanassiev had at this stage attacked two important groups of the Soviet intellectual

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<sup>106</sup> "Характерная черта общей психологической настроенности советских людей сегодня - устремленность в будущее, нацеленность на предстоящие перемены...необходимо, прежде всего, глубоко осознать, казалось бы, несложную истину: прошлое не прошло, оно стало настоящим и станет будущим... осознание текущего сквозь нас времени". Ю. Афанасьев, «Прошлое и мы», *Коммунист*, 1985, №14, с.106

<sup>107</sup> "Идеализация дней минувших, присутствие в публикациях фигуры умолчания, пренебрежение тем, что составляет логику и суть прошлого, - явное неуважение к нему и, более того, одна из форм забвения". "Была у нас полоса исторического нигилизма, разрушения памятников - и вот теперь в виде "обратной" реакции приходится часто наблюдать крайности умиления и восторга". Ю. Афанасьев, *Ibid.*, сс.108-109,

<sup>108</sup> "Очевидно, нет нужды доказывать, что историческая наука, обрабатывая лишь до предела ограниченный во времени и пространстве участок мировой истории, неизбежно и сама станет содержательно и теоретически худосочной... Освоение прошлого призвано обеспечить выполнение важнейшего требования XX века к человеку - он должен обладать глобальным мышлением, чтобы стать сознательным и активным обитателем нашей планеты", *Ibid.*, с.116

<sup>109</sup> See the account of the typical reactions of the official historians to Afanassiev and on the situation in *Коммунист* in Виктор Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, «Жизнь и Смысл» М., 2005, с.44-45



establishment: the officials and academics among professional historians who failed to provide an un-dogmatic account of history and secondly the Russian “patriotic” writers and publicists accused of the recently re-emerging idealization of the [Russian] past and “extreme manifestation of excitement and tenderness towards the past”. Himself a member of the *Kommunist’s* board, Afanassiev could have personally decided or at least could have lobbied the appearance of a relatively bold article advancing some critical points about Soviet historical science and even could modestly attack Russian nationalist deviations of “certain authors”. However, taking into account the context of 1985, the possibility to promote a completely new research program with evident political implications individually looked extremely unlikely to appear on the pages of the main theoretical review. This article remained a unique case in 1985: it broke the official censorship and the intellectual hierarchy as far as his position was not in line with both, established academicians and the new Party leader<sup>110</sup>.

During perestroika Afanassiev became one of the leading public figures and one of the best known intellectuals who actively supported perestroika reforms and then split from Gorbachev and socialist reformism, remaining alongside with A. Yakovlev and at the end of perestroika was offered to run a new large University on the basis of the former High Party School<sup>111</sup>. Most probably, Yakovlev as in few other cases has personally brokered both the conception and the publication of the article. This conclusion is indirectly confirmed by the fact that most significant ideological moves that we can discern in the avant-garde article “The past and us” correspond to the previous views of Yakovlev expressed in his article “Against anti-historicism” published in 1972 and to further Yakovlev’s statements on the need to reassess history, which were made during the next few years after this publication. The Afanassiev’s article “The past and us” offers the agenda of the future political and ideological intrigue. During this period Gorbachev still considered that the priority should be given to the future oriented social perspective, while digging up the past was not a timely move. The coincidence of positions with A. Yakovlev and the unprecedented boldness of Afanassiev could be best explained by the fact that the former advanced his agenda “often secretly with tricks and lies”.<sup>112</sup>

The acceleration of the public historical revisionism took place in 1987, when outstanding Soviet publicists, economists and critics with very different ideological positions published several texts addressing acute political questions of the Soviet past: Abalkin, Klaymkin, Latsiss, Kazintsev, Selyunin, Khanin and Popov<sup>113</sup>. These articles received a wide resonance, while directly linking

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<sup>110</sup> The analysis of the main specialised historiographical review *Вопросы Истории* and of the *Коммунист’s* articles in 1985 equally shows that the general judgments on the state of the Soviet historiography as whole belonged to the academic establishment; mid-rank historian could be only *moderately* critical on the particular point in his field of specialisation. Open criticism and open general criticism towards Soviet historical methodology or factual accounts were clearly a taboo genre for the Soviet historians in early 1980s. Afanassiev broke the taboo, but was not punished.

<sup>111</sup> By the end of perestroika, Afanassiev was appointed as the rector of the newly created Russian State Institute in Humanities (RGGU) to which the property and the buildings of the former High Party School were transferred with the help of A. Yakovlev. See: Виктор Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, «Жизнь и Смысл» М., 2005, с.44-45

<sup>112</sup> А.Н.Яковлев, *Сумерки*, М., Материк, 2003, с.395

<sup>113</sup> И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №10; Л. Абалкин, «Опираясь на уроки прошлого», *Коммунист*, 1987, №15; О. Лацис, «Проблема темпов в социалистическом строительстве», *Коммунист*, 1987, № 18, А. Казинцев, «Лицом к истории: продолжатели или потребители», *Наш Современник*, № 11, Василий Селюнин,

historical inquiries with political conclusions or lessons drawn for the present. Afanassiev again played one of the most important roles in this revision making a series of critical interventions more openly directed against the official historiography, thus liberating the space for the renovation of the public historical consciousness. Afanassiev covered by Yakovlev *de facto* worked as a shield for the spontaneously emerging discussions on history; he attacked the established historians and thus removed the benchmarks of what was publicly acceptable. Once the authority of the official historiography was undermined, public interpretations of the Soviet past became slightly more open-ended. Probably, the most influential article in this first 1987 series was “The energy of historical knowledge” published in *Moscow News*,<sup>114</sup> two years after the first revisionist text in *Kommunist*. We can identify the development of the three main points we have analysed along with a new critical point directed against Soviet historiography. Afanassiev publicly claimed that professional historians were bankrupt in accounting and explaining major past events in USSR and therefore totally lost their right “to speak authoritatively about the society in which we live”<sup>115</sup> – a new authority had to be found.

The focus was on the Stalin era and its crimes, which in Afanassiev’s term “we continue to ignore” despite the fig leaves such as ‘mistakes’ and ‘deficiency’ applied to “the massive repressions directed against honest Soviet people in the 1930s”. Using Soviet rhetorical appeal to the authority of the Party Congress’ resolution condemning “The personality cult”, he suggested that nothing excused the uncritical reception of this period in the official historiography after the XX Congress<sup>116</sup>. The article stirred up a vigorous reply signed by four directors of the Party History Institutes who concluded their counter-attack and self-defence with the recall of the traditional pedagogical value of the Soviet historiography:

The energy of historical knowledge must be directed toward the revolutionary perestroika of all aspects of our life and history of Soviet society, and towards educating our young people in historical responsibility and pride in their homeland, in both heroic history and its present... Unfortunately, Afanassiev’s article does not serve these aims<sup>117</sup>.

The defence of the Soviet patriotic cults was not very vigorous and most importantly this time it did not have enough administrative back up. The last word was on the Afanassiev’s side: established historians surprised by this attack could not enforce his dismissal, and the official position of Gorbachev, seemed to be closer to the critical re-evaluation of history. More exactly, Gorbachev advanced the renewed Khrushchev’s formula uniting both pride and criticism towards the past and

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Григорий Ханин, «Лукавая цифра», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №2; Г.Х. Попов, «С точки зрения экономиста», *Наука и жизнь*, 1987, № 4.

<sup>114</sup> Ю. Афанасьев, «Энергия исторического знания», *Московские Новости*, 11.01.1987, №2

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> To be sure Afanassiev knew only too well, that the resolutions of Party, which had to be followed, were only the last resolutions and not any previous resolutions! The ambiguity of this passage signalled to the readers that Afanassiev expressed the new line of the Party leadership, which passed unnoticed by the academics and directors.

<sup>117</sup> Translated in English following A. Melville, G. W. Lapidus, (ed.) *The Glasnost Papers, Voices on Reform from Moscow*, Westview Press, 1990, p.79

called to leave “no blank spaces”<sup>118</sup>, while Afanassiev in his publications along with several distinguished publicists pushed towards radical criticism of the established “system” and more revelations of past crimes. The official historiography had to change to catch up at least the new balanced formula of “pride *and* criticism”, running the already looming danger of total identification of the public image of the Soviet system with blood and crimes of the past.

In this respect, Yakovlev’s strategy concerning the revision of history as a means to promote more radical and wide reforms was double: it affected public perception of the past and of the future. The new ideological scheme mobilized Soviet history in a radically new way. The configuration of the historical scheme had been changed: instead of the successive chain of victories in the past coupled with the horizon of the guaranteed brighter future the Soviet public discovered the uncertainty of the open future and the mix of tragic errors and relative progress in the past. This revelation was of a great significance for the whole framework of understanding social and political facts. Gradually, Soviet history appeared as the main battlefield of the bad and good political and economic models with the emphasis on two periods: 1937 as the expression of the essentially failed option and NEP as an essentially good precedent for the future. The magazines and authors from Yakovlev’s network paid particular attention towards the repressions and purges in the Soviet history of the first half of the twentieth century. The massive publications on the tragic record of the inner repressions against both opponents and proponents of the regime symbolically focused on 1937. This year symbolized the culmination of the black pages of the Soviet history linked to the icons of Stalin and repressions. According to this scheme, the negative picture of the Soviet experience helped to justify the present serious difficulties by the seriousness of the past errors committed by Stalin and his close allies<sup>119</sup>. The NEP period as a successful precedent to follow helped to draw also positive inspiration in Soviet history. The architects of the new political agenda found in national history a rich source for ideological innovations: highlighting the current economic problems and social tensions as the traces of past repressions symbolised by 1937 and pointing at NEP as the newly rediscovered and certain Soviet remedy. As his later writings clearly show, disillusioned, A. Yakovlev secretly saw no remedy in NEP.

The official leading role in this important campaign belonged to Gorbachev. While not addressing the causes of the Stalinist terror, Gorbachev condemned Stalin in July 1987:

I think that we never could and should not forgive or justify what happened in 1937-1938. Never. For these misdeeds are responsible those who were then holding power. But, comrades, this does not denigrate all this, what we have, what has been achieved by the Party and people... We have to see how great a power is enclosed in socialism, in our regime, which could hold and win in the mortal fight

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<sup>118</sup> “Каждое поколение советских людей внесло свой вклад в развитие, укрепление и защиту завоеваний Октября. Мы по праву гордимся своей историей, уверенно смотрим в будущее”, “Я думаю, что мы никогда не можем и не должны прощать или оправдывать то, что было в 1937-38 годах...Но это товарищи, не принижает всего того, что мы сегодня имеем, что сделали партия, народ...», М. С. Горбачев, «Выступление на Июньском Пленуме 1987», *Коммунист*, №12, с.66

<sup>119</sup> Starting from 1987, Gorbachev repetitively referred to the Stalin’s legacy as the main break for the rapid economic growth and social development in today’s Soviet Union.

against fascism. And therefore, we should speak with pride of our people when remembering 70 years of his history, its deeds<sup>120</sup>

This passage is extremely telling about the way Gorbachev addresses the issues of repressions focusing on 1937-1938 and then going to another edifying moment in Soviet history – the Victory in the Second World War. This counter-positioning of the Stalinist terror and people's Great Victory helped to draw a globally positive emotional balance of the period. What is equally important in this passage is the treatment of the question of historic responsibility. When accepting Stalin's *personal* responsibility the new Soviet leader did not intend to assume "what have happened in 1937-1938" in its proper name or in the name of the Party. In the light of the personal condemnation of Stalin the Party, the people and Gorbachev did not bear any responsibility for these "unforgivable deeds", moreover they could be proud of the common victory over the mortal enemy. Thus, although unusual as compared to the Brezhnev's policy of "respectfully" silencing Stalin's name, this passage does not belong to the genre of symbolic excuses – the Party leader accused his predecessor in person, thus still sparing from historical responsibility himself, the Party and finally the people of the Soviet Union.

#### *Between repentance and pride: a difficult balance*

In parallel to this official position, we can trace a considerably different motive in addressing the crimes of the past – Repentance. The movie made by a Georgian film-maker, T. Abuladze and protected by E. Shevardnadze and A. Yakovlev, put the concept of repentance at the centre of intellectuals' debates already in 1986 when the first authorized public showing of the movie took place. This historical drama clearly represented the attempts of a younger generation to over-come the heritage of tyranny, portraying a dictator somewhere in-between Stalin and Beria. The complex plot of the film suggested that repentance for the crimes of fathers is an extremely difficult while moral task. Its general reception took it as a call for collective repentance<sup>121</sup>; as the above quoted passage of Gorbachev, most of the texts we could study actually exclude their authors from those who supposedly should repent. In other words, the idea of personal or collective repentance turned to be a more typical accusation of others. However, the idiom then assumed a wider circulation in the press and triggered the creation of other main "icons" of perestroika such as Klyamkin's article "Which road leads to the Temple?" by his very title referring to the last words concluding the movie with an open question<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> "Я думаю, что мы никогда не можем и не должны прощать или оправдывать то, что было в 1937-38 годах. Никогда. За это отвечают те, кто был тогда у власти. Но это товарищи, не принижает всего того, что мы сегодня имеем, что сделали партия, народ... Мы обязаны видеть, какая огромная сила заключена в социализме, в нашем строе, который и выдержал, вступил в схватку и победил фашизм... И поэтому о нашем 70-летию надо говорить с гордостью за наш великий народ, его историю, его подвиг" М.С. Горбачев, *Правда*, 15.07.87

<sup>121</sup> See the detailed account in Andrew Horton, Michael Brashinsky, *The Zero Hour: Glasnost and Soviet*, Princeton University Press, 1992, pp.220-226

<sup>122</sup> "Да, слово "покаяние" вполне уместно. Но прежде, чем каяться, хочется все же понять: почему мы верили в это? И в чем каяться? В том, что мы - это мы? Но мы же не пятьдесят лет назад родились и даже не семьдесят. С чего начинать отчет грехов? С Московской Руси? С петербургской? Или с советских 30-х годов?" И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №10, с.178

The role of fiction at this stage was particularly important, as far as the metaphorical language of literature and cinema allowed to address the most puzzling political and social issues, which had not yet been theoretically articulated or officially allowed to be discussed. After Gorbachev and Yakovlev's hints towards censorship, the wide range of previously unpublished authors or novels about Stalin's period, were published in the selected thick reviews and weekly periodicals: N. Goumilev, A. Platonov, N. Berberova, B. Pasternak, A. Akhmatova, E. Zamyatin. These authors showed the past in a completely different way compared with official historiography and with incomparably more brio and suggestive power, as far as these were the best Russian writers of the century. The second wave of fiction written during the stagnation period mostly by the authors still in active life completed the picture: A. Rybakov's "Children of Arbat", A. Bek's "New appointment", "Zubr" by D. Granin, "House on the embankment" by Y. Trifonov were among the top readership of the Soviet public during the first years of glasnost. The critical reaction to the movie *Repentance* brought to life I. Klyamkin's article "Which road leads to the temple"; G. Popov's ground-braking and emphatic analysis of the novel "New appointment" gave birth to a new political concept in perestroika's vocabulary: *Administrative system*.

The direct infusions from the arts and fiction into explicit political thought suggest the gradual emancipation of the later in 1987 ensured by the deliberate policy of Gorbachev, Yakovlev and with some restrictions supported by the whole Politburo and enthusiastically praised by the Soviet intelligentsia<sup>123</sup>. This fiction depicting the massive repressions sanctioned by the Party officials and the negative bureaucratic selection constituted the dark side of the new history gradually identified with Stalin's person or Stalinism as a bureaucratic and criminal regime. In this context, the figure of Y. Afanassiev symbolizes this criticism of the past returned against the professional Soviet historians. The official support of this critical recovery of Stalinism's errors manifested in the creation of "Commission on the rehabilitation of the victims of political repressions" in September 1987<sup>124</sup>. As Y. Boldin reported, preparing the creation of this commission Gorbachev regularly gathered Politburo members and groups of three to four CC secretaries and personally read them the passages from the secret report of Shvernik on the inner-party repressions, the transcripts of the interrogations and the conclusions of the commission (the text was made secret by the decision of Khrushchev who first based his own famous report on this investigation but then halted his active anti-Stalinist campaign).<sup>125</sup>

The other side of this return to the past was intended to represent the bright side of the Soviet experience and show its unrealized economic and social potential. The re-evaluation of the period of the New Economic Policy started even earlier than the critical campaign against Stalin's terror<sup>126</sup>. The "Law on cooperatives" translated the expectations of Gorbachev's economic advisers in the potential

<sup>123</sup> See: Г. Х. Попов, «С точки зрения экономиста», *Наука и жизнь*, 1987, № 4.

<sup>124</sup> The "Commission on the rehabilitation" was constituted for the third time in the Soviet history and now headed by Solomentsev, which will be soon replaced by A. Yakovlev. See P. Г. Пихоя, *Советский Союз: история власти. 1945-1991*, Сибирский Хронограф, Новосибирск, с.447

<sup>125</sup> . И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с.321

<sup>126</sup> Candidate to Politburo member, В. Пономарев positively mentions NEP and Lenin's plan on cooperation already in January 1985 (under Chernenko), which reflected the hidden search of the viable economic solutions in the ruling group. Б. Пономарев, «Об исторических судьбах рабочего класса», *Коммунист*, 1987, №1, с.33

of the rapid economic recovery based on local private initiative – the precedent set by NEP was not only the rhetorical device, but actually guided the reformers (although their knowledge and especially understanding of Lenin’s policies remained quite limited)<sup>127</sup>. In the absence of the fictional literature available on this subject, this theme was developed by a number of professional economists who analyzed the historical evidence of the NEP period in order to draw theoretical and practical lessons in support of the current economic reforms. In 1987 the discussion of the NEP on the pages of *Kommunist* and *Voprosy Filosofii* took one of the main places among other subjects. *Novyi Mir* followed this move on its slower but mightier pace. Economist N. Shmelev took the lead publishing a widely discussed article bringing to the open discussion basic economic notions “Credits and Debts”:

I understand what kind of reproaches I am risking, but the question is too serious and vitally important to hide or soften it. If we will not accept that the rejection of NEP most seriously damaged the construction of socialism in USSR, we will condemn our selves on this kind of half-measures as in 1953, as in 1967<sup>128</sup>

Linking the NEP and G. Popov’s neologism on the essence of Stalin’s political model, Shmelev concluded: “NEP and its economic stimulus and leverages were replaced by the administrative system of command”<sup>129</sup>. Moreover, Shmelev claims that NEP actually set for the first time “the true principles of the scientific and realistic approach to building of the socialist economy”<sup>130</sup>. A few issues later, another liberal publicist Klyamkin, in his controversial and subtle article replied to Shmelev’s “boldness” saying precisely the opposite and suggesting that the abandonment of NEP was historically inevitable. “Speaking today about this period otherwise [than regretting the ending of NEP policy] is risky – the excommunication from progress will not wait for long time and you will be judged as the defender of the administrative old-times”<sup>131</sup>. Klyamkin outlined the logic of the objective political superiority of the collectivization policy over other available options in the context of the increasing tensions between the new generation of Bolsheviks who became bureaucrats and entrepreneurs and peasants; yet, he claimed the moral right to condemn this violent and inevitable solution in the name of a higher Truth. This thin line drawn by Klyamkin was often mistaken as the defense of Stalinism<sup>132</sup>.

Economist and historian, Otto Latsis openly defended the new “Law on cooperatives” comparing this supposed introduction of the new stimulus for economic growth with the success of NEP and

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<sup>127</sup> Oscar J Bandelin, *Return to the Nep: The false promise of Leninism and the Failure of perestroika*, Praeger-Greenwood, 2002 : “Gorbachev meant NEP as a principle of motivation of people, and not institutions”, p. 102, and Gorbachev would justify Stalin’s choices as having no alternative in 1987 (p.103); “A blind faith in some kind of deterministic relationship between laws of nature and laws of social development was the cornerstone of the positions of both Lenin and Gorbachev” p.23

<sup>128</sup> “Я понимаю, на какие упреки напрашиваюсь, но вопрос слишком серьезен и жизненно важен, чтобы смягчать выражения и прибегать к умолчаниям. Без признания того факта, что отказ от ленинской новой экономической политики самым тяжким образом осложнил социалистическое строительство в СССР, мы опять, как в 1953-м, как в 1965 году, обречем себя на половинчатые меры...” Н. Шмелев, «Авансы и долги», *Коммунист*, 1987, №6 с.142

<sup>129</sup> “Нэп с его экономическими стимулами и рычагами был заменен административной системой управления”, *Ibid*, с.142

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, с. 143

<sup>131</sup> “Говорить сегодня о том времени иначе — рискованно: отлучение от прогресса не заставит себя ждать, как и зачисление ряды защитников административной старины”, И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №10, с. 180

<sup>132</sup> We will discuss this theoretical puzzle in the next section “The choice of historical path”.

consequent problems of the socialist economy after the rejection of these principles<sup>133</sup>. In his other article Latsis linked the economic accounting (*khozraschet* - another element of the Andropov-Gorbachev's design of economic reforms) and NEP policy as the expression of the latest Leninist model for cooperative socialism<sup>134</sup>. Caching up the established intellectual patterns, Philosopher, S. Nikolsky reproduced the opposition between administrative-command system and new socialist principles of NEP, in which he saw "the opportunities for the large and conscious participation of masses in the process of historical creation"<sup>135</sup>. The after-taste of the actual failure of NEP could be lost even in this still bitter defense of the "missed historical opportunities", provided the first series of Gorbachev's economic reforms inspired by the Leninist precedent could bring the expected fruits.

As Yakovlev's position was gaining ground and actively promoted, the general picture of the Soviet past looked more and more as a negative instead of being the balanced account of positive and negative events. In any case, "a balanced" account of the Soviet history was hardly possible without simply silencing some of its worse aspects. The emotional expressiveness of human sufferings suddenly and simultaneously displayed in public had a deeper impact than theoretical accounts of economists regretting the supposed economic heaven under real socialism. In other words, the NEP's alternative nucleus of successful economic reform remained overshadowed by the terror, which followed NEP. The context of perception here was also set by the immediate success or failure of the current economic reforms of perestroika. As the economy declined and shortages spread over the whole nomenclature of basic goods, the supposed attractiveness of NEP-like reforms declined as well<sup>136</sup>. Instead of providing a clear guidance for the intended reforms the Gorbachev-Yakovlev *return to history* finally intimated to the Soviet audience and publicists, that there were no good solutions or recipes in the Soviet past, which could be applied today.

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<sup>133</sup> О. Лацис, «Индивидуальный труд в современной социалистической экономике», *Коммунист*, 1987, №1

<sup>134</sup> О. Лацис, «На стержне революционного сознания», *Коммунист*, 1987, №13

<sup>135</sup> С. Никольский, «Перестройка общественного сознания и преодоление административно-бюрократического типа управления», *Вопросы Философии*, №12, с.111

<sup>136</sup> Arfon Rees, "Economic Policy", E. A. Rees (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in disarray*, 1992, MacMillan Press, pp.61-64

## Scientific objectivity illusion – rational politics and history

There is a broad consensus among researchers suggesting that Gorbachev's team as well as the Soviet ruling stratum as whole lacked any serious plan of reforms to carry out; instead, there were several themes and concerns identified as important for the successful resolution of the problems that the Soviet Union faced<sup>137</sup>. There were indeed several ideas and favourite themes as well as Gorbachev's personal expectation that by bringing together the best representative of the social and economic sciences together with new party executives he could obtain the necessary articulation for his broad vision of reforms. PhD in history and reformer, Alexander Yakovlev confessed a few years after perestroika's failure this intimate late Soviet conviction in the abilities of the social scientists:

An illusion was created that what needs to be done is to gather as full and reliable information as possible, analyse it strictly scientifically and (then) act in a corresponding way – in that case everything will go in the necessary direction, an honest and reasonable policy will be formed. This is an illusion which I shared.<sup>138</sup>

The rationalist form of the argument tells us more as it points out to a shared belief of the Soviet intellectual and political activists. In his lecture given in 1993 in Stanford, Yakovlev took a slightly different position speaking about the reformers' intentions from the position of an external witness:

It is also true that in the very beginning perestroika's premise was not destruction of "real socialism" as we used to call it, but its improvement on the basis of "humanitarian rationalization." Call it an illusion if you want, or an attempt that was bound to fail, but at least those were intentions of the reformers to which I can be a witness<sup>139</sup>.

An attentive and critical biographer of Gorbachev, Oleg Davydov noted Gorbachev's personal propensity to consult with specialists as a standard means to address strategic challenges he met since the early steps in his career; this was rather unusual for the top Communist leaders. In his consultations with specialists Gorbachev was keen on identifying the appealing ideas but avoided detailed analysis of practical measures<sup>140</sup>. Davydov provides a psychological interpretation of this approach in terms of transaction analysis. But even beyond Gorbachev's psychological particularities which could be over-emphasized in this account, the same belief was widely shared by the reform-minded political elite and especially by the Soviet intelligentsia. A well-known Russian economist Vladimir Mau with his Finnish colleague Pekka Sutela retrospectively named this approach as "the

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<sup>137</sup> See in particular: Geoffrey Hosking, *History of the Soviet Union: 1917–1991*, Final edition, Fontana, 1992, Peter J Boettke, *Why Perestroika Failed*, Routledge, 1993; Bradley, John (ed.) *Soviet perestroika, 1985-93 Russia's road to democracy*, Boulder, N.Y. 1995, 210p. Goldman, Marshall *What went wrong with perestroika*, W.W.Norton and Co., N.Y.&London 1991, 258p.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Pekka Sutela, Vladimir Mau, "Economics under socialism: the Russian case", in Hans-Jurgen Wagener (ed.), *Economic Thought in Communist and Post-Communist Europe*, Routledge, 1998, p.205

<sup>139</sup> Alexander Yakovlev, "The future of democracy in Russia and the Question of the Communist Party", *Sanford S. Elberg Lecture*; Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley, 2/22/1993; [www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Yakovlev/](http://www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu/Elberg/Yakovlev/)

<sup>140</sup> Олег Давыдов, *Горбачев. Тайные пружины власти*, Гелеос, 2002, с. 88-89, 98



objectivity illusion"<sup>141</sup> when analysing Soviet economic policy during perestroika. We find in the political texts as well as in the perestroika periodicals and scientific reviews a large number of similar statements, which imply the general assumption that a *scientifically* valid knowledge on history, economy and society can and should provide the direct guidance for an efficient and presumably harmonious policy-making. *The presumed scientificity used to fill the gap between ideals and reality.*

The intellectual roots of this late Soviet pattern can be easily identified in the general Marxist approach and in its Leninist version; although the latter was much more realistic than theoretical. Marx's pretension to discover the general laws of the world history and to possess the best analytical tool for understanding daily politics acquired a particular credibility for Bolsheviks, once this minor party successfully seized political power in one of the largest countries of the world. This practical political success of the Bolshevik Party under the Lenin's leadership set a symbolic precedent and became an important legitimating device in both external and internal Soviet propaganda. According to his aide who otherwise was not keen on praising his patron, again unlike other leaders, Gorbachev was personally familiar with the classic ideological texts and in 1986-1987 was very much influenced by Lenin's writings: "During the second and third year of perestroika Gorbachev's was suddenly attracted by the works of V. I. Lenin, discovering for himself useful passages. Entering in his room, I constantly saw volumes of the founder of the socialist state. He often would take a volume and read aloud the statements of Vladimir Ilyich, compared them with present context and admired his perspicacity"<sup>142</sup>. Strikingly, Gorbachev did not address the most serious lesson of the NEP policies: tightening of the political regime as the condition of the economic liberalization. Oscar Bandelin having studied the economic reforms' planning during perestroika and the discussions of the Soviet economists on the NEP draws a wider conclusion that: "A blind faith in some kind of deterministic relationship between laws of nature and laws of social development was the cornerstone of the positions of both Lenin and Gorbachev"<sup>143</sup>. This formulation perhaps too crudely reproduced the official rhetoric and amalgamates the different ability of the two leaders to apply theory into practice. Yet, as one of the Soviet publicists phrased the official version of this faith: "Lenin was not writing on something he simply wished to see coming, he was writing about the inevitable, he was preparing revolution on the basis of an undisputable scientific forecast, he directed the rapid flow of the revolution and directed it in the right direction...".<sup>144</sup> Gorbachev most probably had no fixed ideas on the laws of history but he had the intuitive and optimistic faith in people's spontaneous ability to creatively work and self-govern, once the obstacles were removed. Following Khrushchev dismissal in 1964, it was tacitly recognized that among the current leaders there were no more a theoretical and political genius like Lenin<sup>145</sup>, but the very possibility to base successful policy-making on the "scientific" understanding of history and

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<sup>141</sup> Pekka Sutela, Vladimir Mau, *Ibid.*, p.203-206

<sup>142</sup> В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с.132

<sup>143</sup> Oscar J. Bandelin, *Return to the Nep: The false promise of Leninism and the Failure of perestroika*, Praeger-Greenwood, 2002, p.23

<sup>144</sup>"Но Ленин писал не только о желаемом, он писал о неминуемом, готовил революцию на бесспорно научном предвидении, руководил ее стремительным потоком, направлял его по верному руслу", Петр Мезенцев, «Ленинский образ революции», *Наш Современник*, 1987, №4, с.4

<sup>145</sup> See for example the discussion of the popular disappointment in the infallibility of the Soviet leaders since 1964 by Elena Zubkova discussing the reactions on 1964 : <http://www.svoboda.org/programs/hd/2004/hd.101604.asp>

society remained intact and was never questioned. Even if Gorbachev could try for himself the role of a new Lenin<sup>146</sup> – he relied on objective necessity and on the scientific analysis of the Soviet economists, historians and social theorists for finding the right solutions for the realization of his implicit social ideal. The assumption that knowledge of history contained the ideal social solution was widely shared and openly stated; by the end of perestroika this became manifest.

Resuming the substantial achievements of the Soviet historiography, academician Tikhvinsky stated in 1985: “The defining feature of recent historical studies was the increased attention towards the resolution of the practical tasks of “perfecting of socialist society in the fields of ideology, politics, nation and culture building”<sup>147</sup>. In his pioneer revisionist article in *Kommunist*, Yuri Afanassiev was much more innovative in his language and actually challenging the above quoted academician Tikhvinsky on most of the issues but one. Afanassiev stressed with even more clarity and vigour the practical usefulness of studying history as a necessary and reliable science to prepare the future:

The applied significance of historiography will grow, if among historians it will be firmly understood that history is a “gigantic laboratory of the world social experience... and possibly on the threshold of the second and third millennium such an expression as “social engineering” will acquire its real sense and will be as habitual and clear, as biotechnology, genetic engineering, space programs. History occupies a privileged position in this respect<sup>148</sup>.

This sustained belief during perestroika was not a mere professional inclination of historians but the expression of a common sense. In 1987 the editors of *Kommunist* reproduce the same pattern of thought in more traditional Marxist wording. In this passage the ability to properly master history belongs to the Leninist party empowered by the appropriate analytical methods:

Another defining feature of the Leninist party – the recognition of the high role of the scientific revolutionary theory which gave to Bolsheviks the ability to identify the law-like tendencies of the social development, scientifically address and solve the new problem, master the flow of events and not being mastered by events<sup>149</sup>

The last formula is very concise scientific knowledge of society allows to “master the flow of events and not being mastered by the events”. In the next issue of the leading theoretical review we find

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<sup>146</sup> See В. И. Болдин, *Op. cit.*, с. 133-134

<sup>147</sup> “Характерной чертой исторических исследований явилось усиление внимания к решению практических задач совершенствования социалистического общества в области идеологии, политики, национального и культурного строительства” с.4 С. Л. Тихвинский, «Итоги и перспективы исследований советских историков», *Вопросы Истории*, 1985, №7, с.4

<sup>148</sup> “Прикладное значение истории возрастет, если среди историков “укрепится взгляд” на историю как на “гигантскую лабораторию мирового социального опыта “И возможно, на рубеже второго и третьего тысячелетия такое, например, словосочетание, как “социальная инженерия”, обретет реальный смысл и будет для нас столь же привычным и понятным, как и биотехнология, геновая инженерия, космонавтика. Истории принадлежит здесь особая роль”, Ю. Афанасьев, «Прошлое и мы», *Коммунист*, 1985, №14, с.116

<sup>149</sup> “Другая отличительная черта ленинской партии — признание высокой роли научной революционной теории, которая давала большевикам возможность выявить закономерности развития общественной, жизни, научно обосновывать и решать новые проблемы, владеть событиями и не допускать того, чтобы события владели ими”, Редакционная статья, «Партия революции и созидания», *Коммунист*, 1987, №14, с.5

another articulation of the same aspiration by one of the most prominent Soviet economists and for a time acting vice-premier, academician Leonid Abalkin: "Without studying the experience accumulated during the 70 years of the socialist economics without a full appropriation of these lessons it is impossible to develop and realize a systematic complex of measures against the mechanisms of obstruction"<sup>150</sup>. Alexander Yakovlev made the fifth point of his draft of reforms: "Recourse to science for the design and implementation of economic and political democratization".<sup>151</sup> To be sure, we have to be careful and moderate about the univocal reading of these passages as expressing one particular intention. In many cases, the evocation of historical experience can be simply trivial. What seems to be significant here is the formal argument *ab historia*, the variety of purposes which it practically served and the rationalist belief in the possibility of scientific policy making on the basis of a correct historical analysis. Of course, the appeal to a scientific understanding of history could serve as a routine rhetorical device: in many cases, the reference to the past suggested that because of certain dramatic errors and crimes in the recent Soviet past, the necessity for wide reforms should be accepted for the near future. In other cases, the evocation of Lenin's ability to foresee and act upon history was mentioned to hint at the theoretical poverty of today's leadership as opposed to its great predecessors. In others, the negation of past crimes backed the conviction in the rectitude of the current Soviet political and economic model, which should be preserved and not reformed. However, when the idioms revolving around the mastery of history through historic knowledge were used to promote and justify something else, the underlying instrumental assumption was accepted by the author and his audience as a serious and legitimate argument. As we see, an extremely heterogeneous "coalition" of authors ranging from professional historians to leading economists and politicians shared this assumption framing the Soviet vision of politics in the first years of perestroika.

If most critical intellectuals expressed a growing scepticism about the adequacy of the general Soviet framework or "system" (and after 1988 there would be more and more voices against socialism as a historically unsustainable and criminal project), no one would dismiss the very aspiration to rediscover the scientific policy-oriented knowledge extracted from the correct understanding of the course of history. More than this, most of the authors shared the belief that this "historiographical" approach to policy making was natural, optimal and the most efficient. Therefore, Afanassiev, Yakovlev and finally, Gorbachev's emphasis on the scientific revision of history as the primary source for ideological innovations can both explain and also be explained by the intellectual context of perestroika. Reformers expressed the historiosophical assumptions on politics shared by the Soviet intelligentsia and most learned political leaders, which lacked other conceptual tools to orient themselves in a changing society.

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<sup>150</sup> "Сегодня без изучения опыта, накопленного за 70-летнюю историю социалистического хозяйствования, усвоения ее уроков, невозможно разработать и осуществить комплекс мер по демонтажу механизма торможения" Л. Абалкин, «Опираясь на уроки прошлого», *Коммунист*, 1987, №16, с.8

<sup>151</sup> «Привлечение сил науки к разработке и проведения процесса экономической и политической демократизации и контроля за ее промежуточными результатами» А.Н.Яковлев, *Сумерки*, М., Материк, 2003, с.381

In this context, the *socially harmonious* strategy of reforms seemed to be readily available once the ideological dogmatism and short-sightedness of the leaders were overcome. Most publicists, specialists and politicians whose texts we studied, counted that this scientific political recipe could be rapidly recovered and mastered taking into account the historical experience in a global world context. A pluralist discussion opposing different points of view would bring a reasonable and consensual formula. The official declarations of Mikhail Gorbachev bore the numerous traces of these historiosophical beliefs; in the early phase of perestroika he regularly declared that he was “struck by the depth and ever more acute actuality of Marx’s analysis” of global historical processes leading Western countries to imperialism and crisis or praised the decisiveness of the third world countries which “recently have stepped on the road of historical creativity”<sup>152</sup>. The idiom “historical creativity” we already encountered when discussing the rules regulating the public speech played in this respect a double role: it referred to the ability of the Marxist theory to progress, but this was also a subtle way to accept its possible shortcomings. The renovation was necessary because even Marx and Lenin could not predict the details of the future evolution or even certain important changes. Playing with metaphor of social and historic engineering, Yakovlev could even affirm that:

There were no ready-made drafts of socialism, and this could not exist... To foresee in details the future of the new society, all the stages and particularities of the development in details could not be possible, in Lenin’s words, even for “70 Marxes”.<sup>153</sup>

Surprisingly, the shift from the political conception of truth towards the pluralistic one effectuated in the first years of perestroika as well as the discovery of the previously hidden historical evidence on terror, dissent, inefficiency and other negative facts about Soviet history – first enforced the objectivity illusion. The hopes and expectations of this critical wave of revisionism relied on the steady rationalist assumption. Once the hidden facts were rediscovered and pluralistic critical debate launched, the rational policy would naturally follow. The acceptance of the concrete limits and insufficiency of the official theory to address the historical challenges of the present and give a genuine account of the past became another standard theme. As we have seen, M. Gorbachev already in 1984 and since 1985 A. Yakovlev, but also E. Ligachev regularly reiterated this criticism against social sciences in terms of deficit of their practical and political output<sup>154</sup>. In his official address to the social scientists in spring 1986, called “Renewal and criticism of the social sciences” Ligachev indicated the growing *gap* between social theory and political practice and claims that theoretical deficiency of social sciences

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<sup>152</sup> М. С. Горбачев, Доклад Генерального секретаря на ЦК XXVII Съезда Партии, 25 Фев.1986, М. Политиздат, с. 9, 10

<sup>153</sup> “Готовых чертежей социализма не было, да и быть не могло” с.7 “Предвидеть в деталях будущность нового общества, все ступени, особенности развития в подробностях не в состоянии, говоря словами Ленина, и 70 Марксов” in А. Яковлев, «Достижение качественно нового состояния советского общества и общественные науки», *Коммунист*, 1987, №8 с.7, 10

<sup>154</sup> A typical passage on the insufficient advances of the social theory at the service of the political practice made by Gorbachev at the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress : “Нельзя уйти от факта, что наш философский и экономический фронт, да и обществоведение в целом находятся в состоянии, я бы сказал, известной отдаленности от запросов жизни... Время ставит вопрос о широком выходе общественных наук на конкретные нужды практики, требует, чтобы ученые-обществоведы чутко реагировали на происходящие перемены в жизни, держали в поле зрения новые явления, делали выводы, способные верно ориентировать практику...””; М. С.Горбачев, «Политический доклад центрального комитета КПСС XXVII съезду коммунистической партии Советского Союза», *Избранные речи и статьи*, Т. 3., М., Политиздат, 1987. с.214

was one of the main causes of the hindrance to the growth<sup>155</sup>. This criticism of theoretical weakness do not contradict, but confirms the point on “objectivity illusion”, as the criticism stems precisely from the high expectations and fundamental trust in the practical muscle of social theory.

We can identify the double pattern of the late Soviet political thought: belief in the capability to define the appropriate policy rationally and scientifically, and return to history as the main field of intellectual inquiry directly preparing such rational policy. The editor of *Voprosy Filosofii*, the official review of philosophy in the USSR, V. Semenov gives us a plain official expression of these two components of perestroika’s theoretical frame, which became a standard common place by 1987:

The analysis made by historians, the unfolding discussions already gives the basis for the conclusion, that most of contemporary problems of the social development have a deeply rooted character, certain historical steadiness, they come from far away... Under socialism the role of the subjective factor of social development is so highly important as nowhere else and never before; and first of all for the superstructure ... the defining feature is the unity of the actions of the political power and the leadership in the strict correspondence with the requirements of the objective laws of historical development...<sup>156</sup>

The theoretical quest for the collective agency capable of responding to perceived downturns of history found a supposedly safe haven in a pluralistic experts’ community freely and critically discussing the historical experience and advising the leadership in order to correct the past deformations or errors.

#### *The germs of the choice: freedom, alternative and responsibility*

Scientific objectivity illusion in principle excluded freedom, but the debates and positions on the political significance of the Soviet past outlined above addressed one common problem, to which there was actually no clear name in the language of the late Soviet political theory or historiography. We can identify it as a problem of *human agency* in history. Individually, few authors we studied had rather elaborated approach to this issue; however, what is most important in the situation of free public debate is the ability to present one’s position in terms easily accessible and convincing to most readers and peers. The absence of an idiom marking the crucial point of a problematic makes any communications and discussions about the subject more hazardous. As we can see the main

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<sup>155</sup> «...замедление в прошлом темпов нашего движения... объясняется именно недооценкой роли объективных социально-экономических законов, недостаточностью проработки целого ряда актуальных проблем общественного развития, известным отрывом теоретических кадров от практики» Е. Лигачев, «Обновление и критика обществоведения», *Коммунист*, 1986, № 15, с.8

<sup>156</sup> «Уже проведенный историками анализ, развернувшиеся дискуссии дают основание сделать вывод, что многие нынешние проблемы общественного развития имеют застарелый характер, своеобразную историческую устойчивость, тянутся издавна... Нигде и никогда так, как при социализме, не возрастает роль и значение субъективного фактора, субъективной стороны общественного вития и прежде всего роль политической надстройки... судьбоносное значение единства действий политической власти, руководства в строгом соответствии с требованиями объективных законов исторического развития социализма, с диалектикой его роста и совершенствования...» В. С. Семенов, «Успехи, трудности, проблемы перестройки», *Вопросы Философии*, 1987 № 11, с.26

traumatic experience of these emerging public Soviet debates on the past setting the background for the visions of politics – was a number of perceived historical failures: the supposed projects of political actors in the focus of attention were not realized and even brought results opposite to what had been planned and expected. Lenin, other Bolshevik leaders from Bukharin to Radek, Trotsky, and more recently Khrushchev faced the obvious failure of their projects. This outlook could suggest that in the Soviet and Russian history human projects were doomed to failure. Klyamkin was the only publicist who had the intellectual courage to unfold this logic to its conclusion, while still defending liberal and humanist values.

The ‘objectivity illusion’ combined with a defeatist historical fatalism infused by the study of national history could put the spell on any serious attempts at reform. In other words, the support of Gorbachev’s reforms would require stoic *ataraxia* (in the Russian past the presumably powerful historical laws proved to be not very friendly to the reformers and therefore reforms could and should only be initiated because they represented a noble goal, but not because they had realistic chances for success)<sup>157</sup>, which is not an attractive basis for the spread the ideas supporting ambitious and risky reforms. More substantially, independently of the attitudes towards Gorbachev, his allies or opponents this outlook made irrelevant any activist political position. The presumption of one’s capability to impact the historical and political process animated mass participation in Modern politics as far as the idea of citizens’ virtue declined and arose anew in different cultural contexts<sup>158</sup>. The acceptance of the bitter lessons of history would lead Soviet intelligentsia to a sceptical exclusion or stoic endurance instead of civic activism. Public politics in this sense became senseless. The generalized optimism stemming from the ‘objectivity illusion’ of the first years of perestroika over-wrote this pessimist conclusions from the traumatic experience of the Russian history of reforms, which in the absence of other backgrounds provided the matrix of political orientation and communication. However, this threat to the sense of politics emanating from history demanded a stable intellectual and psychological resolution. Several independent authors shaped the appropriate intellectual pattern in reply to this puzzle and as we try to show this pattern solidified in a family of interconnected idioms. The best known and most widespread idiom of this series was “the choice of the path of historical development” was (unlike most other historical idioms in circulation during perestroika) introduced by a well-known Soviet historian P.V. Volobuev as an element of a more global theoretical framework. The universal appeal of Volobuev’s formula consisted in its ability to conciliate the ‘objectivity illusion’ in the sense of the cognizable historical law-like regularities leading to progress with the equally attractive idea of the freedom of historical choice. At the same time, this pattern provided the necessary tools for blaming actors for the unacceptable historic results, and hoping on the more successful paths:

The choice of the path of social development signifies the choice of a radically new path in sense of the direction or of the type of social evolution, and also the choice between substantially different paths,

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<sup>157</sup> This unusual position based on the study of history seem to be close to what I. Klyamkin was exposing in his influential and controversial articles, that were mostly misunderstood by his contemporaries.

<sup>158</sup> See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, Princeton UP, 2003 (1975), pp. 31-49

variations, forms with the already established direction... the path of development is a historical-methodological category which fixes the general features of the historical process<sup>159</sup>

Thus, the idiom of the “choice of historical path” in its way resolved the traumatic contradiction between the aspiration to meaningful and rational public politics and the induced defeatist fatalism of Soviet and Russian history. The solution was in favour of politically meaningful activism: the moment of historical choice conferred a sense to public politics especially during the crucial bifurcation phases. Perestroika satisfied these criteria in the eyes of Soviet intellectuals and political leaders as from its conception perestroika’s meaning gradually shifted to signify the all-embracing and irreversible period of reforms or (re)evolution. Volobuev developed his argument using the familiar Soviet Modernist vocabulary of the self-ruling collective agency:

According to the materialistic understanding of history, humans (e.g. masses of socially organized people – stratum, classes, and peoples) can change themselves and change the social relations, and therefore they choose new paths of their social-political development. There we clearly see the role of the popular masses as the masters of history. But humans make history not arbitrarily or according to some transcending (standing beyond them) laws, but “inclining” before the historical necessity, e.g. acting within the frame of the objective laws of historical development.<sup>160</sup>

The masses and their creativity seen as actors of history remained an important image for both historians and politicians, including Gorbachev who genuinely wanted to wake up the masses for a sort of humanistic creativity. The fact that “masses” were seriously taken just as a positive category of the historical and social analysis shows another aspect of this mixture of the rather abstract democratic and humanist ideals and rather loony “scientific” lenses used to analyse the past and present in the late USSR by its leading figures. Volobuev professionally studied the October revolution and the original concept emerged explaining the participation of the masses in the revolutionary events; in 1970 he was condemned as the defender of the bourgeois conception of “*alternatives in history*”<sup>161</sup>. Defending the *socialist choice* of the Russian people, Volobuev constantly stressed that masses supported the October revolution objectively, instinctively and spontaneously, and in this sense this was both choice and necessity – while the role of the leader is to capture and guide this spontaneity of masses.<sup>162</sup> Condemning Stalinism, Volobuev argued, that in 1917 there was no

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<sup>159</sup> “Под выбором пути общественного развития подразумевается как выбор принципиально нового пути в смысле направления или типа социальной эволюции, так и существенно различных путей, вариантов и форм в уже определенном направлении”, “путь развития” - это “историко-методологическая категория... фиксирующая общие черты процесса” П. В. Волобуев, «Россия: борьба за выбор новых путей общественного развития», *Вопросы Истории*, 1987, №5, с.46

<sup>160</sup> “Согласно материалистическому пониманию истории люди (имеются ввиду большие массы социально-организованных людей - межклассовые слои, классы, народы) сами могут изменять и изменяют общественные отношения, а следовательно, выбирают новые пути своего общественно-политического развития. В этом ярко проявляется роль масс как творцов истории. Но люди делают свою историю не по произволу или направляемые некими трансцендентными (т.е. стоящими над ними) законами, а “подчиняясь” исторической необходимости, т.е. действуя в рамках объективных законов исторического развития...”  
Idid, с.42

<sup>161</sup> П.В.Волобуев, *Неопубликованные работы. Воспоминания. Статьи*. М., 2000, с.37

<sup>162</sup> See: П.В. Волобуев, *Выбор путей общественного развития: теория, история, современность*, Политиздат, М., 1987

*alternative* to the Bolsheviks' strategy because of the socialist choice of masses, while in the second half of 1920s there was an open choice between the continuation of NEP and collectivisation. He also deliberately opened the contemporary political agenda. In the foreword to his book devoted to the major theoretical revision of Marxism-Leninism, P. Volobuev mentioned that socialism created new higher mechanisms for the "optimization of the choices of the paths of historical development", but unfortunately, these new promising mechanisms are studied "quite badly".<sup>163</sup> Devoting the entire book to the analysis of the distant Soviet past or of the other countries of the world, Volobuev implies that his vision can shed new light on the "forthcoming path"<sup>164</sup>. The suggestion he makes in this respect is to meditate on the Lenin's text written on the eve of the October revolution:

We do not pretend that Marx or Marxists know the path to socialism in its concreteness. It is silliness. We know the direction of this path, we know which class forces lead along this path, but concretely and practically only the *experience of the millions of people* will show this path when they will join the cause.

The universal appeal of his pattern consisted in the applicability of this scheme – according to the political preferences or available evidence on different political groups. In this crucial case, the ongoing debates on the past followed the methodological innovation of the professional historians. In parallel with P. Volobuev, several outstanding and independent-minded historians worked out compatible theoretical constructions and in particular A. Gourevich (*the palette of probabilities*), I. Gindin (*crossing of alternative paths*), M. Barg (*historical alternative*). Another reputed but dissident historian, and the original leader in the Soviet historical revisionism, M. Geffer addressed the period of 1920s-1940s in similar but slightly more sophisticated terms badly looking for the most accurate definition:

What happened in – 1917 – was the only thing which stood against a bloodier outcome, to the dismantling without any sense. The *Choice* – is later. Not the choice of historical path, but already within this "path". More than variants, other then steps, leading upwards from the first crossroad<sup>165</sup>

In 1988, we can count more than fifty influential authors who used the idioms from the family set: alternatives, variability, choice of historical path, cross-road of history and a number of derivatives. Indeed, this idiom clearly articulated the central relation between historical laws, free political choice and responsibility in a way, which corresponded to the basic values and theoretical assumptions of the Soviet intellectuals in mid 1980s. This innovation saved the most important and not yet achieved individual experience of freedom and a political value – free agency, understood as the capability to master history within a political community of peers. To cite once more the reform draft written by Alexander Yakovlev in 1985 and then judged by Gorbachev premature:

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<sup>163</sup> «Между тем известно, что социализм создал новые, присущие только ему механизмы общественного развития. ... Эта сторона социалистического развития, связанная с появлением в нем на известном этапе различных альтернатив, как нам представляется, изучена весьма слабо». Ibid., с.16

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., с.16

<sup>165</sup> М.Я Гефтер, *Из тех и этих лет*, М., Прогресс, 1991, с.213



Democracy is first of all freedom of choice. But we now have first of all – non-alternative and centralisation... The lack of choice in all spheres and on all stages (Asiatic past, history of the country in general, hostile surrounding and etc.). Today we do not understand the essence of the upcoming and historically inevitable from the époque, when there was no choice or when it was historically impossible, to the époque, when without a democratic choice in which every body is taking part, there will be no successful development.<sup>166</sup>

In conclusion, we can note the widespread references to historical necessity as the main mode of theoretical argumentation in favour of reforms, i.e. the main mode of public argumentation in this period. What suddenly appeared as historically inevitable was the very need to make free choices as the guarantee to survive in the new époque. However what made this change so inevitable, objective and needed was not really specified, as it probably was not clear for the reformers. They presented and most probably saw their own moods and decisions on strategic issues as the expression of necessity, but the fear of a drawback in reforms haunted them too. Scientific objectivity illusion and moral quest for integrity can explain the surprising enthusiasm of reform leaders and intelligentsia at the beginning of perestroika. In this logic, intellectually honest public deliberation was to rapidly produce scientifically proven political and economic recipes for reforms – implicitly this combination of the technocratic and moral assumptions was strengthened by the trust in the natural goodness of history.

We argue that moral dissatisfaction was the main driver of the Soviet reformers as opposed to retrospective attribution of their reforms to the structural inefficiency of planned economy.<sup>167</sup> The situation of non-choice was perceived and understood as the reason of duplicity and cynicism by those who felt concerned by the public interest. Thus, the emergent historiosophical argument on the need of change through choice was related to the quest for moral integrity. Potentially, the dominant mode of political argumentation by historical necessity (and scientific objectivity was a more positivist complement to this historiosophical mode of thinking) contradicted the quest for moral dignity and integrity, because the later demanded to recognize the situation of free choice – at the individual level but also at the level of the polity. This contradiction was addressed and solved in 1988 in the formula

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<sup>166</sup> «Демократия – это, прежде всего, свобода выбора. У нас же – отсутствие альтернативы, централизация... Отсутствие выбора во всех сферах и на всех ступенях (азиатское прошлое, история страны вообще, враждебное окружение и т.д.). Сейчас мы в целом не понимаем сути уже идущего и неизбежного перехода от времени, когда не было выбора или он был исторически невозможен, ко времени, когда без демократического выбора, в котором бы участвовал каждый человек, успешно развиваться нельзя». А.Н.Яковлев, *Op. cit.*, с.381

<sup>167</sup> This argument is forcefully although with many self-negating provisos advanced by E. Gaidar. We can distinguish the structural tensions within the USSR of the 1980s from the actual historical logic of its downfall. We argue here and in the following chapters that first, moral quest of integrity was the main preoccupation of Gorbachev and his supporters (as Gaidar notes, they realized the gravity of economic threats, when political chaos and economic errors had already significantly worsened the economic situation), and second, that economic collapse of the 1989-1991 was directly caused by the reformers' policies precisely breaking the established economic equilibrium – although stagnating, suboptimal and wasteful, but far from catastrophic on the eve of perestroika. См.: Е. Гайдар, *Гибель Империи. Уроки для современной России*, М., РОСПЭН.

“there is no alternative to perestroika” as the ground for the morally just and socially efficient choice opposed to the conservative dead-end.

In 1987 Gorbachev started enthusiastically speaking about the right historical choice made by the *people* in 1917 and compared perestroika to revolution. Did not he imply that it could be decided otherwise in 1987? Rather than deliberately subverting the official ideology, we presume Soviet humanist reformers and revisionists felt that modelling, simulating or recreating the situation of choice was the condition to make beliefs and convictions *real*. In principle, reformers could skip the ideological revitalization phase and simply impose the new agenda of reforms as at the earlier stages did Lenin, Stalin or Den Xiaoping using propaganda and military violence. But the new generation of leaders – and the first properly Soviet generation brought up by the Stalinist system of education – had no firm orientation and decided otherwise. They saw the purity of convictions as the condition for the success of reforms, presuming that a reasonable man of conviction could not stand against reforms. But we can reasonably range their views about reforms from Ligachev’s straightforward Soviet Puritanism to Yakovlev’s subversive humanist purification. Ligachev, Yakovlev, Slyunkov, Cherniaev, Medvedev and many of their peers, advisers and supporters at the top of the CPSU first called by Andropov and consolidated by Gorbachev were looking for honesty and integrity in convictions. Despite the ambient pragmatism or cynicism, reformers trusted in free criticism, human factor, persuasion and instinctively distrusted violence, i.e. they kept faith in the frame set by the official ideology, but disproved the massive use of violence and hatred of class-enemies. The common *strategy* of perestroika was mobilization by persuasion and purification.



## **CHAPTER III**

**Unity for reforms against the convictions of Nina Andreeva  
[rules in 1988]**

The year 1988 was crucial for perestroika as far as the general strategy designed by Gorbachev and his reformers' team deviated from the original optimistic script and the public noticed the sway. The response of social reality proved to be very different from what they expected, precisely when reformers announced most of the new policies and institutions. During 1988 Gorbachev outlined the contours of substantial democratic reforms consistently but indirectly dismantling the top-down party-state hierarchy by the revitalization of Soviets, competitive elections of the regional party chiefs and by the creation of a new, non-party organ of Supreme power – The Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. The CPSU's central apparatus replied by the passive obstruction of new reforms directed against its powers. New actors entered political scene using the opportunities offered by glasnost, first alternative elections and economic liberalization. For instance, first private banks were already created in 1988. Moreover, new values brought by generational change and the requirement of intellectual honesty and open criticism started to bear their first *unexpected* fruits: debates exposed irreducible and conflicting values; the discussion about the Soviet past intended as a means of moral purification and reconnection with the sources of Lenin's socialism displayed an ideological split within the Politburo over the proper balance between the criticism and pride in the Soviet history.

Arguably, each of the seven years of perestroika deserves special attention, and there are good reasons to identify each year as pivotal in several aspects<sup>1</sup>. The logic of most of the social and political processes of perestroika was cumulative: every major threshold had its antecedent and continuation. This would justify a distinction of seven phases of perestroika; or a distinction of even smaller periods than one year as crucial with some reason. In the academic literature to date there is no general agreement about the periods of perestroika; we can refer to a dozen of periodizations of perestroika that do not coincide. We believe this diversity of periodizations, at least partly, reflects the logic of perestroika, which shares this feature with other revolutions and major political crises. The historical logic of perestroika as a series of reforms responding to the difficulties and inadvertently triggering the crisis in several spheres of life fits well the sociological conception of political upheavals offered by Michel Dobry. M. Dobry in his influential book suggested that a major political crisis originates in a constellation of several crises in different *sectors* spreading across and mutually strengthening<sup>2</sup>. There is no major factor driving the crisis. The accumulation and diffusion of the “local” crises in different sectors of social life, each marking a meaningful threshold, – constitutes the logic of a major political crisis. In this sense, competing periodizations point at different shifts and thresholds in different segments. In order to be able to distinguish meaningful periods, we must choose a specific segment of the historical process – and for this particular segment we can identify meaningful periods.

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<sup>1</sup> We can refer a substantial two-volume collection of essays making a detailed account of political, economic, social and cultural evolutions of 1990. The editors explicitly mentioned they took 1990 as the least significant year and provided a “thick description” of its events in order to prove its paramount and pivotal character. See: *Новое Литературное Обозрение*, специальный выпуск 1990: *Опыт изучения недавней истории*, №83/84, (1/2, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Michel Dobry, *Sociologie des crises politiques: la dynamique des mobilisations multisectorielles*, Paris, Presses de la FNSP, 1986

For our research, the framing question is the evolution of public speech: key idioms, values and conventional rules regulating public discussions in the context of policy making. In 1988, the conventional Soviet rules of public debates substantially changed. The letter of Nina Andreeva manifested a cleavage within the Politburo, which was condemned, but not duly repressed nor overcome. This break accelerated public communication between actors spreading new ideas, values and idioms. Precisely during 1988, the new historiographical idioms of choice, path and alternative became the main theoretical way of debating politics. In this chapter, we first outline the key policies and events framing the agenda for nascent public debates from “outside” the intellectual field of debates, then we will trace the changes in the rules of public debates typically articulated when debating historiographical issues and in the third part, we analyse the meta level of debates – subjective integrity, values and conceptions of truth as means to regulate communication.

## **Problematique: events and intentions on the agenda**

In 1988, the general agenda of perestroika changed as far as the distribution of the roles changes between Gorbachev and his closest allies, other politicians and society. As we stressed earlier, during the first stage of perestroika the ideological and political initiative fully belonged to M. Gorbachev's team – other actors could only support, subvert or distrust their policy, but there was no public disobedience, counter moves nor any significant opposition to the leader's initiatives. By the end of this crucial year, ideological discord within the ruling group became lasting and public for the first time since the dismissal of Khrushchev in 1964. Gorbachev also faced meagre results of his policies and the first signs of people's public discontent. Finally, when Gorbachev announced the concrete outline of political reforms, he faced the discontent of the majority of the Politburo, as well as of the executive apparatus of the Communist Party, such as the *Secretariat* and *Obshchy otдел*, despite the fact that Gorbachev had recently reappointed most of these cadres. Metaphorically speaking his main political instrument fell out of his hands. As the General Secretary's personal aide, A. Chernyaev formulates it opening the chapter on 1988 in his memoirs and speaking about glasnost: the instrument became an independent force<sup>3</sup>. Alexander Yakovlev says that in the second half of that year "perestroika became autonomous from its initiators"<sup>4</sup>. Gorbachev had decided to break the tool before becoming its victim. The memory of Khrushchev's fall was one of his constant worries. Gorbachev's closest allies in Politburo, the anonymous Party apparatus, slowing economic growth and finally the wider public, for the first time, openly challenged several of perestroika's policies and assumptions. This was not a failure, but a challenge of a new kind – that of competitive public politics. Gorbachev's leadership and the traditional legitimacy of the Communist Party rule did not vanish in 1988<sup>5</sup>; rather, the reform of the Soviet society proved to be a more complex task than expected both by the energetic team of reformers and by the society. Moreover, new actors willing to use these difficulties of reforms to contest the political leadership signalled their presence. The downplaying of Soviet rules and conventions in the public sphere stimulated new political and ideological dynamics: allowing grumbling discontent to amplify and consolidate into discredit of the political authority. For Gorbachev this year marks the peak and the limits of his ability to reform the Soviet regime and control the outcomes of his reforms. For the Soviet public this period marked the shift from hopes, promises and initiatives encouraged by the new charismatic leader – to doubts, contest and active competition from new actors unintentionally but consistently brought into being by his new policies.

### *From lagging economy to democratization: the pillars of historiosophical optimism*

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<sup>3</sup> А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с.179

<sup>4</sup> А. Н. Яковлев, *Предисловие. Обвал. Послесловие*, М., 1992, с.130 – cited in А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.105

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Wyman brings ample evidence that until 1989 Soviet institutions and Gorbachev benefited from a reasonably strong support according to the first professional polls - already in the context of unfolding glasnost. "Polls from 1989 describe a situation where the main institutions of power: the Communist Party, the Supreme Soviet, the USSR Council of Ministers, and Gorbachev himself were broadly accepted...". Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p.87

What was Gorbachev counting on to replace the broken institutional tools and reply to the challenges of new political actors? In short, Gorbachev brilliantly used his expertise in *apparatchik* politics, his taste for institutional reforms, and his personal charisma to outmanoeuvre or convince his allies-opponents within the Politburo, CC and Party. Strategically, introducing his radical political reforms he counted to unleash and master the “creativity of the masses” and “human factor”, however odd it may sound today or in another intellectual context. From the vantage point of historical retrospective, we can see with certainty that reliance on the human factor, local initiative, democratic elections, self-management and participation, glasnost, and public opinion as the main tools to reform the USSR were inadequate and even naïve, as a few Western scholars and observers argued already in 1990<sup>6</sup>. Reconstituting the Soviet intellectual context of the mid-1980s, we suggest that this *naivety* reflected both the critical and positive beliefs of the new political generation succeeding to Andropov, Gromyko and Suslov. Thus, Gorbachev’s presumed naivety was to a wide degree defined by the intellectual context of his most theoretically learned peers and advisors recruited to the elite after 1950s; Gorbachev’s personal touch was probably his outstanding vigour in applying what his peers felt as necessary<sup>7</sup>.

The reformers did not expect or fear an imminent crisis even in 1988. The way Gorbachev perceived the *current* situation in this period reveals the formula he often used with his advisors: “nothing changes!” – He exclaimed. The general mood of the General Secretary and the reformist team remained optimistic as the expectations of rapid positive changes lasted almost the whole year<sup>8</sup>. The main sources of the negative information for Gorbachev in 1988 were not statistical reports announcing the crisis in the financial sphere (nor a personal experience of unsuccessful shopping in empty shops as was the case for Soviet citizens), but his discussions with people during trips around the country and people’s letters which complained of the bureaucracy’s immobility<sup>9</sup>. This certainly gives more ground to affirm that perestroika was not initiated out of the sense of urgent danger to the

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<sup>6</sup> We refer in particular to the accounts of J. Sachs (1990), M. Goldman (1991-1992), and E. A. Rees (1990) who clearly pointed out that self-management, elections of the executives and more financial independence for organizations without real private property - and its financial responsibility - did not create incentives for a better output but dramatically increased the salaries of employees: “As de-centralisation increased, workers and managers found new ways to appropriate the enterprise income for their own benefit. For example, workers pressed for ever-higher wages, which their managers routinely granted; both knew that the government would make up for the firm's higher wage costs one way or another”, Jaffrey Sachs, “What is to be done?”, *The Economist*, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, Norton & Company, NY and London, 1992 (second edition), p.120-121, 139-142. E.A. Rees, “Economic policy” in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.63-65

<sup>7</sup> We specify this argument later on; to cite an example of nuanced prudence in the respect, but also showing that the author saw no *other* strategic options: “Контроль снизу, демократия, народовластие, самоуправление, саморегулирующаяся экономика... Все это для нас великая стратегическая магистраль, ведущая в коммунизм. Но магистраль эту еще предстоит построить. А пока? А что до? Выбор вариантов тут очень скромный - или отступить, или решительно идти путем, намеченным январским (1987) Пленумом ЦК КПСС: кадры, кадры и еще раз кадры!” А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы» (часть 2), *Новый мир*, 1988, №2, с. 224

<sup>8</sup> In 1989, he could not publish his personal notes from 1988 in a form of a book, because the manifested over-optimism of his diary already seemed displaced. See: А. С. Черняев, *Op. Cit.*, p.179

<sup>9</sup> This information on the importance of the people’s letters is reported by Cherniaev and Brutents and confirmed in the more recent Gorbachev’s interview to Starodubrovskaya and Mau. A. Yakovlev in his memoirs spoke of the monopoly of KGB on the information in the country; this view is contradicted by Gorbachev and his aides. See, И. В. Стародубровская, В. А. Мау, *Великие революции, от Кромвеля до Путина*, Варгрус, (2ое издание), 2004, с. 183, 227.



USSR's economic stability or to its geopolitical stance. Perestroika was launched as a means to reply to stagnation, not to the future crash.

During his trip in Krasnoyarsk in September, Gorbachev faced the negative attitude of the population for the first time – people openly complained about their economic situation and worsening shortages of goods<sup>10</sup>. These signals worried Gorbachev but he still was convinced in the potential of the Soviet economy and Soviet society to improve rapidly: provided a large political reform could *unleash* people's energy. The shift from first economic reforms to political reforms reflected the broader "political philosophy" of Gorbachev and Soviet style of leadership. Most of other prominent Politburo members such as Gromyko, Ligachev, Chebrikov, Yakovlev or Shevardnadze as well as most of their predecessors shared Gorbachev's preference for political problematique. Even Nikolai Ryzhkov as the president of the Council of Ministers in charge of the planned economy shared the same political approach to economics and had neither the voice nor the vision to set a coherent economic strategy even when he had a strongly different opinion<sup>11</sup>. Short of new economic tools, he called for democratization to ensure steady growth of the Soviet economy. Discussing a Gorbachev draft to the Politburo in 1988, Ryzhkov somehow confusingly presented and approved the idea of democratisation as a condition of economic growth: "If we speak about economy, then it's impossible to set it on new railways without democratization. If people will not feel that they should earn their salary [by hard work], nothing will change. It's impossible to separate the economy and democracy"<sup>12</sup>. The Soviet leaders did not mean market economy and liberal democracy, but something different: the idea of self-government in the economy and politics. In this period Gorbachev, Yakovlev and Ligachev split over other issues, agreed on the need for popular self-government at all levels, perhaps, except their own.

Thus, the shift from economic to political reform operated by Mikhail Gorbachev by the end of 1987 (and considered probably one year earlier) was not a reaction on an actual or anticipated *economic crisis* as sometimes implied *ex post*<sup>13</sup>. The factual and chronological inaccuracy of this supposed link

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<sup>10</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.104

<sup>11</sup> Gaidar in his volume *Долгое Время* analyses Ryzhkov confession in 1990 that his government did not manage to show the importance of the growing monetary and budgetary imbalance in 1988: the measures proposed were delayed and the question was considered as not urgent. See: Егор Гайдар, *Долгое время, Россия в мире*, М., «Дело», 2005, с.349; Marshall I. Goldman, highly critical of the Gorbachev's half-measures and loss of time, carefully analyzed his economic policies and programmatic speeches about economy. He notes the very rare use of the very term – economic reforms by Gorbachev; Goldman resumes: "During his first year or so, Gorbachev made his limited aspiration for economic reforms"

Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, Norton & Company, NY and London, 1992 (second edition), p.95; <sup>12</sup> "Если говорить об экономике, то перевести ее на новые рельсы без демократизации невозможно. Если люди не почувствуют, что надо зарабатывать свою зарплату, ничего не будет. Или – или. Разделить демократизацию и экономику невозможно". See: *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991)*, М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.126

<sup>13</sup> First post-Soviet prime-minister, Egor Gaidar in his two substantial books (*A Long Time*, 2005, and *The Fall of empire*, 2007 2nd. edition) shows the Soviet dependence on oil export and points out the resulting shortage of food provision for cities. In the chapter significantly entitled "*USSR and falling oil price. The essence of choice*" Gaidar explains that the fall of oil prices resulted in a hard currency deficit, which set the dramatic dilemma for USSR: consumer price increase, introduction of ration card or reduction of industrial investment. Despite this suggestive title, in his most recent study he shows that Soviet leadership simply ignored the dilemma and saw it too late – in 1990. Gaidar's overemphasize on oil price shock as the structural cause contradicts the motives of reformers and the sequence of events. E. A. Rees identifies the fall of oil revenues as one of the causes of the foreign *trade deficit* in addition to substantial flaws within the Soviet economy. See: Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, М. Роспэн, 2007, pp. 207-233; Егор Гайдар, *Долгое*

is well demonstrated by Harrison.<sup>14</sup> Gorbachev's motivation was different: a general preference for political over economic issues, and irritation with the *average* results of the first economic reforms. This relative frustration was caused by the high expectations from the bold economic measures already taken and not by the concern about the approaching economic crisis<sup>15</sup>. In other words, bad economic news did not affect Gorbachev's policy choices although they should probably have to. As we mentioned, there is broad evidence that during 1988 the economic situation did not seem to Gorbachev alarming; he and most of his advisers explicitly rejected the idea of an approaching economic crisis at the end of the year<sup>16</sup>. As the notes from Politburo sessions show, statistical data were not very much trusted by its members and the questions of financial imbalance did not attract any serious attention despite several alarming reports from the finance minister, V. I. Gostev<sup>17</sup>. This year, however, saw the deficits and shortages spreading to most basic food and commodities around the country<sup>18</sup>. In 1988, people got first signs of perestroika's policy backfiring. Shortages heavily affected Moscow breaking its privileged position in the administrative-territorial hierarchy of food supply<sup>19</sup>. Both, gloomy economic forecasts and country-wide shortages were ignored by the reformers in 1988. Political responsibility for this ignorance clearly lies on Gorbachev as a leader who initiated the reforms; historical responsibility seems to be shared with many other Soviet politicians, intellectuals and citizens who could not identify the effects of the popular reforms and the causes of the spreading economic crisis.

#### *Consensus of the best minds: democracy against bureaucracy*

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*время, Россия в мире*, М., «Дело», 2005. E.A. Rees, "Economic policy" in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.62-65

<sup>14</sup> Mark Harrison, "Coercion, Compliance, and the Collapse of the Soviet Command Economy", *The Economic History Review*, 2002, Aug., pp. 397-433

<sup>15</sup> This psychological gap between over-ambitious plans and average results of the first period hiding behind the approaching crisis were noted by V. Mau and equally pointed by the USA State Secretary George Shultz relatively well aware about the current economic problems in USSR; George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, N.Y., 1993, pp. 1003-1004

<sup>16</sup> M. Gorbachev in his memoirs remembers he was "irritated" by alarmism of L. Abalkin in June 1988 and kept this optimism until December. K. Brutents echoes this impression and confirms that the rejection of the rising economists' warnings against the economic crisis was shared by Gorbachev's close allies and aides. Gorbachev even supposed the implication of the foreign secret services drawing a gloomy picture of the Soviet economy. See Карен Брутенц, *Несбывшееся, Неравнодушные заметки о перестройке*, М., «Международные Отношения», 2005, с.248; Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 1, М., «Новости», 1995, с.565.

<sup>17</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.169

<sup>18</sup> Karen Brutenets follows Anatoli Cherniaev and notes the first "empty shelves". A. Kokh and I. Svinarenko in their politically incorrect memoirs made a special section about the rise of deficit in 1988: "In 88 everything was starting to be in deficit..."; in Альфред Кох, Игорь Свиноаренко, *Ящик водки*, 2 том, ЭКСМО, 2004, с.56; Карен Брутенц, *Несбывшееся, Неравнодушные заметки о перестройке*, М., «Международные Отношения», 2005, с.241

<sup>19</sup> A. Shubin, following here Yeltsin's biographer A. Gorjun, intriguingly explained the economic disruptions in Moscow's food and consumer goods supply by the bureaucratic and sales management's reaction to the aggressive anti-corruption campaign initiated by Yeltsin. The established mechanism was endangered and both official and unofficial transactions slowed. A. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки, упущенный шанс СССР*, «Вече», М., 2005, с. 160. Also see: А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с. 229

Someway against the critical accounts of Gorbachev's personal flaws<sup>20</sup>, one of the leading Russian economists, V. Mau convincingly showed that Gorbachev had actually drawn from the expertise of the best reform-minded economists available in USSR by mid 1980s – L. Abalkin, N. Petrakov, S. Shatalin, G. Arbatov and A. Aganbegyan<sup>21</sup> – and he mostly applied their recommendations. Thus, by the end of 1987, Gorbachev has already used most of the leading economists' suggestions via a series of laws, new committees and budgetary decisions. But, as V. Mau concisely puts it: "It soon became clear, however, that the ideas which not long before had seemed the most advanced not only would not solve the ambitious tasks posed by perestroika but, on the contrary, were leading only to deeper social and economic problems"<sup>22</sup>. If the introduction of private ownership in large firms was *ideologically* unacceptable for economists and politicians until the economic crisis became imminent, the necessary price liberalization of the Soviet economy was also very *unpopular* measure in 1988 and later<sup>23</sup>; both moderate Communist reformers and the most radical and liberal ones warned the leadership about the negative impact of possible price liberalization on perestroika's fate<sup>24</sup>. The original set of reforms crafted by the boldest economists did not bring the highly expected and desired effects. In this context, uncertain, unpopular and ideologically problematic price reform looked neither plausible nor pressing. V. Medvedev was its main and sole advocate in the Gorbachev close surrounding. The real passivity and resistance of the bureaucracy to reforms was a much more visible target. A. Sakharov put his authority to support that democracy and direct referendums is the only path of real perestroika guaranteed from the setbacks and the unnamed resistance of bureaucracy:

I believe that democratization is the only real way to realize perestroika. Only with referendums on the key questions, which have to be determined in the future, we can create a situation securing the further political development of the country. Yes, the renewal started from the historical initiatives of Michael Sergeevich Gorbachev, but it can develop only on the grass-root basis, otherwise it is the path of dead-ends.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The careful policy analysis shows the fallacies and mistakes of the reformers: we refer among others to the accounts by M. Goldman, D. Price-Jones, E. A. Rees, S. White and many Russian researchers. However, the question for historians is to see these policies in their context and to identify the real options available. The *roadmap* Gorbachev used misled him and his peers in the most important economic and social challenges.

<sup>21</sup> We refer to the detailed insider's account in Vladimir Mau, "The Road to Perestroika: Economics in the USSR and the Problems of Reforming the Soviet Economic Order", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, March, 1996, pp.207-224; V. Mau reiterates this argument in his following work.

<sup>22</sup> V. Mau, *Ibid*, p.222

<sup>23</sup> E.A. Rees, "Economic policy", pp.62, 72-73

<sup>24</sup> Gorbachev in his memoirs regretted the delaying of the wholesale prices *reform* (not necessarily liberalization, but the change of the prices) and gently blamed the leading economists and economic publicists including N. Shmelev, G. Popov, L. Abalkin, S. Shatalin, T. Zaslavskaya and other supporters of perestroika, who firmly advised him not to engage the price reform in order to avoid popular discontent. N. Ryzhkov and V. Medvedev who favored the price liberalization independently confirm this point, both referring to their own inability to break the negative consensus against the wholesale price reform, despite their personal convictions that the price reform was crucial. See: Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева, Взгляд изнутри*, М., «Былина», 1994, сс.54-55; Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 1, М., «Новости», 1995, глава «Хозяйственная реформа» and cf. next note. Cf.: «Может быть, с точки зрения перспектив экономической реформы это самый страшный вопрос, потому что он связан с интересами человека. Тут есть две стороны: реформа оптовых цен и реформа розничных цен. В Китае растянули это на двадцать лет. Реформу розничных цен нельзя проводить в условиях ненасыщенного рынка. Это вызовет опасные социальные последствия. Надо сначала добиться улучшения положения на рынке, а потом постепенно приступать к этой реформе». Н. Шмелев, «Кто против? Дискуссия о соотношении сил в перестройке», *Огонек*, 1988, Декабрь, №50

<sup>25</sup> "Мне представляется, что единственным реальным способом осуществления перестройки является только демократизация. Только решение при помощи референдума ключевых спорных вопросов, которые еще надо

In line with this anti-bureaucratic political philosophy, the design of the political reform outlined at the XIX Party Conference consisted in reviving the Soviets as the main organ of people's local and regional self-government and creating a new bicameral political forum – Congress of Peoples' Deputy. The regional and republican entities of the Communist Party were to be partly fused with local Soviets. Namely, Party's local first secretary, who previously ran the territorial entity, according to the new rules had to win his position in Soviets in a free election and then should hold both positions - the head of the local Soviet and the head of the Party's local unit. In case of electoral failure, he should resign from both positions. Normally, Soviet's executives had limited functions and the executive power at the regional and republican levels belonged to the Party<sup>26</sup>. The strategic goal of this reform was the emancipation of the political system from the rule of the CPSU. For the transition period, this weakening of the Party was partly and vaguely compensated by the *recommendation* to elect local Communist Party leaders as the leaders of the local Soviets. This recommendation had no institutional power – the party leader had to win the free elections – and Gorbachev announced that he had no intentions to back up unpopular local party leaders behind the scene<sup>27</sup>. Gorbachev's supporters such as academician L. Abalkin critically saw in this measure the reinforcement of the party-state, but the direct democratic election certainly worried the established party apparatus. In reality, the fusion of the two positions simply did not take place. When the local party leaders massively lost competitive elections in 1989, the General Secretary had to correct the rule thus breaking the decisions of the XIX Party Conference: in a typically bureaucratic addendum changing the meaning of the main text, he accepted that holding both appointments was not “compulsory”.<sup>28</sup>

Gorbachev's institutional redesign aimed to replace the pillar of the established system: it offered to reverse the Party pyramid by granting executive power through local elections and not by top-down appointments<sup>29</sup>. Fully applied, this political system did not guarantee any firm long-term place for the CPSU and its ruling body PB – instead it transferred the executive and lawmaking powers to the

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сформулировать, может создать ситуацию, безопасную для дальнейшего политического развития нашей страны. Да, обновление началось именно в результате исторических инициатив Михаила Сергеевича Горбачева, но развиваться может только на народной основе, иначе это путь тупиков.” «Кто против? Дискуссия о соотношении сил в перестройке», *Огонек*, 1988, Декабрь, №50

<sup>26</sup> The formal elections on the positions of the first secretary routinely validated the decisions of the higher hierarchical level or the central executive apparatus within the Party; the local moods were sometimes taken into account before the election, but never via the actual vote against the suggested “candidates”. Votes against oscillated around 0.05 %. The deputies and the executive committees in the Soviets equally were under strict control of the local Party central apparatus. An empathic account is presented in В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с.200-202. ; О. А. Салов, *Советы: форма самоуправления и основа политической системы социализма*, изд. Экономика, М., 2004, с.57-59

<sup>27</sup> See: Ю. Прокофьев, *До и после запрета КПСС. Первый секретарь МГК КПСС вспоминает*, М., ЭКСМО, 2005, с.208-209

<sup>28</sup> И. Клямкин, «Логика власти и логика оппозиции. Почему Горбачев согласился на президентскую систему?», in А. А. Проташик (сост.), *Через тернии, Перестройка: гласность, демократия, социализм*, М. Прогресс, 1990, стр.708-709

<sup>29</sup> We rely on generally converging accounts of the reform of several researchers and memoirists; the critical accent on the non-democratic aspects of the reform put by R. Walker, R. L. Garthoff and others, seems to be out of historical context: Gorbachev had no intention to directly apply the liberal representative democracy and therefore he did not restrict it or placed “anti-democratic filters”; rather, he explored the unknown field of participatory democracy as he could imagine and test it. Cf.: Rachel Walker, *Six years that shook the world, Perestroika – the impossible project*, Manchester University Press, 1993, pp.126-130; Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, Brookings Institute, Washington, 1993, p.358

heads of the Soviets in person and thus granted them grass-roots democratic legitimacy<sup>30</sup>. And the introduction of the new political forum, Peoples' Deputies Congress, implicitly undermined the political monopoly of the Communist Party making it dependent on the free secret elections of the people's deputies. This complex outlook of the reform proved to be very difficult to grasp for Gorbachev's contemporaries: the two widely perceived features were freer elections, and the formation of the new kind of political body – the Congress of Peoples Deputies<sup>31</sup>.

The announcement of the drastic cutback of the central apparatus of the CPSU on the February Plenum devoted to human resources policy, generated a strong reaction of the Party staff and executives in the Soviet ministries. M. Goldman and G. Hahn point out that CPSU executives' and Ministries' power over the directors of the factories was already undermined by the "Law on State Enterprise" in force from 1<sup>st</sup> January, and put in danger by warring plans of political reforms.<sup>32</sup> The standard rhetoric formulas against the *abuses* of bureaucracy turned to be a planned attack against the power of the inner administration of the Party apparatus: *Orgotdel* and *Obshchii Otdel*<sup>33</sup>. The reaction of the central apparatus consisted in a growing sabotage of Gorbachev's further initiatives and policies, as politically Gorbachev kept the initiative and the apparatus could not openly challenge him<sup>34</sup>. In autumn, the Party Secretary of CC K. N. Mogilnichenko humbly but clearly reported to his chief that: "...as a whole, Central Committee apparatus apprehended the measures of its reduction by half with due understanding... however, there is a growing concern about their personal fate among a number of executives..."<sup>35</sup>. As R. Pikhoya showed, these measures undermined not only the personal privileges of hundreds of top apparatchiks; they broke the tacit principle of the post-Stalinist Soviet nomenclature whose place in the hierarchy could not be revoked unless exceptional errors were made<sup>36</sup>. Most of his public and private speeches suggested that the reformist leader purposefully fired

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<sup>30</sup> Since, they would owe their allegiance not the upper levels of the Party and ultimately to the hierarchy topped by the General Secretary, but to the support of local actors and wide population. Gorbachev openly confirmed this interpretation of the reform as an anti-Party democratic attack in December 1991 right after he lost the power. We could doubt his sincerity in the context of the possible pursuits against CPSU, but this interpretation fits well the complex design and this interview Gorbachev reconstructed it in so detailed way that this leaves little doubt. See: Леон Оников, *КПСС: Анатомия распада*, М., Республика, 1996, 90-91

<sup>31</sup> The evidence about Politburo discussions and meetings of Gorbachev with Parties first secretaries and intelligentsia in the eve of XIX Conference shows that many representatives of the elite felt worried and unsatisfied with the proposed institutional measures. They however offered no substantial amendments and were easily convinced by Gorbachev's energetic and ambivalent acceptance of the concerns expressed, which however did not result in the policy or institutional changes. See: *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с. 361-381

<sup>32</sup> See: Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, Norton & Company, NY and London, 1992 (second edition), pp.118-120, pp.139-141. Gordon M. Hahn "The First Reorganisation of the CPSU Central Committee Apparatus under Perestroika", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (Mar., 1997), pp. 281-302

<sup>33</sup> A passionate and insightful account of L. Onikov, we already referred to, puts these two departments of CPSU apparatus at the heart of the real executive power in USSR. Onikov exposed his views on this question to Gorbachev in his reports. Леон Оников, *КПСС: Анатомия распада*, М., Республика, 1996, с.71-74

<sup>34</sup> This turning moment is described by Rudolf Pikhoya as the beginning of a calm hatred of the Party apparatus against Gorbachev; the available information about Gorbachev's yet unmasked intentions and his speeches at Politburo during 1988 shows that his intentions were heard and understood by the central apparatus. Р. Г. Пихоя, *Советский Союз: История власти, 1945-1991*, Новосибирск, Сибирский Хронограф, с.480-483.

<sup>35</sup> Translation and quote from Pikhoya, Op. Cit., с.482

<sup>36</sup> The allegiance of the executives to the hierarchy of the Party and the stability of the system relied on this tacit contract insured via the mechanism of cooptation: personal allegiance in exchange for the guaranteed life-time membership.

against his own apparatus<sup>37</sup>. Between unpopular, ideologically dubious and uncertain economic reforms (such as the price liberalization) and democratisation of the political system, undermining the bureaucratic apparatus Gorbachev has chosen the second option. Reformers relied on the efficiency of the democratic self-rule in the local and central State administrations as well as they firmly relied on the benefits of self-management in the big factories and cooperatives – sparing only the Red Army<sup>38</sup>.

### *The unintended privatization of power and property begins*

The unintended result of this resolute attack against the central administration *and* of the earlier economic liberalization was the start of the wild and mild privatization by the end of 1987 beginning of 1988 accelerated by the “Law on Cooperatives” introduced in May 1988<sup>39</sup>. The beneficiaries of this process – management, certain ministerial executives and legalised black market dealers– took advantage of the situation; but in most cases, they did not share these opportunities with the middle management and workers, as the reformers had expected<sup>40</sup>. Representatives of the upper levels of bureaucracy started to transform the entire ministries, large plants or industry banks into half-private companies [*kontserny*], while on the lower level management easily transferred state funds into the private cooperatives and private “cooperative” banks suddenly legalized in 1988 without any legal framework<sup>41</sup>. In the absence of price liberalization, the gap between “black market” and official state prices increased and so did the shortage of basic goods more actively subverted from the official sales channels. The same year, more than six hundred cases of bandit attacks against the new riches were reported; the corrupted militia often ignored or benefited from it<sup>42</sup>. The entire Soviet wholesale system was paralyzed by its employees withholding the deficit goods and selling them in private: deficit increased in turn and so did the profits of “dealers”<sup>43</sup>. Thus, the economic reforms triggered the “self-induced economic crisis” provoked by the profound self-ignorance of the Soviet polity and society<sup>44</sup>.

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Reducing and criticising the central Party bureaucracy Gorbachev sent a clear message to the whole administration, in turn making its resistance to reforms even stronger.

<sup>37</sup> Valerii Boldin also attests that Gorbachev’s directed his criticism and took several measures directly against the central apparatus of the Party at the February Plenum in 1988 («Главный свой удар он нацелил по штабам, по всему аппаратному люду»); he also notes that the *apparatchik* becomes a swear word Gorbachev starts frequently using. Boldin interprets this shift as a attempt to attribute the responsibility for the failures in fact due to Gorbachev’s own policies duly applied by the apparatus. В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с. 192-194

<sup>38</sup> E. A. Rees pointed out that these self-management experimental measures were recognized as inefficient already in 1989, when the leading economic adviser A. Aganbegyan demanded to restrict this practice. E.A. Rees, “Economic policy” in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.63; For another empathic but still critical account of this aspect of the economic reforms by a Left wing intellectual and one of the leaders of perestroika’s *neformaly* see A. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки, упущенный шанс СССР*, «Вече», М., 2005, с.92-94

<sup>39</sup> This timing is a point of agreement between several scholars studying perestroika. See: Т. Сох, *From Perestroika to Privatisation: The Politics of Property Change in Russian Society 1985-1991*. Р. Г. Пихоя, *Op.Cit.*, с.483; А. С. Барсенков, *Op.Cit.*, с.120.; А. В. Шубин, *Op. Cit.*, с.95-97; А. Ахиезер, И. Клямкин, И. Яковенко, *История России: конец или новое начало*, Новое издательство, М., 2005, с.592. Т. Сох, *From Perestroika to Privatisation: The Politics of Property Change in Russian Society 1985-1991*, Ashgate, 1996

<sup>40</sup> А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки*, с.98-100, and 104.

<sup>41</sup> After the authorization to create cooperative banks in 1988 there were 400 banks in 1990. Due to the lack of expertise in the field the Soviet financial authorities set no measures to regulate new banks and make them accountable; a similar unprepared bank reform was made in Poland. See, Егор Гайдар, *Долгое время, Россия в мире*, М., «Дело», 2005, с.352

<sup>42</sup> С. Барсенков, *Op.Cit.*, с.102

<sup>43</sup> О. Исправников, В. Куликов, *Теневая экономика в России: иной путь и третья сила*, М., 1997, с.53-55

<sup>44</sup> We borrow this expression and the underlying idea from E.A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, p.62

Several authors identify this period as the beginning of the greatest fortunes of the 1990s in Russia<sup>45</sup>. The legalization of the private cooperatives, corruptible officials and the coexistence with large state enterprises made the necessary conditions for an uncontrolled, almost free but still very risky “privatization” of property or of financial resources. The various reactions to this undergoing process show the gap between the real situation and the intellectual maps used by the Soviet leadership and society. The reformers and their academic advisors saw these cases as tacit resistance to perestroika and to cooperative policy<sup>46</sup>; in fact, this spontaneous privatization was to become the main results of perestroika’s economic reforms. Alarming signals about this process came from the Russian nationalist intellectuals, sincere Soviet orthodox and most importantly – from Nina Andreeva’s who implied that intelligentsia, hidden Trotskyites, descendants of kulaks and black market dealers would use glasnost to restore capitalism<sup>47</sup>. This warning did not reach a wide audience; the supposition that second range Soviet managers and *nomenklatura* used perestroika as a means for privatization found much more support several years after perestroika was over<sup>48</sup>. There is however, no evidence that at this stage certain strata of bureaucracy would lobby special measures or laws. Mild privatization started in 1988 was a side effect of the “Law on Cooperatives” engrafted upon the grey deficit economics, but not a shortcut to capitalism deliberately concealed by reformers<sup>49</sup>.

#### *Publicity and new political actors*

Glasnost also diversely affected perestroika politics in a number of unintended ways with mostly destabilizing effects: ideological and value crisis, rising nationalism in the non-Russian Soviet republics and mounting criticism of the reformers. Boris Yeltsin boldly seizing the opportunity of legalized public dissent challenged the leadership at XIX Party Conference from yet another perspective of egalitarian populism: he criticized privileges of the *nomenklatura* contrasted to the growing shortages in basic food supply across the country and denounced poor economic results of

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<sup>45</sup> Е. Т. Гайдар, *Государство и эволюция*, М., 1995, с.63, cited in А. С. Барсенков, *Op. Cit.*, p.121

<sup>46</sup> Т. Заславская, «О стратегии социального управления перестройкой», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.26

<sup>47</sup> Already in March 1988, one year after the introduction of the law on cooperation, in her famous text “Can’t betray my principles” Nina Andreeva denounces the awakening of the “potential Soviet millionaires in the silence of backward bureaus and warehouses”. Nina Andreeva, «Не могу поступиться принципами», *Советская Россия*, 13.03.1988

<sup>48</sup> Retrospectively, researchers such as B. Kagarlitsky on the Left and several “Nationalist” authors see perestroika as the planned privatization brokered by the advanced bureaucracy groups. This big logical picture lacks the evidence in the concrete outline of perestroika: we can identify vague aspirations or individual and risky strategies but no coordinated policy of a large group.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander Shubin representing the Left anarchical wing of perestroika “neformali” carefully balances between this *ex post* attribution of capitalist intentions to Soviet bureaucracy and administrations, and an account of the historical order of events and strategies. In a renewed Marxian language he refuses to qualify perestroika revolution as bourgeois and identifies 1990-1991 as the moment when real interests for privatization and capitalist program appeared for the first time: «Как характеризовать Советскую революцию? ... Может быть, это буржуазная революция? Но собственно капиталистические требования влиятельными силами были выдвинуты только в 1990-1991 г.г., и сам капитал до 1992 г. был еще слаб, только формировался. Рано ему еще было играть роль гегемона революции» А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки*, с.217. For the empirical evidence of the spontaneous mild privatization on the example of a big Soviet plan “Rezina” unnoticed but well described by the authors see Michael Burawoy, Kathryn Hendley, “Between Perestroika and Privatisation: Divided Strategies and Political Crisis in a Soviet Enterprise”, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, (1992), pp. 371-402

perestroika as opposed to the leaders' promises. Then, in an open personal clash with E. Ligachev, his former patron in Politburo, talented populist positioned himself as the most radical reformer calling for immediate economic results, more democratic elections including that of General Secretary and finally for the end of *nomenklatura* privileges. Offering no comprehensive program, Yeltsin publicly criticized the top leadership for the lack of results and its disrespect of simple people<sup>50</sup>. The official counter-attack against Yeltsin did not convince the Soviet public: he managed to acquire an image of a progressive defender of simple people fit to challenge the central authority and willing to tell the truth. 1988 also gave birth to thousands of new clubs, associations, and discussion forums gradually merging into proto political movements – this political format of free associations challenged the ideological and organizational monopoly of the central apparatus of CPSU and official media while they were first created with their direct support<sup>51</sup>. The free associations in Moscow, Leningrad and other urban centres gradually emancipated from the initial tutelage of the Party or Komsomol. They were learning acting on their own: organizing meetings, demonstrations, and wide congresses, publishing their own magazines and newspapers. The new proto political milieu comprehended a very wide spectrum of ideological orientations: from anarchy-socialists to monarchists, nationalists and radical economic liberals<sup>52</sup>. They played a more active role in the last phase of perestroika. At that stage, they remained within the frame designed by Gorbachev: self-organization and mobilization of society without institutional pluralism. The Soviets should be the format of local democracy and self-rule, while the new associations were purposefully kept and protected by the reformers as “un-formal” [*neformaly*]<sup>53</sup>.

Glasnost created favourable conditions for ethnic nationalisms across the Soviet Union: the long-term national trends in the Soviet Republics and Republican Parties found in glasnost an accelerator<sup>54</sup>. A. Shubin metaphorically resumed this aspect: “In 1988 the situation became unprecedented, because once emerged, ethnic conflicts continued to develop. Previously, the unrests were repressed... Now, these “fires” continued to smoke and the flames rose higher and simultaneously in several places”<sup>55</sup>. In the Baltic republics, the ambiguous slogan of “sovereignty” of republican laws over the laws of USSR was launched. The intelligentsia of the Baltic countries started to claim the publication of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact as undermining the legal basis of their inclusion into the USSR<sup>56</sup>. First *People's fronts* appeared during 1988 positioning themselves as pro-perestroika

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<sup>50</sup> XIX Всесоюзная конференция КПСС. 28 июня – 1 июля 1988 года. Стеногр. Отчет в 2т., М., 1988. Т1, с.224

<sup>51</sup> The first clubs of this kind appeared already in 1986. The public activity of the first clubs such as “KSI”, “Perestroika”, “Obshina”, “Moskovskaya tribuna” started in autumn 1987. 1988 was the year of the proliferation of these associations and this year “unformal” clubs started their public activities: public congresses, street manifestations and contacts with the Soviet media. See: Александр Шубин, *Преданная демократия, СССР и неформалы*, 1986-1989, Европа, М., 2006, с.173, 189,

<sup>52</sup> А. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки, упущенный шанс СССР*, с. 121-156

<sup>53</sup> As A Shubin notes, if the ideological emancipation from the reformist wing of the CPSU tutelage was almost immediate, the passage to the participation into real politics and elections occurred in 1989. А.Шубин, *Преданная демократия, СССР и неформалы*, с.309

<sup>54</sup> See: A. Rees, “Nationalities Policy” in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.90

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., с.254

<sup>56</sup> Р. Г. Пихоя, *Советский Союз: История власти, 1945-1991*, Новосибирск, Сибирский Хронограф, с.471-472



national movements in the non-Russian Soviet republics<sup>57</sup>. They were not controlled by the Soviet centre but by republican intelligentsia and executives of the Republican CPSU committees who supported local nationalisms as an alternative basis for legitimacy<sup>58</sup>. People's Fronts took a strong stance in favour of more cultural and economic autonomy and ultimately for independence of their republics<sup>59</sup>. Many future politicians and public officials of the former Soviet republics came out of Peoples Fronts such Landsbergis or El Chibei. In Central Asian and Caucasian republics, multiple violent conflicts rose between republics and Moscow as well as between different ethnic groups within republics. In February, the Armenians in Nagorni Karabakh demanded secession from Azerbaijan and unification with Armenia. A few days later, the Armenian residents of the Baku's suburb, Sumgait, were attacked, violated, and 32 people were murdered as a reaction to a minor conflict in the market place. The local police did not intervene. The Politburo reacted by sending troops to Sumgait and changed the Party leaders in both Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, the renewed administrations persisted in their claims against each other and the mild repression and warnings of the centre could only temporarily freeze the escalation of the military conflict. This violent disobedience and bloodshed and the inability of the centre to counter it was "the first mass resistance that could not be contained within the metamorphosing Soviet system" – nationalist revolution from below hijacking perestroika<sup>60</sup>.

The glasnost policy mutually enforced the "legal" nationalistic claims of the Baltic republics and bloody ethnic conflicts in Caucasus and Central Asia. These popular movements openly challenged the authority of Moscow and its ability to control the political situation or to repress private violence. As Carrere d'Encausse has pointed out, Gorbachev and his colleagues were unprepared for the nationalist challenge and even dismissed it as "remnants of the past" until blood was shed and open claims for independence made in 1988<sup>61</sup>. In reaction, the November Party Plenum was entirely devoted to the "national question". After the Plenum, Soviet Estonia proclaimed its "sovereignty" showing the little impact of the Plenum on its subject. The Politburo and military staff had no new tools to pacify the national claims: limited military interventions, change of personnel and active calls for peace. The general capacity of the centre to control local initiatives, legal innovations, disobedience and violence has been reducing from 1988 onward, despite the real threat of the massive military crackdown. First years of glasnost had already limited the possibility to recourse to this traditional option.

Resuming the core events which framed the intellectual agenda in 1988, we can point at the shift from economic to political reforms, the reliance of Gorbachev's team on revived Soviets and their large Congress as a future alternative to Party rule, the generalization of competitive elections. Despite the

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<sup>57</sup> See the detailed account of their foundation in Baltic countries made by Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *La gloire des nations, ou la fin de l'Empire Soviétique*, Fayard, 1990, p.203-215. Also see Suny, Ronald Grigor, *The revenge of the past: nationalism, revolution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993, pp.128-134

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., c.471

<sup>59</sup> A. В. Шубин, Ibid., c.265-266

<sup>60</sup> Suny, Ronald Grigor, *The revenge of the past: nationalism, revolution, and the collapse of the Soviet Union*, p.128

<sup>61</sup> See the analysis of Gorbachev's and Ligachev's assumptions for their ethnic-national policy at the first stage of perestroika and until 1988 in Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Op. Cit.*, p.24-27

remaining expectations of fast economic improvement, the food shortage spread to the big cities raising the question about the depth and nature of the present difficulties. In this context, conservative and selfish bureaucracy benefiting from unjustified privileges appeared as the main obstacle to economic reforms. The Politburo split over the limits of glasnost, over criticism of the Soviet past and covertly over the direction of reforms. New political actors such as People's fronts, "informal" clubs, or new democratic politicians highly critical of the Soviet leadership such as Yeltsin entered into the political scene – emancipating from the umbrella of CPSU. Finally, Republican and ethnic nationalisms triggered interethnic violence, and posed unprecedented legal challenges to the authority of the Party and to the unity of USSR. Difficulty to reform, new conflicts and cleavages surfacing in 1988 encouraged by the glasnost policy transformed political life into an endless series of public debates in new public forums and in the press. The Soviet leadership, intelligentsia and Soviet public engaged in an audacious attempt to rule themselves by the power of words and reason.

## Changing rules of public debates with Nina Andreeva

The established traditional Soviet rules of public debates suddenly “sparkled” in March 1988 for the last time, and then rapidly faded away. The end of political terror within the Soviet ruling elite also came with the accusation of L. Beria of international espionage for Britain and Japan by his former peers from Politburo, which allegedly ordered his instant execution without trial<sup>62</sup>. Similarly, the disappearance of ideological unity during perestroika presented itself via the sudden revival of the party unity and hierarchy rules. The Nina Andreeva case in this respect played the central role. Historical issues, political strategy and the rules of public debates were discussed simultaneously, with passion, and on the highest political forums such as Politburo, *Pravda*'s front pages, and XIX Party Conference.

The first three years of glasnost contributed to a substantial change in the media landscape. Encouraged by Gorbachev's regular calls for more criticism and more independent ideas from the press, as well as by the two competing official party ideologues, A. Yakovlev, and E. Ligachev, the newly appointed editors gradually realized that they were indeed asked to be critical and innovative when promoting perestroika. Regular meetings of party leaders with editors and journalists as well as personal contacts, negotiations and demands for publications fostered the mental revolution from above<sup>63</sup>. Gorbachev's insistence on the need for the “creative development” of Marxism-Leninism by the social scientists, economists and historians opened the ideological windows wide open. From the end of 1987, when CC instructions “on non-intervention into the politico-ideological content of the published materials” took effect on the heads of the local *Glavlit* branches, previously established system of pre and post-publication control over the press almost disappeared<sup>64</sup>. A number of central periodicals (and in particular those whose editors were personally covered by A. Yakovlev such as *Ogonek*, *Nauka i Zhizn*, *Moskovskie Novosti*, *Znamya*) published previously forbidden fiction and publicistic articles; most of them revealed critical information about the abuses, wrongdoings and crimes of the Soviet period committed by officials of the party, military, secret services, or executives of academic unions and state bodies. This critical stance towards the Soviet past was firmly guided by A. Yakovlev and received vivid public interest. In reaction, E. Ligachev on several occasions voiced his profound disagreement with the “blackening of history” and personally with A. Yakovlev's position in this respect<sup>65</sup>. Politburo members generally supported Ligachev's view, while the General Secretary

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<sup>62</sup> Thus, A. Bovin writes that “Arrest and execution of Beria and his closest aides were accomplished in a purely Stalinist manner. But they announced new times”. А. Бовин, «Перестройка: Правда о социализме и судьба социализма», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.534. For a similar academic account see: Nicolas Werth, *Histoire de l'Union Sovietique, De l'Empire Russe a l'Union Sovietique*, PUF, 1990, p.479

<sup>63</sup> We fuse the term introduced by R.W. Davies and accurately describing the intellectual changes during perestroika as a “mental revolution” with the current description of perestroika as a “revolution from above”. R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, Indiana University Press, 1989, Part I. Mental revolution

<sup>64</sup> Attempts of the local branches of Glavlit to send alarming signals to PB or CC never found any positive return from the superior organizations and gradually disappeared. Clear political will of the leadership played in this process the crucial role. See: Цензура в Советском Союзе 1917-1991. Документы, РОСПЭН, М., 2004, с.531-537

<sup>65</sup> Е. К. Лигачев, *Предостережение*, Газета «Правда», М., 1999, глава «Серый кардинал», с.66: «По поводу замечаний тов. Яковлева А.Н. к проекту постановления ЦК КПСС «Об узловых вопросах перестройки в стране и задачах

supported both positions according to circumstances – he understood the issue as instrumental. The diverging accounts of the national past became the scene of the first ideological split in the Politburo. There was an asymmetry between critics and defenders of the Soviet history within this supreme body: the later had the majority and the former had better and popular “pens” and “minds”. This ideological split over the Soviet past provoked the Nina Andreeva case. The factual plot of this little drama is relatively well established by scholars; however, its significance for the public rules of debates should be reconstructed more in detail. We will briefly review the content of the famous letter, the way it was written and presented to the public, and the three distinct stages of its reception. The available Politburo transcripts provide valuable material on the language and arguments used by the protagonists of this central conflict.

*The content of the second letter of Nina Andreeva framed by Egor Ligachev*

The 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1988, the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossia* published the letter of the teacher of chemistry, Nina Andreeva. She shared with the editorial board and readers her worries about the abuses of glasnost in the discussions of the Soviet past, her thoughts on Stalin and several related issues considered from the point of view of a teacher in close contact with those young students disoriented by new recent publications. The surface message of the letter was clear: criticism against the Soviet past and Stalin threatens the very foundations of socialism in the USSR and ultimately could lead to the restoration of capitalism. In the name of truthfulness to the memory of our fathers and to our socialist values, there should be a strict limit to this historical nihilism. Lenin would send this kind of noisy critics of our past out of the country, – she suggested. Passages relating her personal preoccupation as a teacher responsible for the youth’s education coexisted with the identification of the classes and strata, which were interested in these attacks against socialist values: the West, clandestine millionaires, social-democrats, and the decedents of Trotsky, Martov, kulaks, speculators and even basmach<sup>66</sup>. The letter included the condemnation of mass terror, [false] praiseworthy quotes of Churchill about Stalin, quotes from Kautsky available only in *spetskhran* for authorized readers, allusions against Jewish cosmopolitans, subtle reconstruction of the main ideological trends of the moment, and an assumption of the common Trotskyite origin of perestroika’s bestsellers that blackened history. The title of the letter “I cannot betray the principles” was borrowed from Gorbachev’s recent speech<sup>67</sup>. Andreeva and her unofficial co-author hesitantly balanced on the verge between loyalty and warning to the General Secretary mixing citations, clichés, subtle argumentation and Stalinist idioms. The letter was unusually well elaborated.

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партийных организаций по ее активизации». Е. К. Лигачев, «Доклад члена Политбюро на Февральском пленуме партии "О ходе перестройки средней и высшей школы и задачах партии по ее осуществлению"», *Коммунист*, №4,

<sup>66</sup> «духовные наследники Дана и Мартова, другие по ведомству российского социал-демократизма, духовных последователей Троцкого и Ягоды, обиженных социализмом потомков нэпманов, басмачей и кулаков»

<sup>67</sup> М. С. Горбачев, «Речь на пленуме ЦК, 18 февраля», *Коммунист*, 1988, №4

Nina Andreeva had already written and published another polemic letter in Leningrad's local newspaper in 1987, with no effect<sup>68</sup>. The context of the publication of the letter substantially affected the reception of the message. The new letter sent to *Sovetskaya Rossia*, *Pravda* and *Sovetskaya cultura* was sent to Central Committee in a package with other readers' letters and E. Ligachev approved the initiative of V. V. Chikin, the editor of *Sovetskaya Rossia* standing close to Ligachev, to prepare a more substantial article<sup>69</sup>. The journalist E. Popov went to Leningrad and co-edited the article together with Nina Andreeva. Once published, the article "was recommended by the Central Committee" and personally by Egor Ligachev at a meeting with leading editors and journalists on 14 March<sup>70</sup>. Several local newspapers republished the article and other texts in line with this warning. These small media campaign around Nina Andreeva's letter took place when M. Gorbachev was visiting Yugoslavia and A. Yakovlev, second official ideologue of perestroika competing with Ligachev, was visiting Mongolia. What was peculiar in Ligachev's attempt to take the ideological initiative was the adoption of the new style of debates: the adjustment of the party line passed by a "reader's letter" using sophisticated arguments and references. Simultaneously, the text of the article invoked the Stalin's threatening vocabulary and was recommended by the Central Committee. For the last time, the reaction to this attempt equally mixed glasnost with old Soviet rules of debates and some administrative pressure.

Reacting to the publication and Ligachev's oral recommendation the newspapers stopped publishing any critical articles about the past and present taking this series of ideological coups as a new Party line: some reluctantly and some with sincere relief. As R. W. Davies showed, several protests against the publication of the letter were made "behind the scenes"; but according to Y. Afanassiev's formula this letter was "treated as a directive"<sup>71</sup> and widely supported by regional party committees and by the regional press. According to V. Chikin, the majority of the readers' letters received by *Sovetskaya Rossia* supported the new line. Upon his return from abroad, Gorbachev discovered the impact of the article and its reception; A. Yakovlev's firm claim against "anti-perestroika manifest" fuelled Gorbachev's anger. The second stage in the reaction to the article had begun<sup>72</sup>.

On the initiative of the General Secretary, supported by Yakovlev, Shevardnadze and Medvedev, two full days of Politburo were devoted to the case of N. Andreeva on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of March<sup>73</sup>. Gorbachev fervently attacked the article as an opposition to his new policy approved by the February Plenum,

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<sup>68</sup> Нина Андреева, «Воспоминания о будущем», *Ленинградский рабочий*, 09.10.1987

<sup>69</sup> There are differences in the memoirs and historical accounts of the case: the stage at which Ligachev came to support the letter. Personal patronage of Ligachev on the stage of promotion of the letter is commonly established and accepted by Ligachev himself who does not confirm only his participation in the decision to publish the letter. Cf: E. К. Лигачев, *Предостережение*, Газета «Правда», М., 1999, с.88; Р. Г. Пихоя, *Op.cit.*, 475; А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки*, с.191;

<sup>70</sup> The versions of protagonists and critical accounts converge on this point. See: Интервью Е. Лигачева В. Чикину, «Захват», *Советская Россия*, 1.07.2006; *Вечерний клуб*, 1993, 13 марта; *Родина*, 1991, № 1, с.63.

<sup>71</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, Indiana University Press, 1989, p.142-143

<sup>72</sup> Gorbachev later recalled his short exchange with Vorotnikov, Politburo member, on the Kolkhoz Congress when he actively approved Nina Andreeva's stance as a good benchmark setting article. This triggered Gorbachev's harsh response. A. Yakovlev reported his first thoughts already in Mongolia: he decided to strike back and resign in case of failure.

<sup>73</sup> As Gorbachev puts it, the short notes of the discussion took 75 pages of notes. Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 1, М., «Новости», 1995, глава 12

threatened to resign, and forced each Politburo member to express his position. Alexander Yakovlev, who was invited to speak first and later Vadim Medvedev condemned the article as an anti-perestroika *platform* within Politburo. Indeed, the majority of Politburo members initially had liked and approved the article; under individual scrutiny of Gorbachev, one by one, they withdrew or denied any political support to Andreeva's text. However, many were still pointing out that the blackening of the past and criticism should be limited; Ligachev, Gromiko, Yazov and Lukyanov avoided any direct answer saving face, but voicing no open dissent<sup>74</sup>. Following this forced act of unanimity in the Politburo, Gorbachev spent three meetings on 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of April convincing the party elites – first secretaries of the Soviet republics and regions that his political reforms and Andreeva's platform were totally incompatible<sup>75</sup>. In between, *Pravda* published a severe reply to the chemistry teacher condemning it as a “manifest of the anti-perestroika forces” but citing no other names; the reply was prepared by A. Yakovlev and his aides but not signed which gave to it more authoritative character, expressing the would-be common position of the Politburo<sup>76</sup>. The victory of the anti-Andreeva line marked the third stage when the newspapers and magazines condemned Nina Andreeva whose name rapidly became a common denominator of reactionary forces in opposition to perestroika. Criticism of the Soviet past was renewed and has rapidly sharpened. Ligachev's image and personal vigour tarnished on the eve of XIX Party Conference, but in the aftermath disciplinary consequences followed neither for *Sovetskaya Rossia* nor for its patron. Direct administrative pressure was exercised on its board forcing it to publish an editorial recognizing the “lack of responsibility” in the case of Andreeva's letter and forcing to stop publishing the pro-Andreeva reactions, which according to Chikin prevailed in the readers' angry letters received by this newspaper – 60% pro and 40% against Nina Andreeva<sup>77</sup>.

*“We need a total unity of views on this issue”*

We would like to focus on relations of this case with the rules of public debates before we will reconstruct other ideological and political aspects of this split in the following sections of the chapter. The most striking feature of the discussions at Politburo around Nina Andreeva was the constant evocation of the *unity over dissent* principle by the protagonists. After Gorbachev has clearly expressed his position there was little discussions or arguments around the article's content, and Gorbachev himself dissociated the content from the form:

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<sup>74</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.301-308

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, с. 314-330

<sup>76</sup> Yakovlev's authorship is confirmed by Yakovlev himself and Cherniaev who took part in the editing process. See A. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.411; А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым*, с.207

<sup>77</sup> «К слову, буквально на другой день после разговора с Горбачевым, когда я сказал, что примерно 40% откликов — от противников Нины Андреевой, а 60% — от сторонников, приехали в редакцию ответственные помощники ЦК арестовывать почту нашей газеты. Оказывается, Яковлев не поверил, что у Андреевой столько сторонников, заявил, что все это ложь. И вот вывезли 8 огромных мешков с нашей корреспонденцией — перечитывали, пересчитывали, сколько «за», а сколько «против». Но заведующий сектором печати Бакланов, честный и порядочный человек, подтвердил: наши оценки правильны». Интервью Е. Лигачева В. Чикину, «Захват», *Советская Россия*, 1.07.2006

The content of the Andreeva's article actually does not matter, nor the fact of its publication. There were articles even worse than this one. But, what is worrying is the positive evaluation of this article as a new canon... We need a total unity of views on this issue<sup>78</sup>.

The content of the article is not the most important issue! There is an imposition of a competing general line behind the scene – this was the main cause of Gorbachev's wrath fuelled by Alexander Yakovlev. And whatever pluralism, glasnost and democracy could actually mean to Gorbachev, he genuinely believed that such a direct challenge to the leader's authority was not legitimate under the rules of the new game.<sup>79</sup>

The Politburo was called to reply to this accusation for two consecutive days. The head of KGB reported some critical attitudes among the population and concluded that "The most important question – is in our unity. If there were no unity, there would not be March and April Plenums of CC and there would not be the current political line as it is now. The Yeltsin question would be more difficult to solve"<sup>80</sup>. This commentary makes sufficiently clear the link between the unity principle and the direct sanctions against its trespassers; Yeltsin's case was seen by the Politburo members precisely in these terms. Zaikov spoke about the need of "unity which does not exclude discussions, but without stubbornness, for the elaboration of a common opinion"<sup>81</sup>. We can cite similar points repeated as a ritual *virtually by all participants* addressing the two aspects of the unity principle underpinning the "democratic centralism" – political unity and free debates, but each time in a personal mode: "our unity is real and showed itself in the Yeltsin case" [Solomentsev], "there should not be any opposition grouping" [Scherbitsky], "democracy and unity start around this table" [Dolgikh], "in this composition of Politburo there is a full unity" [Demichev], "of course the most important is unity, but not at any price, only on the basis of fundamental agreement" [Shevardnadze], "unity should not be mechanical, but on the molecular level" [Baklanov], "unity supposes the necessity to defend one's own position" [Lukyanov], and finally the reinsuring "political unity of the army is ensured by the Communist leadership" [Yazov]<sup>82</sup>. This constant reference to unity leaves no doubts as to its importance in the eyes of the Politburo members in relation to the issue raised by Gorbachev. Ligachev was no exception. He had condemned the blacking of history and suggestions of multi-party political system, thus referring to the articles warnings, but then claimed that "*on the key issues we all have not a feigned, but true unity. We created an atmosphere of a free discussion, free expression of opinions*"<sup>83</sup>. This reference to freedom of opinions sounds here ambiguously, as Ligachev reiterated key claims

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<sup>78</sup> Translated from *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.301

<sup>79</sup> In his reaction to the clear split of the democratic opposition in February 1990 rallying people in the streets of Moscow under the anti-Gorbachev slogans he kept this intimate believe, that this was no freedom but betrayal.

<sup>80</sup> *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.302

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, с.303

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, с.303-306

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, с.302. In his memoirs Ligachev writes about this very session of Politburo the opposite: "Здесь я должен отметить, что заседания Политбюро всегда проходили у нас в раскованном стиле. Шел непринужденный обмен мнениями, и даже в случаях разногласий общая атмосфера не нарушалась, оставалась демократичной, свободной. Мы действительно обсуждали вопросы, а не «выносили решения» под диктовку Генерального секретаря. Однако в тот раз все было иначе. Обстановка установилась очень напряженная, нервная, я бы даже сказал, гнетущая". Е. К. Лигачев, *Предостережение*, Газета «Правда», М., 1999, глава «Письмо Нины Андреевой»

from the condemned article; but most importantly the second man in the CPSU denied any personal role in the inspiration of the article – this article was the free expression of a personal opinion of Andreeva, he personally shared, but not a *platform*. Ligachev was most probably not the initiator of the letter; he used this text to set the benchmark and correct the ideological line of the press – he clearly wanted to use this letter as a platform. According to the participants' accounts, Gorbachev most probably knew about Ligachev's personal involvement but did not want to bring this to the open: both leaders still wanted to avoid an open ideological and organizational rift<sup>84</sup>. The pro-Andreeva majority of Politburo remained unconvinced but it was obedient.

The unanimity in the reference to and in the invocation of the unity principle in the discussion about the attitude to Soviet history proceeded from the fact that Gorbachev had just accused his fellows of breaking the rule: debates within the ruling group should not lead to the formation of platforms and dissent among its members. Gorbachev openly called on them to respect the rules of the game, when he initiated the Politburo session devoted to Nina Andreeva and thus transform the issue into a new touchstone:

Let's discuss this issue in the Politburo. I see where it leads. It smells like a split [raskol]... The article is directed against perestroika, against the February Plenum. I never argued against polemic. Any opinions are welcome in the press, letters, articles. But I realized that this article was interpreted as authoritative order [*direktiva*]. In the party cells it is discussed as a framework... But at the February Plenum this was not only "my" report. We all discussed it and approved it. This is a report of the Politburo, and Plenum approved it. And now there is a new line... I don't cherish my chair [of the General Secretary]. But whilst I sit in this chair I will stand for perestroika ideas. No, indeed! This is not ok. Let's discuss it in the Politburo<sup>85</sup>.

The supreme accusation against the highest rank Soviet politicians triggered a common reaction of loyalty not only to Gorbachev, but to the established principle they genuinely shared. The challenge of the situation consisted precisely in the fact that Politburo members were aware that there was no unity on this issue and following the established rules and adhering to the supreme principles of unity and hierarchy, they had to accept what they disliked, as far as the leader made his position clear. Indeed, no one from the "dissident majority" including Ligachev, who inspired the media campaign, dared to assume his disagreement as a claim for a split or a bid for power. Within Soviet precedents they had two options: obey or dismiss the wrong leader in a rapid palace coup. Boris Yeltsin had been excluded only a few months before for breaking this very rule, which secured their mutual guarantees of stability<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Gorbachev clearly saw the letter as a new platform of Ligachev who would err on this point, and allegedly said to Ligachev that he will make no investigations on the origin of the letter because that would cause the split in Politburo [if the Ligachev's role appeared]: "Успокойся, не надо никаких расследований, еще не хватало своими руками раскол организовывать в Политбюро". In A. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, с.207

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, с.307-308

<sup>86</sup> The fact reminded by Solomentsev to his colleagues: "our unity is real and showed itself in the Yeltsin case". Ibid, с.304



Speaking about Nina Andreeva Gorbachev mixed in his personal manner several claims: a) the content of the article does not matter so much, b) as far as the content is concerned, this is an anti-perestroika article against the new political reform approved by the Politburo, c) what's important is that it became the new official party line behind if not against Gorbachev, d) what's important is that this article was promoted by silencing other voices returning to the "administrative" methods – all together this constellation led to open dissent breaking the unity of the Party. The replies of Politburo members also echoed these four aspects. The first consensual point – there is no alternative party line and therefore no dissent. Second, most of them mentioned that free discussions and disagreement help build genuine unity. Third, several PB members voiced serious nuances in their condemnation of the article or avoided the condemnation at all as did Lukianov or Yazov; a number of speakers actually stressed the necessity to limit criticism of Soviet history, but disconnecting this from Nina Andreeva. Finally, Ligachev denied any direct implication in the promotion of the article and declared his political loyalty; but also reaffirmed his ideological disagreement with the blackening of history. This meant that Ligachev remained intimately disloyal: he persisted in his personal convictions after the Party and its leader have decided otherwise. Half a year later Ligachev gradually lost his position of a second person in CPSU. Had the traditional unity principle and discipline triumphed? Not exactly. There were no sanctions against Nina Andreeva, *Sovetskaya Rossia's* editor-in-chief or other authors who expressed similar views after the condemnation; but there was a pressure blocking pro-Andreeva publications in the following months. Condemnation of Andreeva's platform by the PB and in *Pravda* was very firm but this was a real application of Gorbachev's "political methods of work": an attempt to combine the rejection of administrative sanctions *and* rely on the Soviet rules tightly framing the debates. The Anti-Andreeva article in *Pravda* resumed that "unity and hardness" of the party line were the conditions of perestroika's success<sup>87</sup>. In the glasnost context, the leader could enforce the unity rule only once – without sanctions it did not work in the long run, and Gorbachev studiously ignored this logic.

### *The unity of convictions Vs the enforced unity*

The effect of Nina Andreeva case was in contradiction with the conventional Soviet rules, which were only seemingly enforced: the unity over dissent rule was significantly undermined in 1988. This happened for one major reason. Gorbachev and most of his peers prized the values of free debates, integrity of convictions based on personal choices and on the right to express them; simultaneously they adhered to the unity over dissent principle and saw there no need to prioritize. They had no theoretical framework allowing to predict nor had they reflected on the historical experience helping to understand that freedom of personal convictions and free debates undermine political unity, as unity

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<sup>87</sup> «Причем именно в тот момент, когда единство созидательных усилий — при всех оттенках мнений — необходимо как никогда, когда такое единство — первейшая потребность перестройки, неперемнное условие просто нормальной жизни, работы, конструктивного обновления общества»; «В.И.Ленин не раз говорил: «...твердая линия партии, ее непреклонная решимость *тоже* есть *фактор* настроения, особенно в наиболее острые революционные моменты...»», «Принципы перестройки: революционность мышления и действий», Правда, 5.04.1988

within the single party required formal or informal restrictions of both, public and inner freedoms. Gorbachev confidently counted on his ability to lead a wide alliance on the basis of free convictions and public discussions without disciplinary enforcement, directives or fear<sup>88</sup>. Contrary to the reformers initial reading of Soviet history, this proved to be an impossible task even for Lenin's political and tactical genius. Free public debates led to the formation of factions and constantly threatened to split the unity of the rulers. This was the lesson the Bolsheviks had learned well, but could not transmit its inner logic to the new generation of leaders who had no systematic doctrine to follow and had no training in theory. The exception was probably A. Yakovlev who, in private, realized that if political unity and free debates were incompatible, the unity of the CPSU should be sacrificed: "Probably, it would have been wise to divide the party into two parts, giving an organizational solution [*vihod*] to the existing disagreements"<sup>89</sup>. The echoing of the very language of the party's official Rules in this telling passage reveals both Yakovlev's intimate familiarity with the inner party logic and his inclination to subvert rather than oppose the established ideology already in 1985.

The so-called "conservatives", representing the first post-Stalinist generation, accepted the unity rule but they already did not understand its inner logic and consequences. Ligachev defended his personal Socialist convictions claiming the right to express freely his opinions and he later opposed his own frank behaviour to "Stalin-like" cowardly methods of Yakovlev based on accusations in the anti-party grouping<sup>90</sup>. Ironically and surprisingly, Gorbachev and Yakovlev imposed the freedom of public debates referring to the unity over dissent rule and forcing PB members to disregard their personal convictions in case of disagreement with the general line – in the name of unity. In 1920s, similar arguments backed the ban on factions within Bolsheviks and contributed to the spread of censorship and the gradual disappearance of public debates in USSR. Ligachev, Vorotnikov, Zaikov as well as Nina Andreeva herself referred to the freedom of expression of their inner convictions, when defending their position; however, they could not dare to challenge the unity and the hierarchy rules *as such*<sup>91</sup>. The interpretation of the case in the unity-pluralism terms offered by Ronald Hill in 1991 offers valuable insights<sup>92</sup>. We argue that Hill is inaccurate when he concluded about the "manifest desire of

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<sup>88</sup> In his two volume official memoirs Gorbachev returns to the question of free discussions in the Bolshevik Party. The question why Lenin finally restricted this freedom still puzzled the reformer who admires the period when debates were free and clearly wishes to surpass Lenin's ability: "Ведь не кто иной, как Ленин, распорядился установить жесткий государственный контроль над информацией. Почему? Неужели большевики боялись открытой схватки со своими идейными противниками? Этот вопрос всегда меня интриговал. Тем более что внутри партии гласность первые годы не ограничивалась. Помню, я был просто восхищен, когда впервые читал стенограммы VII—XI съездов. Несмотря на Гражданскую войну и иностранную интервенцию, отчаянное положение молодой Советской власти, правящая партия не боялась дебатов, не считала возможным ограничить свободу мнений, высказываний, критики. У меня создавалось впечатление, что Ленин сознательно стимулировал «вскрытие» внутрипартийных разногласий, по крайней мере, на первых порах". М. С. Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 1, М., «Новости», 1995, глава 10.

<sup>89</sup> See: А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.379-381

<sup>90</sup> Indeed, "conservatives" of the Gorbachev's generation genuinely believed in their right to have personal convictions, which was a heresy for the Stalinist trained bureaucracy. See: Е. К. Лигачев, *Предостережение*, Газета «Правда», М., 1999, глава «Письмо Нины Андреевой». In his memoirs Yakovlev confesses certain unease with this necessary cowardice: «Конечно, не очень хорошо людей дурачить, но что поделаешь» А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, с.544

<sup>91</sup> Fully assuming his support to Nina Andreeva's main message against the blackening of history, Ligachev made his best to deny the intention to coordinate "a platform" and media campaign of promotion of this message. He persisted in this denial in his memoirs when he could actually be proud of this supposed leadership. We suggest that Ligachev was genuinely attached to the rule: one can have a different opinion but can not split the party.

<sup>92</sup> Ronald, J. Hill, "The CPSU: From Monolith to Pluralist?", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (1991), pp. 217-235

traditionalists such as Ligachev and the numerous supporters of his ideals to quell what they see as factionalism, banned since 1921". In this aspect, the story unfolded the other way around. As we showed, reformers mobilized the rule of unity to crash the emerging conservative opposition. All Politburo members in public actively adhered to the unity over dissent rule in 1988 and "conservatives" did this precisely *against* their own interests and convictions, namely quelled by "reformers" as factionalism directly echoing the Stalinist tradition (however firmly avoiding any sanctions against factionalists). At that moment, the awareness of the incompatibility between free debates and the unity rule was not exhibited in public if at all present, and became public only few years later and only for a few persons.

Open personal clash between Ligachev and Yeltsin as well as the new general atmosphere of free discussions at the XIX Party Conference confirmed that the most important rules of public debates were *downplayed*: the unity over dissent principle and the respect of ideological hierarchy in debates. Yeltsin's uncertain "revolt" at the November CC Plenum and his repentance in 1987 were provoked by Gorbachev as a means to contain Ligachev's influence<sup>93</sup>. In June 1988 Yeltsin's political challenge took a more certain shape. He advanced his credo promoted until the end of perestroika: the call for rapid economic results, "social justice and the fight against privileges of bureaucratic elite"<sup>94</sup>. This position made public at the main Party forum was once again an overt treason of his peers.

Yeltsin looked for the political support of the party's Conference beyond the Politburo's circle and in Gorbachev's words even "flirted with the masses", while setting the "bureaucracy" and its "privileges" as the main target for rousing popular anger. Simultaneously, Yeltsin asked for his "rehabilitation" by the CPSU, which signalled that he then was fighting to strengthen his position within and not outside of the party. Guided by his intuition and his previous successful experience Yeltsin's early and uncertain bet on democratic support proved to be successful in the mid-term<sup>95</sup>; while other Soviet rulers including Gorbachev did not dare to use or did not see well the potential of this public support in the context of glasnost. For PB members these public accusations looked like a self-defeating attempt of extorting of power using the almost unknown leverage of public support. Ligachev actively refuted this heretic attempt to reintegrate the party's top ranks by appealing to the wider party basis. Replying to Yeltsin he referred to the conventional rules of Politburo's solidarity, but did it in the moment of raising delegates' discontent – Gorbachev calmly let him play this role of a straw man which Ligachev

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<sup>93</sup> Pikhoya suggests that Gorbachev forced Yeltsin to speak knowing from his recent letter, he would attack Ligachev. A. Shubin proposes a more balanced and credible account: Yeltsin rose his hand and Gorbachev was absolutely free to give or not to give him the floor. А. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки*, с.164, Р. Г. Пихоя, *История Советского Союза*, с. 458-459

<sup>94</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.99

<sup>95</sup> R. Pikhoya makes a suggestive account of the period when Yeltsin run Sverdlovskaya oblsast as the first secretary and already used to have unusually "democratic" meetings with workers, intelligentsia and students: "Небывальными для своего времени стали постоянные встречи первого секретаря Свердловской области с различными группами населения. Напомним: это был конец 70-х- начало 80-х гг., времена косноязычного Л. И. Брежнева, когда никакой «гласности» в стране не существовало. А в это время Ельцин встречался с рабочими заводов, с творческой интеллигенцией, студентами города» Р. Г. Пихоя, *Советский Союз: История власти, 1945-1991*, Новосибирск, Сибирский Хронограф с. 418-419

executed with passion<sup>96</sup>, and drew his own image of the main conservative. Beyond this sudden and radical contestation which unpleasantly surprised liberal reformers and moderate conservatives, most participants including Gorbachev, as his memoirs attest, noted with great satisfaction the other side of the same break: the atmosphere of free discussions and striking equality in debates between a simple worker, a famous writer and the General Secretary<sup>97</sup>.

#### *Rational criticism of ideological hierarchy and of classics' authority*

Showing the further emancipation from the *hierarchy* rule in public debates, a group of sociologists from VTSIOM who later assumed the lead in their profession, made a precise and overtly critical account of this conventional hierarchy rule in the aftermath of the XIX Party Conference. In their eyes, this rule expressed the bureaucratic nature of Soviet ideology: "Bureaucratic ideology is "hierarchized", each superior level has larger competences in respect to the theoretical truths and moral judgments, and the total monopoly of truth *in the ultimate instance* is ascribed to the highest level of the hierarchy"<sup>98</sup>. This criticism towards and clear exposition of the rule showed that this was no more a self-evident custom. The authors went on by exposing in details the incompatibility of this hierarchy rule with scientific norms and common sense because what was required from the inferiors was not understanding or agreement with what is stated, but: "only manifest loyalty to the authority sanctioning the formula"<sup>99</sup>. In other words, the sociologists were pointing out the fact that the unity rule was dysfunctional.

A substantial shift also took place in the way authoritative references to the classics of Marxism-Leninism were used and considered during 1988. Gorbachev's own formula of a return to the genuine Lenin naturally found an echo in a number of publications, and there was large number of those who sincerely and passionately defended this formula. Economist and bright publicist G. Lisichkin defended this revolutionary return to the path of Marx, Engels and Lenin in terms of the rational argumentation as opposed to the revolutionary "bullets and blood":

Only now, have we started to speak seriously about the change of our vision of socialism, about the return to that path, indicated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, which we have for long time lost. And that is why perestroika was needed. Not just a perestroika, but a revolutionary one. Only without bullets and blood – we have had enough of this. Let us fight with arguments and facts<sup>100</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева, Взгляд изнутри*, М., «Былина», 1994, с.77

<sup>97</sup> We refer to the highly critical speech of Yu. Bondarev and several other personal attacks against Gorbachev; the general atmosphere of freedom and equality irrespective of the hierarchy is prized in Yakovlev and Medvedev memoirs. А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.439; Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева*, с.76

<sup>98</sup> Г. Гудков, Ю. Левада, А. Левинсон, Л. Седов, «Бюрократизм и бюрократия: необходимость уточнений», *Коммунист*, №12, с79

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, с.79

<sup>100</sup> «Только теперь мы всерьез заговорили об изменении нашего видения социализма, о возвращении к тому пути, указанному Марксом, Энгельсом, Лениным, с которого давно сбились. И именно поэтому нам нужна перестройка. И не просто перестройка, а революционная. Только без пуль и крови. Этого уже было достаточно. Давайте воевать

In parallel to this declared return to Lenin justifying new political and economic policies of the reformers, the principle of the classics' citation as the way to defend an idea or illustrate any text became more questionable in theoretical, political, economic and historiographical writings and public speeches. From the top of the ideological hierarchy Vadim Medvedev, newly appointed responsible for ideology in the Politburo, warned against abuses of the classics' citations in his first official interview: "Truthfulness to Leninism in words, accommodated by arbitrarily cut citations, was not supported by real deeds, and in most cases was contradicted by them..."<sup>101</sup> Classics' citations became suspicious.

There were still multiple citations of classics and even of worse kind of scholastic exegesis as in the case of a scientific distinction between Lenin's use of adjectives "full" and "definitive" applied to "victory of socialism" as the conceptual basis for the periodization of Soviet history; however, this academic passage looked already odd and its author soon adopted more modern rhetoric<sup>102</sup>. Milder and traditional criticism of the abusive citations consisted in opposing the "dogmatic approach"<sup>103</sup> as well as scholastic quotes from Marx, Engels and Lenin "taken out of context" to the depth and vividness of their original writings<sup>104</sup>. This kind of criticism unwillingly repeated Stalin's critical passages against dogmatism and scholastics used to unbind him from any "contradictions" with the authority of classics; it was harmless for the integrity of the rules regulating public speech and this sense it routinely announced a change in the party line. But there were also claims challenging the classics' convention. Subversively, one historian suggested that *Das Kapital* would not pass the VAK dissertations committee for its heterodoxy<sup>105</sup>. Rectifying established view, A. Y. Gurevich recalled that the most important of Marx's method that should be followed was just that: "critically question everything!"<sup>106</sup> By the end of the year, renowned military historian, general speechwriter and CC advisor, F. Bourlatsky overtly claimed that Marxism-Leninism was prone to utopia and violence: we should save only the Marxist method of analysis, but not the recommendation for the concrete policies<sup>107</sup>. In his other text of

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аргументами и фактами». Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность, Нужен ли Маркс перестройке?», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №11, с.187

<sup>101</sup> «Верность ленинизму на словах, обставленная произвольно выдернутыми цитатами, не только не подкреплялась реальными делами, а, напротив...» В. Медведев, интервью, «К познанию социализма», *Коммунист*, 1988, №17, с.6

<sup>102</sup> М. П. Ким, «О периодизации истории советского общества», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.130

<sup>103</sup> В. В. Мшвениерадзе, «Перестройка и политическая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №2, с.7

<sup>104</sup> «Уже при жизни Ленина стала складываться обстановка, которая предопределила отход от творческого марксизма к его догматическому варианту. Это с неизбежностью привело к отходу от самого теоретического наследия Маркса, Энгельса, Ленина". Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность, Нужен ли Маркс перестройке?», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №, с.164. "Отталкиваясь от этой цитаты, произвольно выдернутой из контекста времени и смыслового контекста самой ленинской статьи, критик с поразительным равнодушием ведет подсчет жертва гражданской войны... вместо того, чтобы склонить голову перед каждой из этих народных трагедий" Оскоцкий, «Круглый стол: Историки и писатели о литературе и истории» *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.44

<sup>105</sup> В.К. Болховитников, «Круглый стол: Историческая наука в условиях перестройки», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №3, с. 42

<sup>106</sup> «Все подвергай сомнению!», А. Я. Гуревич, «Философия и историческая наука, Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.23

<sup>107</sup> «Марксизм мы получили из рук предыдущего поколения. Но важно оценить и марксизм, и ленинизм в свете прежде всего в свете современного опыта... Наши классики были утопистами в отношении быстрого перехода к коммунизму. А политические деятели социалистических государств, не освободившиеся от догматических пут, не

the same year, Bourlatsky playfully admitted his preference for Frederic Engels over Karl Marx referring to the fact that he himself was named after Frederic<sup>108</sup>. An economist and influential publicist, Selyunin compared the methodological “seriousness and solidity” of Marx, Engels and Thomas More giving the priority to the later<sup>109</sup>.

Finally, several authors questioned the very *principle* of citations from the classics as a legitimate way to argue instead of condemning certain *abuses* in this practice. V. A. Kozlov after citing K. Marx on the pages of *Kommunist*, has spontaneously noted: “the question is not about the citations, however authoritative they were for us, but about the essence of the problem”<sup>110</sup>. Independent minded historian of Russian revolutions, E.G. Plimak personally approved Lenin’s remarks by affirming that “Lenin was fully right”, thus re-appropriating his academic right to judge Lenin’s rightfulness and not *vice versa*<sup>111</sup>. Yu. Karosas, philosopher and a member of *Kommunist* board, revealed as a notoriously known fact that Soviet social theory “engaged in a research always knowing from advance which result should be obtained... In this kind of research one had to rely on the opinion of one or another authority as on something self-evident”<sup>112</sup>. This critical deconstruction of the authority of the references to classics texts took multiple forms and based itself on different grounds: classics of Marxism-Leninism themselves, quotes from recent speeches of General Secretary, common sense and finally on norms of scientific rationality and quest for personal integrity. In general, this traditional Soviet convention has significantly weakened.

Perestroika’s leaders and intellectuals did not intentionally *reject* the Soviet rules of public debates; rather, they thought to add a rational amendment to them. PB members counted on the stabilizing effect of Soviet conventions and took them for granted. This section shows how natural and unanimous was the reference to the authority of the first two rules within the Politburo in case of serious discord<sup>113</sup>; these rules did not automatically work on the scale of the country in the double context of glasnost and economic crisis. Lacking the relevant experience, the new leadership disregarded the difficulty get both the benefits of ‘Soviet rules’ making society and establishment governable, – and the benefits of ‘critical rationality’ and pluralism making the roadmaps more adequate and ideological commitments genuine. Thus, the experience was repeated in a new way: first time in 1920s the ban on factions to the profit of unity gradually resulted in the disappearance of

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учитывали реальностей второй половины XX века». Ф. М. Бурлацкий, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с. 35

<sup>108</sup> «Меня и назвали Федором не почему-нибудь, а в честь Фридриха Энгельса. Может быть поэтому, из двух наших классиков я всегда как-то больше был расположен к нему...» Ф. Бурлацкий, «После Сталина», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №10, с. 154

<sup>109</sup> Василий Селюнин, «Истоки», *Новый Мир*, №5, с.163

<sup>110</sup> «Дело, конечно, не в цитатах, сколь бы авторитетны они для нас не были, а в существовании проблемы» in В.А. Козлов, «Социалистическая революция и человек», *Коммунист*, 1988, №4, с.105

<sup>111</sup> Е. Г. Плимак, «Круглый стол: Советский Союз в 1920ые», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.5

<sup>112</sup> «Общеизвестно, что социальная теория у нас просто получала задание с указанным заранее ответом, то есть приступала к исследованию, заведомо зная, какие результаты нужно получить... В таких теоретических исследованиях надо было опираться на мнение того или иного авторитета как на само собой разумеющееся». Ю. Каросас, «Историческая действительность и социальная теория», *Коммунист*, №18, с.10

<sup>113</sup> As we show in the corresponding section of the V Chapter these rules continue to be partly valid among the members of the CPSU’s direction until as late as end of 1990 and the last XXVIII Party Congress.

debates on crucial policy issues; second time in 1988, the reintroduction of debates rapidly led to a split. We suggest that the gradual shift from political (ideological, quasi-religious) to scientific (critical, rationalist) concept of truth *unwillingly* undermined the relevance of the Soviet rules of public debates, based on the strong political understanding of truth. Most of the influential Politburo members including the later more conservative Ligachev genuinely supported this rationalistic and critical shift, while most of them could not foresee its direct political consequence. In the next section, we consider the hypothetical linkage between the need of personal integrity, the change in the regulative concepts of truth and core values people refer to when debating in public.

## Quest for personal integrity as the background of glasnost

The quest for personal integrity drove perestroika mental revolution along with glasnost policy and it actually prepared the changes in the rules of debates. The demonstration of this argument is based on and limited to the analysis of the statements of perestroika's actors and authors relating their sense of integrity to the norms of scientific rationality and to the supreme political or moral values.<sup>114</sup> The background for this inquiry was set by the pioneering work of Oleg Kharkhordin on the dominant Soviet practices of the self-formation and covering most of the Soviet period<sup>115</sup>. We also draw on Richard Sakwa's original article exploring the relationship between values and Russian political evolution after perestroika<sup>116</sup>. We identify as the quest for ideological and moral *integrity* in the various manifestations of the discontent with a series of related feelings of alienation, double-thinking and cynicism widespread at all levels of society in early 1980s. As our analysis in the second chapter showed, the first three years of perestroika were marked by the appearance of a new charismatic leader incarnating the widely expected promise of change. Gorbachev's figure manifested the aspiring type of Soviet leader combining energy, experience and genuine Socialist convictions – this was the way Andropov saw him and this was the main reason why he was first welcomed by the Soviet public and many influential intellectuals such as Arbatov<sup>117</sup>. At that first stage of perestroika, in their public writings authors critically referred to dogmatism, the gap between words and deeds, the gap between practice and theory – but made no explicit reference to the resulting lack of personal integrity in Soviet society.

In 1988, we see politicians and publicists explicitly pointing at the lack of integrity as a social and intellectual problem; this raising awareness reflected long-term sociological and anthropological shifts in USSR<sup>118</sup>. The reassessment of the history-centred Soviet values and cults played the major role in this change. However, this reassessment actually discredited the symbols, including Lenin's image, ensuring the sense of integrity for people such as Nina Andreeva, but also for the humanist reform-

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<sup>114</sup> The use of the English word *integrity* facilitates the description of a complex set of social and psychological experiences and idioms in Russian. We refer to the following words and idioms: *совесть, порядочность, честность, цельность, верность, прямота, искренность - двуличие, цинизм, подлость, лукавство, предательство, отчуждение*. The perestroika texts and the memoirs about pre-perestroika attest the central importance of this personal dissatisfaction expressed in a number of ways. We will try to show the concrete historical relevance of this approach in this section.

<sup>115</sup> We use as the main reference, the Russian edition of the book: О. Хархордин, *Обличать и лицемерить*, Спб.-М., Летний сад, 2002. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The collective and the individual in Russia: a study of practices*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, 406 p.

<sup>116</sup> R. Sakwa focuses on the Post-Soviet period but makes a more generic historical overview and makes a methodological and philosophical introduction to this type of approach in terms of subjectivity, civic subjectivity and integrity. Richard Sakwa, "Subjectivity, Politics and Order in Russian Political Evolution", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4, (Winter, 1995), pp. 943-964

<sup>117</sup> Gorbachev's carrier within the Party is in many respects due to this charisma and ideological vigor which made him so distinctive. G. Arbatov reported his discussion with Y. Andropov in spring 1977. In this private and frank conversation Arbatov bitterly confessed his worries about the difficulties Soviet Union faces in the absence of energetic and ideologically strong leaders among the new generation. In reply the then KGB chief referred to Gorbachev and rebuked Arbatov's over-criticism: "there are new people grown up with whom we can keep the hope for the future". Г. Арбатов, *Моя эпоха в лицах и событиях*, Собрание, М., 2008, с.45-46, especially 87

<sup>118</sup> See as an example the analysis of A. Bovin we use extensively in this section: А. Бовин, «Перестройка: Правда о социализме и судьба социализма», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.538-539



minded intelligentsia. We believe the shock of this failed quest of integrity characterises the Russian society today and the whole period of 1990s when the late Soviet humanist aspirations were broken by the hard practices of the “wild capitalism” without the established legal and social infrastructure.

### *Loosing my integrity: ideology and conscience*

The issue of lost integrity was one of the central issues in the benchmark article of Gavriil Popov “From the point of view of an economist” that opened perestroika’s mental revolution. When analysing the career of an efficient, honest and loyal top manager of heavy industry in 1930s-1950s as described in the novel of A. Bek “New appointment”, Popov introduced the concept *Administrative system* which rapidly became the main negative definition of the Soviet regime. In the article he depicted this regime as an impersonal, blind but vehement execution of and obedience to orders throughout the single hierarchy of power headed by Stalin, or the Master, and his motto: “don’t discuss the orders from above”. The plot of the novel and of the article turns around the relationship between the Administrative system and the personality of its virtually ideal and yet really existing servant, exemplifying the whole generation of Soviet managers who carried out the industrialisation of the USSR. Popov identified several systemic weakness of the regime: over-charge of responsibility and decision-making at the top, growing distance between “life” and the narrowing worldview of management and finally the inability of the System to produce new top cadres from within<sup>119</sup>. The culmination of this critical socio-literary analysis comes when the main hero, the ironworks manager, suddenly realises his disagreement with the orders from above; namely he doubted one of the Stalin’s personal orders. Bek described this moment of contradiction and the other similar moments in the novel – as a clash or skirmish [*s-shibka*] and Popov concluded that these clashes were a constitutive failure and a defining feature of the System:

The most dangerous for the Administrative System are “clashes”. The problem of the “clash” – is the problem of the contradiction between the inner convictions and beliefs of the rulers of the System, and their official decisions. “Clashes” – are the dissonance [*razlad*] between thoughts and deeds, feelings and their expressions. “Clash” is the sickness of the System.<sup>120</sup>

Looking for a further and deeper understanding of the phenomenon, Popov used Pavlov’s famous studies on animal reflexes and defined “clash” as the “collision between two contradictory impulses, both emerging from within the cerebral cortex”.<sup>121</sup> This comes pretty close to the concept of *cognitive*

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<sup>119</sup> The lack of initiative and loyalty perfect at the middle level contradicted the need to make decision once at the top; promotion according to the personal loyalty to the chief contradicted the selection of the professionally apt executives. Г. Попов, «С точки зрения экономиста», *Наука и жизнь*, 1987, №4, с.142-144

<sup>120</sup> «Но ещё более опасным для Административной Системы являются „сшибки“. Проблема „сшибки“ — это проблема противоречия между тем, в чём лично внутренне убеждены руководители Системы, и тем, что они делают официально. „Сшибки“ — это разлад мысли и дела, чувств и их проявлений. „Сшибка“ — это болезнь Административной Системы». Г. Попов, «С точки зрения экономиста», *Наука и жизнь*, 1987, №4, с.145

<sup>121</sup> «Сшибка — по И.П. Павлову — это столкновение двух противоположных импульсов, каждый из которых идёт из коры головного мозга», *Ibid*, с.145

*dissonance*, used by Archie Brown in his analysis of the institutional amphibiousness in the Communist party's think-tanks. We clearly can identify the double logic: that of dysfunctional contradiction between the informational flows (natural for one of the leading Soviet specialist of management) and that of the moral collision affecting the inner integrity of the loyal servants or as Popov says earlier "their moral qualities" – present in the first generation of founders and absent among their successors born and socialised within the system. The conclusion of the article reiterated the idea that the System was breaking the integrity of its most honest servants and was promoting the conformists; according to G. Popov's cautious formulation, thus grew the gap between "words and deeds, incompatible with the ideals of socialism"<sup>122</sup>.

There were three major features of perestroika's attempts to re-establish integrity between public words and inner convictions: a) an emphasis on the *critical and rational conception of truth* promising to restore integrity as opposed to hierarchical and dogmatic references to the authority, b) official introduction of *new superior values* promising new integrity, and c) an open *clash* between conflicting political values anew taken seriously in public debates. Mainly this was the clash between the established cults of the founding fathers and ancestors (the significance of which can be ennobled by reference to classic Athens with their novel tradition of public funerals)<sup>123</sup> and the scientific standard of the critical reconstruction of historical facts accepted as a norm in public debate. Soviet leadership and intelligentsia remobilized and rediscovered *values* as sources of personal and ideological integrity be it scientific rationality, pluralism, free discussions, self-rule, democracy or orthodox spirituality, Lenin's heritage or truthfulness to the fathers' deeds. Effective removal of conventional and administrative restrictions in public debates encouraged this quest for values and increased the diversity of the "answers". The open clash between incompatible but genuine values was one more unexpected outcome of glasnost: the thrust for integrity and reliance on the critical rationality proved in tension. This integrity quest contrasts with the post-Soviet *apathy* and cynicism noted by Sakwa in his review of the 1990s<sup>124</sup>. In fact, we shall see that the quest for integrity during perestroika was not successful; and the results of this failure and the quest itself remain un-reflected in the Russian culture and in the scholarly literature.

#### *Science and conscience as the sources of ideological integrity*

Progressive boldness in rapport to intellectual hierarchy and the authority of the classics which we have already examined in the previous section had a very powerful patron at the top of the ideological hierarchy who placed "scientific quest for truth" above any other considerations. Meeting the

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<sup>122</sup> «Именно тогда, в те годы, возник никак не свойственный идеалам социализма разлад между словом и делом — благодатная почва для очковитирательства, приписок, обмана государства, незаконного присвоения незаработанных денег и благ. Эти явления вызвали, напомним, протесты изначально чистого и честного Александра Леонтьевича Онисимова. Но сколько рядом с онисимовыми жило и работало приспособленцев-конформистов, умело извлекавших личную корысть из недостатков Административной Системы». Ibid., с.172

<sup>123</sup> We follow here the argument developed by Fridriech Kratochwill referring to N. Loriaux. See: Nicole Loriaux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1986

<sup>124</sup> Sakwa account for the "essential negation of the category of moral integrity and civic responsibility (the space between the personal and political)" in post-Soviet transition in Russia. Richard Sakwa, Op. Cit., p.949

expectations of the scientific intelligentsia Gorbachev was very clear at the February CC Plenum in 1988:

There is no and there can be no limits for the truly scientific search. The theoretical questions can not and should not be resolved by decrees. We need a free competition of minds. Our social theory will only gain from it and thus will increase its predictive power, and hence – its ability to serve as the solid ground for the elaboration of the Party's policy<sup>125</sup>.

A number of passages in the theoretical articles published in 1988 echo this thesis affecting the rules of public debates by the reference to the new superior principle of argumentation: scientific rationality at the service of the Party's policy. Although justified by the reference to the traditional authority of the CPSU's supreme interests, critical scientific rationality was set in this formula as the *de facto* superior and regulative principle, which incarnated the Party interests, and was by no means subjugated to them. We find several keywords marking this new norm of rational argumentation in *Kommunist*, and to a minor degree in *Voprosy Filosofii* and *Novii Mir* (among the five magazines of our corpus *Voprosy Istorii* and *Nash Sovremennik* remained untouched): “no monopoly on truth”, “open critical discussions”, “truth springs from disputes”, “scientific ethics”, “pluralism of opinions”, “dialogue”<sup>126</sup>. As noted, Gorbachev equated the free scientific quest for truth and Party's interests: the former became the condition of the later. Retrospectively, one may well doubt that General Secretary still operated in the interests of the CPSU at the stage when he looked for the new power basis (Congress of Deputies, Soviets, and finally, Presidency), but we can assume that he acted and spoke in accordance with his understanding of his own strategic interest. Then, his bare principle would actually translate this basic assumption: rational and critical *public* quest for truth served his own leadership.

The Soviet intelligentsia's self-esteem and its sense of honour to a large degree proceeded from the experience of independence from the external authority in the field of its professional competence. An engineer, a doctor or a teacher by their training and in their activity exercised relative autonomy, which they were deprived of in the cultural and political spheres where submission to authority prevailed. Strong technocratic strain in the official Soviet ideology, which we identified in the second chapter, kept the traces of Marx's ambition to uncover the reliable science of society and expressed the newly acquired methodological positivism of Soviet scientists. Science and expertise provided them with a matrix for understanding public issues: critical and systematic research would insure optimal government policy. A respected and well established Soviet analyst and top speechwriter A. Bovin formulated the three ingredients of “*any type of thinking aspiring for success*” and then concluded:

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<sup>125</sup> «Нет, и не может быть никаких ограничений подлинно научного поиска. Вопросы теории не могут и не должны решаться никакими декретами. Нужно свободное соревнование умов. От этого только выиграет наша общественная мысль, умножится ее прогностическая сила, а значит - способность служить надежной основой для выработки политики партии» М. С. Горбачев, «Речь на пленуме ЦК, 18 февраля», *Коммунист*, 1988, №4, с.9

<sup>126</sup> Э. Баталов, «Социалистическая перспектива и утопическое сознание», *Коммунист*, 1988, №3, с.86; И. Насташев, «Прикоснись к источнику», *Коммунист*, 1988, №6, с.113; В. Бушуев, «История глазами читателей», *Коммунист*, 1988, №11, с.96. Г. Гудков, Ю. Левада, А. Левинсон, Л. Седов, «Бюрократизм и бюрократия: необходимость уточнений», *Коммунист*, №12, с.76; Редакция, «Перестройка и задачи журнала «Вопросы истории»», *Вопросы Истории*, №2, с.9. Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность, Нужен ли Маркс перестройке?», *Новый мир*, №11, с.186

[These ingredients are not new] they were formulated a long time ago in the framework of a scientific methodology. What is new is their *transfer*... into the sphere of political analysis and political action. And this is the only way to look in a new way at the history and theory of socialism...<sup>127</sup>

Censorship, bureaucracy and restricting rules of debates were often seen as the main barrier for efficient policy-making and economy in the Soviet Union. To the rational argument based on the “technical efficiency” of unrestricted debates expressed in Gorbachev’s formula, we must add the intelligentsia’s moral aspiration to acquire personal integrity in the public sphere, which stimulated the shift from “political” to “scientific” view on truth while insuring their personal commitment.

The intimate link between personal integrity and scientific conception of truth was manifested well in a remarkable speech that Yakovlev addressed to the Lithuanian academy of science in August 1988: “Yesterday one wrote that Stalin is the greatest military genius, and today one has to write the opposite. How can we trust this kind of scientist? We should wait until the next generation of scientists with an unfeigned consciousness appears; for even in social science, if it really is a science, repudiation of one’s personal convictions – is a grave act”<sup>128</sup>. The continuous reflection on the theme of personal integrity, conscience and craftiness played a very important role in the Yakovlev’s later writings where he confessed on a dozen of occasions his unease with the craftiness [*lukavstvo*] he *had* to exercise during his career and during perestroika<sup>129</sup>. Similarly, in their memoirs several of Gorbachev’s associates or advisors such as A. Cherniaev, V. Boldin, G. Arbatov, V. Medvedev prize the virtue of integrity [first of all as *poriadochnost’, chestnost’*] and use it as the touchstone in their personal judgments of others. The prominent historian M. Gefter, one of the heroes of this inquiry, also inscribed the two themes of independent-minded thinking and morality together with the figure of Stalin denying both. For Gefter, thinking over and even accepting this terrible figure as our own past may help to re-unite the moral integrity and rational truth, although historically Stalin was their conscious destructor:

Probably, [Stalin] is for us, for our searching spirit, the main subject of thought. Although namely this ability of an independent thinking, of the morality of the grey matter, of the doubt, without which there is no truth – he eradicated, torn out from us and was so successful, that today we rather mumble using words but presuming that we are thinking aloud<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> А. Бовин, «Перестройка: Правда о социализме и судьба социализма», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.523

<sup>128</sup> «Вчера написал, что Сталин гениальнейший из гениальнейших военачальников, а сегодня должен писать все наоборот. Как мы можем верить такому ученому? ... Должно вырасти поколение научных работников с незамутненным сознанием, поскольку в общественной науке, если она действительно является наукой, отказ от своих убеждений – серьезное дело». Цитата по, А. Бразаускас «На пути к независимости», in *Александр Яковлев: свобода – моя религия*, М., Вагриус, 2003, с.49

<sup>129</sup> See: А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.395, 405, 411, 417, 435, 436, 443, 469, 480, 482

<sup>130</sup> «Может быть, он и есть для нас, для нашего нынешнего ищущего духа предмет мысли – несмотря на то, что именно это, способность к независимой мысли, к нравственности серого вещества, к сомнению, без которого нет истины, он вытравлял и выбивал из нас и настолько преуспел в этом, что и сегодня мы чаще членораздельно мычим, полагая, что думаем вслух...» М. Гефтер, «Сталин умер вчера...», in Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.318.

Partly in contradiction with historical experience but in fact in a strong *normative* stance, V. A. Kozlov stipulated the impossibility to subjugate one's convictions to external pressures: "Ideological problems can be solved only by ideological methods: it's impossible to force a person to change his convictions, one can only force to silence the inner convictions"<sup>131</sup>. The opposition 'submission to authority – personal convictions' coexisted with another dimension of the quest for integrity: 'dogmatic ritual – live discussion'. "Let's stop chewing truths, today the truth must spring from discussions" exclaims the editor of the historical section of *Kommunist* introducing the publication of the readers' letters<sup>132</sup>. Gorbachev in his address to the February CC Plenum of CPSU formulated a very similar thesis: "We should not simply repeat the truths learned by rote, for the sake of a certain ritual, but we should be looking into ourselves for the reply to the numerous questions posed by the current situation"<sup>133</sup>. Both oppositions 'submission to authority Vs personal convictions' and 'dogmatic ritual Vs live discussion' highlighted the necessity to revive authentic personal convictions and free critical discussions as aspects of the genuine quest for truth and contact with the reality. If not, not only the moral corruption was spreading, but the sense of reality was lost.

Levada, Gudkov, Levinson and Sedov in a substantial theoretical article, that we have cited earlier, subtly distinguish these two aspects suggesting that in the Soviet deplorable practice "submission to authority" was a superior principle even to the "dogmatic reading" of classics and in case of discord the submission to authority overruled dogmatism. As a result, the authors continued, even orthodox ideology vanished in this context, and any "lively thought is turned into the dead formula for conjuring reality" while the most adequate practical ideology is hypocrisy and "double-thinking" but not convictions<sup>134</sup>. Sociologists made the conclusion that the established bureaucratic system "led society to stagnation, its institutions – to decomposition, and the bureaucracy itself to unprecedented corruption"<sup>135</sup>. This account also directly links bureaucracy with the lack of integrity in both a moral and practical sense. For these sociologists the recipe against corruption consisted in breaking the monopoly of administration on "power, authority and truth"<sup>136</sup>.

Several renowned authors of the benchmark setting collection "There is no alternative" [*Inogo ne dano*] also published in 1988 expressed their concern with the general moral corruption. Andropov's closest speechwriter and political advisor, A. Bovin noted the difficulty of the public learning to tell the truth and presumed that integrity is a requirement of personal conscience and a condition for the effective advancement of social sciences:

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<sup>131</sup> "Идеологические проблемы могут решаться только идеологическими методами: заставить человека изменить свои убеждения нельзя, его можно только принудить не высказывать свои убеждения вслух" В. А. Козлов, «Социалистическая революция и человек», *Коммунист*, № 4, с. 110.

<sup>132</sup> В. Бушуев, «История глазами читателей», *Коммунист*, №11, с.96

<sup>133</sup> «Не просто повторить затверженные истины, ради некоего ритуала, а искать самим ответ на многие вопросы, рожденные сложившейся ситуацией» М. С. Горбачев, «Речь на Пленуме ЦК КПСС. 18 Февраля», *Коммунист*, № с.8

<sup>134</sup> Г. Гудков, Ю. Левада, А. Левинсон, Л. Седов, «Бюрократизм и бюрократия: необходимость уточнений», *Коммунист*, №12, с.75-78

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, с.81

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, с.83

The problem of truth [*pravda*] – this is not only a personal problem for each of us, the problem of conscience [*sovest'*], morality, self-esteem, if you would like. The problem of Pravda and truth [*Pravda i istina*] – is the decisive problem of the social science, social theory, without the revival of which perestroika is doomed. Pravda in the sciences is precisely objectivity...<sup>137</sup>

### *The integrity of the Soviet puritans*

The reference to scientific and critical debates as the superior norm for public discussions, at least partly, stemmed from the aspiration to restore the intellectual and moral integrity and authority of Soviet intellectuals and politicians. The Politburo member in charge of ideology addressed the other face of the personal quest for integrity in his speech on the February CC Plenum: "...[today] every one has an opportunity for an independent understanding of reality. In this context, the ability to defend ideals and values of socialism not following someone's hint, but from the bottom of one's heart and mind is especially worthy"<sup>138</sup>. A. Shubin's term "Soviet puritans" qualifying E. Ligachev as its main representative fits better this way of thinking and arguing than the established label of "conservative" borrowed from the language of Ligachev's political opponents and slightly obscuring his initial political and personal stance. We should recall that he was the man who most actively supported Gorbachev's election and first economic reforms<sup>139</sup>. Ligachev represented the case of a limited but reform-minded leader convinced that the deficiency of the socialist regime sprang from *individual corruption* caused by over-bureaucracy and lack of constructive criticism.

Dogmatism and blind submission to authority revolted the man who personally was inclined to exercise high pressure on his subordinates, and who himself duly obeyed party discipline. The quest for integrity meant for him more discipline *and* more sane criticism: "as a matter of fact, what we probably still lack today is deep and analytical criticism"<sup>140</sup> *and* genuine sincere truthfulness to socialism "from the bottom of one's heart and mind"<sup>141</sup> as opposed to superficial loyalty and underlying selfishness. If this approach gave no answer to the question of how to draw a circle of puritans who could constructively criticize each other, and how to exclude selfish bureaucrats or covert enemies, it had its inner coherence. Nina Andreeva's case can be considered as an attempt to find an efficient

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<sup>137</sup> «Проблема правды – не только личная проблема каждого из нас, проблема совести, нравственности, самоуважения, если угодно. Проблема правды, истины – решающая проблема общественной науки, социальной теории, без ренессанса которой перестройка обречена». А. Бовин, «Перестройка: Правда о социализме и судьба социализма», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.519

<sup>138</sup> Е. К. Лигачев, «Доклад члена Политбюро на Февральском пленуме партии "О ходе перестройки средней и высшей школы и задачах партии по ее осуществлению"», *Коммунист*, №4, "Каждому открыта возможность самостоятельного осмысления действительности. В том числе и критической ее оценки. В такой обстановке умение отстаивать идеалы и ценности социализма не по подсказке, а по велению собственного ума и сердца многого стоит... На деле-то, напротив, критики глубокой и аналитической нам еще, пожалуй, не достает" с.54

<sup>139</sup> For the definition of "puritans" see: А. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки*, с.28

<sup>140</sup> We should liberalize, as Ligachev puts, not in "a western way, when the accent is placed on the formal-procedural methods" but in order to promote the genuine "self-government of labor". Е. К. Лигачев, «Доклад члена Политбюро на Февральском пленуме партии "О ходе перестройки средней и высшей школы и задачах партии по ее осуществлению"», *Коммунист*, №4, с. 54-55

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, с.55

way of exclusion of the non-puritans from perestroika's pluralism: by combining talented sincere pamphlets against trespassers and administrative directives sent to the mass-media editors. In fact, he tried to mirror Yakovlev's successful media campaigns in his own way. This attempt practically failed, but Nina Andreeva and Egor Ligachev each remained true to her/his convictions years after *nina andreeva* became a common name for neo-Stalinists and after hidden millionaires "took off the sheep's clothing of humanist socialism" and became capitalists, heirs to the liberal critics of the Soviet past<sup>142</sup>.

If we consult the Cambridge dictionary for the definition of the word "integrity" in English, the first entry defines it as "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change". As Nina Andreeva declared in her famous letter - "I cannot betray my principle" – her convictions and values were genuine and her integrity intact. In February 1988, Ligachev prized the ability to defend the socialist convictions from the bottom of one's heart and mind in a situation when "every one has the ability to judge independently", in March he seized the opportunity to support this kind of a personalized and convincing ideological manifesto<sup>143</sup>. There were in this letter several passages attesting the feelings and thoughts of the author speaking in the first person, e.g. "from the heart", and not following the empty ritual or opportunist subjection. Andreeva also referred to the norms of scientific quest opposing them to the erosion brought about by religious obscurantism and cosmopolitan nihilism: "The authors of time-serving falsifications under the cover of moral and spiritual "purification" are eroding the boundaries and the criteria of the scientific ideology, manipulating glasnost, imposing an extra-socialist pluralism; this objectively hinders the perestroika of social consciousness<sup>144</sup>".

### *Recovering the whole truth: Soviet values and cults under the fire of historical criticism*

The contradictory attitudes towards the Soviet past provoked a dramatic crisis, which symbolically marked the split in the leadership about the ideological values expressed in Nina Andreeva's case. There were no other disagreements of the same scope about, say the interpretation of the particular texts or ideas from the "Marxist-Leninist" canon; and the most radical of Gorbachev's reforms did not provoke similar clashes. This vivid conflict made manifest one of the few real sources of legitimacy of the Soviet regime: popular allegiance to the *sacred memory of fathers and grandfathers*, to their heroic deeds and to their Victory in Great Patriotic War. In this sense the claim that "iron laws of history" were

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<sup>142</sup> Under a more detailed scrutiny their convictions proved to be divergent as well: Andreeva found a small neo-Bolshevik Stalinist party, while Ligachev followed his career as one of the Left-wing godfathers of the mainstream Russian Communist Party (KPRF) mixing Soviet nostalgia, Russian nationalism, Orthodoxy and great power values.

<sup>143</sup> The polemical quality of the article is noted by R. G. Pikhoya; this statement should be adjusted as far as her political language revealed clearly Stalinist vocabulary mixing anti-Semitism, anti-Trotskyism and invectives against "cosmopolitans". See: "Отметим, что статья, шедшая «вразрез» с обличительными публикациями «Московских Новостей», «Огонька», «Литературной газетой» демонстрировала успешное владение приемами «перестроечной» критики – там были ссылки на западные публикации, практически неизвестные в стране, и знание публикаций из спецархивов». Р. Г. Пихоя, *Советский Союз*, с.475

<sup>144</sup> We follow the translation of this passage by R.W. Davies in his *Soviet History in the Gorbachev revolution*, p.143

the object of faith and source of popular legitimacy must be considerably amended<sup>145</sup>. This complex of commemorative values proved to be more solid than Marxism-Leninism as a particular historiosophical doctrine. The personal cult of Lenin also played an important role structurally similar to the truthfulness to fathers' memory<sup>146</sup>. Perestroika's publicists and journalists questioned this allegiance to the traditional values in two ways: in the tabloid-like format of sensational revelations about the misdeeds of the past; and – preceded by the political leaders – in offering new and competing values superior to the old ones. The clash between values assumed obvious religious overtones.

*Socialist humanism and man [Chelovek, lichnost]* formed a stable core of new values introduced by Gorbachev in his numerous speeches and articles, and carried on by the publicists and scientists from 1988 onwards. This allowed describing perestroika as the cause of *shestidesiatniki*. Humanistic and global planetary values were to be first implicitly confronted with old class-struggle values and then Gorbachev left no ambiguity: in international relations and in Soviet society humanist values and the value of human beings had "priority"<sup>147</sup>. By the end of the year, the editorial of *Kommunist* clearly referred to the "priority of all-human values, priority of democracy and humanism"<sup>148</sup>. This elevation of humanistic values was linked with the restoration of personal dignity<sup>149</sup>, and on the other side with the horizon of global nuclear and ecological threats – the issue addressed by academician N. N. Moiseev in terms of "ecological imperative": "We need to make human life under socialism truly human, with a new morality, new scale of values... And this is no utopia, this is the requirement of the ecological imperative, otherwise we will not survive!"<sup>150</sup>. For another author moral values meant humanism or free development of each individual: for him this *Leninist* humanism should be opposed to "administrative-bureaucratic approach, external pressure, violence, and usurpation of consciousness"<sup>151</sup>. The most succinct expression of the new socialist and humanist values relied on the ancient Anaxagoras' maxim placed in a slightly different context of socialism and democracy

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<sup>145</sup> For instance, Robert Byrnes correctly suggesting in 1989 that USSR runs a deep legitimacy crisis formulates its historiosophical origin as follows: "Above all, the system rests not on acceptance of hereditary rule or a traditional monarchy or free elections, but faith in the iron laws of history as Marx spelled them out..." R. F. Byrnes, "Some Perspectives on the Soviet Ferment Concerning Soviet History", in Ito Takayuki, *Facing up to the Past*, Slavic Research Centre, Sapporo, 1989, p.19

<sup>146</sup> An extensive and precise account of this popular Lenin's cult and its religious overtones is offered in John Gooding, "Lenin in Soviet Politics, 1985-91", in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3. (1992), pp. 403-422.

<sup>147</sup> See numerous passages in Perestroika and new thinking for our country and for the world.

<sup>148</sup> "...о все более осознаваемой ориентацией на приоритет общечеловеческих ценностей, на приоритет демократии и гуманизма" Редакция, «Живая мысль обновления», *Коммунист*, №18, с.4

<sup>149</sup> "По-моему, высшая цель Советского государства может состоять только в создании всех условий для полного и всестороннего развития личности - ведь в этом весь смысл жизни не только нашего, но и всех предшествующих и будущих поколений!" В. Прокопьев, «Демократия и человеческое достоинство» *Коммунист*, №8, с.45

<sup>150</sup> «Нам необходимо, что жизнь человека при социализме была действительно человеческой, с новой нравственностью, новой шкалой ценностей... И такое утверждение не утопия - это требование экологического императива, иначе не выжить!» Н. Моисеев, «Облик руководителя», *Новый мир*, №4, с. 187

<sup>151</sup> "Если теперь развернуть ленинские определения, то получится: с точки зрения коммунистической морали свободное развитие каждого человека, самоценность личности, ее полное благосостояние являются базисными ценностями. Мораль, собственно говоря, и есть гуманизм, человечность, избранные в качестве нормы жизни" А. Гусейнов, *Коммунист*, №13 с.84



brought together by V. Medvedev: "this is the idea of a humanistic essence of socialism, unification of socialism and democracy, the idea of a future society where man is the "the measure of all things"<sup>152</sup>.

The requirement of *full historical Pravda* as a self-sufficient value taken in the form of an imperative became widespread after 1987. As Hans-Joachim Torke has noted, "the search for truth is perhaps the common denominator for the majority of 10 000 historians in the various institutions"<sup>153</sup>. A. Yakovlev used this idiom appealing both to common sense and to Soviet integrity values, while in fact subverting the official rhetoric against itself: "Sever truth [*pravda*] in any case is better than comfortable silence, fantasies and emotions. Only lies blacken history, truth [*pravda*] elevates it"<sup>154</sup>. Who could contest the idea that *Pravda* elevates history and only lies can "blacken history"? In Yakovlev's stratagem this appeal to the superiority of *Pravda* opened the way for collective repentance and condemnation of the crimes of the civil war, mass terror, collectivization and inner party terror.

The same idiom *recovery of the full truth* was also used to oppose mainstream criticism of the Soviet past<sup>155</sup>, or as E. Ligachev did, to remember not only the bitter truth, but also that new generations inherit the "great history of a great nation"<sup>156</sup>. Another key variation of the reference to this value presented historical truth as a moral imperative and moral lesson for the present and for the future: "this need to recover the past has first of all a moral ground. The return to the past is needed in order to recover the whole truth and justice"<sup>157</sup>. Rapidly, the reference to the recovery of the historical *Pravda* became so widespread and common that a literary critique N. Fed' could sarcastically speak about a "fashionable *Pravda*" which will ultimately lead us astray<sup>158</sup>. Finally, the *return to the sources of morality* placed even a stronger accent on the ethical aspects of the criticism of the Soviet past transforming this criticism of the past into a reconnection with the [broken] tradition<sup>159</sup>. Along with the moral imperative of recovering the full *Pravda*, especially well present in *Kommunist*, there was a

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<sup>152</sup> «Это идея гуманной сущности социализма, соединение социализма и демократии, представление о будущем обществе, где человек выступает "мерой всех вещей"», В. Медведев, Интервью секретаря ЦК КПСС журналу, «К познанию социализма», *Коммунист*, №17, с.10

<sup>153</sup> Hans-Joachim Torke, "The History of the pre-Revolutionary Russia in the Current Debate of Soviet Historians" in Ito Takayuki, *Facing up to the Past*, Slavic Research Centre, Sapporo, 1989, p.97

<sup>154</sup> "Суровая, но правда, в любом случае лучше, чем ласкающие умолчания, фантазии и эмоции. Очернить историю можно только ложью, правда ее возвышает". А. Яковлев, cited in А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы», 2 часть, *Новый Мир*, №2, 1988

<sup>155</sup> "После статьи В. Кожинова мне хочется задать вопрос: "Почему у нас публикуется детско-арбатская литература и занимает главенствующее положение во всей литературе вообще... полного освещения истории; хочется узнать всю правду в действительности". Письма читателей, *Наш Современник*, №10, с.185

<sup>156</sup> "Сейчас много говорят об исторической правде. И как бы она ни была горька, о ней надо говорить, писать, дабы извлекать уроки для настоящего, будущего. Важно без очернительства и без приукрашивания донести до новых поколений полную, ни в чем не урезанную правду... Но главное в том, что у нас за спиной великая история великого народа" Е. К. Лигачев, «Доклад члена Политбюро...», *Коммунист*, №4, 1988, с.55

<sup>157</sup> "Эта потребность [в изучении прошлого] диктуется, прежде всего, нравственными причинами. Обращение к прошлому необходимо для того, чтобы в полном объеме восстановить истину и справедливость. Утверждение исторической правды нужно нам и как урок для настоящего и будущего", В. Бушуев, «Обзор редакционной почты», *Коммунист*, №11, с.87

<sup>158</sup> "Все жаждут правды. В свое время великий Гоголь с грустью поведал, чем оборачивается мода на правду", Н. Федь, «О чем спорят?», *Наш современник*, №6, с.163

<sup>159</sup> А. Гельман, «Возвращение к нравственным истокам», *Коммунист*, 1988, №9

stronger imperative of *repentance*<sup>160</sup> - more current in *Novi Mir* and *Voprosi Filosofii*, and somehow in-between one can place the value-idiom of *purification* from the misdeeds and obliteration of the past.

Apart from Andreeva's case, the defence of the *fathers' and grandfather's heritage* and bonds between generations was particularly strong in *Nash Sovremennik*, while references to humanism and purification had significantly lower currency there<sup>161</sup>. This magazine did not support Nina Andreeva and probably not only out of fear or from conformism. The most influential authors of *Nash Sovremennik* genuinely condemned and deplored Stalin's great terror against the Russian peasantry.

The main and supreme values for them were the Russian people and old Russia – as opposed to liberal, socialist, western and “Zionist” values. And the main national imperative reiterated merely in every second article in 1988 is memory and spiritual unity between generations of Russian people: “It is time to realize that lively, pulsating cord ties us with all those who lived and will live on this earth...we should be all united if we are to speak about our future”<sup>162</sup>. Renowned film director S. Bondarchuk in a rare interview given to the editor-in-chief in close terms related the high esteem of the spiritual heritage of the forefathers, morality and the chances for the future. “The more respectful we are for the spiritual heritage of our forefathers, the less our relations to it are destructive, the richer and the more moral we become. A people without a past – is people without a future”<sup>163</sup>. The value of fidelity to grandfathers' memory and deeds was shared by the official Soviet propaganda of 1980s and by the Russian nationalist intellectuals; most frequently we find these idioms in *Nash Sovremennik* and occasionally in *Voprosi Istorii*. During perestroika, these two strains, Soviet patriotism and Nationalism, diverged over crucial historical issues, but this value allowed at least a partial synthesis. The president of the influential Union of writers in his keynote speech called on the round table of historians and novelists to reconstruct all the dimensions of our history: “the legendary might of our grand-grandfathers and the saintly crystal integrity [*chistoty*] of our fathers – the Leninist guard, and the self-neglecting fidelity to Homeland of the victors in the Great patriotic war”<sup>164</sup>. Recovering “full truth” meant here fidelity to all the ancestors.

The call for purification, – milder than repentance and stronger than the seemingly neutral call for the recovery of the whole truth – implied spiritual overtones and focused on the present generation carrying the traces of the past that needed to be overcome. Nina Andreeva openly opposed the Yakovlev's purification pathos and truthfulness to *her* fathers who were on the right side and got it all right. In the articles of Igor Dedkov, a passionate and original author of *Kommunist*, the ‘purification’

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<sup>160</sup> “...нравственно «изблевать» сталинизм - оказывается не просто императивом нашей общенародной жизни, но и жизни общечеловеческой... и в этом плане, как мне кажется, наше философское наследие входит в число необходимых духовных ресурсов нашего «покаяния» и очищения”, Е. Б. Рашковский, *Вопросы Философии*, №9, с.96

<sup>161</sup> We noted just one positive reference to each of these values in 1988 issues.

<sup>162</sup> А. Казинцев, История - объединяющая или разобщающая, *Наш Современник*, №11, с.183

<sup>163</sup> “Чем уважительнее наше отношение к духовному наследию предков, чем менее разрушительны наши поступки в отношении к нему, тем богаче и нравственнее становимся мы сами... А народ без прошлого - народ без будущего” С. Бондарчук, Интервью С. Викулову, *Наш Современник*, №8, с.171

<sup>164</sup> “... богатырскую силу наших прапрадедов и святую кристальную чистоту наших отцов - ленинской гвардии и беззаветную преданность Родине победителей в ВОВ”, В.В. Карпов, «Круглый стол: Историки и писатели о литературе и истории» *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.4

and 'truthfulness to fathers' values often at odds, were fused together in one rare but authentic idiomatic blend: "the sacred duty of those now living is to recover and to purify all the forgotten and offended names, once and forever to restore justice".<sup>165</sup> Dedkov in his life and in writings brought together the values of the urban liberal intelligentsia open to the external world and social and ethnic mix - and the values of the first generation Russian intelligentsia, which kept the intimate links with small Russian towns and villages. This personal stance was visible, but remained atypical and most importantly had little public resonance.

In the chapter entitled "Politburo and Soviet History" of his encyclopaedic book on perestroika historical debates R. W. Davies cites an instructive exchange between M. Gorbachev and V. Chikin, chief-editor of *Sovetskaya Rossia*. It took place just two months before the publication of the N. Andreeva's letter in the newspaper run by Chikin. The editor diplomatically tried to warn his leader against abusive criticism of the past: opposing the "intelligent and delicate" treatment of the re-evaluation of the past in *Izvestia* to "some declaration of a quite a different kind" which appeared in *Moskovskaya Pravda*:

V. V. Chikin: There are phrases here, which sound – forgive the expression – blasphemous.

M.S. Gorbachev: This shows a thirst for sensations. Must this be a feature of our press? [One should] write seriously about the most difficult things – of yesterday and today – but responsibly and scientifically... But is it now just a matter of revealing facts in order to inflame passions? I am convinced that this is not the path that we should follow.<sup>166</sup>

Davies pointed out at the inherent difficulty to make a distinction between "a serious critical article in a newspaper and a purely sensational one" without constantly exercising political judgment and ultimately censorship.<sup>167</sup> Gorbachev was ready to exercise his own political judgment *ad hoc* and not ready to face the consequences of the liberty he granted others to exercise their own. This raises another question – the Soviet reformers' reliance on their ability to control the free press without censorship by pure intellectual leadership, acknowledging that the free press can be both constructively and de-constructively critical, but ignoring that intellectual leadership is not granted to them. A second lesson of this exchange concerns the rapport between history debates, rules of debates and values. V. Chikin implied that *sacred values* are at stake referring to "blasphemous" though excusing of religious term, whereas Gorbachev calls to oppose what he recognizes as "passions" with *scientific* cold and civic responsibility. Attacking the too eager defenders of the Soviet cultic values, Publicist A. Nuikin unmasked behind the defence of the "sacred values" hidden interests of corrupted bureaucrats<sup>168</sup>. Gorbachev at this stage tried to promote a balanced view to the Soviet

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<sup>165</sup> "Святой долг ныне живущих - вернуть и очистить забытые и оскорбленные имена, раз и навсегда восстановить справедливость" И. Дедков, «Вместе вчера, вместе сегодня и завтра», Коммунист, №8, с.22

<sup>166</sup> Quoted and translated in R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, p.139

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, p.139

<sup>168</sup> «Не идеалы они отстаивают, а интересы свои. Зачастую исключительно шкурные... мы должны, следуя совету Ленина, за каждой пышной фразой, каждой патриотической клятвой видеть, чьи интересы за ними скрываются». «Логика несокрушимая проглядывает: раз мы чтим имя Сталина, то извольте и вы его чтить! ... Сейчас в редакцию

past combining pride and shame. Personally, he had a rather pragmatic and detached approach to history, underscoring the sense of gravity for many Soviet citizens with strong views and memories about crimes and victories, which opposed people and their values<sup>169</sup>.

Summarizing the interplay between socialist humanism, *Pravda* [justice-and-truth], imperative of purification and truthfulness to fathers we should remind two underlying processes: the shift to the *scientific* conception of truth and the quest for personal integrity as means to better face the elusive and corrupted social reality. Political leaders, scholars and publicists of perestroika diverged on several significant points but most of them adhered to the idea that integrity should be based on personal convictions freely expressed and freely debated. Most of them disliked the direct result of this freedom – the clash of values and the destabilization of the political process. Most of them would confine this freedom to themselves. The astonishment of reformers with the discord and the lack of institutional means to address this issue manifested later during perestroika. Genuinely promoting democracy and pluralism, Gorbachev saw serious ideological discord only as “betrayal” or manifestation of personal “ambitions”. We would like to refer to the revealing remark of the Gorbachev’s closest aide Anatoly Cherniaev: “And also, the word “split” [*raskol*] kept its Leninist magic force even for Gorbachev himself and for the whole party... Starting from Lenin and “Short Course” this word provoked hatred and disgust in every true party member [*partiets*], this was akin to “betrayal””.<sup>170</sup> In this sense, the very situation of ideological discord as the basis of *organizational* competition was for him unacceptable. This unacceptability of organizational-ideological discord for Gorbachev in fact was never noted by academicians because it indeed coexisted with his firm commitment to glasnost and democracy. Soviet rules of public speech hierarchy were firmly guiding his tactical behaviour, but diffuse democratic beliefs and values guided his macro institutional innovations.

Gorbachev, who saw no contradiction in professing respect for forefather’s memories and engaging radical reforms (and indeed this stance would be a better coverage for reforms provided historical facts were not freely discussed in public), vigorously reacted to the attempt of using Soviet allegiance to the sacred father’s memory as a political platform of opposition to his policy, when reforms did not bring political and economic results. Pushed by the public rift between Yakovlev and Ligachev (supported by the majority of the Politburo), after a hesitation Gorbachev radically condemned those who wanted to limit the criticism of the past designating them as opponents of perestroika – and called

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приходят такие требования: “Сделайте нам свято”» А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы и интересы», *Новый мир*, 1988, №2, с.220, с.221

<sup>169</sup> The underscoring of overtly conflicting ideas and behavior as “passions” or considered them as the residual remnants of the past played similar role in his inability to address the scale of interethnic conflicts. Taking into account, that this attitude formed the core of his “humanistic” beliefs about the right way to govern, it is hard to see what Gorbachev could do in case he was able to recognize the scope and scale of danger.

<sup>170</sup> «А кроме того, слово «раскол» сохраняло еще ленинскую магическую силу и для самого Горбачева, и для всей партии... Со времен Ленина и «Краткого курса» оно у каждого настоящего партийца вызывало отвращение и ненависть, шло на уровне предательства». А. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым*, М., Прогресс, 1993, стр.209

Politburo for discipline and unity. At the same time, defenders of the “conservative strain” were not repressed and kept all their positions. Playing conservatives against radicals seemed manageable and even profitable for the centre. Splitting the party in two mutually recognized parties was by then virtually unthinkable for Gorbachev and most of his colleagues and still unacceptable even in 1990. Above all the ideological quarrels, he feared that in the Politburo an opposition could form. “It smelled like a split...”<sup>171</sup>

Thus, historical criticism became the new ideological party line and no boundary for criticism was set by censorship or by the clear position of the leadership. To secure his leadership in reforms he decided to counter-attack active defenders of the Soviet values and institutions when they tried to impose their values and reframe the ‘party line’ backing up Nina Andreeva. He obliquely struck against traditional Soviet values using the Soviet unity rule, but keeping his humanist commitment not using dismissals or censorship, let alone terror. As a result this decision induced bolder and more radical criticism of the sacred Soviet past. Silencing the defenders of the Soviet cults of ancestors Gorbachev attacked the most reliable legitimating basis of the USSR and unwillingly encouraged the radicalization of critical “discoveries” about first Stalin and later Lenin and Bolsheviks. The quest for moral integrity mobilized all the protagonists of these first ideological conflicts who saw in the free public debates the possibility to express their own personal convictions. But being true to one’s inner convictions when speaking in public, and maintaining the overall political unity and hierarchy proved impossible. The acceptance of the scientific concept of truth promoted by the reformers radicalized the attack against the Soviet ancestors’ cults by recovering plain facts about Bolsheviks and made Russian nationalists, who empathically approved the attachment to forefathers, sceptical or doubtful about the sense of reforms. Gorbachev and his peers could not imagine a more acute threat to their power than a split *within* the ruling party’s leadership. Boris Yeltsin after several false starts hazardously dared to break the established rules of public communication, by making the split and his bid for supreme power public.

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<sup>171</sup> “Тут пахнет расколом” М. С. Горбачев, *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.307-308

## **CHAPTER IV**

**Path, choice and alternative as key idioms of political thought  
[idioms in 1988]**

Free public debates demanded new effective modes of argumentations. History and in particularly philosophy of history provided themes, idioms and arguments central for this renewal of public deliberation and political philosophy in 1988. The main linguistic and intellectual novelty was the rediscovery of the sense of *free political agency* in terms of historical choice between alternative paths. The metaphor of choice was first of all referring to individual experience, and transposed into the realm of collective deliberation and became the central metaphor of public politics. The discovery of historical choice as essence of politics required a fundamental revision of the late Soviet historiography giving priority to the objective and law-governed over the subjective, and plainly excluding political struggle as well as the accidental and contingent. The post-Marxian reception of Spinoza and Christian intellectual heritage proved crucial components for the theoretical reinvention of politics in terms of agency's historic choice, guilt, alternative and crooked paths of historical necessity.

We can link the changes of the established rules analysed in the previous chapter with the rapid diffusion of a new set of historical idioms into the political language of perestroika. Popular perestroika publicists were emerging as new ideologues and even politicians, encouraged by Gorbachev's public speeches, A. Yakovlev's personal suggestions and *Pravda's* clear-cut condemnation of those who in fact objected to perestroika by defending their outdated principles and cults, and gradually liberated from external censorship. Publicists took the intellectual initiative and captured the public's attention borrowing original idioms from independent-minded historians. The reading public eagerly and massively responded to these intellectual innovations by growing interest and attention. The new pattern of interrelated idioms emerged as the dominant way to discuss the October revolution, the end of NEP or Stalin's purges in the leading theoretical magazines; this pattern consolidated in parallel and independently from Gorbachev's own pronouncements. Within one year it becomes the dominant mode of the theoretical debates about history, politics, and economics as it will become the main language of retrospective descriptions of perestroika in the post-Soviet Russia. In 1988 the idioms of choice, path and alternatives were the privileged way to rework the established late Soviet historiography, which in this respect was significantly different from both Stalinist and Leninist variations both containing strong voluntarist strand: the key stake for perestroika revisionists was drawing the proper balance between free political agency and historical necessity. That this purely "metaphysical" problem spontaneously rose into the central problematique indicates that we have to deal with common intellectual assumptions on how to think, speak and argue about politics.

In the first section, we make a review of the three idioms of choice, path and alternative probing them with Pocock's three criteria and assessing whether these words or their combination acquired the status of the hot idioms for the given intellectual community. We examine the diversity of their usages in the main theoretical magazines, their origins and their second-order uses and abuses in 1988. The dominant perceptions of the time-frame for political debates was analysed in the second section showing the vitality of the new idioms in the discussions of the current politics. In this respect, perestroika's crucial year was characterized by the perception of global threats in the immediate future, uncertain but decisive choice in the present and by the obsession with the Soviet past, where

authors were searching for ideal solutions and discovered absolute crimes. In the third section we try to systematically explore the three issues that were puzzling most Soviet intellectuals, who spontaneously adopted the new language to solve or rather to speak about these ideological challenges: what is the correct historiosophical order of formations in the contemporary world? (taking into account the vitality of capitalism, deviations of socialism and split of the third world); what are the historiosophical or methodological grounds for judging about moral and political responsibility in history? (accepting law-like historical necessity seems to exclude any responsibility and justifies the worse state crimes, hence, freedom should be “postulated”); whether and how the choice is possible in history and politics? (how law-like historical necessity and choice are compatible and how does this compatibility makes public politics meaningful). We can call this rather specific mode of public argumentation – justification by public history. The intellectual efforts of the Soviet intelligentsia were directed to cope with the unsolvable contradictions of freedom and necessity; these complex historiosophical questions emerged as soon as people started looking for better theoretical justification of their political arguments in a competitive public debate. We presume that this historiosophical justification of politics is one of the defining features of the Russian political thought – historiosophical assumptions provide the main theoretical basis for valid and vivid political arguments.



## Key idioms and metaphors in 1988: choice, path and alternative in history

This section considers how the three related idioms of “choice”, “path”, and “alternative” suddenly informed ways to *theorise* politics in a historical perspective, typical for perestroika. In a very short period, these idioms were widely accepted and so diversely employed that we can state that a paradigmatic shift occurred in 1988, within which the nascent Soviet public could discuss politics in a number of new meaningful ways<sup>1</sup>. The central *theoretical* problem of perestroika’s public history inherited from Stalin’s *Short Course*, Lenin’s pragmatic voluntarism and by that time far less read Marx’s writings – consisted in the simultaneous affirmation of objective historical laws and of the ability of human agency to know and master history. The proper balance between those two sides was difficult to establish both practically and theoretically: how to elaborate strategic and daily policies referring to the historiosophy dating back to the previous century and how to keep the ideological and practical coherence? The *Short Course* elevated both, the objective historical necessity and the human agency with its will, unity and knowledge of history<sup>2</sup>. The peculiar coincidence between necessity and agency’s will was articulated in Spinoza’s philosophy identifying the human will and causality<sup>3</sup>; the Soviet common philosophical tradition used to refer to the formula *attributed to Spinoza* in the textbooks and dictionaries: “liberty is the awareness of necessity” [*svoboda est osoznannaya neobkhodimost*]<sup>4</sup>. In this line, reason understanding the causal origin of thought and will, should embrace the causal logic, which actually guides it anyway. *Ethics* or the direction of behaviour coincides with a rational understanding of the chain of causes, in which human agency properly understood is just one of the many causal links<sup>5</sup>. In a more pragmatic articulation skipping the paradox of liberty of will and necessity, the formula was approaching the Bacon’s famous maxima “knowledge is power”: knowing and subjugating to the laws of nature in fact helps acting efficiently and thus increases freedom. The move is similar as more liberty and power are thought to be acquired by the voluntary subjugation to laws.

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<sup>1</sup> This formulation is partly borrowed from: J.G. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment, Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2003 (first ed. 1975), p.361

<sup>2</sup> Historical agency *par excellence* was the unique-united (M. Gefter) Communist Party of Bolsheviks guided by the leader and with a common disciplined will and determination for the victory in a fight, while the laws of history guaranteed the victory of new relations of production based on the new productive forces. This claim is maintained in the official rhetoric until Gorbachev. See: *История Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков). Краткий Курс*, М. ОГИЗ, 1945 (1938). We address the treatment of the two sides of the formula in this part.

<sup>3</sup> Proposition 28. *The will cannot be called a free cause, but only a necessary one*. Sf.: Spinoza, *Ethique*, (trad. Robert Misrahi), PUF, 1990, p. 87 ,

<sup>4</sup> We could not identify the original formula in Spinoza, and there were no quotes provided by the Soviet sources. However, the formula was widespread in USSR and became known beyond academic circles as a typical philosophical saying by 1970s. Compare: ““В философской теории Спинозы имеют место и элементы диалектики... Диалектически подходил Спиноза к вопросу о свободе, полагая, что свобода есть осознанная необходимость”, М. Розенталь, П. Юдина (ред.), *Краткий философский словарь*, М., 1954, с. 562.; There are similar expressions in Lenin and Marx. «... Пока мы не знаем закона природы, он, существуя и действуя помимо, вне нашего познания, делает нас рабами "слепой необходимости". Раз мы узнали этот закон, действующий (как тысячи раз повторял Маркс) *независимо* от нашей воли и нашего сознания, - мы господа природы.» Ленин. *Полное Собрание Сочинений*, т. 14., с. 177. «... Истинное царство свободы, которое, однако, может расцвести лишь на этом царстве необходимости, как на своем базисе», К. Маркс, *Капитал*, т.3. М., 1955. с.833.

<sup>5</sup> This exposition naturally does not address well Spinoza’s philosophical problematique and his solution ; we reckon this is sufficient for our purpose in order to trace the formal lineage of the Soviet tradition as far as it understood itself. Cf. Proposition 49. *In the mind there is no absolute or free will; but the mind is determined to wish this or that by a cause, which has also been determined by another cause, and this last by another cause, and so on to infinity*. Cf. : Spinoza, *Ethique*, p.147

Transposed to the uncertain realm of History these metaphysical solutions implied that once human agency has discovered the true laws of historical development (chain of causality for Spinoza), it can fully master its destiny calculating or deducing it from its accurate theory<sup>6</sup>. This calculation is an easy metaphor difficult to apply. It relies on two bets: that history can be fully understood and that whereby this correct understanding people will agree on what to do. The open question of how human agency can discern the full knowledge of History was allegedly closed by Karl Marx's writings and later only timidly questioned in the Soviet tradition. In reality, no universal historical sextant has left once Marx and then Engels stopped writing and passed away; only tens of volumes treating various historical, theoretical and hot political issues exposing no program for decades or centuries to come. The competing groups of Marxists uniting and quarrelling around this heritage into one party seen as human agency *par excellence* had to decide in each case, what practical decision was fit in the local situation if applying the knowledge of History<sup>7</sup>.

The idea that *ad hoc* application of the theory in the given situation was no mechanical task was integrated in the keynote Soviet texts<sup>8</sup>. The assessment of the concrete situation and the adequate Marxist policy was always a matter of judgement of the leader. As we argued earlier, one of the stable practical solutions for a group of people to decide on the proper interpretation-application of the authoritative texts in practice was to rely on the intellectual authority of the political and ideological leader who would be able to discern the truth in the given context as understood by Marx and those who followed and literally "inherited" his genuine spirit<sup>9</sup>. To deduce decisions from founding texts there should be a superior mind mastering the application of theory to concrete circumstances as well as the ability to steer the energy of human agency – while remaining true to the canon. Common faith in History's progressive pace, Lenin's leadership style and Stalin's theoretical and political tactics at first disposed Bolsheviks from the hard questions: what occurs in the absence of such a unique leader and his historiosophical insight? Terror, unity principle, censorship, and secrecy disposed most Soviet citizens from the question: what if the genius was not virtuous, i.e., wrong or worse, selfish in his "reading" of history?

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<sup>6</sup> We can refer to, but cannot reconstruct here the complex history of this problematique and this vocabulary from Descartes and Spinoza, via Hegel, Schelling, Marx and finding a simplified but still recognizable formulation in Stalin's unsigned *Short Course* where the above mentioned pragmatic solution of the "paradox" between historical laws and reasonable collective agency is firmly stated at different occasions. See: *Краткий Курс*, М. ОГИЗ, 1945 (1938), с.11, 109, 111-112, 125, 342

<sup>7</sup> *Short Course* is focused on the construction of the "Party of the new type" as an effective agency with corresponding set of virtues: unity of action and thought, discipline, will, energy, spirit of the winner, courage, readiness to fight and expel those who fail to maintain the unity, discipline, energy... See as examples: *Краткий Курс*, с.138-139, с.242

<sup>8</sup> *Short Course* devotes four consecutive pages at its very end, to explain that Marxist-Leninism is no dogma or series of quotes; the key for proper application of Marxism-Leninism is to enrich this theory with "new historical experience" and make appropriate decisions based on the *essence* of the theory and not its dead letter. This formula of "creative enrichment of the theory" becomes later a part of the official standard. *Краткий Курс*, с. 339-342

<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, there would be no stable solution to decide in case of divergences and difference of opinion. Each time, one would had to vote and split – while the principle of voting as superior reference would betray Marx's vision in favor of the public opinion as the ultimate source of knowledge. In this respect, *Short Course* clearly specifies that after Engels' and Lenin's death the *only* genuine theoreticians "without exaggeration" were Stalin and unnamed "other Lenin's pupils". «Можно сказать без преувеличения, что после смерти Энгельса величайший теоретик Ленин, а после Ленина – Сталин и другие ученики Ленина – были единственными марксистами, которые двигали вперед марксистскую теорию и обогатили ее новым опытом в новых условиях классовой борьбы пролетариат». *Краткий Курс*, с.342.

When freedom of critical expression was promoted by the reformers, it was first directed towards History. The complex theoretical equilibrium officially fundamental for political leadership and set up in the absence of any open criticism, – was placed under scrutiny. We argued in the first chapter that the real stakes in this revisionism were not so much the legitimacy of the regime, but a new ideological challenge. Emerging public debates were to lay the shared picture of the social reality, traditionally understood as History, in which collective political action takes place. If indeed the community was to decide what to do via *public debate*, then the shared definition of reality is the primary stake.

Soviet intellectuals responded by the re-evaluation of historiosophical problems of necessity and human agency in terms of historical *choice*, historical *path* and historical *alternatives*. The established historiosophical maps of necessity were to be honestly tested and the role of agency rediscovered again both practically and theoretically. New idioms allowed critically rearrange Stalin's pattern with new accents: explaining terror and backwardness of socialism, restoring the fallibility of human agency, denying the leader's historiosophical omniscience and discovering public speech and contradictory debates as means to guide human agency in History. As we established earlier, the most successful innovations concerning new values, revision of the rules of debates, new idioms and themes discussed in public until 1987 originated from within Gorbachev's reformist circle. The three related idioms of *path*, *choice* and *alternative* emerged more spontaneously as the most effective way to discuss politics theoretically.

We find these new idioms in Gorbachev texts too, but they played there a minor role compared with his own favourite idioms and themes such as "perestroika", "new thinking", "self-rule", "creativity of masses", and "mechanism of hindrance". Historically, the set of these idioms originated in the middle of 1960s in the circle of Soviet historians, including M. Gefter, P. Volobuev, M. Barg and A. Gourevitch who riskily tried to advance Marxist historiosophy under the name of *methodology of history* and make it more coherent and updated. As argued above, the common *theoretical* ground for perestroika political debates was the revitalization philosophy or the methodology of history. By readdressing history intelligentsia sought to do three main things: locating the USSR in the global history in order to define the right historical direction for future development, coming to terms with the past crimes and defining the responsibilities for these deeds, finding the metaphysical ground or more prosaically finding the operational metaphors for theorising and practicing the emerging public politics.

In order to demonstrate the presence and high relevance of these idioms for public debates in 1988 we will proceed in three steps, generally following Pocock's guidelines. A) Present the diversity of uses of these idioms B) Show the spreading of the idioms from the original context to the new contexts C) Demonstrate the awareness of the authors expressed in words, that they were employing specific idioms rather than neutral words<sup>10</sup>. Throughout this reconstruction the main theoretical implications of

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<sup>10</sup> Cf.: "a) that diverse authors employed the same idiom and performed diverse and even contrary utterances in it, b) that the idiom recurs in texts and contexts varying from those in which it was at first detected, and c) that authors expressed in

the three related idioms must appear; in this section, we attempt a systematic account of the key role played by these historical idioms in what at this stage of perestroika can be called its political theory. There arguably were three related idioms at the heart of public debates: *path*, *choice* and *alternative*.

### *The idiom of historical path*

The idiom of “**path**” [*putʹ*], “historical path” and a number of connected expressions typically present the history of a whole country as a natural move forward following a pre-established trajectory. This metaphor omnipresent during perestroika supposes that a path predetermines what will come up in the future, as far as the agency embarks on it: “This is not a simple or short path... Dramatically difficult and sometimes tragic is the path of our revolution, but this is our revolution and our path. We stepped on this pioneering path as internationalists and none of the testing has changed us”<sup>11</sup>; “but revolution – means revolution. We already have stepped on this path”<sup>12</sup>; “we should beware not to turn to this dangerous path”<sup>13</sup>, “the single path of tomorrow’s development of humankind as the path of a total and inevitable destruction”<sup>14</sup>. The idiom of the path in other contexts expresses the wholeness of a historical experience: “look back at our entire path”, “a deep analysis of the historical path and experience of Comintern”, “perestroika obliges us to look anew... not only at the path we traversed, but also at the forthcoming path” [Gorbachev]<sup>15</sup>. A stable pattern emphasised by P. Volobuev and widely employed by others was the expression “*path of development*” frequently used in a neutral sense of “historical path”, but having its inner dynamism<sup>16</sup>. In this sense “path of development” meant something similar to “historical formation” but added the image of a necessary historical progression. A number of parented idioms were used as synonyms or derivatives from the same metaphor: road, track [*doroga*], railroad, railways [*jzeleznaya doroga, relsy*], course [*khod*], river-bed [*ruslo*], zigzags [*zigzags*], turn [*povorot*], trail [*tropa*] and most notoriously – street [*ulitsa*]<sup>17</sup>. Gorbachev and his speechwriters routinely used these interchanging words to describe not only the past, but also

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words their consciousness that they were employing such an idiom and developed critical and second-order languages to comment on and regulate their employment of it...” J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History, Essays on Political Thought and History*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.10

<sup>11</sup> “Это не простой и не скорый путь... Неимоверно сложен, труден, а временами трагичен путь нашей революции, но это наша революция и наш путь... Мы вступили на этот первопроходческий путь интернационалистами, и никакие испытания нас не переменили” И. Дедков, «Вместе вчера, вместе сегодня и завтра», *Коммунист*, 1988, №8, с.25

<sup>12</sup> «Но революция - значит революция. Мы уже вступили на этот путь», Николай Шмелев, «Новые Тревоги», *Новый мир*, 1988, №4, с.175

<sup>13</sup> С.В. Колесников, «Идеологические проблемы перестройки. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1988 №7, с.8

<sup>14</sup> А. Косоруков, «"Плаха" - новый миф или новая реальность», *Наш Современник*, №8, с.141

<sup>15</sup> В. Бушуев, «История глазами читателей», *Коммунист*, 1988, №11, 88; К. Фирсов, М. Ширня, «Коминтерн: Опыт деятельности», *Коммунист*, 1988, №10, с.105; “Перестройка обязывает нас взглянуть по-новому на некоторые, ставшие привычными характеристики, сопоставить не только пройденный, но и предстоящий путь с теми критериями прогресса... которые сформулированы классиками марксизма-ленинизма” М. С. Горбачев, «Речь на пленуме ЦК, 18 февраля», *Коммунист*, 1988, №4, с.8

<sup>16</sup> See: В.Ж. Келле, «Круглый стол: Философские проблемы теории и практики национальных отношении при социализме», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №9, с.4; Василий Селюнин, «Истоки», *Новый Мир*, №5, 186; А. Косоруков, «"Плаха" - новый миф или новая реальность», *Наш Современник*, №8, с.141

<sup>17</sup> «...дорога, по которой нам идти», М. Лобанов, «Послесловие», *Наш Современник*, №4, с.157; «тот или иной ход мировой истории», Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность, Нужен ли Маркс перестройке?», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №11, с.161; «сегодняшний интерес к историческому прошлому, его проблемам, не только в русле традиции», Редакция, «Круглый стол: Проблемы изучения истории русской философии и культуры», *Коммунист*, 1988, №9, с.92;

perestroika's present and future: "we will follow this road, however difficult it will be. Of course, there will be different stages on this path... We will move forward"<sup>18</sup>. The expression "street leading to the temple" became recognizable idiom after the movie "Repentance" addressing the question of the heritage of tyranny, which ends up with a rhetoric question of an old woman: "why do we need a street which does not lead to the temple?" The title of the famous Klyamkin's article "Which road leads to the temple?" published in November 1987 polemically played with this sentence and questioned the main message of the movie using and interchanging terms of the road and street as a historic metaphor:

Some hurry up to remove the street [of hour recent history] from memory, erase it from the map: dead-end, road to nowhere, let's repent before it is too late... let's throw the dead body of the past from the precipice which is high enough. Let's purify ourselves! And some don't hurry, they think it over. [They] realize that the light weighted thinking will not overcome the credulity, and ask themselves and others: was there any other street?<sup>19</sup>

In this passage, Klyamkin explores the different modalities of the image of the historical road, street, and finally dead-end [*tupik*]. The expression "dead-end" was also the then current one to dismiss or criticise certain historical and political options<sup>20</sup>. Another economist, G. Lisichkin spoke about the genuine path we lost and must return to<sup>21</sup>. More rarely employed Russian term "impassability" [*bezdorozhie*] reverts to the same original metaphor of the path and the use of this term indicates the historical situation, in which it is objectively difficult to decide about the right and wrong options as there is no pre-established path to follow and rely on, but impassability. The implied general connotation is close to that of a dead-end: neither the continuation of the path, nor the new surrounding offers any credible direction to follow. Another strong Russian term was literally invented by M. Gefter to describe the present context of disorientation - *besputie* [*no-path-ability*] marking the zone where there can not be any path to follow<sup>22</sup>. Using another possibility of this series, the widespread idioms of *thoroughfare* [*magistal'*] and *high road* [*stolbovaya doroga*] suggested the opposite of the dead-end and impassability: the reliability and communality of the strategic path<sup>23</sup>. In

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<sup>18</sup> М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с.56

<sup>19</sup> И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый мир*, 1987, №11, с.160

<sup>20</sup> «Более того, социальные утопии воплощаются в жизнь, хотя именно в этом случае и обнаруживается их ограниченность, тупиковость вариантов общественного развития», В. Г. Хорос, «Утопизм и реальность», *Вопросы Философии*, № 9, с.143; "Подобный "перевод" социальных отношений на язык отношений межнациональных крайне опасен. Он способен многих обмануть, запутать, увлечь, но как неоднократно показывала история, такой путь неизбежно ведет в тупик" И. Дедков, «Вместе вчера, вместе сегодня и завтра», *Коммунист*, №8, с.21 ; Е. Амбарцумов, «Советский союз в 1920ые годы. Круглый Стол», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №9, с.35.

<sup>21</sup> «Только теперь мы всерьез заговорили об изменении нашего видения социализма, о возвращении к тому пути, указанному Марксом, Энгельсом, Лениным, с которого давно сбились», Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность, Нужен ли Маркс перестройке?», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №11, с.187

<sup>22</sup> «Между Лениным и Марксом - эта Россия. Лениным она вступила в спор с классическим, "универсальным" Марксом, и Лениным же классический марксизм вступал в схватку с Россией, какова она есть и какой еще ей предстояло стать... От "двух путей" к одному. От предвосхищения альтернативы - к действию и торжеству действия. От торжества к трагедии беспутья». М. Гефтер, «Россия и Маркс», *Коммунист*, 1988, №18, с.94.

<sup>23</sup> "Контроль снизу, демократия, народовластие, самоуправление, саморегулирующаяся экономика... Все это для нас великая стратегическая магистраль, ведущая в коммунизм. Но магистраль эту еще предстоит построить" А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы» (часть 2), *Новый мир*, 1988, №2, с. 224. «Магистральная линия пути к феодализму лежала не через разложение рабовладельческого способа производства, а через трансформации доклассовых, архаических обществ», А. Я. Гуревич, «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.20.

1988, these two expressions were already used both positively to indicate the reliable direction, and in commas to revise the crucial aspects of the ideological frame, for instance to advance a variation of the world-system perspective as opposed to the Soviet Marxist philosophy of history where USSR led the field<sup>24</sup>. The active revival of this metaphorical series found its justification in the vocabulary of the classics; the new editor-in-chief of the *Voprosy istoriy*, A. A. Iskenderov addressed one of the major methodological issues in this recognisable way:

Meanwhile, in real history there were much more different deviations from the thoroughfare or from the law-like path, than was assumed by our historians. V. I. Lenin in 1919 noted that "different nations follow a similar historical road, but via highly diverse zigzags and trails"<sup>25</sup>.

The dictionary of G. Guseinov offers no specific references for *put'*, and one for the expression *doroga k khramu* [road to the temple] – directly mentioning the sentence from the movie of T. Abuladze "Repentance".<sup>26</sup>

#### *The idiom of historical choice*

The word "**choice**", also used in the expression "choice of the path of development"<sup>27</sup>, in 1988 usually implied the opposition to necessity or fatality and various marks of special interest of authors who claimed the need to take into account the problematique of agency analyzing both past and present:

The transition from war communism policy to NEP – was already a choice... And what happened in our country on the verge of 1920-30s, was far from fatal. And finally, our today's perestroika of social relations – this is also a conscious choice of path<sup>28</sup>.

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«...сформулирована его [Бухарина] точка зрения о "столбовой дороге к социализму"», Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, «Николай Бухарин: Эпизоды политической биографии» *Коммунист*, №13, с.96. «И это полностью соответствует нашим принципиальным установкам, ибо сам марксизм, как не раз подчеркивал Ленин, возник не в стороне от столбовой дороги мировой цивилизации», В. Медведев, интервью, «К познанию социализма», *Коммунист*, 1988, №17, с.7

<sup>24</sup> «"Магистральный путь строительства социализма для всех народов мира" оказался на деле путем, типичным для сравнительно отсталых стран, и осуществлен он был отнюдь не в лучшем варианте. Во многом он явил пример того, как не надо строить социализм», Е. Г. Плимак, «Советский Союз в 1920ые годы. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Истории*, №9, с.4

<sup>25</sup> «Между тем, в истории различных отклонений от магистрального и закономерного пути было куда больше, чем это допускали историки. В. И. Ленин в 1919 г. заметил, что "разные нации идут одинаковой исторической дорогой, но в высшей степени разнообразными зигзагами и тропинками". А. А. Искендеров, «Выступление на круглом столе. Историческая наука в условиях перестройки», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №3, с.6

<sup>26</sup> Г. Гусейнов, Д. С. П. – *Материалы к Русскому Словарю общественно-политического языка XX века*, М., 2003, стр. 145

<sup>27</sup> Along with his book's title V. P. Volobuev, who actively participated in the numerous round-tables and published new articles, on a number of occasions re-iterated and developed his idioms in 1988. Compare: «Мне представляется, что проблема альтернативности исторического процесса, выбора путей развития должна привлечь, наконец, внимание философов...», В. П. Волобуев, «Философия и историческая наука, Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.40

<sup>28</sup> «Переход от политики военного коммунизму к нэпу - это уже выбор. Нэп предполагался всерьез и надолго... И то, что совершилось в нашей стране на рубеже 20-30х годов, отнюдь не было фатальным... И, наконец, нынешняя перестройка общественных отношений - это тоже сознательный выбор пути», Л. В. Данилова, «Философия и историческая наука, Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.50

The passage quoted above was typical as far as it concerns the vocabulary and the affirmation of the linkage between the past and present both “subjected” to free historical choice. We can relate it to a number of similar passages made by historians, economists, literary critics, and publicists from different ideological perspectives. Publicist Igor Dedkov from *Kommunist* linked the criticism against Stalinism with the choice of a non-Stalinist liberal future; a literary critique from *Nash Sovremennik*, articulating a Russian patriotic position critical of the “westernizing” mainstream of perestroika, Alexander Kazintsev used the same language to warn readers: “Namely, the choice concerning the past is not only a moral act. This is simultaneously the choice of the future with its social and economic reality”<sup>29</sup>. The gravity of the notion of “choice” was frequently stressed by the adjectives “historic”, and “historical” in the sense of a decisive and far-reaching choice with long term consequences<sup>30</sup>. History became for many perestroika authors the place or the time of constant choice. Connecting the uncertainty of the present with historical perspective and responsibility philosopher A. Zotov articulates the existentialist overtones of the constant “historical choice” as the very essence of human History during the roundtable of historians and philosophers:

Contemporary events brutally and tangibly show that the roads of history are roads of liberty: and if in the past, humanity or a nation faced the problem of “existential” [“bytiinogo”], subjective choice only at certain occasions... today, probably, history only begins in its “proper sense”... Today we live in a situation of historical un-determination – or in other words, of historical choice<sup>31</sup>.

The vocabulary of Gorbachev’s team and pro-reform intellectuals also included a new expression “socialist choice”. Gorbachev, Medvedev, Dedkov, Bovin, Volobuev referred to the socialist choice made in 1917 by the Soviet people and which was still guiding today<sup>32</sup>. They referred to the socialist choice to re-affirm their truthfulness to it in opposition to those who would not share socialist values: socialist choice would thus set the due limits of glasnost and reforms in USSR<sup>33</sup>. Researchers some

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<sup>29</sup> «Именно потому, что выбор по отношению к прошлому является не только моральным актом. Это одновременно и выбор будущего с его социальными и экономическими реалиями», А. Казинцев, «История объединяющая или разъединяющая», *Nash Sovremennik*, 1988, № 11, с. 164. “Отдадим себе отчет: сегодня мы заново подтверждаем социалистический выбор семнадцатого года. Это только кажется, что спор идет о заслугах и преступлениях Сталина... На самом деле обсуждаем: каким путем идти дальше, как жить, какими быть?”, И. Дедков, «Круглый стол. Идеологические проблемы перестройки», *Коммунист*, 1988, №7, с.22

<sup>30</sup> «Члены ЦК, сделав свой исторический выбор, несут историческую ответственность за последовавшие в 30ые годы трагические события. По сути дела, они вынесли вотум доверия Сталину и его курсу на политическую и экономическую “чрезвычайщину”». Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, «Николай Бухарин: Эпизоды политической биографии» *Коммунист*, №13, с.105

<sup>31</sup> « Наши сегодняшние события уже весомо, грубо и весомо показывают, что дороги истории есть дороги свободы: если в прошлом проблема «бытийного», субъективного выбора вставала перед человечеством, перед народом только время от времени... теперь ситуация другая... быть может, только и начинается история, так сказать, «в собственном смысле»». А. Zotov, «Философия и историческая наука, Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.19

<sup>32</sup> See a non-comprehensive list of direct uses of the expression “socialist choice” from our corpus and benchmark setting Gorbachev’s book published in 1987: М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с. 12, 32, 33, 39, 146. В. Медведев, интервью, «К познанию социализма», *Коммунист*, №17, с.5; И. Дедков, «Идеологические проблемы перестройки. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1988, №7, с.22; ”. А. Bovin, «Перестройка: Правда о социализме и судьба социализма», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.547-549; В. П. Волобуев, «Философия и историческая наука, Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.41.

<sup>33</sup> «Вопрос: Есть ли у гласности пределы? Ответ: Разумеется, есть. Эти пределы обозначены законами и здравым смыслом. Есть пределы, которые предписываются нормами нравственности и, конечно, интересами стабильности

times took this expression at its face value<sup>34</sup>, but the apparent traditionalism of the idiom should not be mistaken for yet another formulation of the same; and this novelty noted by Neil Robinson had not only a quality of protecting CPSU from criticism “in a time-honoured fashion”<sup>35</sup>. The novelty of the language marked a greater shift.

The ambiguity of the new expression consisted in the special emphasis on the voluntary decision and value-orientation (rather than on the established laws of historical development) as the implied *basis* of the October Revolution and Soviet socialism in the present. While as we saw earlier, fidelity to father’s memory was common Soviet *topoi*, the very expression “socialist choice” and fidelity to it implied that Soviet socialism originated from a *choice*, thus leaving the historical path of USSR and its future under the auspice of a decision and not historical necessity or fidelity to the past. This shift was probably designed by reformists to reaffirm and distil the core socialist values as opposed to the real historical logic leading to Stalinism after the socialist revolution; however, the very semantic of this expression opened if not encouraged the possibility to take the opposite, non-socialist choice, which would be a matter of value-choice and not historical necessity<sup>36</sup>. The failure to assume the consequences of this innovation is manifest in 1990 during the meeting of Vadim Medvedev as the Politburo member in charge of ideology with the leading Soviet historians. Pavel Volobuev who first promoted the idea of “historical alternative” bitterly condemned those who “look for alternatives to October [Revolution]”. In reply, Medvedev acknowledged that one cannot find the consensus around socialist values “simply by discussing and arguing” (sic!). However, Medvedev added “we cannot compromise about Lenin, October revolution and socialist choice” but without specifying how to defend this position if words were not enough<sup>37</sup>. This new value-choice language and its ramifications were opening the possibility for all actors to defend their own values regardless of Bolshevik *unity* or Gorbachev’s *consensus*.

Y. Afanassiev, one of the best known historian and for a time politician who did not hesitate to question Lenin’s authority, articulated the common definition of perestroika as a collective choice of historical path in a critical discussion: “Only an open competition of most diverse ideas can generate a free and democratic choice of the paths to deepen perestroika. Namely here, politics and history fuse,

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нашего строя и социалистического выбора...», М.С. Горбачев, «Интервью журналу «Шпигель»», *Schpiegel*, 20.10.1988. В. Медведев, op.cit., с.5

<sup>34</sup> Cf.: Казьмина М. В., “Проблема перестройки и развитие исторической науки”, *Электронный научный журнал «ИССЛЕДОВАНО В РОССИИ»*, 2006. <http://zhurnal.ape.relarn.ru/articles/2006/123.pdf>, с.1157

<sup>35</sup> Neil Robinson pointed out at its novelty in 1995 and sees in it a “shield” for the Communist party’s officials, when accused of poor representation of people’s interests, **although noting the absence of clear criteria of socialism defining this “choice”**. Robinson also qualifies this concept as “teleological” which does not seem exact. See Neil Robinson, *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet system*, Edward Elgar, 1995, p.132-134, p.161, quoted in p.191

<sup>36</sup> The four authors who used the expression “socialist choice” were critical of the late Soviet Union and of the Stalinist period; after perestroika they kept their convictions, which could be described as socialist or social-democratic. The consequences of this semantic shift from necessity to choice were probably not fully assumed. The shift reflected the significance of the idiom of “choice” and its positive intellectual and moral connotations.

<sup>37</sup> «Историческое сознание общества - на уровень задач перестройки», Совещание историков с членом политбюро, член-корреспондент АН СССР, В. А. Медведевым, *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.12, 22-23



as well as the past and present”<sup>38</sup>. The close link between the word “choice” [vybor] and the word “elections” [vybory] in Russian presenting singular and plural of the same word carried new political associations incorporated in this term. Another peculiar expression of the time “alternative elections” [*alternativnie vybory*] reminded people that elections in the USSR used to be without choice and without alternative.

This underlying semantic community was first expressed in the draft program of perestroika addressed by A. Yakovlev to M. Gorbachev in 1985. It indicates that both terms were in the thin air before 1988:

On the elections. The elections [vybory] should be not the election [izbranie], but a choice [vybor], and the choice of the best one. We can limit the number of candidates (but no less than two).<sup>39</sup>

### *The idiom of historical alternative and its ambiguity*

The third term of the idiomatic triad, “**alternative**” or “**historical alternative**”, probably bore the strongest intellectual and political load. Compared to the idioms of path and choice, the idiom of alternative had considerably lower currency in the Soviet rhetoric before perestroika and therefore its widespread use in 1988 signalled the genuine renewal of the vocabulary. The active simultaneous use of the three terms by the same authors affected the first two traditional Soviet idioms conferring them a more political and fresh sound. In Gorbachev’s texts there were rare occurrences of the term alternative, so that its success can be attributed mostly to its proper merits in the new intellectual context<sup>40</sup>. Most pro-reformist authors called for and welcomed the theoretical integration of the concept of *alternative* into the debates on history and politics. Among the most influential bearers and users of the new idiom were: Yu. Afanassiev, L. Batkin, A. Bovin, A. Butenko, Yu. Burtin, F. Burlatskiy, O. Chubaryan, V. Danilov, I. Dedkov, D. Furman, M. Gefter, B. Grushin, L. Gordon, A. Kazintsev, L. Karpinskiy, V. Kiselev, E. Klopov, V. Kozhinov, Klyamkin, Yu. Levada, G. Lisichkin, V. Medvedev, N. Moiseev, A. Nuikin, E. Plimak, V. Sirotkin, N. Shmelev, N. Shmelev, V. Selyunin, A. Tsypko, G. Vodolazov, and finally, M. Gefter and P. Volobuev. They expressed support of this idea in a variety of

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<sup>38</sup> «Только открытое соревнование самых разнообразных идей может порождать свободный демократический выбор путей углубления перестройки. Именно здесь и сливаются история и политика, прошлое и настоящее», Ю. Афанасьев, «Перестройка и историческое знание», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.492

<sup>39</sup> «О выборах. Выборы должны быть не избранием, а выбором, причем выбором лучшего. Можно ограничить число выдвигаемых кандидатов (но не менее двух). Депутат должен зависеть от избирателей, действительно выражать их мнения своими устами, а не свое мнение от их имени. Подотчетность и сменяемость депутатов. Реальный отзыв депутатов – с публикацией, с объяснениями.» А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.383

<sup>40</sup> The three typical occurrences of the term “alternative” in Gorbachev’s texts up until 1988 or in the official party documents that we identified, are the passages stating that there is no reasonable alternative to perestroika, and the single passage in his report on the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of October revolution where he spoke about socialism as an alternative to capitalism and about the choice between socialism and capitalism calling it “major social alternative of our times” since 1917; in both cases Gorbachev’s accent is on the concept of *choice*: «Когда спрашивают, не слишком ли круто мы заворачиваем, мы отвечаем: нет. Разумной альтернативы революционной, динамичной перестройки не существует. Альтернатива ей – консервация застоя... Время диктует нам революционный выбор – и мы его сделали». М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с.55. Compare with similar passages in *Материалы XXVII Съезда Коммунистической Партии Советского Союза*, М., 1986, с. 63, 97, 110. Also see a more detailed account below in this section.

ways, pointing out a) its objective importance for social theory b) subjective interest to this problem by the public. The significance or rather the “centrality” of the issue was described in the following terms: “We paid insufficient attention to the theory of the historical process, to the problem of alternatives and multi-variations”<sup>41</sup>, “the problem of alternativeness of historical process, of the choice of the optimal path of development today is as acute as never before”<sup>42</sup> “. Another author brought together these two aspects of the problem of “alternativeness” before declaring his own philosophical view in this respect:

As a bright example [of the interdisciplinary approach], let me address the problem of alternative paths of historical development. The fact that it is today at the centre of public attention is quite logical, as far as one cannot speak about the further creative development of social sciences without the resolution of the problem of alternative on the theoretical level; second, because there is obviously a burning social need in the discussion and understanding of this issue<sup>43</sup>.

In the light of this theoretical and political discovery of alternativeness, the whole history of the Soviet Union suddenly presented itself to perestroika authors as a series of missed alternatives to what actually had happened and principally to Stalinism and its terror. In 1988, the most discussed and visible was the alternative of NEP personified by Nikolai Bukharin and his tragic fate. As mentioned earlier, the initiative for the rehabilitation of Bukharin and his presentation as an alternative to Stalin since 1986 was the background for a positive reappraisal of NEP, in turn meant to justify economic novelties<sup>44</sup>. This reappraisal resulted from two independent factors: mostly from the reformers’ will to bet on cooperative economics, and second from multiple private initiatives of Bukharin’s family, American historian S. Cohen, Soviet political advisors and official speechwriters such as E. Ambartsumov or F. Burlatsky. Two young historians G. Bordugov and V. Kozlov who got the official mission from the Institute of Marxism Leninism to present Bukharin as the leading Soviet theoretician, in their balanced and apologetic article preferred to speak about the spontaneous “renaissance” of Bukharin in the writings of historians:

What happened is that when historians addressed the paradoxes and dramas of the pre-war past, when they turned to the “critical points” of the transitional period from capitalism to socialism, when they raised

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<sup>41</sup> «Мы слишком мало занимались теорией исторического процесса, проблемами альтернатив и многовариантности», О Чубарьян, Директор Института Всеобщей Истории АН СССР, «Круглый стол: Историки и писатели о литературе и истории» *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.49

<sup>42</sup> В. И. Керимов, «Рецензия на книгу П.В. Волобуева, «Выбор путей общественного развития»», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.167. Also see among other similar passages: «Опыт показывает: проблема вариантности конкретных путей и форм строительства социализма, развития социалистической демократии, вариантности возможных выборов и альтернатив выдвигается в ряд важнейших исследовательских плацдармов исторической науки. А значит, и художественных концепций советской истории в современной литературе». О. Д. Оскоцкий, «Правда истории и лики охранительства. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №9, с.111

<sup>43</sup> «То, что она оказалась в настоящее время в центре общественного внимания, вполне закономерно, поскольку, во-первых, говорить о дальнейшем творческом развитии общественных наук без решения проблемы альтернативности на теоретическом уровне не представляется возможным; во-вторых, потому что налицо жгучая общественная потребность в обсуждении и осмыслении этой темы». Я. Г. Шемякин, «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.60

<sup>44</sup> We refer again to the thorough accounts of R.W. Davies and M. Yunge. Марк Юнге, *Страх перед прошлым. Реабилитация Н.И. Бухарина от Хрущева до Горбачева*, АИРО-XX, М., 2003; R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, Indiana University Press, 1989, p.27-43

the problem of alternatives of historical development of the country, before our eyes, the figure of Bukharin was reborn almost from non-being<sup>45</sup>.

In 1988, most authors approved and stated the reliability of the Bukharin humanist and democratic alternative to Stalinism situating the point of fatal non-return somewhere between 1925 and 1932: "Most writers believe that the Bukharinist road to socialism, through voluntary peasant cooperatives and the continuation of NEP, offered a viable alternative which would have been much more human"<sup>46</sup>. Few sound voices, including that of I. Klyamkin, V. Danilov, V. Dmitrienko or N. Simonia, who otherwise had no common political position, claimed that while NEP looks like a more attractive option today, this does not imply that Bukharin's views and NEP could offer a viable solution for USSR at the end of 1920s in the then given political circumstances. They argued that social, political and economic contradictions within and between the peasantry, political authorities, cultural backwardness and the need of rapid industrialization determined the forced collectivization. F. Burlatsky in his theoretical report on socialism offered an original counter-argument defending the viability of NEP alternative – without Bukharin: if Lenin lived long enough there would be surely have been an alternative to Stalinism<sup>47</sup>. What is most certain for us here is that this idiom remains central for most of divergent positions on NEP. Once introduced, this reading of historical *alternatives* becomes attractive as the way to see national history in general: the search of alternatives goes back to imperial Russia and even Ancient Rus'. In our corpus, we traced the following «alternatives», which were explicitly discussed by authors, posited as viable or refuted in 1988: the Stolypin's alternative<sup>48</sup>, Trotsky's alternative<sup>49</sup>, the alternatives of 1956 and 1965<sup>50</sup>, the alternative between Prussian and American paths in agriculture<sup>51</sup>, Eurasian world-alternative to capitalism<sup>52</sup>, the missed western alternative between Protestantism and Reformed Catholicism unavailable in Russia<sup>53</sup>, and the non-Christian alternative to Orthodoxy in 988<sup>54</sup>. In the texts of Politburo member and close Gorbachev associate, V. Medvedev cited above, we also find a minor idiom "socialism as an alternative to capitalism" echoing

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<sup>45</sup> «А случилось так, что когда историки начали разбираться в парадоксах и драмах довоенного прошлого, обратились к "критическим точкам" переходного периода от капитализма к социализму, поставили проблему альтернатив исторического развития страны, на наших глазах, буквально из небытия возродилась фигура Н. И. Бухарина», Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, «Николай Бухарин: Эпизоды политической биографии», *Коммунист*, №13, с.91

<sup>46</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, Indiana University Press, 1989, p.34

<sup>47</sup> «Была ли альтернатива сталинскому пути? Конечно. Если бы Ленин прожил еще 10-15 лет, разве страна пошла по тому же пути? Нам кажется это странным, потому что не укладывается во внешне марксистские схемы: решающая роль народных масс в истории и т.д. и т.п. А если освободиться от заданных схем, то нельзя не прийти к выводу: да, развитие было бы другим, никто бы не снял его с работы, как Хрущева», Ф. М. Бурлацкий, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.39

<sup>48</sup> «Профессиональные историки с удивлением обнаружили вдруг широко распространившиеся представления о "столыпинской альтернативе" в истории России, которая будто бы могла избавить ее от революционных потрясений и жертв», В. П. Данилов, «Круглый стол: Историческая наука в условиях перестройки», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №3, с.22

<sup>49</sup> While refuting the viability of Stolypin's reforms, V. Danilov claims that Trotsky's vision should not be identified with Stalin's choices and can be considered as the third alternative along with Bukharin. *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>50</sup> Е. Зубкова, «1956, 1965: уроки незавершенных поворотов», *Коммунист*, 1988, №10, с.117

<sup>51</sup> С. А. Мдоянц, «Обсуждение доклада Ф. М. Бурлацкого, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма»», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.62

<sup>52</sup> М. Гефтер, «Россия и Маркс», *Коммунист*, 1988, №18, с.97

<sup>53</sup> Д. Е. Фурман, «Выбор князя Владимира», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №6, с.99

<sup>54</sup> «Вопрос. Русь приняла христианство. А была ли у наших предков альтернатива? Могла стать господствующей другая религия? Ответ. Выбор, конечно, был...». Интервью Митрополита Филарета, «1000-летие крещения Руси - выдающееся событие отечественной и мировой истории», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №5, с.103

the West European debates<sup>55</sup>. There were several new expressions with the word alternative put by the authors in comas signalling the author's awareness of the novelty or conditionality of the use: "forced alternatives", "diabolic alternatives", and "existential alternatives"<sup>56</sup>. The widespread noun "alternativeness" and the adjective *alternativnyi* as well as the second-order neologism "alternativeness-less"<sup>57</sup> [*bezalternativnost'*] attested the appeal of this root and the willingness of authors to use it when discussing various issues relating history and politics. In the course of one year we note a sharp rise in the use of an idiom absent from the official Soviet vocabulary. Reflecting this novelty G. Gusseinov made place for ten entries with the word "alternative" in his *Materials for Russian Dictionary of the Political language of XX century*.<sup>58</sup>

In parallel to this long chain of historical alternatives identified by perestroika's intellectuals, a number of expressions revolved around the idea that in the present there was *no alternative to perestroika*. This idea – not yet the term – was first introduced in 1986 at the XXVII Party Congress and confirmed in Gorbachev's theoretical book on perestroika and new thinking in 1987: "we are united in that perestroika is necessary, inevitable and that there is no other path for us"<sup>59</sup>. In 1988, this became a stable expression with some minor variations: "there is no alternative to perestroika", "there is no reasonable alternative" or "there is no other way". Let us cite just typical passages from pro-perestroika reviews *Novyi Mir* and *Kommunist*: "Perestroika shook up the society... slowly, but steadily grows the conviction that there is no alternative to perestroika"<sup>60</sup>, "It is clear to every one, that today it is impossible to advance any serious political alternative to perestroika"<sup>61</sup>. The intellectual and political symbol of this claim was the publication of the authoritative collection of essays entitled "There is no alternative" [*Inogo ne dano*] edited by Y. Afanassiev and bringing together very different pro-perestroika authors, many of whom were discussing the crucial importance of alternatives in history, but all subtly amalgamated as supporters of "no-alternative" by the slogan becoming the combative title of this collection<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> «Социализм дает принципиально иной ответ на вызов времени, выдвигает свою альтернативу, призванную обеспечить гуманистическое решение проблем эпохи НТР и ядерного века». В. Медведев, «Великий Октябрь и современный мир», *Коммунист*, №2, с.12

<sup>56</sup> Г. Гудков, Ю. Левада, А. Левинсон, Л. Седов, «Бюрократизм и бюрократия: необходимость уточнений», *Коммунист*, №12, с.74; А. Зотов, «Философия и историческая наука, Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.19

<sup>57</sup> See: Н. Злобин, «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.34; Л. Новикова, «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.45; И. Дедков, «Идеологические проблемы перестройки. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1988 №7, с.11.

<sup>58</sup> Г. Гусейнов, Д. С. П. – *Материалы к Русскому Словарю общественно-политического языка XX века*, М., 2003, стр. 27-29.

<sup>59</sup> *Материалы XXVII Съезда КПСС*, Политиздат, М., 1986, с.63, 97, 110; "В главном мы едины – едины в том, что перестройка необходима, неизбежна, что другого пути у нас нет". М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с. 64, also с.66

<sup>60</sup> «Перестройка всколыхнула общественную жизнь страны... Пусть медленно, но утверждается убеждение, что альтернативы перестройке нет». Н. Шмелев, «Новые Тревоги», *Новый мир*, 1988, №4, с.160

<sup>61</sup> "Каждому ясно, что сегодня какой-нибудь серьезной политической альтернативы перестройке выдвинуть невозможно" И. Насташев, «Прикоснись к источнику», *Коммунист*, 1988, №6, с.115

<sup>62</sup> This expression and the title of the book triggered a strong intellectual reaction and in 1996 a collection of influential essays was published under the title *Иное*, [The Other]. Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, 586 с.

We can now more accurately distinguish two main and mutually contradictory uses of the term and theme of alternative in this period: a) the idea of positive alternatives is considered as the most important theoretical discovery helping to understand the Soviet past, History and the present; b) the recurrent affirmation itself based on historical experience, that today, there is no political alternative to perestroika. This seemingly direct “contradiction” did not puzzle the authors even when both aspects were brought together within one paragraph – and the following passage is not a unique case of seeming blindness<sup>63</sup>:

One of the most widespread myths of conservatism: the myth on the mono-variant, historically inevitable socialism, “retreat” from which, would start after the death of Stalin... In sum, this is nothing more than the myth on an alternative to perestroika, [the myth] that we can still move on following the Stalinist path, but just slightly ennobled<sup>64</sup>.

How can we explain this contradiction? Pro-perestroika authors defended the *alternativeness* in history as a general principle; when speaking about the present choice the slogan “there is no alternative” actually implied, although significantly it did not articulate this idea, that there is no *good* - serious, reasonable and humanist - *alternative* although there is probably a *bad* one – the dead-end of stagnation, the non-history<sup>65</sup>. There is ambiguity in this implicit balancing between the “unacceptable” [values] and “unsustainable” [reality], but there is no open contradiction. Hence, this ambiguity passes unnoticed by most of the perestroika readers and writers. In other words, the reformist publicists did not negate the principle of the existence of alternative in the present (on the contrary, they often stressed the open-ended character of the present moment and referred to the struggle, say, between new and old), but claimed that there was only one desirable and worthy alternative to the repetition of the same. Archie Brown in his apology of Gorbachev quotes his similar passage from an unpublished manuscript written in 1989 on perestroika as “a necessity”, having no alternative in the sense, that there was no “reasonable, constructive alternative” to it.<sup>66</sup> Summarizing this dialectics of choice and necessity, Machiavelli noted that people demonstrate much more virtue when they act by necessity, then when they act freely by choice.<sup>67</sup> Looking back at this period and its intellectual ferment, we can now see that indeed, people with the then dominant mindsets could hardly *conceive* any alternative to

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<sup>63</sup> Compare the subsequent passage with a strikingly similar passage of S. Mdojants on the round-table of the Institute of Social Sciences affiliated with CC of PCUS. С. А. Мдоянц, «Обсуждение доклада Ф. М. Бурлацкого, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.62

<sup>64</sup> «Самые распространенные из мифов консерватизма: миф об одновариантном, исторически неизбежном социализме, “отступление” от которого началось после смерти Сталина... В совокупности это ничто иное, как миф об альтернативе перестройке, о том, что сталинским путем, слегка облагороженным, можно идти и дальше». И. Дедков, «Идеологические проблемы перестройки. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1988 №7, с.11.

<sup>65</sup> See as an example the explicit passage of Mdojants: “С исторической точки зрения единственной альтернативой государственно-бюрократической или административно-командной системе (думаю, тут дело не в словах, все достаточно четко представляют, о чем речь) является широкая и всесторонняя модернизация общества на основе товарного производства... Именно это обстоятельство укрепляет нас в мысли, что начавшимся преобразованиям нет разумной альтернативы; их торможение или отказ от избранного пути может привести к трагическим результатам как для судеб нашей страны, так и для человечества в целом”, С. Мдоянц, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.62

<sup>66</sup> Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, p.5

<sup>67</sup> “E perché gli uomini operano o per necessità o per elezione; e perché si vede quivi essere maggior virtù dove la elezione ha meno autorità...” Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, (I, 1)

more cooperatives, more elections of the factory management and more glasnost. Now it is hardly acceptable to think that then there was no reasonable and constructive alternative. This distinction is not designed to measure the degree of personal responsibility of Gorbachev or his contemporaries but our own.

As we can see in the above-cited passages that the uses of the term alternative – whether the alternative was affirmed or excluded – often called the terms of choice, path or their derivatives. In a typical historiosophical “apology” of perestroika made by N. Shmelev the combination of the two is manifest:

But, too many among us still do not understand that there is no real alternative to perestroika, that in the economy we just stepped back from the brink of abyss... That otherwise, we will find ourselves on the roadside [*na obochine*] of history, we will fall into the third-world, and our revolution will be strangled<sup>68</sup>.

Another expression of the triad of historiosophical idioms was their natural synthesis in the metaphors of the cross-road [*perekrestok*], or parting of the ways [*rasputie*] we already met on several occasions in the writings of publicist, scientists and politicians in this chapter. The image symbolised the paradigmatic situation of choice between alternative ways to follow as the metaphor of human history. Renowned Russian writer fashionable in late 1970s and notoriously critical of perestroika, Y. Bondarev philosophically notes in one of his essays in *Nash Sovremennik* that “the book of being lies on the cross-road of rather bumpy country-side roads, and its pages are turned by the wind of eternity”<sup>69</sup>.

In this general context, orthodox archbishop Filaret, editorial board of *Voprosi Istorii* or a sociologist and historian, D. Furman, could naturally speak about the *choice of the path* and about *alternatives* when they described the Orthodox baptism of Ancient Rus’ by Vladimir in 988, thus transferring the vocabulary elaborated to discuss NEP a thousand years back in history. In a footnote to his article “Choice of Duke Vladimir” D. Furman makes a particularly sophisticated shift of the new vocabulary to the minds of medieval chronologists opposing them to supposedly less sensible modern historians:

It is important here that the historical consciousness of medieval chronologists captured what often did not fit to the minds of later historians looking for various law-like regularities, - the situation of the existential choice in which found themselves the leaders of the young states “grown up from idolatry”, the existential choice which simultaneously was a historical one<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> “Общественный климат в нашей стране за последние два года изменился. Изменился в принципе. Но многие у нас пока еще не понимают, что никакой реальной альтернативы перестройке нет, что в экономическом смысле мы пока еще только отошли от края пропасти... Немало людей еще не поняли, что иначе мы окажемся на обочине истории, превратимся в слаборазвитую страну, что иначе нашу революцию в конце концов задушат”. Николай Шмелев, «Новые Тревоги», *Новый мир*, 1988, №4, с.163

<sup>69</sup> “Книга нашего бытия лежит на перекрестке довольно ухабистых проселочных дорог, и страницы ее листает ветер вечности...” Ю. Бондарев, «Мой Толстой», *Наш современник*, 1988, №12, с.3

<sup>70</sup> “Важно лишь, что историческое сознание средневековых повествователей улавливало то, что часто не укладывалось в сознание позднейших историков, ориентированных на поиски разного рода закономерностей, - ситуацию жизненного выбора, в которой были руководители “переросших язычество” молодых государств, выбора,

In the interview of Filaret to the board of *Voprosi Istorii* we can hear another exchange in these terms:

*Archbishop Filaret:* The Kiev's grand duke Vladimir completed the pre-history of Christianity, accomplishing the choice of religion, the choice of that path, which then the Russian state followed in its development.

*Interviewer:* Ancient Rus' converted into Christianity. Was there an alternative for our ancestors? Could another religion become dominant?

*Archbishop Filaret:* Yes, of course, there was a choice...<sup>71</sup>

We must note that the very myth about the choice between the three religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) – constitutive for the Russian historical imaginary and reported by the chronicles and legends – fits this particular language. We can presume certain influence in both senses: from the perestroika idiomatic language to the myth of *choosing* Orthodoxy as in the texts just cited above, and probably in a stronger sense, from this ancient image to the formation of key idioms of perestroika. This second linkage is, however, far too distant to make certain conclusion on the continuity of vocabulary and metaphors; Soviet official uses of the identified idioms provide more immediate intellectual context and we shall briefly examine the continuities and discontinuities in their meanings.

#### *The official Soviet vocabulary, revisionist historians and the new idioms*

Drawing on the traditional Soviet idioms or expressions and providing them with the new polemical charge, the central metaphor, which we can artificially reconstruct as the “choice of the path between alternative paths of historical development”, gave new political senses to all of the three idioms. The three words were naturally used in other European languages and historical contexts in a metaphorical way without necessarily becoming idiomatic or mutually enforcing; the partial exception is the English word “way”, and German “Weg” used in the expressions such as “Third way” and “Sonderweg”. In USSR, the joint use of these three idioms in the context of perestroika conferred them rhetoric power and richness transforming these common metaphors into more specific and recognizable perestroika idioms. We shall briefly resituate the previous Soviet usages of the idioms path, choice, and alternative so that we can see the shift in their common meanings explicit by 1988. The idioms of the path, road and their derivatives played routinely important role in the official Soviet vocabulary. We find the recurrent expressions such as “historical path”, “our path”, “right path” starting from the celebrations of the anniversary of the October Revolution by M. Pokrovsky (1930s) and

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который одновременно был выбором историческим”. Д. Фурман, «Выбор князя Владимира», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, № 6, с.92 (примечание)

<sup>71</sup> «*Ответ.* Таким образом, наши предки были знакомы с христианством задолго до 988 года. Киевский князь Владимир как бы закончил предысторию христианства, завершив выбор религии, выбор того пути, по которому пошло в дальнейшем развитие Русского государства. *Вопрос.* Русь приняла христианство. А была ли у наших предков альтернатива? Могла стать господствующей другая религия? *Ответ.* Выбор, конечно, был». Интервью Митрополита Филарета, «1000-летие крещения Руси - выдающееся событие отечественной и мировой истории», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №5, с.103

solemn generalizations in the *Short Course* (1938), then in the *Materials of the XXII Party Congress* (1961), in the official texts of the Brezhnev's period as well as in the *Materials of the XXVII Party Congress* (1986). In his letter "On certain questions of the history of bolshevism" written in 1931, Stalin did not use these expressions except when he sarcastically referred in comas to "the paths and parting ways" of Trotskyism<sup>72</sup>. In contrast, the opening page of the *Short Course* starts with an incantation of the "long and glorious path" of the All-union Communist party<sup>73</sup>. In the concluding chapter of the *Short Course*, the unnamed author solemnly asks before repeating the key points of his catechism: "What are the main totals of the historical path traversed by the Bolshevik party?"<sup>74</sup> The last sentence of the Short Course redundantly concludes: "Those are the main lessons of the historical path traversed by the Bolshevik party". The new Party Program approved in 1961 asked with a slightly less triumphant accent: "What are the main lessons of the path traversed by the Soviet people?", and replied: "The high road to socialism is paved. Many nations already follow it. Sooner or later, all nations will follow".<sup>75</sup> We can also read in bold characters the following passage from Khrushchev's official report on the XXII Congress projecting the image of the path to the uncertain, but certainly victorious future – the image later met in Gorbachev's writings: "It fell to the lot of the Soviet people, to the party of Communists of the Soviet Union the great mission to be pioneers of the communist construction, to march towards the victory of communism via unknown paths"<sup>76</sup>. The image of the pioneer path uncovered by USSR returns several times in the Party Program (1961) accommodating history to Stalin's "errors" and treating them as deviations due to the difficulties of pioneers<sup>77</sup>. Twenty five years later, the first line of CP Program (1986) opened with another pathetic turn clearly borrowing the stable and recognizable expression from the Stalin's *Short Course*: "Born by the Great October socialist revolution the country of Soviets traversed a long and glorious path"<sup>78</sup>. We note here the central place of this idiom in the keynote party texts as a standard means to express and legitimate the basic political positions or self-praise for historical progress.

Arguably, the problematique and the metaphor of the "socialist choice" was prefigured when speaking about developing countries turning into socialist ones, manifestly skipping [*minuya*] the capitalist stage altogether, with or without direct support of USSR<sup>79</sup>. We can easily read this metaphor of choice, but not the concrete expression, behind the following passage: "Right-less objects of the imperialist

<sup>72</sup> «О некоторых вопросах истории большевизма», in И. Сталин, *Вопросы Ленинизма*, М., ГИПЛ, 1952, с.395

<sup>73</sup> *История Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков). Краткий Курс*, М. ОГИЗ, 1945 (1938), с.3

<sup>74</sup> «Каковы основные итоги исторического пути, пройденного большевистской партией?», *Ibid.*, с.337

<sup>75</sup> *Материалы XXII Съезда КПСС*, Госполитиздат, М. 1962, с.331-332

<sup>76</sup> «На долю советского народа, партии коммунистов Советского Союза выпала великая миссия быть пионерами коммунистического строительства, идти к победе коммунизма неизведанными путями». *Материалы XXII Съезда КПСС*, Госполитиздат, М. 1962, с.4

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, с.327, 330, 332

<sup>78</sup> *Материалы XXVII Съезда КПСС*, Политиздат, М., 1986, с.121

<sup>79</sup> See: Jerry Hough, *The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options*, Washington DC, 1986, pp.71, 156-158 – quoted in Roger D. Markwick, "Catalyst of Historiography, Marxism and Dissidence: The Sector of Methodology of the Institute of History, Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1964-68", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, 1994, No. 4, p. 583. For the later uses compare: «Многие ранее отсталые народы пришли к социализму, минуя капиталистическую стадию развития», *Материалы XXII Съезда КПСС*, 1962, с.330. In the late Soviet period this issue was extensively although cautiously treated in a collective article and a propagandist book: С. Митра, Г. Мирский, Э. Пахад, «Государство и проблема выбора пути в развивающихся странах», in *Проблемы мира и социализма*, 1982, №3. М.М. Авснев, *Выбор пути развития и современный антикоммунизм*, Политиздат, М., 1984



politics in the past, they [new states] stepped on the road of autonomous historical creativity<sup>80</sup>. This image becomes clearer in the subsequent pages of the new CPSU' Program adopted in 1986: "The non-capitalist path of development opens wide perspectives for social progress - the path of socialist orientation chosen by a series of liberated countries"<sup>81</sup>. The probable instigator of this passage, P. V. Volobuev will later cite this very passage in order to justify his own position by referring to the authority of General Secretary in his book: *Choice of the Paths of the Social Development*<sup>82</sup>. In the benchmark setting *Perestroika and new thinking* (1987), Gorbachev stated that the basis of international security lay in "...the recognition of each nation's right of choice of its own path of social development... People [narod] can choose either capitalism, or socialism. This is its sovereign right"<sup>83</sup>, and here he mentions "socialist choice" for the first time when speaking about the due limits for political and economic reforms in the USSR. In the preceding decade Volobuev had no possibility to publish. This confirms that this innovation comes directly from P. V. Volobuev who extensively used the expression "socialist choice" in his book on the October revolution and present times, finished in summer 1986<sup>84</sup>.

In 1988, M. Gorbachev and his ideological allies such as V. Medvedev, I. Dedkov, and P. Volobuev himself used the expression "socialist choice" regularly applying it to the present day Soviet Union<sup>85</sup>. This gradual *transfer* of the idiom from the context of the third world countries to the October revolution and today's Soviet Union found the initial inspiration in Lenin's early analysis of Russia as the country of the "low-middle" level of capitalist development and its two possible paths of development<sup>86</sup>. Therefore, specific political choices were possible – otherwise impossible in developed Western Europe<sup>87</sup>. Advancing on this intellectual line, the Soviet type of socialism could be understood as the path of the second-range, peripheral capitalist countries and not as the mainstream path of History<sup>88</sup>. However, the official perestroika ideologues did not put this conclusion to the forefront; this was rather the side effect than the aim. Finally, as far as we can attest, the word "alternative" with the positive connotation, e.g. as something desirable and worthy, appeared in the official vocabulary only under

<sup>80</sup> «Бесправные объекты империалистической политики в прошлом, они вышли на дорогу самостоятельного исторического творчества». *Материалы XXVII Съезда КПСС*, Политиздат, М., 1986, с.8

<sup>81</sup> «Широкие перспективы общественного прогресса открывает некапиталистический путь развития, путь социалистической ориентации, избранный рядом освободившихся стран», *Ibid.*, с.135 Also see: *Ibid.*, с.128

<sup>82</sup> П.В. Волобуев, *Выбор путей общественного развития: теория, история, современность*, Политиздат, М., 1987, с.7

<sup>83</sup> «Принципиальная основа всеобщей безопасности в наше время – это признание за каждым народом права выбора собственного пути развития... Народ может выбрать и капитализм, и социализм. Это его суверенное право». М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с.146

<sup>84</sup> The book was sent to the typography in September 1986. П.В. Волобуев, *op.cit.*, с. 133, 153, 157, 161, 195, 220, 243, 272

<sup>85</sup> See our account of the "socialist choice" idiom above in this section.

<sup>86</sup> П.В. Волобуев, *Выбор путей общественного развития*, с.139-144, с.191-193; М. Я. Гефтер, «Россия и Маркс» [1977], in *Из тех и этих лет*, Прогресс, М., 1991, с.40-47

<sup>87</sup> "Положения П. В. Волобуева, И. Ф. Гиндина, К. Н. Тарновского, В. Г. Хороса о России как стране запоздалого капиталистического развития, стране "второго эшелона" мирового капитализма имеют самое непосредственное отношение к поискам В. П. Данилова, О. Р. Лациса, В. И. Селюнина... Ленин был совершенно прав, определяя Россию как страну "средне-слабого" развития". Е. Г. Плимак, «Советский союз в 1920ые годы. Круглый Стол», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №9, с.5

<sup>88</sup> This conclusion shared several well-known historians and ideologues such as E. Ambartsumov and E. Plimak. P. Volobuev also actively used the vocabulary and ideas close to that of center-periphery, but did not make the definitive conclusion.

perestroika borrowing from western Left – socialism as a humanist alternative to capitalism<sup>89</sup>. Instead of being the high road as it was in 1962, it modestly offered an alternative in 1987. The crucial impact if not the priority of Gefter and Volobuev in the theoretical and political use of the term *alternative* as the basis of revisionism, is here well manifest.

The bringing to play of these three distinct and relatively plain idioms by a group of Soviet historians since the end of 1960s shifted the accents within each of the terms: the path – which one chooses between alternatives, the alternative – which one chooses as one path among others, and the choice – between alternative diverging paths. This group of researchers willing to make honest socialist account of history, elaborated specific ways of integrating the Stalinist period into the official reading of history, which had substantial difficulties in assuming the scale and the nature of crimes committed in 1930s *within* a socialist country and against its *own* socialist elite. Their primary goal consisted in a mere restitution of complexity of Soviet history's actors intensions ("full-blooded") and their political positions ("nuances") as opposed to the *Short Course* "straightening out" history under the guise of retrospective fatalistic necessity<sup>90</sup>. For the Soviet politico-historical thought the civil war and collectivisation were easier to explain and accept, than the sudden rise of inner-party terror taking place after the political and economic victory of Bolsheviks against their open "class enemies". Stalin's inner terror did not allow any good official explanations; recognising and condemning this terror as "errors" generated more questions than simple silence. Political decision of Politburo members to make no public mentions of Stalin and his crimes after Khrushchev's removal coincided with the first steps of "historical methodologists". G. Vodolazov even published a book applying the conception of crossroads and alternatives in the pre-Leninist socialist thought in Russia and stopping before the crossroad between Lenin and Plekhanov<sup>91</sup>. Disturbing innovators were criticised by peers and removed from their official positions between 1969 and 1972. M. Gefter joined the dissident movement; P. Volobuev lost his status and also lost the possibility to diffuse his views in official academic publications; despite open criticism others such as M. Barg, V. Bibler, E. Plimak, B. Mogilnitsky or Ya. Drabkin continued their academic work on more narrowly framed issues<sup>92</sup>. Starting from 1984 for Volobuev and in 1986 for Gefter they could officially publish again<sup>93</sup>. Two years later, their language became omnipresent in public discussions. The wider public and most authors ignored the leading role of Gefter and Volobuev in exploring this problematique and in "crafting" the new theoretical language. We find a few references to the authorship or intellectual priority of the members

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<sup>89</sup> We mentioned V. Medvedev's using this expression deriving from the Western European Left. Let us cite one of the long-livers and pillars of the Soviet official historiography since 1950s, I. I. Mints who claimed in 1987 that while the periodisation of the world history's transition from capitalism to socialism actually poses some methodological problems, there was on certain thing: «Мы предлагаем всему миру альтернативу, выход из того тупика, в который заводит человечество империализм». И. И. Минц, «Основные этапы развития советского общества. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1987, №12, с.77

<sup>90</sup> For a well informed pioneer account of the rise and some aspects of the fall of the Methodological department we refer to Roger D. Markwick, "Catalyst of Historiography, Marxism and Dissidence: The Sector of Methodology of the Institute of History, Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1964-68", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, 1994, No. 4, pp. 579-593

<sup>91</sup> Г. Водолазов, *От Чернышевского к Плеханову: Об особенностях развития социалистической мысли в России*, М. Изд-во МГУ, 1969, 208 с.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 586-588

<sup>93</sup>

of the group even among professional historians. P. Volobuev probably got most credit for his book entitled *Choice of the paths of historical development* published early in 1987; although with a modest circulation of 23 000 copies in the Soviet context amounting to a highly specialised book<sup>94</sup>.

Scholars studying perestroika and its historical debates often spoke the perestroika idiomatic language themselves, but rarely point out its specificity; one of the exceptions are the remarks of Haruki Wada on Volobuev: "He tried to draw inspirations for new thinking from a historico-theoretical analysis of the category: choice of ways of social development... Volobuev discussed the choices which were made before and after the October Revolution and the Civil War, stopping at a positive evaluation of the NEP. The problem of Stalinism was still evaded yet [in 1986]"<sup>95</sup>. These few lines open the issue, but frame it narrowly and mistakenly put Stalinism out of picture – while this was implicitly Volobuev's main target. We would like to fill the gap and to restore the significance of this original methodological turn and new idioms for perestroika's public debates on Soviet history and politics.

The relative indifference of most perestroika intellectuals to the obvious originators of the main newspeak indicates that the spread of these idioms in their new specific usage did not rely on the *authority* of a particular researcher, his text or on the authority of the political leader-and-ideologue. Facing similar intellectual challenge and possessing common theoretical framework, most authors discovered similar answers. Another structurally similar source of this new idiom along with Soviet methodologists were the American left historians who discussed Bukharin's and other "alternatives" as a means to save both, Socialist values *and* October revolution despite Stalin's disturbing deformations<sup>96</sup>. Cohen's biography of Bukharin published in Russian and followed by seminars in 1988 made this influence material: it was presented as solid "American scientific evidence" in favour of perestroika<sup>97</sup>. Yet, in a letter to Steven Cohen written in 1978 after reading the draft of the book on Bukharin, Mikhail Geffer showed his covert contempt by refining to the already "too familiar" for Geffer' circle, but still unofficial, term "alternative":

Due to the current abuses, this concept [alternative] became omnipresent, self-evident; however, if this concept has any meaning, then it is not simply a choice between two "given things" – two available opportunities, and it is not even a choice between two future or possible outcomes; we actually have to

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<sup>94</sup> П.В. Волобуев, *Выбор путей общественного развития: теория, история, современность*, Политиздат, М., 1987, 312 с.

<sup>95</sup> Haruki Wada, "Perestroika and the Rethinking of History in the Soviet Union, 1986-1988", in Takayuki Ito (ed.), *Facing Up to the Past. Soviet Historiography under Perestroika*, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, 1989, p.39

<sup>96</sup> See: Stephen Kotkin, «1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks», *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (Jun., 1998), p.406. Lewis Siegelbaum, *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1919-1929*, NY, 1992.

<sup>97</sup> Compare B. Mozhaev's rhetorical questioning and his direct reference to the authority of "an American": "But was there no alternative? What about Lenin's cooperation and NEP adopted 'seriously and for long time'. Wasn't that an alternative? Even an American, S. Cohen, noticed this and began his book on Bukharin with a preface on 'Bukharin and the Idea of an Alternative to Stalinism". Cited and translated in R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 36. Also see: Марк Юнге, *Страх перед прошлым. Реабилитация Н.И. Бухарина от Хрущева до Горбачева*, АИРО-XX, М., 2003, с. 191-192

do with something in-between, and at the same time quite different; we have to do with a choice between the known and the unknown: the unknown in principle, i.e. something presently un-thinkable.<sup>98</sup>

Gefter's complex reading of the concept of alternative as the radically new opportunity created in the social and political life did not become dominant, but gave an additional spice and depth to its later usages. We cited above the typical statements made in 1988 relating the importance and acuity of the three terms often enumerated together for the *Zeitgeist* of the crucial perestroika year. Several second order remarks about *choice* and *alternative* attest to the awareness of contemporaries of the idiomatic character of these terms resented in 1988, although ten years before Gefter could write about the abuses and plain evidence of the term *alternative*. Sometimes, marking a critical distance towards these terms, sometimes, stressing their conceptual power, authors noted the significance and centrality of the "new" terms. Leading publicist and professional historian Y. Afanassiev in the article published in the benchmark-setting volume "There is no alternative" defended the intellectual frame uniting history and politics and concluded: "Those are the reasons of the sharp acuity of the problem of alternativeness of history, and of the category of "choice" as the most important aspects of the historical becoming"<sup>99</sup>. A specialist on Latin America noted about the issue of alternatives: "there is obviously a burning social need in the discussion and understanding of this issue"<sup>100</sup>. Taking a critical distance with what they saw as the mainstream, authors of *Nash Sovremennik* were ironically noting the omnipresence of "alternatives": "today, everybody calculates the alternative starting from 1929"<sup>101</sup>, "conceptions of the leaders or, as they say now, their alternatives"<sup>102</sup>.

The variety and diversity of uses of the three idioms, the significant shifts from their original contexts of appearance, and finally the second order references to these idioms confirm the actual reach of the new language in 1988. These factual conclusions require more analysis of the *problematique* and of the *solutions* brought about by the use and the remarkably rapid reach of these idioms from the scholarly work of historians to the heart of public debates.

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<sup>98</sup> «Впрочем, от нынешних злоупотреблений этим понятием оно стало расхожим, самоочевидным, между тем если оно что-то значит, то это не просто выбор между двумя «есть» - двумя наличными возможностями, и даже не только выбор между двумя «будет», двумя «может быть»; здесь нечто совершенно среднее и совсем иное; здесь – выбор между известным и неизвестным: неизвестным в принципе, то есть еще недоступным сознанию». М. Гефтер «Все мы заложники мира предкатастроф. Письмо американскому историку Стивену Козну» [1978], in *Из тех и этих лет*, Прогресс, М., 1991, с.85

<sup>99</sup> «Таковы причины нынешней острой актуализации проблемы альтернативности истории, категории «выбора» как важнейшего элемента исторического становления». Ю. Афанасьев, «Перестройка и историческое знание», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.492

<sup>100</sup> «То, что она оказалась в настоящее время в центре общественного внимания, вполне закономерно, поскольку, во-первых, говорить о дальнейшем творческом развитии общественных наук без решения проблемы альтернативности на теоретическом уровне не представляется возможным; во-вторых, потому что налицо жгучая общественная потребность в обсуждении и осмыслении этой темы». Я. Г. Шемякин, «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.60

<sup>101</sup> «...»Какая улица ведет к храму?» именно так назвал свою статью И. Клямкин. Сейчас все просчитывают альтернативы пути с 1929 года. А иногда и более раннего. И. Клямкин пришел по нашим временам к неожиданному выводу. Альтернатив тому, что произошло не было. Ни одна из улиц к Храму не вела.» А. Кузьмин, «К какому храму ищем мы дорогу?», *Наш современник*, 1988, №3, с.156

<sup>102</sup> «А что же другие политические деятели - по тогдашнему вожди? Их концепции, или, как сейчас говорят, альтернативы, тоже преломлялись на пути сверху вниз. И ... идеи Троцкого еще имели свои каналы распространения, достигая функционеров районного масштаба" Ирина Струмилина, «Желаемое и действительное», *Наш современник*, 1988, №12, с.174



## Digging over the past as the new horizon of public politics

In the previous section, we examined the rise of the new historical idioms framing the political arguments and debates of the moment. In this part, we outline the broader horizon of public history framing the debates on politics, society and economy in 1988 – we can attest the active use of the new vocabulary in the political reflections on the past, present and future. R. Koselleck referred to the two fundamental dimensions of Modern perception of politics as History: “horizon” and “experience”<sup>103</sup>. Francois Hartog identified the contemporary way to apprehend history into present as “presentisme” where both images of past and future are dominated by the image and concerns of the present – as opposed to the modalities of *passéisme* and *futurisme*<sup>104</sup>. French and Russian revolutions represented themselves as the dawn of new superior era and as a break with the past. Perestroika’s crucial year was framed by the perception of global threats to the world in the immediate future, uncertain but radical choice in the Soviet present and by the obsession with the Soviet past where authors were looking for original solutions and discovered original sins.

This pending past experience was a paradoxical horizon of perestroika, which shaped political thought and the discussion about practical decisions. As one of the leading publicist and political advisor, A. Tsipko formulated during the round table aiming to elaborate the new conception of socialism: “There is a striking contrast between that activity and liberty of thought, which is manifest in our research about the past, and flabbiness and indecision of our judgments about the future”<sup>105</sup>. We will try to outline the contours of this characteristic asymmetry of in the dominant time-frame of the political debates in this section. The priority given to the past experience as a means to discuss politics was in part a response to censorship; but with the hindsight of the following years we can conclude that history provided the only language for free political theory. This is not the effect of censorship, but rather an inborn limitation of public political thinking.

### *The time-frame for political action: the uncertain future*

The *distant future* mainly appeared in 1988 with uncertain or negative connotations. Authors rarely referred to the horizon of world revolution or communism and in most cases, they did so to deconstruct the bygone aspirations of the past. The leading theorist of history Pavel Volobuev reminded the readers of *Kommunist* the unsolved question of the non-advent of the world revolution<sup>106</sup>. In the same issue, Vadim Medvedev in his capacity as the official party ideologue claimed that early Bolshevik “hopes of the rapid development of the world revolutionary process” had “no substantial

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<sup>103</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Times*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1985

<sup>104</sup> Francois Hartog, *Regimes d'historicite. Presentisme et experiences du temps*. Paris, Editions du Seuil, 2003

<sup>105</sup> “Разителен контраст между той активностью, свободой мысли, которая проявляется при исследовании прошлого, и вялостью, скованностью наших суждений о будущем” А. Тципков, «Круглый стол: проблема разработки концепции современного социализма. Обсуждение доклада Ф. Бурлацкого», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №11, с.47

<sup>106</sup> «Мы как будто забыли о том, что поколение творцов и защитников Октябрьской революции вдохновлялось идеями мировой революции...» П. Волобуев, «Обращаясь к Великому Октябрю», *Коммунист*, №17, с.100

ground"<sup>107</sup>. D. Furman recalls the "vanished horizon of the world brotherhood"<sup>108</sup>. Two main worries more often relate to the near future: nuclear and ecological problems threatening the survival of the human race. The threat to the survival of mankind was probably the most certain and immediate feature of the near future: "It seems to me, that the present state of the world finds itself under the Damocles sword of nuclear apocalypse (if we are to cite just one threat to humankind)..."<sup>109</sup>. V. Medvedev identified the prevention of the nuclear catastrophe as the most urgent and most important among the "global problems"<sup>110</sup>. The only confident and positive affirmation about the future in our corpus was made by a group of official philosophers announcing that "we head towards the age of humanistic and reasonable man". Their new manual of philosophy was going to focus on this assumption<sup>111</sup>. If the self-confidence of this optimist prognosis looks very unusual, humanistic values were often claimed and referred to in 1988. This single firm announcement of the humanist era set apart, a literary critic assumed as self-evident that "today, there is no more optimists able to affirm that happiness any way will come up historically"<sup>112</sup>. Assuming the built-in uncertainty of the future can also *encourage*: "But there is no one ahead of us where we are going to be tomorrow [who could give guidance]. Every generation is the pioneer on his fraction of the historical path"<sup>113</sup>. Gorbachev's earlier spur probably triggered the previous author's public courage: "We opened the doors into a new and unusual living space... we are moving on the path of pioneers, which means we move ahead. Hence, there are diverging reactions of people to the ongoing processes"<sup>114</sup>.

A second important feature of the time horizon in 1988 was the generalized identification of the *historical and world context* when speaking about the present situation or the *immediate future*. Authors of the texts from our corpus constantly speak about humanity and history of humankind or refer to "global problems"; this theme and references are universally current as the frame for theoretical thinking on politics throughout the five magazines<sup>115</sup>. That historicized humankind plays several distinct roles: as a value to protect and as an object of concern, as the decisive playground of perestroika, and as the source of valuable experience. The first two figures clearly appeared in

<sup>107</sup> В. Медведев, Интервью секретаря ЦК КПСС журналу, «К познанию социализма», *Коммунист*, №17, с.4

<sup>108</sup> Д. Е. Фурман, "Круглый стол: Философские проблемы теории и практики национальных отношении при социализме", *Вопросы Философии*, №9, с.71

<sup>109</sup> Ю. Н. Давыдов, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.39

<sup>110</sup> В. Медведев, "Интервью...", с.12

<sup>111</sup> "Впереди век человека разумного и гуманного. А это будет означать подлинный Ренессанс реального гуманизма и, следовательно, философии как мировоззренческой основы его", И. Т. Фролов, В. С. Степин, В. А. Лекторский, В. Ж. Келле, "О замысле книги "Введение в философию"", *Вопросы Философии*, №9, с.22

<sup>112</sup> "Сейчас уже нет оптимистов, способных утверждать, что счастье все равно наступит исторически" П. Г. Горелов, «Круглый стол: Историки и писатели о литературе и истории» *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.90

<sup>113</sup> «А разве есть кто впереди нас там, куда мы вступим завтра? Так что каждое поколение является первопроходцем на том отрезке исторического пути, которое оно проходит» И. Насташев, «Прикоснись к источнику», *Коммунист*, 1988, №6, с.112

<sup>114</sup> *Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.357; See: Редакция, «Каким быть нашему дому?», *Коммунист*, 1988, №8, с.3

<sup>115</sup> Typical references to history of humankind and "world-historical" context see for example in: Андрей Нуйкин, «Идеалы и интересы», *Новый мир*, №1, с.206; Никита Моисеев, *НМ*, № 4, Василий Селюнин, *НМ*, №5; А. Косоруков, «"Плаха" - новый миф или новая реальность», *Наш Современник*, №8, с.141; Ю. Н. Давыдов, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, №10, с.39; А. С. Ципко, «Круглый стол. Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, №11, с.47; В. В. Мшвениерадзе, «Перестройка и политическая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №2, с.3.; Б. Грушин «Возможность и перспектива свободы», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, 5, с.17-18; and multiple references in *Вопросы Истории* and *Коммунист*.

Gorbachev's "new thinking" initiative in 1987<sup>116</sup>. The more heterodox reference to humankind as the source of valuable experience for the USSR came later and was facilitated by the first two references. In some cases, there was a sliding from the supposedly global problems to the problems of socialism alone, which may stem from both rhetorical prudence and inner evolution of the authors. In January 1988, V. Medvedev opened his article with a solemn passage: "History throws a challenge to the whole of humankind... Socialism gives a radically different reply to the challenge of our time, advancing an alternative called to insure the humanistic solution of the problems of the époque of the techno-scientific revolution and nuclear age"<sup>117</sup>. World and humankind are the objects of concern. Half a year later Medvedev used the same formula in a reduced way: "Socialism today faces the historical challenge, which requires a deep qualitative renewal and intensification of its dynamism"<sup>118</sup>. The challenge to humanity turns here into the challenge to Soviet socialism alone. Finally, the official ideologue of CPSU mentioned that the objective competition between the two world systems is beneficial for both, and socialism to remain competitive should "learn all what is valuable in the experience of the other social formation"<sup>119</sup>. Formerly dissident Soviet sociologist B. Grushin proposed his own articulation of this experience the Soviet Union should benefit from. Liberty as the general sense of history is the main benchmark to follow: "The evolution of the *homo sapiens* has a clear direction, which makes its way through all the recessions, bypasses, all the zigzags and accidents of historical move of earthlings' nations which is reflected in all the available data and practices... [move] towards the realm of the genuine liberty."<sup>120</sup> This general historiosophical formula easily brings together early Marx's reading of communism and global liberalism of Fukuyama as of the main horizons for the politics of perestroika.

#### *The time-frame for political action: the decisive present*

The perception of the *present* and its agenda in 1988 was also routinely framed by historical and historiosophical references, idioms and metaphors. The present understood as a *historical* moment acquired a sense of its greater significance for the country's destiny: "in the crucial [*perelomnye*] historical époques the interest towards ideological aspects of the ongoing changes in the society always grows... In those moments, social consciousness "wakes up" and an intensive intellectual and moral quest addresses the most fundamental basis of being, of its historical past, present and future"<sup>121</sup>; "the country's destiny, perestroika's destiny – is placed now in the hands of people"<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> М. С. Горбачев, *Новое мышление для СССР и всего мира*, М., 1987

<sup>117</sup>"История сегодня бросает вызов всему человечеству... Социализм дает принципиально иной ответ на вызов времени, выдвигает свою альтернативу, призванную обеспечить гуманистическое решение проблем эпохи НТР и ядерного века". В. Медведев, «Великий Октябрь и современный мир», *Коммунист*, №2, с.12

<sup>118</sup> В. Медведев, интервью, «К познанию социализма», *Коммунист*, №17, с.3

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, с.10

<sup>120</sup> «Развитие рода *homo sapiens* в рассматриваемом отношении имеет вполне отчетливую направленность, которая выразительно пробивается через все отступления, отходы в сторону, через все зигзаги и случайности исторического движения отдельных народов землян... к царству истинной свободы», Б. Грушин, «Возможность и перспектива свободы», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №5, с.17

<sup>121</sup> В переломные исторические эпохи всегда возрастает интерес к идеологическим аспектам идущих в обществе перемен... В такие моменты общественное сознание как бы пробуждается, начинается напряженный умственный и



Perestroika becomes the self-description not only of Gorbachev's policies, but also of the whole historical period – in other words the generally accepted meaning of the present becomes the *process* of reforms springing not only from political leadership but mostly from objective historical necessity which still demanded to be better understood<sup>123</sup>. This historical process combines the grass-root awakening or mass mobilization and resistance of the old structures and habits, which is proper to every revolutionary process<sup>124</sup>. The ambiguous metaphor of perestroika as a re-actualized or continuing revolution launched by Gorbachev in his 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary report on October Revolution<sup>125</sup>, and the modification "revolution from above"<sup>126</sup> set the historical frame for the political present: intended historiosophical *reification* of a reform into the designation of the whole historical period is a proper perestroika's feature. Perestroika becomes a proper name. Gorbachev successfully presented his reforms in the language of irreversible revolutionary process drawing on the Soviet heritage and implying the objective need in a radical and yet undefined change he was bringing by his "revolution" with the typical metaphor of the "creative masses".

In our corpus of articles authors mainly described the present day in 1988 in terms of *historical choice*, *cross-road* and *break*: "major historical choice", "cross-road of historical paths", "historical turn", "transitional passage", "change", "break", or even the preparation for a "leap over the abyss"<sup>127</sup>. This use of metaphors presumes that there might be the right and wrong choices of the path; that the abyss can be jumped over, the gulf can be overcome. For authors of *Nash Sovremennik* critical of the perestroika ideological mainstream, uncertainty and the metaphor of the lost way characterized the present moment: "[we are] at the cross-road of the rough cart-roads", "humanity is now at the parting of the ways"<sup>128</sup>. However, this uncertainty about the present is not exclusive to the sceptical *Nash*

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нравственный поиск, выходящий на коренные основы бытия, его историческое прошлое, настоящее и будущее «Идеологические проблемы перестройки. Круглый стол», от редакции, *Коммунист*, 1988, №7, с.3

<sup>122</sup> А. Казинцев, «Очищение или злословие?», *Наш Современник*, 1988, №2, с.187

<sup>123</sup> "Нынешний, исторически назревший, объективно необходимый этап социалистического строительства настоятельно требуют и нового теоретического уровня осознания перестройки...", Редакционная статья, «Идеология революционной мысли», *Коммунист*, 1988, №5, с.4

<sup>124</sup> "Перестройка - это прежде всего разрушение всего обветшавшего в общественной жизни... Пробуждение активности людей, доселе пассивных, переход от исторической спячки к новому историческому творчеству вначале не могут происходить иначе, как через митинги и дискуссии", И. Несташев, «Прикоснись к источнику», *Коммунист*, 1988, №5, с.114

<sup>125</sup> "Могучая сила Октября подняла к самостоятельному историческому творчеству миллионы людей, не имевших навыков работы в условиях демократии... Дыхание Великой революции мы ощутили в последние годы в освежающем ветре апрельских перемен", «Каким быть нашему дому», *Коммунист*, 1988, № 8, с.6

<sup>126</sup> "Мы уже вступили на этот путь. Решения июньского Пленума ЦК по своим потенциальным последствиям имеют воистину революционное значение. Однако революция сверху отнюдь не легче революции снизу. Успех ее, как и всякой революции, зависит от... способности сломать сопротивление отживших свое общественных настроений и структур", Николай Шмелев, «Новые тревоги», *Новый мир*, №4, с.175

<sup>127</sup> «На нынешнем, переломном рубеже человеческой цивилизации с особой полнотой осознается мера исторической значимости того, что произошло в России в Октябре 1917 года», В. Медведев, «Великий Октябрь и современный мир», *Коммунист*, №2, с.3; «... На нынешней развилке нашего исторического пути», Ю. Буртин, «Ключ к заповедному царству», *Коммунист*, №8, с.107. «Наш напряженный, переломный этап истории» В. В. Мшвениерадзе, «Перестройка и политическая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №2, с.11; «Потерять время - это потерять все... История не простит нам, если мы опять упустим свой шанс. Пропасть можно преодолеть одним прыжком, в два уже не получится», Василий Селюнин, «Истоки», *Новый Мир*, №5, с.189;

<sup>128</sup> "Книга нашего бытия лежит на перекрестке довольно ухабистых проселочных дорог, и страницы ее листает ветер вечности... Книга человеческого пути трагична и смешна", Ю. Бондарев, «Мой Толстой», *Наш Современник*, № 12,

*Sovremennik*; with different ideological connotations the concern manifests itself in pro-perestroika articles and magazines. The well-known reform-minded economist Nikolay Shmelev in his article “New worries” published by *Novy Mir* noted the growing feeling of worry for the outcome of perestroika<sup>129</sup>. Moral philosopher A. Guseinov in *Kommunist* spoke about the “jump into the unknown”, rather than about the “jump over the abyss” as did V. Selyunin just quoted above. In both cases the historical risk is assumed, while for A. Guseinov this risk concerned the very worthy destination, which has been chosen and not only the moment of passage: “The blend between socialism and democracy – is a frontier task, and we might assume an unusually difficult one. This is the field of historical search and risk. In a certain sense, this is a jump into the unknown”<sup>130</sup>. Supporting the risky jump in line with his humanist values Guseinov exposed a rare virtue of historical courage atypical for the perestroika’s intellectual milieu; most authors tried to align their values, projects and what they consider as historical necessity, which is a rather typical Modernist attitude opposed to the Early Modern stance of resistance to history’s natural corruption.

#### *The time-frame for political action: the actual past*

Thus, the future promised little certainty for Soviet intellectuals beyond vague humanist expectations, reliance on human factor and serious worries of world catastrophes. Publicists, academics and ideologues were much more confident in their judgments over Soviet past choices as the benchmark for the present political situation, although far from unanimous on concrete points. There are a large number of passages where today’s “historical choice” is clearly presented as the analogy, reiteration or rectification of the choices made in the past:

When today we turn to our past, this is not an accident that we focus on the periods of radical turn, those periods when arose the question of alternatives and the choice of further path... Today we live in a situation of historical uncertainty – or, what is the same thing, - in a situation of historical choice.<sup>131</sup>

More concretely linking the past to the present, Igor Dedkov called upon the readers of *Kommunist* to realize that the discussions over the merits and crimes of Stalin *in fact* are the discussions over the historical path to follow now: the confirmation of the truly socialist choice made in October 1917 or its corrupted version imposed by Stalin<sup>132</sup>. Thus, the relevance of the past had several dimensions. The common *topoi* in the theoretical texts of this period were the *lessons of history* and the passages on

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с.3. “Все дело в том, что на подобном временном распутье находится не только волчья пара или животный мир Земли, но все мы. Все человечество”, А. Косоруков, «“Плаха”...», с.141

<sup>129</sup> Николая Шмелев, «Новые Тревоги», *Новый мир*, 1988, №4, с.160

<sup>130</sup> “Соединение социализма с демократией - задача все еще не изведенная, и надо думать, необычайно трудная. Это область исторического поиска и риска. В известном смысле это прыжок в неизвестность”, А. Г. Гусейнов, «Мораль без морализаторства», *Коммунист*, №13, с.81

<sup>131</sup> А. Ф. Зотов, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.19

<sup>132</sup> “Отдадим себе отчет: сегодня мы заново подтверждаем социалистический выбор семнадцатого года. Это только кажется, что спор идет о заслугах и преступлениях Сталина... На самом деле обсуждаем: каким путем идти дальше, как жить, какими быть?... Это столкновение разных, а то и противоположных концепций социализма и человека”, И. Дедков, «Круглый стол. Идеологические проблемы перестройки», *Коммунист*, 1988, №7, с.22

the actual significance and relevance and urgency of history, which is still here. Vasiliy Selunin in his benchmark article “*Istoky*” [Origins] justifies his focus on the Soviet past tacitly replying to Gorbachev’s earlier calls to look forward rather than digging over the past:

Why dig over the past? Some learned authors explain: enemies pull us into the discussion over the past in order to divert us [from the real problems]... But how can one learn from history at all, if again we will close certain lines with our finger: please, read here, and here you can not read? And the most important question: whether all of what was lived through already belongs to history?<sup>133</sup>

Lessons of history are called to help make the right choice of the historical path today – the choice society failed to take in the past: “We are again on the breaking point, on the crossroad. But behind us lies the road full of tragic errors as is already proven: the path of administrative regulation is incompatible with democracy, self-government, justice and morality”<sup>134</sup>. Reviving or rectifying the choices of the past on the basis of the lessons learned from its study becomes the common formula articulating the thrust for history. There are a number of similar passages on the usefulness of historical lessons and experience for the current political decisions and for the choice of strategic direction on the pages of all the magazines beyond the ideological differences between them<sup>135</sup>. The whole ideological fundament of perestroika was thus defined by Oskotsky as “**nothing but lessons of history**”<sup>136</sup>. In fact, the focus on the Soviet historical experience is the mark of the whole year: most of the aspects of the social, political and intellectual life in 1988 were seen and debated through the lenses of public history. The assessments of the “second degree” about the general interest of the public in the past made by the publicists are worth mentioning to complete the picture of this historic horizon replacing the future and pressing if not replacing the present:

The interest towards history nowadays is unprecedented. Sometimes, they see in it something unwholesome, diverting our attention from the current businesses, but, probably, this interest is the sign of the spiritual and moral health, of growth of people’s consciousness<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup> "Зачем ворошить былое? Ученые люди: объясняют: это враги втягивают нас в дискуссию о прошлом, чтобы отвлечь... Только как учиться у истории, если опять станем закрывать ее строчки пальчиком: это читайте, а это нельзя? А главное, все ли из пережитого принадлежит истории?" В. Селюнин, «Истоки», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №5, с.163

<sup>134</sup> «Мы снова на переломе, на развилке. Но сзади-то полная трагических ошибок дорога, которая уже вроде бы доказала: путь администрирования ни с экономическими методами руководства не совместим принципиально, ни с демократией, ни с самоуправлением, ни со справедливостью, ни с нравственностью», А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы», 1 часть, *Новый Мир*, 1988, №1, с.207

<sup>135</sup> «Из прошлого опыта можно извлечь в этой связи важнейший урок: принцип избрания органов партийного контроля эффективен не сам по себе, но лишь при условии демократической системы формирования партийных органов»; «многое из опыта и уроков тех лет может подсказать ответы на сегодняшние вопросы, в конечном счете, работать на перестройку»; «Уроки прошлого должны помочь обществу очиститься от скверны, увереннее строить жизнь на более демократических началах». И. Москаленко, «Внутрипартийный контроль: цель и средства», *Коммунист*, №8, 38; Е. Зубкова, «1956, 1965: уроки незавершенных поворотов», *Коммунист*, № 10, с.116; Н. Федь, «О чем спорят?», *Наш современник*, №6, с.172.

<sup>136</sup> «А на что опирается идеологическое обеспечение перестройки, если не на уроки истории, которые служат ему фундаментальным основанием», с. В. Оскоцкий, «Круглый стол: Историки и писатели о литературе и истории» *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.44

<sup>137</sup> И. Дедков, «Вместе вчера, вместе сегодня и завтра», *Коммунист*, №8, с.22

History becomes the master genre professed by economists, philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, chemistry teachers and politicians. A retired Red Army general writes in his response to the interview of well-known G. Popov and N. Adjubei: "There is nothing surprising in the fact that PhD in economy addresses the questions of historiography and interethnic relations – today these issues are not less relevant than the economy"<sup>138</sup>. Some authors indeed opposed these overheated historical passions or concrete political interpretations and discussed the lessons incorrectly drawn, but none of them denied the fundamental usefulness of Soviet and Russian history for public debates. The constant back and forth intellectual movements between 1917, 1920s, 1930s, 1964 and present choices and problems characterized much of the economic, political and literary writings of this period. The glasses of Soviet history were the most current but yet not unique way to see the present and even the future by looking at the past. For several authors of *Nash Sovremennik* the relevance of the more distant past by far exceeded the lessons from the recent Soviet experience: the proper depth of Russian history is not a few Soviet decades but the 1000 years – they argued against the mainstream – and we should embrace this depth of centuries, which already inspired our fathers and grandfathers in moments of danger or chaos like today<sup>139</sup>. Reverting the Koselleck's opposition of the past experience and expectations, the past was the actual horizon: "Then I fully realized that simple truth – going deeper into the past one expands the horizon of the future"<sup>140</sup>.

*Again on the balance of criticism and pride: is history good for life?*

Keynote speeches of Party leaders, official decrees and decisions concerning history, and the passionate debates about history on several political forums including Politburo and XIX Conference in turn initiated, amplified and relayed the centrality of History for the current *Zeitgeist* of perestroika. As R. W. Davies showed, consolidating the new Party line more critical towards Soviet past, M. Gorbachev in his key-note speeches in January-February 1988 in two steps advanced that 1) the Soviet period of history should be studied and analyzed more actively and 2) critically – in order to cover 2.1) "white spots" and 2.2) "draw lessons for the present days"<sup>141</sup>. From his initially firm position that one should not lose one's energy by digging over the past, through his well nuanced and covered criticism in his report for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October revolution, Gorbachev passed to a new conclusion: the critical re-evaluation of errors of the past was the condition for the further advancement of perestroika. As far as we can attest from the available sources, this re-evaluation in Gorbachev's mind and texts was not called to denigrate the whole Soviet experience – which was allegedly the design of Alexander Yakovlev; Gorbachev's formula was to find the balance between pride and criticism in the name of full historical Pravda. In the purifying light of this factual Pravda, political theory had to draw lessons and adjust its premises to reality.

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<sup>138</sup> "В том, что доктор экономики обращается к вопросам истории и национальных отношений, нет ничего удивительного, - сегодня эти темы не менее актуальны, чем экономические" Письмо читателя, Г. Самойлович, «Кому и зачем нужны "землячества"», *Наш современник*, №7, с.187

<sup>139</sup> See: А. Казинцев, «История - объединяющая или разобщающая», *Наш современник*, 1988, №11, с.178

<sup>140</sup> А. С. Трофимов, «Отечество, память и ты», *Наш современник*, 1988, №2, с.179

<sup>141</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, p.136-137

As we noted earlier considering the shifts in Soviet values, pragmatic scientific reasons were frequently identified or associated with the moral imperative of honesty or integrity. To ensure this double headed formula of balance the General Secretary since 1986 maintained two Politburo members in charge of ideology each of them putting the accent on one of the two parts of the formula. Thus, Egor Ligachev in his key-note speech on the February plenum 1988 noted that “among other disciplines of social sciences we must highlight history as its fundamental and thoughtful study contains a great power [*gromadnaya sila*]”. Accepting that more sharp criticism towards our past was needed, he then stressed that the overall pride for the great historical achievements should prevail:

Today we often speak about historical Pravda. And however bitter it was, one should write and speak about it, in order to draw lessons for the present and for the future. It is important to bring to the new generations the entire and uncut Pravda... But the most important thing is that behind us – we have a great history of a great people.<sup>142</sup>

In response to the growing number of highly critical revelations about the Soviet past in the press and to Gorbachev’s gradual shift in this direction, Ligachev wished to maintain the *status quo* between critical accounts and supremacy of pride for the great history associated with the memory of heroic grandfathers. He refers to the October revolution report of the General Secretary trying to halt the critical re-evaluation of the past with this “reliable methodological key for the right, and balanced understanding of history”<sup>143</sup>. This reference, however, already contradicted Gorbachev’s own public position revealed one month earlier at one of his regular meetings with leading figures of the media and arts: “The understanding of our history which we achieved in preparing for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of October is not something frozen, and given once for all”<sup>144</sup>. The surprising rectification reflected the decisiveness of the reformers to cover new institutional proposals concerning the introduction of the Congress of Deputies and elections with a pre-emptive ideological onslaught on those in the Party top ranks who could oppose it. The consolidation phase marked by the celebration of the October revolution was over. Gorbachev and his reformist allies such as Yakovlev, Shevardnadze, and Medvedev shared and now expressed the view that the established “administrative-command system” was rotten and full scale democratic reforms would be beneficial for the USSR. The lessons of history were for them sources of reformist ideas, moral indignation, and rhetoric arguments to promote their agenda of reforms<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> “Сейчас много говорят об исторической правде. И как бы она ни была горька, о ней надо говорить, писать, дабы извлекать уроки для настоящего, будущего. Важно без очернительства и без приукрашивания донести до новых поколений полную, ни в чем не урезанную правду... Но главное в том, что у нас за спиной великая история великого народа”, Е. К. Лигачев, «Доклад члена Политбюро на Февральском пленуме партии "О ходе перестройки средней и высшей школы и задачах партии по ее осуществлению"», *Коммунист*, №4, 1988, с.55

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, с.\55

<sup>144</sup> As R.W. Davies noted this remark was unusual and contradicted the established practice of authoritative citations we considered above in this chapter. *Правда*, 13.01.1988. Cited and translated in R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, p.136

<sup>145</sup> For instance, A. Yakovlev recalls his bitter disenchantment in Marxism-Leninism in purely historiosophical terms. V. Medvedev writes in his memoirs about his shock from the Abouladze movie “Repentance” and fiction; but most of all he was marked by his participation in the Commission on rehabilitation where he personally went through thousand falsified

Thus, the accent in the twin-headed Gorbachev's official formula gradually changed: we need more historical *Pravda* about the difficult past; we need more critical lessons to be drawn from the errors of the past for our political theory and for the reforms to come; and in the third place, we can be proud of the achievements and sacrifices of the grandfathers. The position of A. Yakovlev in this respect was both more radical and more hidden, which he saw as the strategy of a "great craftiness" in dismantling the established system from the beginning of perestroika<sup>146</sup>. Yakovlev thought that a full-scale historical repentance would be salutary and necessary remedy to overcome the massive crimes committed in USSR in XX century and during the centuries-long tradition of servitude and slavery<sup>147</sup>; he saw not much ground for pride in Soviet history and was literarily irritated by these references for "our great historical achievements"<sup>148</sup>. Being convinced that the majority of the party leaders and people would not accept the full revelation about the bloody past Yakovlev advanced the formula of the "full recovery of *Pravda*" without ever mentioning which *Pravda*, one ought to recover. Even in the official reprimand to Nina Andreeva's he warned those who [as he himself did] "would see in perestroika the possibility of a dismantling of the whole socialist system" and who denounce the "whole historical path since October"<sup>149</sup> in order to suggest that this was not at all his position. In this official text, anonymously setting in *Pravda* the new party line Yakovlev introduced the bitter medicine against Soviet patriotism and Russian nationalism in a sweeter rhetoric capsule<sup>150</sup>.

The article constantly referred to the Soviet values such as "pride for great socialist history"<sup>151</sup>, "*Pravda*", "unpayable debt to the previous generations of veterans of the Party, War and work", "dialectics as the soul of Marxism", and "true patriotism and morality".<sup>152</sup> The battle between the two positions and Gorbachev's centre resulted in the official endorsement of the new party line on history after the hesitation of the Politburo's majority: historical criticism and bitter lessons should precede historical pride for heroic past. A. Yakovlev, Soviet intelligentsia, and editors of the leading perestroika journals used this formula to reveal publicly the shocking crimes and abuses of the Soviet period.

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accusations and executions of the top Party leaders in 1930s-1950s. А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с. 374-375; Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева*, с.56-59

<sup>146</sup> А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, с.475

<sup>147</sup> See a number of passages in А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, сс.5, 375, 378, 459; Александр Яковлев: *свобода – моя религия*, М, Вагриус, 2003, Введение.

<sup>148</sup> Yakovlev later qualified these typical passages as "crackling" [*treskotnya*]. А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, с.434

<sup>149</sup> "Другие увидели в перестройке возможность некоего «демонтажа» всей системы социализма, а коль так, то весь путь, пройденный после Октября, объявляется ложным, ценности и принципы социализма — несостоятельными. Третьи — увлекаются радикальной фразеологией, теша себя и других иллюзией перепрыгнуть через необходимые этапы", *Ibid*.

<sup>150</sup> А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, с.435-436

<sup>151</sup> "Нам нужен патриотизм не созерцательный, не словесный, а созидательный. Не квасной и лапотный, а патриотизм социалистических преобразований. Патриотизм, идущий не только от любви к «малой родине», а пронизанный гордостью за свершения великой родины социализма", «Принципы перестройки: революционность мышления и действий», *Правда*, 5.04.1988

<sup>152</sup> «Мы восстанавливаем в правах Правду, очищая ее от поддельных и лукавых истин, удививших в тупики общественной апатии», «Замолчать большие вопросы нашей истории — значит пренебречь правдой, неуважительно отнестись к памяти тех, кто оказался невинной жертвой беззакония и произвола», «Нет, не зря прожили свою жизнь ветераны партии, ветераны войны и труда! В неоплатном долгу у них все последующие поколения», «В самые сложные, самые драматичные, переломные моменты истории В.И.Ленин снова и снова обращался к диалектике как живой душе марксизма», *Ibid*.

During the second half of the year, the interposed discussion between Yakovlev and Ligachev followed the established pattern: both accepted the other side of the formula, but stressed the primacy of their own side<sup>153</sup>.

### *The primacy of criticism endorsed by Gorbachev*

The significance of this high rank debate gradually diminished as the decisive break took place after the Nina Andreeva's affair. Critical evaluation of history was officially endorsed, and the defence of Soviet history was not officially repressed with any sanctions: this opened the way for a real pluralism against the background of horrible historic revelations. The destabilizing impact of these revelations on the society was underestimated by most of its protagonists, while its opponents ignored the pending demand of society to uncover the buried massive crimes and to know what really had happened<sup>154</sup>. The dramatic situation with the new official version of history was suddenly revealed by the suspension of the leaving school examinations in history by the State Committee for Education already in May 1988 under the growing sense of inadequacy of the current textbooks that according to Y. Afanassiev had "not a single page that is not falsified". The decision was motivated by the fact that instructions on how to teach history had changed over the year and "pupils' opinion frequently differed from that of the teacher"; an open competition for new textbooks was launched and the special commission of historians chaired by Gorbachev had to create "Essays" on party history<sup>155</sup>. Gorbachev made the next significant official shift in the re-evaluation of the Soviet history during the extraordinary XIXth party Conference in July 1988 in reference to the old Khrushchev's decision at XXII party Congress:

As that report stated, it is our political and moral duty to restore justice to the victims of lawlessness. Let us carry this out by constructing a Memorial in Moscow. I am convinced that this step will be supported by the whole Soviet people. (Applause)<sup>156</sup>.

This official decision took on the Intelligentsia's grass-root initiative launched in August 1987 by the group *Pamiatnik* [monument], then supported by leading public figures and finally headed by Y. Afanassiev and E. Klimov who in their capacity of party Conference delegates brought 50 000 signatures endorsing the idea of a monument for the victims of the repressions<sup>157</sup>. This symbolic and official announcement strengthened the critical stance towards the Soviet past calling to commemorate the victims of the Soviet repressions. The Politburo approved and formalized this

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<sup>153</sup> See the detailed and instructive account in R. W. Davies, *Soviet history...*, pp.161-163

<sup>154</sup> We address this problematique in the section of this chapter on "Distribution of responsibility". Among a large number of authors stressing the practical complexity and the moral need to deal with difficult past we refer to Timothy Garton Ash, "The truth about dictatorship", *New York Review of Books*, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1998

<sup>155</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, Indiana University Press, 1989, p.184

<sup>156</sup> *Правда*, 06.29-07.04.1988, as cited and translated in R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, p.156

<sup>157</sup> After the XIX Conference Memorial became one of the leading civil rights organizations uniting Adamovich, Afanassiev, Baklanov, Bykov, Evtushenko, Likhachev, R. Medvedev, Sakharov and Shatrov; finally, only a modest monument on Lubianka square was established by Memorial in 1991 and later recovered. See: А. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки*, с.135-136

decision<sup>158</sup>. Prior to this initiative a “Commission of the Politburo on the additional consideration of materials related to the repressions which took place during the period of 1930–40s and beginning of 1950s” was created in autumn 1987 and headed first by Solomentsev before his retirement, and from 1988 by Yakovlev<sup>159</sup>. The main task of the Commission was the rehabilitation of the repressed Communist party members including its top officials. In his confessional memoirs, A. Yakovlev considers the rehabilitation of the victims of political repressions as his main personal mission [*de/o*]<sup>160</sup>. During 1988, the Commission in collaboration with the Supreme court of USSR regularly announced the rehabilitation of the leading Bolshevik figures. Starting with the repeal of the sentences against Bukharin, Rykov, and Rakovsky in February, it followed with the rehabilitation of other would-be members of “anti-Soviet right Trotskyite block”, public announcement of the previous rehabilitation (which legally took place in 1955–1957<sup>161</sup>) of Tukhachevsky and other military chiefs in March, rehabilitation of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Pyatakov and Radek in June 1988, and of the members of the “Workers’ opposition” in November<sup>162</sup>. In June, Politburo restored the party membership of Bukharin, Rykov and others<sup>163</sup>. Trotsky’s membership was not restored; his image incarnated the anti-Party line and was so demonized that even Yakovlev did not dare to take it on<sup>164</sup>. However, by making these two initiatives official, the reformers engaged Politburo in the process of the full rehabilitation of the former enemies and sketched the next step – the designation of responsibilities for the groundless mass accusations and executions of the past.

On the contrary, the full-fledged rehabilitation of Bukharin played an important public role. Bukharin was portrayed as Lenin’s true pupil and as a viable alternative to Stalin’s brutal collectivization and industrialization. In a thorough and instructive book, Marc Junge presented the underlying tensions, fears and negotiations within the ruling elite around the attempts to rehabilitated Bukharin from 1956 onward<sup>165</sup>. Junge shows that the Commission on rehabilitation had charged the researchers from the Institute of Marxism Leninism to prepare the ground for rediscovery of Bukharin as the leading theoretical figure<sup>166</sup>. Director of Institute, G. L. Smirnov headed this theoretical work carried out by two promising historians G. Bordugov and V. Kozlov, and several other more and less distinguished

<sup>158</sup> Постановление Политбюро ЦК КПСС "О сооружении памятника жертвам беззаконий и репрессий" от 04.07.1988, See: *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1989, № 1, с.43

<sup>159</sup> Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева*, с.58

<sup>160</sup> «Реабилитация жертв политических репрессий стала главным делом моей жизни [курсив А. Яковлева]. Когда спускаешься шаг за шагом в подземелье по кровавой лестнице длиною в семьдесят лет, то вся труха из веры в коммунистическое всеобщее счастье улечивается, как дым на ветру. Обнажаются догола вся подлость, трусость и злобная людская, беспредельная преступность режима и садизм ее вождей». А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.21

<sup>161</sup> For a more detailed account of the pre-perestroika rehabilitation process see: Stephen Wheatcroft, “Glasnost and rehabilitations”, in Ito Takayuki, *Facing up to the Past*, Slavic Research Centre, Sapporo, 1989, p.199–204

<sup>162</sup> *Ежегодник БСЭ*, 1989, стр.43; *СПР*, выпуск 29, сто.176; *СПР*, выпуск 29, стр.177; *Ежегодник БСЭ*, 1989, стр.51

<sup>163</sup> *Правда*, 10.06.1988

<sup>164</sup> In this context, R. W. Davies analyses Burlatsky’s article in *Pravda* entitled “The Demon of the Revolution” and providing the ground for a more objective and less hostile image of Trotsky. At the same time, IML liberal historians Bordugov and Kozlov defended Bukharin’s theoretical evolution towards genuine Leninism as opposed to Trotsky inability to learn dialectics. See: R.W. Davies, *Soviet history in the Gorbachev revolution*, p.159; Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, «Николай Бухарин. Эпизоды политической биографии», *Коммунист*, №13, 1988

<sup>165</sup> Марк Юнге, *Страх перед прошлым. Реабилитация Н.И. Бухарина от Хрущева до Горбачева*, АИРО-XX, М., 2003, 334 с.

<sup>166</sup> Марк Юнге, *Страх перед прошлым*, с.180



researchers<sup>167</sup>. In August, *Politizdat* published a collection of Bukharin's selected works and widely presented it as a heritage of the leading party theoretician; a number of other re-editions followed. The publication in autumn 1988 of the famous partisan political biography of Bukharin written by Steven Cohen marked the apogee of Bukharin's page in perestroika's historical debates. In September, IML organized the conference misleadingly entitled "Spiritual heritage of Bukharin" on the eve of his centenary. Junge analyses a significant divergence in the interpretations of the scale and viability presented by "Bukharin's alternative". But, beyond these divergence, as he convincingly shows, a consensus backed by Gorbachev (and several pro-perestroika publicists and historians such as G. Smirnov, O. Latsiss and V. P. Danilov) implied that Soviet history and perestroika contained a more humanist and democratic project for socialism than Stalin's command system, which led USSR to stagnation<sup>168</sup>. In the context of the critical re-evaluation of history, Bukharin offered a positive light spot.

The official support for celebrations of the 1000 years of Russia's evangelization, TV translations of the liturgy and the organization of the "festival concert" at the *Bolshoi* Theater in July 1988 gave a spiritual and long-term temporal dimension to official public history.<sup>169</sup> Gorbachev personally met with the Patriarch Pimen and greeted the wide scale celebrations breaking with the official anti-religious stance – Orthodoxy from the remnant of the past became a spiritual treasure. In August, the Soviet Fund for Culture started editing a high-quality magazine *Nashe Nasledie* [Our Heritage] devoted to the recovery of cultural and historical wealth of pre-revolutionary Russia. This inclusion of the pre-revolutionary Russia as a positive cultural and spiritual reference was supported by Gorbachev and his advisors.

Thus, the historical horizon of public debates was set by the keynote speeches of the most influential party reformers – Gorbachev, Yakovlev and Ligachev. Despite their ideological divergences, they all appealed to recover the forgotten pages of the Soviet history, called to draw far-reaching theoretical and practical lessons from history, demanded more criticism of the errors and crimes of the past, and referred to the moral duty of memory. The inner PB debates over the pamphlet of Nina Andreeva crystallized two positions: primacy of historical pride Vs primacy of criticism of the past. Gorbachev's clear choice in favour of the critical stance triggered by the Nina Andreeva case intensified critical publications about the repressions and the Soviet period in general. The official rehabilitations held in slumber since Khrushchev's fall, radically speeded up in 1988. Restoring party membership of the expelled and executed leaders, the Politburo Commission clearly condemned the illegal repressions and indirectly questioned the principle of unity as most of the repressed were accused of fractional activities and deviations from the party line. The approval of Politburo to erect a Memorial for the victims of mass repressions expressed a new commemorative perspective. Rehabilitation of Bukharin and the promotion of the "Bukharin alternative" by the official party think-tanks, relaying the private initiatives in USSR and abroad, offered theoretical and historical backing for the perspective of human

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid, c.192-201

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, c.210-211

<sup>169</sup> *Ежегодник БСЭ*, 1989, стр.51

democratic socialism. This glimmering gave hope, but it raised disturbing questions and worries concerning the actual fate of Bukharin's alternative: shadows of murdered leaders and ordinary people suddenly entered the public scene called on to back up perestroika. Public political thought had turned into rectification, re-actualization or recall of dramatic choices made by grandfathers. Depending on the perspective, thousand years of orthodox spiritual life, sacred heroic memory or lawless servitude drew the background. The future promised hazy humanist perspective and pending world threats of nuclear and ecological apocalypse. Reformers exposed the slowly awakening Soviet society to the historical drama, instead of bringing in the promised economic fruits.

## **New idioms and theoretical problems of formations, responsibility and agency**

In this section, we will consider the theoretical problems, which publicists and researchers addressed and solved using the new idioms: the success of the new vocabulary clearly had to do with its polyvalence and its efficiency in dealing with hot questions and “crying” contradictions, which could not be solved otherwise. These hot questions as much as the hot answers inform us about the shared public worldview emerging in 1988 as the theoretical background of public politics. We identify three related theoretical problems actively debated in 1988 and setting the theoretical problematique typically addressed by protagonists in terms of *choice*, *path* and *alternative*:

- A. World map. Problems of the stages, laws and linearity of the world historical process,
- B. Responsibility. Question of historical responsibility for the crimes of the past,
- C. Human agency. The capability of human agency in the new historiosophical outlook

We will expose the main questions and arguments around these three problems, as we can reconstruct them, and then relate this problematique to the uses of the idioms and to the ways, in which they helped in capturing, expressing and solving these complex political riddles to publicists, scientists, politicians and reading public, focusing on the debates in 1988. Opening the theoretical debates meant exposing the official formulas and assumptions underlying political authority to factual, logical and value-based criticism. Facing the reality and adjusting theory to facts about the past and present – previously obliterated or only indirectly recognised – was as difficult as retaining the supreme values publicly referred to in the frame of socialist unity. Best perestroika intellectuals could hardly integrate the present-day reality into their shared historiosophical picture slightly better coping with what happened fifty to twenty years ago.

The General Secretary in his position of the top ideologue and top theoretician claimed that the country would remain true to its original “socialist choice”, but he avoided giving clear limits of what he thought was socialist and decided not to punish the trespassers of these undefined limits. In other words, the state and party leader set the benchmarks of the ideal state of society, but he did not specify the *limits* of the possible reforms to debate, nor could he or the members of his advisory team provide the answers for the most obviously pending theoretical questions brought by the pretension of glasnost to give convincing answers to the obvious question. Thus, Gorbachev gave up not only censorship and his conventional ideological power, but also the claim for ideological leadership. The bet was made on his personal charisma and tactical skills, creativity of the social scientists and finally consensus as the outcome of the open debates. Consensus was elusive if neither the culture of public debates nor the censor imposed it to the naturally conflicting, divergent and diverging voices. In this sense, Soviet polity could not overcome the Early Modern threshold as it could not stabilize a political order accommodating the destabilizing free public debates and electivity of the top offices.

*Coping with facts: the rediscovery of the historiosophical map of the world*  
[USSR on the historical map]

The first *theoretical* challenge for the Soviet intellectuals had to do with the place that Soviet socialism occupied in the given moment on the **historiosophical world-scale or world-map**. Both, the outlook of this global history scale and the place USSR occupied on it became dubious in the light of new and old facts when they were frankly acknowledged and the critical questions of the coherence of the official scheme became receivable. Schematic and clear, the representation of History as a progressive rise through five stages or formations from *primitive-communal* to *socialism*, became the basis of the common worldview since its concise exposition in the famous twenty-seven pages of the *Short Course*. It was reiterated in the article “On dialectical and historical materialism” this time signed by J. Stalin [September 1938], and then with minor variations replicated in hundreds of textbooks compulsory for every graduate student in USSR<sup>170</sup>. For our purpose, we will resume this scheme in an even shorter form.

The driving force of the steady rise was the development of the *productive forces* incarnated by techniques, which in turn modified the *productive relations* between men usually lagging behind the development of these new techniques<sup>171</sup>. The *adequacy* [*sootvestvie*] between the productive relations and productive forces gained through violent revolutions, once achieved, fostered the overall productivity and guaranteed long-term economic growth<sup>172</sup>. Therefore, under socialism, concluded the anonymous author of the *Short Course*, “productive forces are developing with increased speed as the corresponding productive relations give to them the full freedom for such development” compared to capitalism where productive relations, i.e. capitalism, would already slow down the productive forces<sup>173</sup>. The presumed successes of USSR in economic, social and military areas relied on the *adequacy* of its social system to modern technical tools. This historiosophical claim about the **superior productivity** of socialism remained vital throughout the fifty years after 1938 for Khrushchev, Kosygin and Brezhnev, Andropov and Gorbachev<sup>174</sup>. The registered slowdown in the Soviet productivity growth in 1970s plainly challenged the validity of the assumption for Soviet socialism and the steady growth of productivity in the western countries made it questionable as applied to capitalism. How challenging was this incoherence? Soviet leaders probably were not

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<sup>170</sup> *История Всесоюзной Коммунистической Партии (большевиков). Краткий Курс*, М. ОГИЗ, 1945 (1938); глава IV, часть вторая «О диалектическом материализме». И.В. Сталин, «О диалектическом и историческом материализме», in И.В. Сталин, *Вопросы ленинизма*, М., ГИПЛ, 1952 (1931).

<sup>171</sup> *Краткий Курс*, с.114-115

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 122; compare with И.В. Сталин, «О диалектическом и историческом материализме», с.597

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 121; compare with И.В. Сталин, «О диалектическом и историческом материализме», с.596

<sup>174</sup> See as an example the explicit formula equating the attainment of communism with the labour productivity superior to the capitalist countries in the conclusions of the XXI Congress of CPSU in 1959: «Сегодня еще больше, чем прежде, сохраняют значение указания В. И. Ленина о том, что главное свое воздействие на международное развитие социализм оказывает своими хозяйственными успехами». «...Новый важнейший период своего развития - период развернутого строительства коммунистического общества...Это будет решающий этап соревнования с капиталистическим миром, когда практически должна быть выполнена историческая задача – догнать и перегнать капиталистические страны по производству продукции на душу населения». *Материалы внеочередного XXI съезда КПСС*, М., 1959, с.8, 166

worried about the historiosophical incoherence as such, but they were somehow losing self-confidence. However irrelevant the official Marxism-Leninism could seem to Leonid Brezhnev in person, the leadership had no alternative world-view to assess the solidity of their own power basis and the perspective of political or economic development of the USSR and its satellites Vs capitalist countries.

Before 1970s, when the problem of lagging productivity became too obvious, the question on the socialist formation in the USSR posed other kind of difficulties prefiguring the similar solutions. Thus, N. Khrushchev's personal and political account of terror focused on the inner party and state terror reaching out to the new Soviet elites in 1937 and onwards. This policy of the inner terror was considered as a *deformation* of socialism caused by the *cult of personality*. "Zigzag road of pioneers" sometimes leading apart and then again forth, which was Khrushchev's modest theoretical innovation, accounted for the terror under socialism. Historiosophical premises for building socialism in Tsarist Russia as well as the post revolutionary period in general could still be considered as sane and secure. Rejecting the Russian historical backwardness (and implied socio-economic un-preparedness of Russia for socialism) was easier when the current Soviet growth rates remained equal or superior to the leading capitalist countries, as this was the case for Khrushchev in 1961<sup>175</sup>. Once the difficult pioneer path was set up, and its non-linear zigzags resumed by USSR, the socialist road looked again certain for others. Another empirical riddle for theory, seemingly more positive, was posed by the post-colonial nations which "skipped the stage" of capitalism and moved directly into the supposedly upper, socialist stage. If in Russia there was a short history of capitalist development, in many countries in Asia and Africa opting for socialism there was not even a short one.

To integrate this new political success into the official theory the *transition* from capitalism to socialism (initially seen as the universal progressive movement for each country through compulsory stages) was presented as world *competition* of Soviet socialism with Western capitalism taken geographically, economically and morally. This major theoretical innovation introduced in 1930s remained the new cornerstone of the official historiosophy until 1985; its compatibility with other assumptions in Marxism-Leninism was never tested, adjusted or even questioned as such. Robert Tucker analysed the intermediate ideological shift within this general scheme when between 1956 and 1961 Khrushchev advanced that war between socialist countries and imperialist capitalist countries was not an inevitable outcome any more.<sup>176</sup> Socialist victory was again historiosophically ensured in advance in all three domains of competition for all nations stepping on the right socialist path – not only by engaging into violent revolutions, but also through Parliamentary elections; the existence of the neutral "Third world" where the struggle between two systems could take a peaceful character was thus postulated.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> «Экономика мировой социалистической системы продолжает развиваться несравненно более высокими темпами, чем экономика капитализма». Ibid., с.9-10

<sup>176</sup> Robert C. Tucker "The Deradicalization of Marxist Movements", *The American Political Science Review*, 1967, July, pp. 343-358

<sup>177</sup> "...and what has come to be called the "third world" was thus given Soviet support and was recognized as such in a new tripartite world-view which contrasted sharply with the Stalinist bifurcation of the contemporary political universe into two warring camps. That the developing countries would eventually develop into Communist states was postulated, but it came

Under the pressure of contradictory facts (developed capitalist countries remain capitalist, less developed Asian countries become socialist, inner-party terror in socialist countries) the linear clarity of the initial Marxist design solidified in the *Short Course* gave place to a more complex map. There may be socialist *deviations* before the communist stage, and in the context of global *competition*, capitalist stage can be skipped for certain countries or may take longer for others. These two innovations in part allowed recognising and addressing the problem of the Soviet inner terror, and the problem of the arrival of socialism in a relatively backward country such as Russia and its salient non-lieu in most advanced capitalist countries. Socialist reforms undertaken by the new (and right kind of) leader set up the goal to enter the communist stage for the present generation of Soviet people. The official theory was adjusted to the new anomalies and the shining goal remained historically close and achievable.

With N. Khrushchev's removal and the abandonment of the economic and political reforms disturbing the newly consolidated ruling clans, the complex "zigzags" were replaced by the pseudo neo-Stalinist cumulative rise through historical stages. The critical notion of the *cult of personality* was first attacked as idealistic (i.e. contradicting the premises of historical materialism), and then downplayed in the official historiography<sup>178</sup>. The interest of the ruling groups to fix the status-quo by blocking criticism from below and reformist mobilisation from above, conditioned this ersatz neo-Stalinism. The superficial reiteration of Stalinism was in fact stripped from its core rhetoric and practice of the terror-and-struggle within the ruling group and towards the outside world inherited from the Manichean worldview of the professional revolutionaries' party<sup>179</sup>. World competition with capitalism remained the historiosophical frame as for Khrushchev, while the zigzags of the past were made straight again, history of socialism looked again progressive, but unlike Stalinist, fully pacified: the current political consensus around status-quo along with "*historical laws*" guaranteed a peaceful present and pacified the past. In other words, the official strategy in addressing ideological riddles in the Brezhnev period was ignoring them. Revisionist historians-methodologists started their search for good socialist answers to the theoretical questions around 1965 when they were officially dismissed and abandoned.

Gorbachev and his reformist team had no satisfying socialist answers to the old and newly accumulated theoretical questions provoked by the recognition of the ever-growing gap in productivity between the USSR and USA; in 1985 they faced the issue but did not realise its scope and possible

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to be recognized that nations choosing the "non-capitalist path" of development might inaugurate socialist economic practices in various different ways and not necessarily under Communist Party auspices. Moreover, a political way-station on the long journey to Communism was envisaged in the concept of a "national democracy," which was defined as a non-Communist regime committed to internal developmental goals, tolerant of its own Communist movement, and friendly to the Soviet Union and associated states". Ibid., p.344

<sup>178</sup> See: "Тогда осенью 1965 г. Последовали статьи в "Правде" сначала за официальной подписью заведующего Отделом науки и учебных заведений ЦК С. П. Трапезникова (8. X.1965), затем через некоторое время, в январе 1966 г., (30.1. 1966) за тремя подписями крупных историков, которые... объявили, что никакого периода культа личности не было, что это понятие немарксистское, отдает субъективизмом, а стало быть, научно несостоятельно". В. Д. Поликарпов, «Историки и писатели о литературе и истории. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Истории*, №6, с.94

<sup>179</sup> The Soviet language of struggle and war was first studied by A. Selishchev. A. Селищев, *Язык революционной эпохи, Из наблюдений над русским языком последних лет (1917-1929)*, Издание второе, М., Работник Просвещения, 1928 (Reprint, Leipzig, 1974), глава «Борьба, война и язык».

implications of its non-resolution in the context of free theoretical debates. This challenge called to redefine what historical background ensured the emergence of the Soviet socialism (if the straight logic of formations was not really working in the Soviet case) and to redefine the nature of its superiority to capitalism. In his keynote speeches, the reformist General Secretary pointed out these riddles with ease, and submersed them into historiosophical optimism relying on human factor and creativity of masses. Perestroika publicists addressed these questions and tried to find good answers; when doing so, they discovered the gravity of the problem. We can suggest that the language of alternative paths and historical choice gave intellectually most satisfactory socialist answers in the middle of perestroika's period, and later showed the limits of these answers when the liberty of critical speech brought all its charge and economic crisis deepened. Superseding the "zigzags" of history which helped Khrushchev to account for Stalinism, the idioms of "choice of the alternative path" emerged as a theoretical frame for the perestroika's mainstream.

Under the constraints of the ritualised self-praise, secrecy and censorship, the public recognition of the factual and theoretical inconsistency takes long time and the problematique of formations manifested this well. First, the *factual* statement that in the recent years, capitalist countries developed more rapidly and that the gap in productivity between capitalist and socialist countries increased in favour of the former, was not and could not be made clear at once. Second, the *passage* from acknowledgment of this fact to the acceptance that is challenged the understanding of the nature of USSR's socio-economic formation – was not direct. Only in 1987, on the third year of perestroika did the political leadership accept the theoretical dimension of this problem as "something seemingly (sic!) difficult to explain":

On the certain stage – this was especially clear in the second half of 1970s – something seemingly difficult to explain had occurred. The country started loosing its velocity [*tempy dvizhenia*], disruptions in economy accumulated... A kind of mechanism of hindrance of the social-economic development formed. All this happened, in the context where the technical and scientific revolution opened new perspectives of economic and social progress [in the West].<sup>180</sup>

In the following paragraphs Gorbachev went on specifying that in terms of efficiency of production, quality of output and implementation of the new technologies "the gap started to widen not in our favour"<sup>181</sup>. This recognition of the backwardness justified the wide-scope economic and political reforms announced further on; within the limits of the "socialist choice" the new mechanisms were to be introduced to "fully unleash the potential of socialism" and overcome the "paradoxical situation" when a more progressive formation lagged behind the less progressive one<sup>182</sup>. The causes of this backwardness named by Gorbachev in his book did not relate to the substantial revision of theory and

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<sup>180</sup> «На каком-то этапе – особенно это стало заметно во второй половине 70ых годов – произошло на первый взгляд трудно объяснимое. Страна начала терять темпы движения, нарастали сбои в работе хозяйства... Образовался своего рода механизм торможения социально-экономического развития. И все это в условиях, когда научно-техническая революция открыла новые перспективы экономического и социального прогресса». М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с.13

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., с.13-14

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., с.44

history; wrong priority of the extensive growth [*val*], disconnection of the egalitarian flat-rate rewards and individual output of workers [*uravnilovka*], and neglect of machine-tools production were named as major causes of stagnation. No major revision needed to account for a temporal slowdown. More candidly, V. Medvedev in his first theoretical article “Great October and contemporary world” wrote that capitalism had better mastered the techno-scientific revolution. According to Medvedev it fits Lenin’s prediction on capitalist “tendency to become rotten” combined with “rapid growth”<sup>183</sup>. Besides Leninist quotes and obvious inconsistency, Medvedev was clear in his empirical diagnosis.

*The “seeming absurdity” in the Soviet historiosophy: the productivity test*

[USSR on the historical map]

Starting from the end of 1987 pro-reform publicists and economists discussed the low productivity in USSR as one of the main theoretical challenges: they seemingly were not satisfied by the mid-range explanations and deepened both questions, and answers. There was a clear historiosophical question to ask within the official Soviet frame: how it was possible, that the superior socio-economic formation had lower and falling productivity, while the inferior one had higher and growing productivity? The Marxian language (rather than “Marxism” or “Marxism-Leninism”) whispered very clear anti-Soviet conclusion: in USSR the *relations of productions* hindered productive forces and new technology, while in western countries relations of production were in harmony with new technologies<sup>184</sup>. Claiming this Marxian, but anti-Soviet formulation of a major theoretical question, the leading perestroika economist Abalkin briefly and not very precisely specified the ideological limits for drawing conclusions from this answer: “Collective property, as the characteristic of socialism cannot become the cause of negative processes in economy. They only appear when concrete form of its realisation [of the communal property] does not correspond to the very character of property and to new conditions of economic life. We must restore the adequacy”<sup>185</sup>. In other words, if capitalism was economically more efficient than socialism, this should not be attributed to the negative impact of the collective property as such, but to its specific modalities – the relations of productions hindering growth under socialism were not collective property but something else, which was not yet well defined. Replying to the next logical question of the interviewer on how to restore this adequacy in practice, Abalkin cautiously says that “the question of these forms is new for our science and yet is not well elaborated”. Then, he briefly enumerated the general issues to address: *khozraschet*, better price system, better tax system, better reward system, and the fundamental need in “commodity-and-money relations” under socialism.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> В. Медведев, «Великий Октябрь и современный мир», *Коммунист*, 1988, №2, с.4-5

<sup>184</sup> Indeed, L. Abalkin or A. Aganabegian, the most influential economic advisors in this period, discussed reform in terms of “improvement of the relations of production” or more radically in terms of the “revolutionary perestroika of relations of production”. Abalkin formulates it clearly: “Не какие-то внешние факторы, не случайные погодные явления и даже не влияние международных условий, а наши собственные социальные, производственные отношения стали тормозом на нашем пути». See: Л. И. Абалкин, *Перестройка: пути и проблемы*, М., Экономика, 1988, с. 17, also с.10-12, 17-19, 27-31.

<sup>185</sup> Л. И. Абалкин, *Перестройка: пути и проблемы*, с.31

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31



G. Lisichkin, another renowned economist, unambiguously defended Leninist human socialism, NEP and cooperation along with actuality of Marx for perestroika on the pages of *Novy Mir* in November 1988:

As we can see, the conceptions of socialism developed by Lenin and Stalin are explicitly opposed. Lenin included in the defining features of socialism first of all labour productivity superior to capitalism and democracy on the basis of Soviets, superior to parliamentary democracy in the level of liberties. Naturally, for building this kind of socialism, Lenin believed, required a long historical period<sup>187</sup>.

Lisichkin concludes that USSR is still far from "scientific socialism" because its productivity is just one third of the American productivity, and then goes on claiming that today perestroika incarnates this "scientific socialism"<sup>188</sup>. Top political commentator and advisor since 1970s, F. Burlatsky exposing his vision of reformed humanist socialism faced the similar challenge and stated that "according to Marxist-Leninist theory" socialism as a post-capitalist formation should have superior technologies, higher productivity, and better welfare conditions than capitalism<sup>189</sup>. He then reconstructed the theoretical riddle of inadequacy in the supposed link between higher productivity and higher formation. Indeed, suggested Burlatsky, GDR or Czech Republic supposedly were less advanced on the socialist path than USSR, but they had higher productivity, while USA and Japan had several times superior productivity and were capitalist: "this led to absurdity"<sup>190</sup>. Academic N. Petrakov reviewing the book of another Soviet economist mocked the naïve argument that once Japan had 8-10% growth for decades being capitalist, USSR being socialist country can securely rely on similar or even higher economic growth rates. Petrakov exclaims: "What can one object to this kind of "logical demonstrations!"<sup>191</sup> The problem was that the mocked economist strictly followed and honestly explicated the official assumptions. Another ironic formula belonged to L. Batkin, well-known publicists and historian of culture, who elegantly exposed the contradiction between the officially recognized *competition* with capitalism and unrecognized inadequacy between productive relations and productive forces *within*

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<sup>187</sup>"Как видим, представления о социализме у Ленина и Сталина диаметрально противоположны. Ленин в характеристику социализма включал в первую очередь более высокую, чем в передовых капиталистических странах производительность труда и демократизм на базе Советов, более высокий по уровню свобод, чем парламентский строй. Для строительства такого социализма Ленин, естественно, просил у истории длительного времени". Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность. Нужен ли Маркс перестройке?», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №11, с.176

<sup>188</sup> "По этому признаку мы еще до научного социализма не дотянулись. Производительность общественного труда у нас составляет примерно треть от американского...". Г. Лисичкин, *Op. cit.*, с.186

<sup>189</sup> "...ибо, согласно марксистской теории, социализм представляет собой не докапиталистическое, а послекапиталистическое общество, а это предполагает более высокий уровень индустриального и научно-технического развития, производительности руда, благосостояние и культура народных масс, чем при капитализме". Ф. М. Бурлацкий, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.31

<sup>190</sup> "Если у нас развитой социализм, а производительность труда в ГДР, в Чехословакии много выше и там живут намного лучше, а они только строят развитой социализм, то как быть? А если взять производительность труда в Японии, в ФРГ и США, которая в несколько раз выше нашей, то как с этим справиться в теоретическом отношении? Получалась чепуха". *Ibid.*, с.39

<sup>191</sup> «На вопрос о том, - пишет М. Попов, - возможны ли темпы роста производительности труда порядка 10 процентов в год, ответ, безусловно, является положительным. Иной ответ означал бы отказ от признания за социализмом коренных преимуществ в развитии производительных сил. Если в капиталистической Японии ежегодно производительность растет на 7-9 процентов, то было бы явным игнорированием законов общественного развития считать, будто социалистической стране не доступны более высокие темпы роста" Что можно возразить на такое "доказательство"?» Н. Петраков, «Игра в диалектику», *Коммунист*, 1988, №8, с.112

USSR: “Oh Marx, clear head! Oh, the development of others’ productive forces and the necessity to make adequate to them our own productive relations!”<sup>192</sup>

Most surprisingly, M. P. Kim, one of the pillars of Brezhnev’s official Soviet historiography, tried to modernize his ideological positioning and criticised the deficiency of Soviet historiography along the similar lines. Accepting the inevitability of the setbacks in building socialism due to the lack of precedent, he recalled that strictly speaking one should not compare Soviet economic progress with the state of the Russian economy in 1913 [which was easy], but with economic progress in most advanced countries today: “As Lenin stressed several times, socialism will overcome capitalism first in labour productivity”<sup>193</sup>. Thus, in 1988 the riddle was evident for official ideologues, social scientists, top political advisors and politicians. They recognised the gravity of the problem, mocked, offered weak explanations, set undefined “socialist” limits to its solution, and devised the pseudo Leninist solution: more democracy and self-rule. There were no certain explanations of the past and vague projects and hopes for the future. In 1988, the related questions such as whether the USSR was really socialist? Whether we still know what to call socialism? Whether genuine socialism was possible? And if USSR was not socialist what it was and what it could become? – Most of these hard questions were debated in all the five magazines from the studied corpus.

Within the Soviet rules of debates, a superior theoretical mind from the apex of the hierarchy was needed to come up with historiosophical explanations and remedies for filling the gap in productivity between real socialism and capitalism. Gorbachev addressed the issue, but provided a very short-range and cautious account of this gap taking it as a temporal slowdown rather than a major challenge. In 1988, actors and commentators were increasingly concerned with slow or unexpected reactions of the Soviet economy to reforms; in parallel, already in 1987 Gorbachev and his advisors boldly accepted that they had no recipes and no definitive theoretical answers<sup>194</sup>. As we saw earlier, most actors kept their moderate optimism for the rightfulness of the general strategy – less central planning, *khozraschet*, self-rule of the enterprises and cooperation, - and felt the need to secure it with proper political reforms understood as more democracy at all levels of political life. Moderately confident in their economic remedies and looking for new and rational ones to emerge from the free debates, neither Soviet public nor its leadership had a satisfying account of the economic

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<sup>192</sup> «О Маркс, умница! О развитие чужих производственных сил и необходимость приведения в соответствие с ними собственных производственных отношений!». А. Л. Баткин «Возобновление истории», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.159.

<sup>193</sup> «Теоретическое обобщение прошлого опыта развития человечества не могло дать ответа на многие практические вопросы... Мы забыли, что Ленин учил нас заимствовать у капитализма все самое ценное. Мы стали сравнивать себя не с капитализмом, а со своим прошлым, с дореволюционным периодом. А ведь Ленин не раз подчеркивал, что социализм победит капитализм прежде всего высшей производительностью труда». М. П. Ким, *Историческая наука в условиях перестройки*, *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №3, с.9

<sup>194</sup> Compare Abalkin’s theoretical caution about his own proposals and Gorbachev’s remarks on the end of monopoly on truth and his criticism of social scientists: “New tasks we are forced to address without “ready-made recipes”. We have no such recipes today. Social scientists did not offer anything coherent [*tselostnogo*] yet”. «Новые задачи приходится решать без «готовых рецептов». Нет таких рецептов и сегодня. Обществоведы не предложили пока ничего цельного». М. С. Горбачев, *Перестройка и новое мышление для нашей страны и всего мира*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с.46

backwardness of USSR compared to capitalism, a problem qualified from “seemingly difficult to explain” to “absurd”.

What were the pending implications of recognising the productivity gap? The first conclusion made to adjust theory to reality, was to accept that Soviet socialism had not reached the stage of “developed socialism” as previously claimed in Party keynote documents since 1967 and theoretical literature based upon them, let alone the Khrushchev’s announcement of the beginning of the “building of communism” phase a few years earlier<sup>195</sup>. This new acceptance itself was politically difficult: administrative and economic elites oriented on the *status quo* and the certain popular support of the regime both were attached to the claim that USSR had actually built full-scale socialism in people’s interest. However, the theoretical notion of “developed socialism” under Brezhnev applied to the present historical period was publicly questioned first by the reformist leadership, and then by publicists and historians. One of the authors of this redundant official conception A. Butenko changed his mind without criticising his previous position – socialism should be recognized according to its ability to promote the interests of the “working man” rather than according to the criteria of the collective property of the means of production as in case of Stalinist “state-administrative socialism”<sup>196</sup>.

V. P. Danilov criticised the “outdated” attempts of periodization made by academician Kim as “leading to unsatisfactory results” (who as we saw, by this time already had changed his position and became more sceptical about the USSR’s advancement on the path of real socialism). Danilov offered his own periodization based on the consideration of the form and content of the *productive relations* and qualifying the period between 1917-1937 as revolution, 1937-1985 as evolution, and 1985 – and onwards, again as revolution – all within the socialist form of production<sup>197</sup>. G. Lisichkin, among others, used Engels criticism of the Düring’s Prussian socialism to claim that the Stalinist model actually reproduced this wrong kind of socialism, as Stalin and his followers, unlike Lenin, did not understand the lack of an economic basis for genuine socialism in Tsarist Russia. This author called to return to Lenin’s understanding and his realism in order to guarantee the success of perestroika in building humanist and effective socialism<sup>198</sup>.

More radical criticism of the present state and the past came from historian Yu. Affanasiev or economist V. Selyunin: the former questioned the very socialist nature of USSR and the socialist character of “state property”, and the second qualified Stalinist period as a “state feudalism”<sup>199</sup>. The

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<sup>195</sup> See: Л. И. Брежнев, *Ленинским курсом. Речи и статьи*, 1970, М., т.2, с.92

<sup>196</sup> “В советском Союзе к концу 30-х годов было реализовано сталинское видение социализма, был в основном построен сталинский, государственно-административный социализм с господством партийно-государственной бюрократии... вполне соответствовавший каноническим представлениям марксизма не о действительном, а о казарменном социализме». А. Бутенко, «Обсуждение доклада Ф. М. Бурлацкого, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.44. Also see the account of this episode in P. Медведев, *Социализм в России?*, АИРО-21, М., 2006, с.164-165

<sup>197</sup> В. П. Данилов, «Дискуссия в западной прессе о голоде 1932-33 гг. и “демографической катастрофе” 30-40-ых годов в СССР», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №3, с.122-123

<sup>198</sup> Г. Лисичкин, *op. cit.*, с.172-176

<sup>199</sup> See: «Перестройка и историческое знание», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.493-494; Василий Селюнин, «Истоки», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №5, с.181

most widespread characteristic of the Soviet model in 1988 became “*command-administrative system*” (or “administrative-command system”) originally introduced by G. Popov as Administrative system in his benchmark article “From the point of view of an economist” published one year earlier<sup>200</sup>. Gorbachev gave the official credit to this perestroika’s equivalent of *ancient regime* using it on the February Plenum in 1988 to describe the Soviet past: command-administrative system as a deformed model of social relations of production that *blocked* [the otherwise natural] growth and socialist development in USSR<sup>201</sup>. In response, few daring authors including G. Popov himself called to break the mechanism of hindrance or more plainly to smash the administrative system<sup>202</sup>.

*Choice, path and alternative: accounting for the anomalies of the progress*  
[USSR on the historical map]

The next theoretical step related to the problem of comparatively low productivity under Soviet socialism was not just politically difficult, but it was also puzzling. The question to answer: how the most progressive historical revolution guided by the omniscient chief, could finally lead to the increased backwardness of the country? One had to reject the progressive character of the October revolution and Lenin’s political genius, *or* to abandon the assumption of the linear and progressive character of History in general. The first option would actually imply the second and it would undermine the trust in the sacred *origin* of USSR as a state, and as a viable ideological project. The October Revolution and Lenin’s integrity were the founding myths for the USSR. Beyond theoretical issues, it would undermine strong popular beliefs in Lenin’s personal powers and goodwill. The second option on the non-linear character of History was ideologically easier to take – it remained less ideological and more narrowly theoretical. History would not be always cumulative and progressive, but sometimes going back or crisscrossed. In this case, current backwardness or stagnation of the Soviet economy did not mean *historiosophy* was fully wrong.

The most complex task, once the non-linear history was accepted, was to find credible explanations and then agree on what exactly had caused the now acknowledged disruptions of progress. Khrushchev blamed Stalin and his cult of personality for abuses or misdeeds and actively used the metaphors of “historical zigzags”, inevitable for pioneers in history. Unlike Gorbachev advisors in 1980s, he had not to account for the decades-long and presently growing superiority of capitalism over socialism in terms of productivity and technical progress. The then Marxist dissident, M. Geffer critically asked in an article written in 1977 and published in 1988: “The so called “zigzag” or the emptied “backwardness” of Russia, today it’s not convenient to call even as the Procrustean bed. Can we reduce one of Marx’s greatest tragedies to the regional scale issues?<sup>203</sup>”

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<sup>200</sup> Г.Х. Попов, «С точки зрения экономиста», *Наука и жизнь*, 1987, №4

<sup>201</sup> М. С. Горбачев, «Речь на пленуме ЦК, 18 февраля», *Коммунист*, 1988, №4, с.9

<sup>202</sup> See the contributions of G. Popov, G. Vodolazov, A. Butenko in the cited collection *Иного не дано*, с. 455, 519, 553, 632

<sup>203</sup> М. Гефтер «Россия и Маркс» [1977], in *Из тех и этих лет*, Прогресс, М., 1991, с.63. М. Гефтер, «Россия и Маркс», *Коммунист*, 1988, №18,

The idioms of path, crossroads, choice and alternative gave a reasonably convincing account for this anomaly wherein the new balance set between historical laws and free agency's will. In this view, the historiosophical landscape would not be a straight main road from capitalism to socialism paved by the laws of progress redrawn in the Brezhnev area, but a web of several paths sometimes radically diverging. At the crossroads, or at the turning points, human agency can choose its direction, and according to the quality or accuracy of its choice, the further movement becomes more or less progressive and successful. This theoretical adjustment helped explaining how the Soviet Union could empirically find itself on a lower stage of progress than capitalist countries after passing the threshold of socialism as a socio-economic formation – after the unquestionably socialist October revolution had triumphed. The progressive linear stages within which nations could move only forward within the main road were replaced by the net of diverging paths some more progressive and some more regressive or leading nowhere. Uncertain passages or theoretical questions left by Marx, Engels and Lenin confirmed the retrospective insights of the many sincere socialist theoreticians integrating Russian socialism with its terror and relative economic successes into the global picture of world history. In the collection "There is no other alternative", V. Kisselev made a typical revision of the official theory drawing frank socialist conclusions from the criticism of Stalin and its command-administrative system; his conclusions are expressed in this typical perestroika language of path and choice combined with Marxian language of formations and modes of production:

I think we should look for the sources of the deformation of socialism in the historical particularities of Russian development. The most important among them – backwardness partly due to the particularities of the paths, connected to the Asiatic mode of production.

It seems to me, that until now we did not pay enough attention to the thought of Engels on the double path of class development as a background of the two different (although at times mutually crossing) forms of civilization. The first path of class formation is connected with the commercial monetary civilization... The forms of government based on Asiatic mode of production reject commercial-monetary relations. They are relatively stable, although they are bypassed in terms of efficiency by the western path of civilizational development... What does it have to do with socialism? I think it is directly relevant. The history of socialism in USSR showed that typical Asiatic modes of production could be reproduced by the "top-down", government led transformation of the social formation [*sotsialnogo stroya*]<sup>204</sup>.

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<sup>204</sup> «Думается, что истоки деформации социализма следует искать в исторических особенностях развития России. Важнейшая из них – отсталость, частично объясняемая своеобразием путей, связанных с наследием азиатского способа производства.

Мне кажется, до сих пор недостаточно глубоко исследована мысль Энгельса о двояком пути образования классов как предпосылке двух различных (хотя порой пересекающихся) форм цивилизации. Первый путь образования классов связан с зарождением товарной цивилизации... Это дорога экономической эксплуатации, но одновременно и утверждение личной независимости, свободы на основе вещной зависимости...

Формы правления азиатского типа отторгают товарно-денежные отношения. Они довольно устойчивы, хотя и проигрывают в эффективности западному пути развития цивилизации.... Какое отношение это имеет к социализму? Думаю, что прямое. История социализма в СССР показала, что схожие с азиатским способом производства структуры можно воспроизвести с помощью «верхушечной», правительственной трансформации общественного строя». В. Киселев, «Сколько моделей социализма было в СССР», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.364

Different paths, their inner logic and points of bifurcations turn to be specific for different nations or group of nations. The shift from *linear* stages and formation to the two-dimensional *geography* of paths and cross-roads facilitates accounting for the paradoxical differences between capitalist and suddenly more advanced “western” countries and socialist but again backward “eastern” ones. Historical trajectories are different, this vocabulary suggests, to the extent to which countries made their own choices at the cross-roads; in principle, this idiom also could imply that the paths themselves could be initially different for different nations. The language of *choices* between paths clearly overruled for Kissilev and his peers the Marxian objective *historical laws* and law-like tendencies of historical development still present, but subjugated to crucial choices: “One can say, that not only the formation [*stroï*] predetermines the social climate, social psychology, but that latter can predetermine the choice of the formation or at least of its variation<sup>205</sup>”. Here, the theoretical path of the most sincere and theoretical honest Soviet “revisionists” comes close with what is known as *world-system* approach. The difference with world-system theory was not only in the degree of empirical and theoretical elaboration of this problematique, but also in the language, which imposed the limits on what could be said and thought over clearly. E. Plimak offered an explicit formulation of the problematique of socialism and backwardness and its solution in terms of diverging paths at the round table in 1988:

The trunk-road [*magistralni put*] of the socialism building for all the peoples of the world turned to be in reality typical for relatively backward countries, and was effectuated not in its best form. In many respect, it showed an example of how not to build socialism<sup>206</sup>.

The basic reply given by the world-system approach is that socio-economic backwardness is not a position on the universal line of progress set in parallel within each country’s history, or a result of a choice. The co-existence of more and less developed countries – of the centre and the periphery – predetermines the steady and *mutually enforced* differences between an advanced West and backward East, phenomenon unaccounted and unforeseen by Marx and Engels. Lenin only sketched this issue in his work on imperialist phase of capitalism, still expecting the proletarian revolution in the most advanced European countries. The world-system theory saving some of Marxist central ideas and methods clearly relegates the Soviet Union to a secondary position of the resisting periphery: it explained why there was no revolution in the West and why USSR and its socialist camp were backward.

The reply of perestroika revisionists dominant in 1988 left more ground for pro-socialist optimism in the future: if tsarist Russia’s backwardness indeed influenced the Stalinist turn, countries can *choose* the degree of their advancement by choosing more or less progressive paths. For the majority of publicists the better path for perestroika lay somewhere between Western socio-economic progress and the

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<sup>205</sup> «Можно сказать, что не только строй определяет социальный климат, социальную психологию, но последние могут определять выбор строя или по крайней мере его разновидность». Ibid., p.365

<sup>206</sup> «"Магистральный путь строительства социализма для всех народов мира" оказался на деле путем, типичным для сравнительно отсталых стран, и осуществлен он был отнюдь не в лучшем варианте. Во многом он явил пример того, как не надо строить социализм», Е. Г. Плимак, «Советский Союз в 1920ые годы. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Истории*, №9, с.4

combination of genuinely socialist self-rule, NEP, decentralization, democracy, personal freedoms and ecological concerns. Strikingly, there was no such clarity about this alternative better path, but the firm certainty that keeping the established socio-economic structures in place meant persisting on the Stalinist path, which “as history already showed” – led nowhere. The historical act of *choosing* a non-Stalinist path, thus *changing* the present gave hope and favoured optimism: during this period of perestroika the underlying apocalyptic nuclear-ecological horizon and worries coexisted with the optimistic humanism dominant in the press. Other authors, such as M. Gefter, L. Batkin, Y. Levada, G. Pometants or L. Karpinsky, expressed deep worries for the outcome of reform, but had deliberately chosen to take the historical risk.

#### *Affirming political responsibility and historical choice*

[Responsibility]

The second theoretical problem we focus on in our analysis of the new idioms is the problem of moral and political **responsibility** for the political terror under Stalin, Stalinism and more generally to the question of political violence in history. This issue was central for the public theoretical debates in 1988 and its centrality can account for the sudden diffusion of the idioms of path, choice and alternative among the most influential perestroika intellectuals. Using these three idioms, they found the best way to discuss, attribute or dismiss the arguments on the moral and political responsibility for the mass terror of 1930s. Most authors debating current politics revisited history and most authors debating history discussed the responsibility for the past crimes and present backwardness attributing both to the wrong past choices of paths; whilst the present was judged through the lenses focused on the past.

The issue of the Stalinist crimes gradually took the front page of the current agenda by a series of revelatory publications, some backed by A. Yakovlev as in case of Yu. Afanassiev, A. Tsypko or *Ogonek's* editor V. Korotich, and some by the previously influential official ideologues, such as F. Burlatsky and E. Ambartsumov, or semi-dissidents, such as R. Medvedev. The question of Stalinist crimes and inner terror was ever pending in USSR after Stalin's death, as far as the official public history diminished or ignored its scope and its impact. However, popular memory, Soviet elites and influential intellectuals carried the deep imprint of fear, hatred or feeling of injustice mixed with the popular longing for the just punishment of the corrupted elite. From 1970s, the official Soviet media did not mention facts related to terror and repressions; extending glasnost to the Soviet history Gorbachev wanted to come to terms with this “blank spot” and its inconveniences, using it as leverage in justifying substantial reforms and current difficulties. As in several other areas, he underestimated the gravity of the question and optimistically overestimated the quality of his and his advisors' answers. In his well-nuanced speech for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of October revolution, M. Gorbachev made a clear-cut statement on the personal responsibility of Stalin for the repressions [mostly 1937]: “The guilt of Stalin and his close circle towards the party and the people for the massive repressions and lawlessness is

huge and unforgivable. This is a lesson for all generations"<sup>207</sup>. In the same paragraph Gorbachev invited his audience to consider both Stalin's contribution to the cause of socialism and his "blatant errors and arbitrariness"; several pages earlier Gorbachev mentioned that Stalin did his best to consolidate the Bolshevik party in 1920s. In other words, Gorbachev wanted to make clear to his audience that Stalin's crimes were officially recognized as well as Stalin's personal responsibility. Last General Secretary of CPSU continued his delicate account: "Of course, despite the claims of our ideological opponents the cult of personality was not inevitable. It is alien to the nature of socialism, it is a step back from its basic foundations and therefore it has no justification"<sup>208</sup>. And he finally concluded that Politburo decided to renew the process of rehabilitation of the innocent communists and simple Soviet people halted in mid 1960s after the first wave of rehabilitations which followed the decisions of XX and XXII Party congresses. These few lines in the anniversary report, setting clear questions and clear answers triggered thousands of heated debates in the press, and certainly more passionate personal exchanges at the round-tables, in the "informal" organizations, in the streets and in the small urban kitchens.

The articulation of the link between the non-inevitability of the Stalin's cult and the moral responsibility of Stalin and his allies for their crimes sounded scientific and ideologically solid: it allowed attributing full responsibility to Stalin's arbitrary decisions and keeping the socialist basis safe. Moreover, thinking otherwise was associated with our "ideological opponents". In the pre-glasnost context, this basic re-iteration of Khrushchev formula looked revolutionary; in the context of looming economic crisis<sup>209</sup>, rising anti-Russian nationalisms and actually guided but unrestricted glasnost this formula resonated with most important ideological strings. First, many prominent intellectuals condemned and deplored the supposedly Stalinist "iron laws of history" and "non-alternativeness" in order to rediscover the fallibility, divergences between and responsibility of the Soviet leaders<sup>210</sup>. The insistence of some in

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<sup>207</sup> "Вина Сталина и его ближайшего окружения перед партией и народом за допущенные массовые репрессии и беззакония огромна и непростительна. Это урок для всех поколений." Горбачев М.С., *Октябрь и перестройка: революция продолжается.*, М., Политиздат, 1987.

<sup>208</sup> "Конечно, вопреки утверждениям наших идейных противников культ личности не был неизбежным. Он чужд природе социализма, представляет собой отступление от его основополагающих принципов и, таким образом, не имеет никакого оправдания. На XX и XXII съездах партия сурово осудила и сам культ Сталина, и его последствия. Мы знаем теперь, что политические обвинения и репрессии против ряда деятелей партии и государства, против многих коммунистов и беспартийных, хозяйственных и военных кадров, ученых и деятелей культуры были результатом преднамеренной фальсификации». Горбачев М.С., *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> As we noted in the first section of this chapter, shortages in the supply of basic goods became widespread and reached Moscow. Intelligentsia along with wider public resented these shortages painfully as opposed to certain hopes and promises of the first years of perestroika. From the top, the economic situation looked average and alarming signals were dismissed.

<sup>210</sup> Compare: "Активно заявляет себя, в частности, позиция безальтернативности пути развития страны. Как ни странно, такой вывод согласуется и с внешне противоположным вариантом "сбалансированности" - сведением всех извращений в теории и практике социалистического строительства к фигуре Сталина". Н. Злобин, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №10, с.34. "В этом ключе строилась и строится система доказательств безальтернативности судеб страны в период индустриализации и коллективизации... Догматизм мышления не преодолен и по отношению к капиталистической системе: мы твердо убеждали себя, что капитализм обречен "законами истории" на гибель и не способен к развитию" Л. И. Новикова, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Op. Cit.*, с.45. "Характерной, сложившейся в сталинское время традиции рассматривать исторический процесс как однолинейный... противопоставлены представления о многовариантности и альтернативности исторического движения, ведущие к более глубокому пониманию роли субъективной



criticism of the “iron laws” or more commonly “objective factors” as well as the insistent of others in their search for “objective factors” leading to Stalinism reveals something important on the way of thinking of perestroika intelligentsia. This theoretical if not scholastic question on the relations between “objective and necessary” and “subjective and not inevitable” in history opened the doors for bitter debates around the possibility to attribute ultimate political responsibility to human agency or to some form of necessity. The tacit question: who is guilty for XX century’s failure? – Then understood as a mixture of Stalin’s crimes and economic stagnation of 1970s – hunted perestroika’s public debates since 1987 and onwards. As we will try to show in the next chapters, this question was based on the assumption that “normally” or “naturally” Russian and Soviet history should be wholesome and good – unless wrong or wicked choices were made.

Strikingly, Stalin’s personal guilt for crimes was very largely and rapidly accepted: in 1988, Egor Ligachev fully embraced this formula and even Nina Andreeva lukewarmly referred to it. Stalin’s retrospective rehabilitation came only a decade after perestroika in the 2000s. The political question debated in this period was not whether Stalin was guilty, but whom to charge as *co-responsible today*. The issue of ultimate responsibility brought by this first public attempt of honest reappraisal of the Soviet past carried a political charge. We can clearly see now, that this charge could be used as a means of criticism and de-legitimization rather than as a means to back a reform or enforce a political community. In 1988, the question of mass repressions occupied the central place on the agenda of theoretical discussions. The revelations about the state agencies’ crimes in the mass circulation press made a strong emotional impact on the intelligentsia and the wider public who were looking for an acceptable interpretation of past atrocities, which suddenly acquired a character of a-historical simultaneity with perestroika. As we argue in the sixth chapter, there was no historical precedent when a society could assume the crimes of that or even lesser scale immediately after the shock of their public revelation. In 1988 the main guilty Soviet actor was Josef Stalin but very few were ready to assume their symbolic co-responsibility. Attribution of responsibility became one of the major theoretical and historiosophical issues. Let us consider the relations between responsibility and subjective-objective factors in the theoretical debates on history and reconstruct the debates around political co-responsibility with Stalin.

During the debates around Nina Andreeva case and on several other occasions, M. Gorbachev personally cited certain facts at Politburo sessions in order to produce a stronger impression on his peers. In this context, seemingly empty historiosophical concepts of late Marxism-Leninism played the role of the *common* intellectual frame for public discussions attributing political and historical responsibility for these massive crimes. That is probably the main reason why the theoretical problematique of relationship between human agency and historical necessity occupied the minds of perestroika authors and served as the regular point of passionate discord between the rare defenders

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деятельности людей в истории”. Заключение редакции, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №10, с.61.

of necessity such as Igor Klyamkin and the majority of authors claiming the ontological alternativeness of history.

The standard moves here consisted in relating the rediscovery of alternativeness in history with the possibility to attribute personal and political responsibility to Stalin. Symmetrically, criticising historical alternativeness served to diminish (but not to openly deny) Stalin's responsibility by indicating other candidates for this demonic role: objective necessity in a variety of forms or other persons and groups, most of which could be symbolically associated with contemporaries. Echoing Gorbachev and originally P. Volobuev's solution, the majority of authors in 1988 accepted the idea of alternativeness of history, which allowed attributing historical responsibility for the wrong and free decisions of Stalin and his associates<sup>211</sup>. As we saw earlier and as we can read in the following passage written by Bordugov and Kozlov, the focal point was the abolition of NEP, associated with subsequent violent collectivization and inner party terror: "Members of CC, who made their historical choice [abandoning NEP], bear historical responsibility for the subsequent tragic events of the 1930s"<sup>212</sup>.

A prominent perestroika publicist, A. Nuykin in his key-note article published in the two first issues of *Novy Mir* in 1988 [№1, №2] exposes a clear historical scheme linking the abandonment of NEP with the current economic difficulties of perestroika and mass state violence in 1930s:

In short, we now reap the economic fruits of what was sown during the years of abnegation of NEP, i.e. somewhere in 1927-1929.<sup>213</sup>

If our country had followed this path [NEP], we would not hear of mass repressions, camps and rehabilitations post-mortem. Economic means of regulation do not suppose political violence. Administrating economy ends up in it, sooner or later (normally sooner), with the inevitability of fate... We are again at a turning point. But, behind us we have a road filled with tragic errors which would have proved: the path of administrating is totally incompatible with democracy, self-government, justice and morality.<sup>214</sup>

Between the two passages, Nuykin inscribed the already fused past and present in the global context where the Soviet public should make its historical choice knowing its precedent and its implications: "In our press, an opinion was already expressed that in 1928-1929 we faced a factual *coup d'état*

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<sup>211</sup> See: П. В. Волобуев, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №10, с.41

<sup>212</sup> «Члены ЦК, сделав свой исторический выбор, несут историческую ответственность за последовавшие в 30ые годы трагические события. По сути дела, они вынесли вотум доверия Сталину и его курсу на политическую и экономическую "чрезвычайщину"». Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, «Николай Бухарин: Эпизоды политической биографии», *Коммунист*, 1988, №13, с.105

<sup>213</sup> Короче говоря: сейчас мы пожинаем в экономике то, что было в ней посеяно в годы отречения от принципов нэпа, то есть где-то в 1927-1929 годах". А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы», 1 часть, *Новый Мир*, №1, 1988, с.204

<sup>214</sup> "Пойди страна этим путем, ни о каких массовых репрессиях, лагерях и посмертных реабилитациях нам бы услышать не довелось. Экономические методы регулирования не нуждаются в политическом насилии. Администрирование же скатывается к нему рано или поздно (обычно рано) с неотвратимостью рока... Мы снова на переломе, на развилке. Но сзади-то полная трагических ошибок дорога, которая уже вроде бы доказала: путь администрирования ни с экономическими методами руководства не совместим принципиально, ни с демократией, ни с самоуправлением, ни со справедливостью, ни с нравственностью". Ibid., с.207

prepared by Stalin's group... Today I address this issue not because of some sort of historiographical curiosity. We have now to realise the scale of the choice our country is facing again... Namely for this reason we should face our recent past with eyes wide open. Presently, from the path which will follow USSR – again in its role of the socialist flagman – depends... the entire pace of the ongoing history of humanity”.<sup>215</sup> Later arguing against B. Kurashvili's defence of Stalin's violent rule Nuykin dismissed any references to the “objective necessity” as an attempt to deprive the historian of his moral right to judge the events of the past<sup>216</sup>. This methodologically less balanced position refusing to consider any circumstances as “false excuses” relies on the moral imperative of non-violence and departs from the distinction between turning point or crossroads – where the major choice is possible, and the normal path – where individual decisions could make little difference.

*There must be liberty, otherwise there is no responsibility*

[Responsibility]

The moral drive of historical accounts rapidly became self-conscious using the implicit but strong references to the Christian intellectual heritage: intellectuals re-stated their reading of history in terms of the free choice between “good and bad” and this new moral requirement contradicted or created a tension with historiosophical objectivism of the late Soviet tradition. To illustrate this integration of the moral problematique with the perestroika historiosophical idiom of choice and Marxist-Leninist vocabulary, let us cite in parallel two passages from a rising professional historian, V. Kozlov, who collaborated with perestroika mainstream *Kommunist*, and from A. Kazintsev, a young literary critic and member of the editorial board of Russian nationalist *Nash Sovremennik*:

If “good” and “bad” lie at the basis of moral judgments of historical events, then the principle of humanism, considering man as “a measure of all things” and taken in the uninterrupted unity with class criterion of historical progress, manifest itself as criterion of these two notions [of good and bad], it is fundament of the evaluation of that choice which society is making.<sup>217</sup> [V. Kozlov]

We often hear today the word “history”. I would like to utter another word “memory”. More human, more personal... Remembering bitter pages of the recent past, some one dropped a characteristic sentence:

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<sup>215</sup> “В печати уже высказывалось суждение, что в 1928-1929 годах у нас “произошел фактически государственный переворот, подготовленный группой Сталина... Я сейчас затрагиваю этот вопрос не из исторической любознательности. Нам сейчас крайне важно осознать масштаб того выбора, перед которым снова стоит наша страна... Именно для этого нам и необходимо открытыми глазами взглянуть в наше недавнее прошлое. Сейчас от того, каким путем пойдет СССР, вновь ставший флагманом социализма зависит... весь ход дальнейшей истории человечества”. А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы», *Ibid.*, с.206

<sup>216</sup> Here is the quote from Kurashvili which provoked such a strong reaction and a comment by Nuykin: «...“Так вот, если требуется чрезвычайное управление, то никакое морализаторство не спасет... Был бы Сталин, не было бы Сталина, - у нас период чрезвычайного управления, я убежден, был необходим». Б. П. Курашвили категорически отверг право историка на моральную оценку событий прошлого» А. Нуйкин, «Круглый стол. История и мораль», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №9, с.107.

<sup>217</sup> “Если “добро” и “зло” лажат в основе нравственных оценок исторических событий, то принцип гуманизма, рассматривающий человека, “как меру всех вещей” и взятый в неразрывном единстве с классовым критерием исторического прогресса, является критерием различения этих понятий, фундаментом оценки того выбора, который делает общество”. В.А. Козлов, “Социалистическая революция и человек”, *Коммунист*, 1988, №4, с.107

"The époque made an imprint". As if the époque – could be a subject possessing a will and a mind. No, it is not an époque, which puts its imprint on people; they were making their choice themselves, they decided whom to serve – for good or bad<sup>218</sup>. [A. Kazintsev]

Focusing on history both authors articulate the idea of free choice of the human agency and state the existence of choice between good and bad as the basic condition of historical accounts. In the following years of perestroika the moral imperative in history crystallized and became one of the strongest points of the *de facto* consensus (authors rarely expressed their *agreement* with one another on this point). However, in 1988 the historiographical and political mainline was to find a reasonable balance between the return of moral responsibility of agency on the one hand, and the objective factors, context and historical laws, on the other. For instance, E. Plimak carefully specified, that "one could not avoid the victims on the path to socialism", but condemned Stalin for crimes during Ezhov's rule in the NKVD when there was no "historical justifications for Stalin's actions"<sup>219</sup>. Thus, we return closer to the heart of this approach based on the use of the three idioms of path, choice and alternative elaborated by professional Soviet historians to solve pending political questions springing from previously obliterated facts. Leading specialist of history of peasantry, V. P. Danilov left his terrain and formulated the essence of the relation between moral responsibility and what he called "conditional tense" directly referring to the basics of historiography as a science; along with many others he spoke in terms of public history and not just as a scientist:

Refusal of the "conditional tense" in this case automatically implies approval of every thing, which happens simply because it has happen. History offers to humans the possibility of choosing the paths and means of development... Otherwise, history would acquire some kind of mystical character, and studying history would loose all its sense.<sup>220</sup>

While P. Volobuev, A. Nuykin or G. Lisichkin paved perestroika's mainstream in 1988 with new overtones and idioms, the zeal to directly follow Gorbachev's latest formulation on Stalin's responsibility and the incorruptibility of socialism could also reproduce the late-Soviet scholastics mixed with perestroika's new themes: "Our social sciences should today accurately demonstrate that Stalinism was a move backward from Lenin, from Leninism... that Stalin – is a historical accident, and not in any case a possibility, and even less so a necessity under socialism as opposed to what our

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<sup>218</sup> "Здесь часто звучало слово "история". Я бы хотел произнести другое слово "память". Более человеческое, личностное. ... Вспоминая горькие страницы недавнего прошлого, кто-то обронил характерную фразу: "Эпоха наложила отпечаток". Как будто эпоха - субъект, наделенный волей и разумом. Нет, не эпоха накладывает отпечаток на людей, они сами делали выбор, они сами решали, кому служить - добру или злу". А. Казинцев, «Круглый стол. Историки и писатели о литературе и истории», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №6, с.69

<sup>219</sup> «Никаких исторических оправданий для действий Сталина мы не можем найти во времена "ежевщины"... Такова была расплата за невыполнение рекомендаций ленинского завещания. Жертв на пути строительства социализма нельзя было избежать. Сталин возвел их число в квадрат. Ему мы и предъявляем теперь обвинения по крупному счету. Открыл этот счет XX съезд. Сейчас мы углубляем его линию» Е. Г. Плимак, «Круглый стол. Советский союз в 30ые годы», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №12, с.7

<sup>220</sup> «Отказ от "сослагательного наклонения" в этих случаях автоматически означает одобрение всего того, что совершилось и только потому, что совершилось. История предоставляет людям возможность выбора путей и способов развития... Иначе история приобрела бы какой-то мистический характер, а занятие ею потеряло бы смысл". В. П. Данилов, «Круглый стол. Историческая наука в условиях перестройки», *Вопросы Истории*, 1988, №3, с.23

opponents several times tried to prove. Lenin painfully realised this and therefore before parting, he insisted on the dismissal of Stalin from his post"<sup>221</sup>. The editorial board of *Voprosi Filosofii* recapitulated the lively discussions at the round-table entitled "Philosophy and historical science" with another kind of scholarly *langue de bois*: "To the tradition of looking at the historical process as linear which was characteristic for Stalinist times... [By the participants] there were opposed the ideas of plurality and alternativeness of historical movement, leading to a deeper understanding of the role of subjective activity of man in history".<sup>222</sup> At this round-table, a certain Y. Davydov called to unmask behind "the universal laws of history the will of those who linked their destiny with the cult of Stalin, who wanted to present its wild arbitrariness as an expression of "world-historical necessity"<sup>223</sup>. We should point out that Stalin and his historiography did not *justify* his decisions or errors by the "world-historical necessity" and "iron laws": people's enemies publicly confessed their wrongs and any information, which could put in doubt leader's infallibility was erased. Hence, there was no need for such a justification; this was probably a side-effect, but clearly not the mainline. We already stressed, that the *Short Course* simultaneously praised Stalin's wilful omnipotence and its accordance with objective necessity. What Y. Davidov and his colleagues had in mind was most probably the "straw-man" drawn of the Brezhnev's neo-Stalinism that ignored his voluntarism and stressed objective historical necessity.

Behind these official tongue-tied formulations, often lacking originality, we can even easier read the new solution to the dilemma of agency and necessity, which attributes historical responsibility for crimes and failures to the free acting will rather than to historical necessity. Let us conclude the review of these neo-Marxian arguments of agency's responsibility with another quote from V.P. Volobuev, who in 1988 could make explicit all the ideological and theoretical implications of his innovation, at this moment actively used by most public speakers:

Fundamentally, on the verge of 1920-30s, the violence against history took place, violence on the law-like historical regularities of socialism. On the other hand, it turned out, that socialist basis, despite our theoretical assumptions, did not unilaterally define the political superstructure... [non-democratic superstructure deformed the basis of socialism in USSR] in line with that variation of socialism which was mostly feared by Marx and Lenin<sup>224</sup>.

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<sup>221</sup> "Наше обществоведение сегодня должно аргументировано показать, что сталинизм - движение вспять от Ленина и ленинизма, от Октябрьской революции и ее идеалов, что Сталин - историческая случайность и никоим образом не возможность, а тем более не необходимость при социализме, как неоднократно пытались доказать наши оппоненты. Это болезненно осознал Ленин, и потому, уходя, так настойчиво ставил вопрос о смещении Сталина с поста генсека". Л. А. Никитич, «Обсуждение доклада Ф. М. Бурлацкого, «Проблема разработки концепции современного социализма»», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №11, с.55

<sup>222</sup> "Характерной, сложившейся в сталинское время традиции рассматривать исторический процесс как однолинейный... противопоставлены представления о многовариантности и альтернативности исторического движения, ведущие к более глубокому пониманию роли субъективной деятельности людей в истории". Заключение редакции, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №10, с.61

<sup>223</sup> «...вскрывая за всеобщими законами истории волю тех, кто связал свою судьбу с культом Сталина, желавшего представить свой дикий произвол в качестве выражения «всемирно-исторической необходимости»" Ю. Н. Давыдов, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №10, с.37

<sup>224</sup> "На рубеже 20-30х и в начале 30х годов, по сути имело насилие над историей, над закономерностями развития социализма. С другой стороны, оказалось, что социалистический базис, вопреки теоретическим представлениям, неоднозначно определял политическую надстройку" "партийно-государственная надстройка, поддерживаемая не

How the breaking of the historical laws of socialism was possible still remained ontologically problematical, but there should be liberty in history as the beneficial laws of socialism did not lead to their natural fruits. In parallel to the mainstream interpretation of the newly revealed mass repressions and executions as mainly Stalin's personal guilt, another type of response emerged. To this outlook where people and leaders at the *turning points* (or even more radically *always*) can choose good and bad historical paths to follow, several writers opposed the other side of the Soviet historiosophical dilemma: the conditions of the given historical situation, cultural and social conditions, objective historical laws and factors, world-historical processes. Some scholars mistakenly associated these arguments with pro-Stalinists or at least with those supporting the status-quo – this probably reproduces the self-presentation of the perestroika mainstream as opposition to the Stalinists<sup>225</sup>. To be sure, this move could mean the defence of Stalin, as in the exceptional cases of B. Kurashvilli and R. Kosolapov, but in most cases, the purpose of authors was *not* to whitewash the former dictator in person. We suggest that at this moment there were two principle and related motives of “objectifying” interpretations of the repressions under Stalin:

- a) Methodological preference for historical explanations in terms of law-like regularities (rather than in terms of decisions), proper to Western historical positivism, late Soviet academic tradition and strengthened by Marxism in the broad sense<sup>226</sup>;
- b) Hidden or open charges against other persons or groups which *today* should share the public responsibility and/or blame along with Stalin.

*Dignity confronting fate: Igor Klyamkin and Vadim Kozhinov*

[Agency and Responsibility]

The liberal economist and historian Igor Klyamkin occupied the pivotal position for the development of the objectivist and “alternativist” interpretation of Stalinism, Soviet and Russian history – with his best known article “Which road leads to the temple?” published in *Noviy Mir* in November 1987 and widely discussed throughout 1988. The ambivalent title with a question mark reflects the general move Klyamkin was operating: using emerging idioms of *the choice of the path* and addressing the core

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демократическими институтами... [деформировала базис социализма]... в духе того варианта социализма, которого больше всего опасались Маркс и Ленин”. П. В. Волобуев, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы философии*, 1988, №10, с.41

<sup>225</sup> See: Олеся Кирчик, “История как экономика, или Путешествие из 1921-го в 1906-й через 1990-й”, *НЛО*, 2007, №83: «Вторая точка зрения состояла в том, что, несмотря на излишнюю жестокость сталинских методов, они не имели реальной альтернативы и были оправданы исторической ситуацией. Разделявшие ее экономисты и историки не ставили под сомнение основные принципы сложившейся системы».

<sup>226</sup> This however, should not be mistaken for the property of Lenin's or Stalin's legacies, per se: both, as we referred earlier had an extreme political sense of concrete historical constellation and in their writings they pointed out on the necessity of such opportunism. However, within Soviet ideological model, if the current leader lacked this ability, the system blocked any reforms or open conflicts, and the official ideologues naturally moved towards the incantation of objective laws and regularities as a theoretical pendent of the political *status-quo*. In early 1980s, this preference for objective explanations was dominant.

ideological issues of the moment he articulated a sophisticated and multi-level reply calling across the ideological spectrum and opposing perestroika mainstream on one crucial point. The originality and depth of his thought escaped from the dichotomy implied by the new perestroika language: Stalin's crimes resulted either from agency's *wrong choices* which we should condemn or from objective *historical necessity* that we can not blame. Klyamkin argued that despite his profound dislike of what happened to Russia and USSR in XX century, there was no empirical and moral ground to claim that the country could do otherwise or much better<sup>227</sup>. The radical question he posed in the first pages embraced philosophy of history, Greek mythology and the metaphor of the street to the temple:

Was there another street? Was there a choice for hundreds, thousands, millions of contemporaries of that movies' hero [The dictator from "Repentance"] who brings to them so much evil? Was his power and their subjugation accidental, or was there in it something, which ancients called fate, in the middle age – they called it predetermination, and you and me, we call it historical laws?<sup>228</sup>

His answer was argued in several ways, but univocal: there was no substantial alternative to collectivization and other of Stalin's policies ideologically, economically and even anthropologically speaking<sup>229</sup>. This is Klyamkin's first level of reflection on the central perestroika's theoretical questions; there is a second level. The pathos of the article goes beyond the recognition of objective regularities in history and beyond consideration of the concrete historical circumstances. The objective for this liberal anti-Stalinist thinker, who accepted the necessity of Stalinism, seems to be not only to correctly understand and explain the past (avoiding the temptation of comfortable explanations of uncomfortable facts), but to accept the past in its wholeness as *our* past:

The refusal of the past via its crossing out – it's just putting it aside, but it is not overcoming... Crossing out the names, crossing out the "street"... Are we mature enough for the serious relation with history? Are we grown up to the understanding that one can not abolish, recall or bypass the past, that one can move forward only from the point to which he arrived and always with the luggage on his back<sup>230</sup>.

The idea of methodological objectivism and empirical accuracy in dealing with history reveals itself as the idea of the full moral responsibility of the agency for its past and present. This paradoxical return of

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<sup>227</sup> "Но если нам с вами сказать нечего, то давайте, пересилим себя, и не постесняемся произнести вслух: победили тогда сильнейшие, к никто, кроме них, победить не мог, потому что другого «проекта застройки» нашей улицы, способного конкурировать с коллективизацией, в ту пору не было. Признать это вовсе не значит осудить тех, кто думал тогда иначе". И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый мир*, 1987, №11, с.181

<sup>228</sup> "Была ли другая улица? Был ли выбор у сотен, тысяч, миллионов современников того героя фильма, который приносит им так много зла? Случайны ли его власть и их подчинение, или было во всем этом то, что в древности называли судьбой, в средние века – предопределением, а мы с вами называем исторической закономерностью?" И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», с.152

<sup>229</sup> "Крестьянство предполагает общую пирамиду власти и монарха, воплощающее "национальное "мы"", но городские жители другие, для них "точка становится просто точкой"... Эпохальный сдвиг произошел прямо на глазах: Русь крестьянская окончательно исчезла, ее сменила Русь городская"; "Я" родилось. Ему предстояло развиваться, пройти школу исторического воспитания, наполниться живым национальным и общечеловеческим содержанием", *Ibid.*, с.158, 159

<sup>230</sup> "Отрицание прошлого методом его вычеркивания - это отстранение, а не преодоление... Вычеркивание имен, вычеркивание "улицы"... Доросли ли мы до серьезного отношения к истории? До понимания того, что ни отменить, ни обойти ее нельзя, что вперед можно идти только от той точки, к которой пришли, и с тем багажом, который за спиной", *Ibid.*, p.150-151

agency's responsibility for the whole once the objective necessity was accepted superior to the agency echoes the Spinoza's enigmatic solution. Let us leave Igor Klyamkin for a moment, and turn to another influential thinker, Vadim Kozhinov who tried to solve this puzzle in similar terms but arrived at very different conclusions:

The inability to think about the whole and experience the plenitude of responsibility to this whole namely lead to the focus of attention around 1937... But I do not consider as acceptable to distinguish the destinies of those close to me by blood or by cause from the common tragic destiny of the people<sup>231</sup>.

During the first years of perestroika, Kozhinov, as a renowned specialist of Russian literature, published his theoretical and publicistic articles in the leading intellectual review *Noviy Mir*. After 1989, he mainly published in *Nash Sovremennik*, mixing the emerging Russian nationalism with less and less present Soviet patriotism. This change of the review characterises his personal evolution but also to a lesser degree the dynamic polarisation of the public debates and reviews as their ideological centres. *Nash Sovrmennik* became the central edition of Russian nationalists and Soviet Russian patriots negatively *reacting* against the perestroika mainstream, but also critical of Soviet crimes as anti-Russian. The clear anti-Semite strain in *Nash Sormennik* and in the articles of Kozhinov significantly lowered their public credibility, but this line remained ideologically significant. In the context of our quest, Kozhinov's argued and erudite anti-Semite position reveals the innate instability of the holistic approach to historical responsibility. Like Klyamkin, he argued on the two levels: methodological and ethical. Methodological arguments on the objective character of Stalin's rule advanced by Kozhinov differed substantially from Klyamkin's arguments: in short, Kozhinov stated that Stalin's rule was a world event, which could only be understood in a broader historical context. He referred to the pan-European context of dictatorships, the inner logic of technological civilization but also to the common sense in respect to agency's responsibility. "At the end of the day, only serious and in-depth research on all the circumstances can provide a reply to the question of whether that or this phenomena was the expression of absolute necessity or resulted from arbitrary decision"<sup>232</sup>. But accepting this idea of complex historical causality, where individual decisions cannot be easily granted or blamed for ultimate results, Vadim Kozhinov was still torn between the two poles: blame and irresponsibility. Claiming the shared historical responsibility for the whole, Kozhinov *de facto* slid down into the accusation of the Soviet Jewish community for the wrong behaviour in the past<sup>233</sup> and for the

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<sup>231</sup> Неспособность мыслить о целом и испытывать полноту ответственности перед этим целым как раз и приводит к сосредоточению всего внимания на 1937 году... Но я не считаю допустимым выделять судьбы близких мне по крови или по делу людей из общей трагедийной судьбы народа". В. Кожин, «Правда и истина», *Наш Современник*, 1988, №4, с.169

<sup>232</sup> "В конце концов, только серьезное и глубокое исследование конкретных обстоятельств способно ответить на вопрос было то или иное из подобных явлений выражением абсолютной необходимости или результатом произвола". Ibid., с.167

<sup>233</sup> "Энгельс резюмирует. "... То чего хочет один встречает препятствие со стороны всякого другого и в конечном результате появляется нечто такое, чего никто не хотел". Именно так следует понять волну репрессий 37ого, 38ого годов обрушившихся во многом как раз на тех людей, которые создавали культ Сталина (в числе жертв было между прочим много зарубежных рев. деятелей...)" В. Кожин, «Правда и истина», *Наш Современник*, 1988, №4, с.165



wrong way of remembering it in the present<sup>234</sup>. We continue the last quote on the historical necessity from the point where we left it, to meet again this attribution of responsibility for a group: "The most important point is, however, elsewhere [not in the methodological argument on objective character of Stalin's rule]... For most of those, who actively wrote and published in the Soviet literature of 1920s, 1930s, the real tragedy turned to be only 1937, where the chain reaction of death rolled to themselves and their relatives by blood"<sup>235</sup>. This example clearly shows the manifestation of the underlying political logic of the theoretical debates on the role of agency and necessity: the issue of *inherited* political responsibility. In the next years of perestroika public accusations against groups, ideas and individuals responsible for the blood of the XX century and economic backwardness have multiplied.

The articulation of the principle of "responsibility for the whole" proposed by Klyamkin is much broader and almost deprived of ambiguity of hidden charges. However, for this liberal thinker too, the proclaimed double principle of objective necessity and shared responsibility for the whole retains ideological and theoretical ambiguity, impossible to surmount. First, Klyamkin considers the call for collective repentance for Stalinist crimes and dismisses it; he points out at the potentially endless regress in search of the ultimate cause or of the "original sin". The logical end of such a collective repentance, he convinces us, is to repent in the fact that "we are ourselves"<sup>236</sup>. How then morally accounting for and symbolically reprimanding what is unacceptable in our past? Igor Klyamkin speaks about *Pravda* or "supreme moral rightfulness" of millions of unnamed victims, or millions of Evgenii, following the name of Pushkin poem's hero who perished under Peter's historical press for progress:

Therefore in regard to *Pravda*, we only recognize it on the side of millions of unnamed Evgenii. Here is our only hope that humanity will be willing and will be able to come to terms with the slaughter used as the tool of progress... To overcome the slaughter without "crossing out" it from our past, but taking the full account of its impact and its incompatibility with *Pravda* – this means to repent"<sup>237</sup>.

The healing effect of this acceptance of the inevitability of a tragic fate, which leads to freedom proposed by Klyamkin echoes the Greek catharsis integrated into Hegelian historiosophy of progress.

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<sup>234</sup> "Но я не считаю допустимым выделять судьбы близких мне по крови или по делу людей из общей трагедийной судьбы народа". Ibid., с.169

<sup>235</sup> "Главное в другом, в самом понимании и оценке таких явлений писателями... Для большинства из тех, кто активно выступал в литературе 20ых, 30ых годов, настоящей трагедией оказался лишь 1937 год, когда цепная реакция гибели докатилась до них самих и кровно близких им людей" Ibid., с.167

<sup>236</sup> "Да, слово "покаяние" вполне уместно. Но прежде, чем каяться, хочется все же понять: почему мы верили в это? И в чем каяться? В том, что мы - это мы? Но мы же не пятьдесят лет назад родились и даже не семьдесят. С чего начинать отчет грехов? С Московской Руси? С петербургской? Или с советских 30-х годов?", И. Клямкин, op.cit., с.178

<sup>237</sup> "Так что же теперь — все оправдать и снова слагать хвалебные гаммы? И жертвы невинные уже не жертвы, что ли? И ложь и цинизм — все необходимо было?... Поэтому что касается Правды, то признаем ее только за миллионами безымянных Евгениев. В этом — единственная надежда, что человечество захочет и сможет расстаться с мясорубкой, используемой как орудие прогресса. В этом — единственная гарантия, что отвечая на вопрос "почему?", мы не забудем и о вопросе "кто виноват" "Преодолеть мясорубку, не "вычеркивая" ее из прошлого, а отдав себе полный отчет о ее роли и несовместимости с Правдой, - это и значит покаяться". И. Клямкин, op.cit., с. 184

Let us accept the whole past as necessary, but recognize *Pravda* only on the side of innocent and unnamed victims? What was Klyamkin doing when he first carefully eradicated the superficial moral pathos from the public reading of history and then re-introduced it via highly sophisticated manoeuvres? Retrospectively, we can attempt a reconstruction of his ambivalent move aiming to reframe the emerging perestroika mainstream. As we showed earlier, moral pathos of condemnation and the reintroduction of agency's free will choosing between the "streets to the temple" served to pro-perestroika publicists to save Soviet socialism in face of its double failure: the inner party terror and the administrative system instead of self-rule in politics and economic deficiency in comparison with the developed capitalist countries. Moral anger for the wrong choices in the past implied that we could make now a good choice in favour of the previously missed alternative. Moral anger also served as a political shield against those who would publicly oppose radical reforms. Focusing the attention on the *objective* character of Stalinist repressions and Stalin's main policies for the country passing from agrarian to urban civilization, Klyamkin sought to seed doubts on the viability of human socialism both in the past and in the present. Stalinism was not a deviation or anomaly, and Stalin was not a "trespasser" of historical laws normally leading to humanistic self-ruling socialism<sup>238</sup>: this was the logical outcome of an attempt to build such socialism in an agrarian country<sup>239</sup>.

Since, the situation has changed. In 1950s, he claims, modern "I" was born and the new urban individuals today will no longer accept the dictatorship of the state as did the Russian peasants in 1920s and 1930s<sup>240</sup>. In this new urban context, the moral imperative (progress does not justify the slaughter) directed toward the *present* becomes real and efficient force of the urban intelligentsia in its struggle with the outdated administrative system. We probably presented Klyamkin's move more explicitly than he could and wanted to do it in his colourful, ambiguous and suggestive articles; but we presume that the question of *responsibility* was instrumental for advancing the *realistic* liberal agenda instead of the neo-socialist utopia of Gorbachev's circle (shared by the wide Soviet intelligentsia). In order to influence the emerging ideological avant-garde, Klyamkin used its language, addressed its problematique and advanced his own methodological, ethical and finally covert political answers backed by a sound liberal historiosophy. One author could not reverse the mainstream: although Klyamkin managed to shake its sense of coherence and intellectual superiority, he objectively strengthened the halo effect of the new idioms by successfully using and subverting them.

*The problem of the aware agency: public politics and history*

[Rediscovering Agency]

The third theoretical problem often left beneath the surface of public debates revolved around the **agency's ability to act** in the flow of history, which in the generalized historiosophical context of

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<sup>238</sup> "Не пора ли серьезнее относиться к нашим "ошибкам" и учиться видеть в них не только отступление от закономерности, но и проявление ее? ... Неужели перед нами действительно непрекращающаяся борьба истины и заблуждения, закона и его нарушителей?", Ibid. с.186-187

<sup>239</sup> "Теперь никому не надо объяснять, что если в "переделку мира" вовлекаются "недоделанные" люди... то вместо храма добра и правды они неизбежно создадут "недоделанный" притон зла и лжи". Ibid., с.160

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., с.158,159

perestroika meant agency's *political* capability. The autonomous grass-root political activity expected and systematically encouraged by M. Gorbachev since his April thesis relied on the formation of the new social practices and of a new political language. We suggest that the three idioms of choice, path and alternative articulated the most intimate personal and the most abstract theoretical dimensions of human agency's ability to act *on its own*. The major problem faced by historico-political thought of perestroika was that most authors lacked any life experience of public political action: they did not know and did not feel what it could be like an agency in history, while the basic post-Stalinist theoretical framework adopted by default suggested that an independent agency could hardly stand against historical necessity. Leonid Batkin formulated the general feeling of "the renewal of history" as the first characteristic of perestroika in an article with the same title. The rediscovery of the **driving agent** of this renewal of history was dramatically limited by both the lack of personal experience of politics and by the theoretical paradox, which had no easily accessible pragmatic or theoretical solution. Looking back into 1920s when politics existed gave some hope and the last benchmark to reconstruct the meaning of public politics as "history on the move" rather than as man's actions:

We have just experienced a period when history would seemingly stop... *Nothing really happened*. Politics were reduced to the health problems [of the elderly leaders]. Speaking more seriously politics disappeared from the life of our society since the end of 1920s. Politics disappeared as a specific sphere of human activity, where the differences of interests between classes and groups manifest and oppose, where different positions publicly oppose each other searching ways to establish certain dynamic compromise.<sup>241</sup>

How did this discovery of genuine politics and genuine history fit the presumed Stalinist idea of historical necessity? A few pages later defending his strong democratic expectations concerning the near future, L. Batkin suddenly gave a well recognizable "Spinoza's argument" against pessimists; Batkin exposed his conviction that perestroika was "inevitable", although it could start some twenty years later<sup>242</sup>:

They can say: "unrealistic". They can object: "This is an empty utopia. Conservative apparatchiks will oppose". I will reply: "and do you think perestroika declared itself just from scratch, out of nowhere? Or, perestroika is the sign of the pressure of historical necessity, **of the awareness of this necessity?** ... This is a hard and torturous, but historically inevitable path of the rupture with the half-century past<sup>243</sup>.

Does this mean that this specialist of Renaissance considered that History would do the job of democratisation without "groups and classes"? No, L. Batkin assumed the possible failure of perestroika but called all the decent people to active participation: "If you want so, you can be sceptical about [its success]. But, please, act, I swear you, act as you consider good for the success of perestroika. History has restarted and we are invited to take part in it. *We will have no other*

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<sup>241</sup> Л. Баткин, «Возобновление истории», in Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.158

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., с. 159

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., с.188-189

*chance*<sup>244</sup>. Historical necessity and human agency constantly change their roles in the writings of most perestroika's authors who sought to rediscover the agency with its free choices *and* to secure its fate by saddling the right side of historical necessity. First, the individual and social aspects of agency had to be rediscovered. Late Soviet society fundamentally lacked the experience of being a public actor.

### *Sociology of free agency in the USSR*

[Rediscovering Agency]

We can examine the individual dimension of the agency problematique in broad sociological and anthropological terms: Soviet citizens have systematically unlearned both practically and theoretically, how one can act and speak in public on their own, i.e. how to act politically. In the Brezhnev decades, the top-down drive for mobilisation and transformation of the society has vanished – once those who survived under Stalin have rebuked Khrushchev's reformatory rash. The new ruling coalition did not have any radical program to change the whole society and Kosygin's reforms were the last attempt of the top-down drive. As a heritage of the mobilisation period, the system preferred overt prescriptive models of control and the dominant mode of social control was explicitly paternalistic. Looking from bottom-up perspective any independent argument made within the field of the official ideology or any local initiative surpassing its ascribed circle met the *active repressions* (both, soft and hard) of the established social system of the party, state, economic, social and territorial groups of peers and hierarchies.

Most stakeholders in the hierarchy and among peers considered innovations as a possible threat for the established *status quo* and had the means to protect it. In this context, mere disagreement or criticism on the mid levels of hierarchy by the lower levels moderately encouraged under Khrushchev and Stalin, under Brezhnev became suspicious; the hierarchical network of controlling, supervising and repressive agencies insured the prophylactics of such occurrences of dissent, but also produced dissent among the true believers<sup>245</sup>. The tight and manifest social control imposed on those who would persist in their attempts to faithfully improve the hierarchy and its rules, the position of a dissident – the system of the established social relations did not tolerate faithful reformers, but accommodated well the conformists and hypocrites. Indeed, most dissidents passed the phase of reformatory aspirations, which led to a series of disappointments<sup>246</sup>. The case is most convincingly argued by Juliane Furst who studied the formation of the anti-Stalinist youth opposition in the post-war USSR, which was the Gorbachev generation. She concluded that conformism gained the ground over true believers, as the

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., c.159

<sup>245</sup> V. Kozlov indicates that starting from 1966 Soviet regime efficiently prevented and repressed any "ferment" of masses' unrest, but faced a more elusive "aura of opposition" among the Soviet intelligentsia. A. Bezborodov argues that the "academic dissent" has formed precisely in the same period. В. Козлов, *Неизвестный Советский Союз. Противостояние народа и власти 1953-1985*, М., Олма-пресс, 2006, с.421-433. А. Безбородов, *Феномен академического диссидентства*, РГУ, М. 1998, с. 40-45.

<sup>246</sup> А. Безбородов, *Op.cit.*, с.47

propaganda and censorship setup discouraged precisely those who were most earnestly faithful in the Soviet ideals and able to form an opinion, i.e. otherwise, the best supporters:

The solid support base of the Soviet system were the students who read Lenin only in order to satisfy the examiners in Marxism-Leninism, the activists whose social ambition transcended their political conscience and the thousands of young people who were Komsomol members in name but had lost any interest in living a truly collective Soviet adolescence. The ideologically earnest inevitably became the system's most out-spoken critics.<sup>247</sup>

The criticism addressed to this empirical research and its conclusion made by Kuromiya in two subsequent articles is helpful for a better understanding of this central problematique. He wondered if it was not creating "opposition" where there was none, and proposed a supposedly more conventional reading of the same historical evidence:

Yet, although no one denies the existence of the group, its political nature has been disputed by its former members themselves, among others, to the effect that it was merely a secret (unofficial) Marxism-Leninism study group. Whom to believe?<sup>248</sup>

For Kuromiya those people were sincere believers willing to enforce the party, and not "oppositionists". The authors of the *Party statutes* defining the rules of public communication and those who were responsible for supervising youth in the Stalinist and later periods of the Soviet history would be surprised by Kuromiya's apology. Forming "merely a secret (unofficial) Marxism-Leninism study group" was the worst crime after the openly organized propaganda of capitalism; but, the latter was hardly ever reported. The true believers willing to contribute were gradually marginalized by the rules regulating public speech as they saw no firm reasons to join the party as did the first Bolsheviks and had their own views on what was the proper reading of Marx or Lenin: "The Soviet system seems to have survived less through the efforts of the radical fanatic or the convinced socialists, but was carried by the 'imperfect'. Its real backbone turned out to be the 'new Soviet people', who had adapted official demands to suit their own personal needs and survival and were thus neither rejecting nor truly fulfilling them."<sup>249</sup> Few stood the test of consistent public dissent and on the eve of perestroika, the joint policy of the vigorous KGB headed by Andropov and the general conservatism of controlling agencies reduced these people to silence, imprisoned in a variety of ways or literally forced into

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<sup>247</sup> Juliane Furst, "Prisoners of the Soviet Self?: Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2002, May, p. 375

<sup>248</sup> Hiroaki Kuromiya, "'Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism': Evidence and Conjecture" *Europe-Asia Studies*, Jun., 2003, p.633

<sup>249</sup> Kuromiya seems to imply that this distinction does not exonerate the 'true believers' or those who identify with them from responsibility and tries to give more weight to the non-Communist opposition to the Soviet regime. Thus, Kuromiya argues that we should not "accept the logic of Stalinism" when qualifying these groups as opposition and points at nationalistic and religious resistance as the real opponents of the regime. What seems however important is not the real degree of opposition of the young Communists and not active minorities' resistance – quite understandable and current in other historical contexts – but precisely this self-defeating logic of the Soviet regime turning its most serious and active supporters into "opposition" in order to maintain itself and obey its own rules of communication. Juliane Furst, "Prisoners of the Soviet Self?: Political Youth Opposition in Late Stalinism", p.368-369. Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Re-Examining Opposition under Stalin: Further Thoughts", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Mar., 2004, pp. 309-314

exile<sup>250</sup>. Thus, the enforced social practices drawing the rules made risky not only ideological criticism or innovation, but also serious ideological commitment as far as it also presupposed an independent personal opinion. And unlike the first Bolsheviks who were willing to fight the injustices of the old world, the new generations did not understand why the CPSU should be invested with the total trust.

Thus, the other side of this late Soviet silence was the widespread sense of alienation or even cynicism – the first was analysed in the third chapter in terms of lost integrity. The use of the late Soviet verbiage made it difficult to describe the social world in ways one could relate to and identify with personally. Yet, alienation reflected more than the dissatisfaction with the flat descriptions of complex social reality in a bureaucratic language – alienation meant the embedded sense of *powerlessness* especially acute for political leaders who could not act and social scientists who could not speak for on their own. The process of political socialisation through the *Komsomol* activities was thus described by Unger as “learned incompetence”<sup>251</sup>. The feeling of one’s powerlessness was arguably widespread. As late as January 1988, one of the most popular promoters of the Gorbachev’s reforms confessed from the cathedra of *Noviy Mir* his feeling of a lasting “fantastic” surprise with perestroika, which just has “happened”:

The most unbelievable and “fantastic” thing in perestroika – is that it has started, despite every thing, continues. No-no, I have heard a lot about historical necessity, and laws of development, and about the will of masses, but for the world history one or two hundreds years of stagnation – is nothing... Whatever you may say, it is hard to believe that this happens with us.<sup>252</sup>

A. Nuikin enumerates the standard set of “official causes”, which could trigger a dramatic reform, and mentions no specific groups or leaders except of “will of masses”. When only long-term and anonymous factors may affect history (which here totally subsumes politics) perestroika as a rupture in the pace of stagnation looks like a surprise; it is a fantastic historiosophical surprise rather than a result of human actions. Sovietology as discipline faced a similar, although sometimes exaggerated surprise and shared some of the underlying assumptions exposed by A. Nuikin – the Soviet Union left no big room for reforms, change and action. Perestroika as well as stagnation just “happened” to A. Nuikin and L. Batkin as it happened to most Soviet citizens. The expressed concern of perestroika’s intelligentsia, who saw politics as the tread of History or as a more or less favourable *Fortuna* (luck,

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<sup>250</sup> А. Безбородов, *Op.cit.*, с.12-13

<sup>251</sup> “Now the testimony of the interviewees leaves no doubt that they did not believe their own participation to be effective. Whatever may be true of other arenas in which political participation is said to take place in the Soviet Union, the combination of compulsion and formalism which characterizes participation in the Komsomol and party arenas clearly provides no scope at all for the development of a sense of efficacy... If this kind of participation is seen as a case of ‘socialization into incompetence’ it could also provide a clue to the stability of the Soviet system, just as the socializing function of democratic participation helps to account for the stability of Western systems.” Aryeh L. Unger, “Political Participation in the USSR: YCL and CPSU” *Soviet Studies*, Jan., 1981, pp. 122-123

<sup>252</sup> “Самое невероятное и “фантастичное” в перестройке - это то, что она началась и, несмотря ни на что, продолжается. Нет-нет, и про историческую необходимость, и про законы развития, и про волю масс я тоже слышан, но для мировой истории лишних сто-двести лет застоя - это “пустяк”... Что не говорите, а просто не верится, что это происходит с нами” Андрей Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №1, с.190. Compare: L. Batkin literary reproduced the same move on the evitability of perestroika but framing the time when history could wait with perestroika more narrowly “History does not care about plus-minus twenty ears”. Л. Баткин, «Возобновление истории», in Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.159

fate, change), was to understand whether this was going to be an “irreversible movement” as declared by its actual instigator or a passing “thaw”, as the previous historical experience had taught this generation<sup>253</sup>. Thus, the down-to-earth individual ability to choose a spouse or a job illustrates historiosophical theory of action as the only available personal experience. This telling conjuncture of individual and historiosophical choice is present in the reflections on Lenin made by M. Gefter<sup>254</sup>, in the formula of M. Zotov that “existential alternatives” – are the essence of human being in history<sup>255</sup>. We also clearly see that individual choice was the main lens to rediscover politics in the way D. Furman connects to the contemporary readers the choice of the prince Vladimir made in 988 in favour of the Christianity:

The fact is that Vladimir and his surrounding – early feudal elite of the Russian society – are not an instrument of some anonymous forces, but living men; who made an existential choice, which, as any other choice, could be different. And namely this volitional decision of the initially undetermined situation make the Baptism of the Ancient Russia a historical event, as our decisions in various situations of our personal life (choice of professional orientation, of wife, of worldview and etc.) are the events of our biographies... this is always a choice<sup>256</sup>.

We can formulate the main argument of this section: *choice* and more particularly *historical choice* was the name and metaphor of the newly discovered public politics. The widespread feeling of the “return of politics” identified by Batkin as “return of history” translated that what was lost and what was discovered was the choice and the corresponding *sense of agency*. Still in 1988 Vyacheslav Igrunov organized a round-table on the following subject: “What is political and whether politics are possible in the USSR?” One of his remarks summarised this ongoing revolution in the vision of politics: “We started with the question that for a long time our society was politicized, but in essences, there was no politics. There was no politics because there was no choice, no debate etc.” In response Andrei Fadin acutely noted that politics thus understood in fact excluded “apparatus politics” and this could be more accurately called “public politics”.<sup>257</sup> Public debates were considered as the return of politics because

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<sup>253</sup> As an example, compare the Gorbachev’s speech with the account of the economic reforms in 1960s by Elena Zubkova published in the same issue of *Kommunist*: “Как углубить и сделать необратимой революционную перестройку, которая по инициативе и под руководством партии развернулась в стране - вот коренной вопрос, стоящий перед нами...”. М. С. Горбачев, «О ходе реализации решений XXVII съезда и задачах по углублению перестройки. Доклад Генсека ЦК на XIX Всесоюзной конференции КПС», *Коммунист*, 1988, №10, с.3. «Не дать реформе остановиться» - таков лейтмотив наиболее конструктивных выступлений по проблемам экономической реформы в конце 60ых годов. Опасения были не напрасны...», Е. Зубкова, «1956, 1965: уроки незавершенных поворотов», *Коммунист*, 1988, №10, с.119

<sup>254</sup> М. Гефтер, «Сталин умер вчера...», in Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988

<sup>255</sup> А. Ф. Zotov, «Круглый стол. Философия и историческая наука», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.19

<sup>256</sup> “Истина заключается том, что Владимир его окружение — раннефеодальная верхушка русского общества — не орудия каких-то безличных сил, а живые люди; совершившие жизненный выбор, который, как и любой выбор, мог бы быть и каким-то иным. И именно это волевое решение заранее не предрешенной ситуации делает крещение Руси историческим событием, как наши решения различных жизненных ситуаций (выбор профессии, жены, мировоззрения и т. д.) являются событиями наших биографий... это всегда выбор”. Д. Е. Фурман, «Выбор князя Владимира», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №6, с.91.

<sup>257</sup> “Пару лет назад, когда я заговорил на эту тему с Глебом Павловским, он мне бросил укор, не называя ли я политикой многие вещи, которые по сути дела таковыми не являются. Действительно, политика - это то явление, которое присуще не для всех обществ и не для всех эпох. Политика возникает тогда, когда необходимо принимать решения в условиях отсутствия согласия в обществе... Проблема выбора была устранена; при помощи политических аргументов, политических сил политика была изгнана из жизни нашего общества, и вот сейчас она возвращается.

their essence was debating on the choice – and speaking in public on matters of public concerns was making choice, making history, and making politics. We will encounter these Quadra of politics, debates, history and choice in the formula made by Yuri Affanassiev and discussed below.

*Inner sense of integrity, social practice and personal choice*

[Rediscovering Agency]

The personal dimension of the problem of agency had a direct parallel in the theoretical language and political practice. The problems of personal choice and integrity echoed the historiosophical choices. In the 1960s-70s, a few intellectuals who were committed to personal integrity and willing to take public position, assumed their dissent<sup>258</sup>; for the majority, exile into private sphere meant surrender with dignity. The other option for ambitious people who could reflect upon the occurrences of reprimands for their intellectual initiatives or doubts remained a more or less *cynical* blend of conformism, integrity and subversion of the established rules. The three brightest party leaders incarnated the generic types of successful activists of the new post-war generation who came to power in 1985: A. Yakovlev (the eldest), M. Gorbachev and E. Ligachev all deeply attached to their personal visions of the political ideal, conformist, subversive and – looking for the lost integrity. Once at the top, they acquired the seemingly great power to bring their ideas to life. These tools and administrative authority were unavailable for the publicists, scientists and new kind of politicians who would like to join, spur or refine the historic reforms initiated by the party leaders.

How could perestroika publicists not only understand the current sense of History, but also contribute to the irreversibility of this “good luck”? The new *vocabulary* directly addressed the common concern. Y. Afanassiev, the public face of the reform-minded historians under perestroika, gave a concise and pedagogical answer:

Only an open competition of most diverse ideas can generate a free and democratic choice of the paths to deepen perestroika. Here precisely politics and history fuse, as well as the past and present. These are the reasons of the current acute actuality of the problem of the alternativeness of history and the category of “choice” as the main aspect of the historical becoming.<sup>259</sup>

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Возвращается вместе с выбором, вместе со спором, вместе с необходимостью принимать решения. Причем эти решения уже принимаются не как прежде, на самом верху.” [http://www.igrunov.ru/cat/vchk-cat-bibl/round\\_tab/vchk-cat-bibl-roundtab-vek\\_ametist\\_88.html](http://www.igrunov.ru/cat/vchk-cat-bibl/round_tab/vchk-cat-bibl-roundtab-vek_ametist_88.html)

<sup>258</sup> Bezborodov speaks about the “imposed politicization” of the intellectual independence and ethical protest: «.. принудительная политизация независимо мыслящей личности, выступающей как правило, с этическим протестом и не провозглашающей при этом никакой определенной идеологии». Ibid., с.14

<sup>259</sup> «Только открытое соревнование самых разнообразных идей может породить свободный демократический выбор путей углубления перестройки. Именно здесь и сливаются история и политика, прошлое и настоящее. Таковы причины нынешней острой актуализации проблемы альтернативности истории, категории «выбора» как важнейшего элемента исторического становления». Ю. Афанасьев, «Перестройка и историческое знание», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.492



The intellectual energy and attention devoted to this issue of agency in history by the most popular public thinkers of the moment translated the lack of the relevant experience of public action. The simultaneous affirmation of the predetermination of history by law-like regularities (laws of formations) and of the freedom of the human agency (vanguard party, its leaders, Soviet people, creativity of the masses, writing publicists, or intelligentsia) generated a tension in the Soviet official discourse well described by Barrington Moore:

To an outsider there seems to be a contradiction in Marxism- Leninism between the belief in a special variety of historical determinism and an equally strong belief in the necessity for vigorous action to bring about the inevitable. Psychologically, these ideas probably tend to reinforce one another rather than to arouse scepticism and similar difficulties.<sup>260</sup>

The Brezhnev's period, when the theoretical accent shifted towards historical necessity, left the context in which the presumed scientific understanding of history by the political leadership absorbed leaders' free agency. Both, the underlying paradoxical move of Spinoza – coincidence of an adequate reason and of a free will – in its official interpretation and the credibility of the claim about the scientific knowledge of laws of history by the uneducated Politburo members looked redundant and dubious for Soviet intelligentsia as many other official ideology claims made in 1970s. Andropov's public confession that "we don't know our society" quietly broke the ideological building into small pieces: one cannot claim historiosophical wisdom as its political guide and accept the deep ignorance of his society<sup>261</sup>.

In this respect, the post-Andropov reformers tacitly (but not fully) accepted his position as their starting point and called for consultations with the best social scientists; they under-evaluated the gap between the social reality and the expert knowledge available within Soviet society. The spare theoretical model to support the reforms was that of "social engineering" presuming that old official ideologues from the Brezhnev period should be replaced by more modern or smarter social scientists<sup>262</sup>. Otherwise, the historiosophical model of reform policy as a science did not change so much between 1960s and 1987. When this technocratic approach that we identified as the "illusion of scientific objectivity" dominant in the first years of perestroika produced counter-productive results, politicians and intellectuals started to see the reforms as a much more complex and uncertain activity of choice-making, where bureaucracy acquired the status of an agency *resisting*, and reformers of the one – promoting *the choice of reform*.

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<sup>260</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr., *Soviet Politics – The Dilemma of Power*, Camb. Mass. Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 417

<sup>261</sup> Ю. Андропов, «Учение Карла Маркса и некоторые вопросы социалистического строительства в СССР», *Коммунист*, 1983, № 3

<sup>262</sup> The replacement of this approach naturally took time. In mid 1988, a respected physicist N. Moiseev, exposed this credo of the independent-minded intellectuals as an imperative: «Законы эволюции общественных структур столь же объективны, как и законы Ньютона... Решать новые крупные народнохозяйственные проблемы в рамках старой организационной структуры невозможно»; «Мы обязаны истории целенаправленно проектировать рациональное социалистическое общество». Н. Моисеев, «Мои представления о новом облике социализма», *Коммунист*, 1988, №14, с. 21, 24

*The Early Modern paradox of agency and necessity embraced*  
[Rediscovering Agency]

Reformers and their supporters tried to rediscover and represent themselves as the agent of change *and* as the agent of the irreversible objective movement as did the Bolsheviks and other Marxist parties. P. Volobuev gave probably the most extensive analysis of the mutually exclusive citations on agency and necessity from Marx, Engels and Lenin linking them to the Russian socialist tradition of the XIX century. Assuming he found the good balance between the two sides in history, Volobuev constantly refined and corrected himself; one of his carefully balanced formula seems to arrest the search:

There is a question: whether the idea of choice of the path of development is compatible with a common thesis of historical materialism on the predetermined character of historical development, on natural-historical character of the formational movement of society, which prevents people from arbitrary choosing the paths of their development and can not “jump over natural phases of development”. Marxist theory and historical practice give a positive answer to this question. If we ask the question, what ultimately defines the choice of the path of development – laws or the free will of men, then the answer can be stated unambiguously: people’s free will and actions, directed by laws.<sup>263</sup>

This “unambiguous” theoretical answer remained ambiguous as well a number of similar passages: from the rediscovery of the agency’s “free choice” back to the formula of “freedom as the awareness of necessity” and back again to free agency. The pragmatic answer given by P. Volobuev was more straightforward: he tended to stress the objective necessity of the decisions in line with his political values such as October revolution and perestroika, and to underline the moment of alternative and choice in the decisions and events of which he disapproved (such as the end of NEP and terror). Agency’s freedom and uncertainty of the historical crossroads were recalled to mobilise public support.

“History is the process in which freedom and necessity dialectically interact – is typically portrayed *sub specie necessitates*... Meanwhile, there is always a “field of possibilities” only part of which actually becomes reality”. This quote from A. Gurevich referring to Volobuev brought together the moral issue of responsibility analysed in the previous section and the theoretical aspect of the problematique of human agency in history: “This approach is evidently important in philosophical and moral aspects”<sup>264</sup>. Gurevich went on in developing his vision of the dialectics of freedom and necessity and concluded that even the development of the “forces of production” in the ultimate sense relies on the discovery of human liberty<sup>265</sup>; for every well established “law-like regularity” results from the uncertain human

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<sup>263</sup> «Если поставить вопрос, что же определяет в конечном счете выбор пути развития – законы или свободная воля людей, то ответ можно сформулировать однозначно: воля и действия людей, направляемые законами» П.В. Волобуев, *Выбор путей общественного развития: теория, история, современность*, Политиздат, М., 1987, с.37

<sup>264</sup> А. Гуревич, «Историческая наука и антропология», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №1, с.66

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, с.67

initiatives: “every human undertaking is utopian, as far as it is unprecedented”<sup>266</sup>. Gurevich like most of his peers concluded that this problematique of human liberty and social laws needed “a deeper” elaboration on the theoretical level.

Another prominent scientist and one of the first Soviet sociologists, Boris Grushin addressed this central theoretical problematique formulating ten questions and answers on liberty in his article “Possibility and perspectives of liberty”. These questions all considered in a global socio-historical context are worth mentioning at least partly: Who can be the subject of a free action? Can the phenomenon of liberty be defined? What are the conditions of liberty? Giving his answer to the second question Grushin dismissed the typical encyclopaedia definition “human ability to act in accordance with his interests (desires, intentions, goals) and in accordance with the correctly understood laws of nature and society (objective circumstances, regularities, necessity)” and analysed a matrix of situations ranging from genuine liberty to its total absence. Grushin comes to an “interesting and important” conclusion that individual liberty does not preclude “the awareness of necessity”<sup>267</sup>. With formal reference to Marx and Engels (giving no quotes) he concedes that the “awareness of necessity” is still crucial for the definition of liberty for the “social communities”, before again with Marx stating that full *individual* liberty is the historical perspective of the human kind in its overcoming of all kinds of alienation and of mutual interdependency (sic!)<sup>268</sup>. In other words, Boris Grushin set up the radical libertarian historiosophy ultimately dismissing the need in “awareness of necessity”.

The compatibility between the laws of history and the conscious human activity remained the constant intellectual puzzle of perestroika; each author tried to address and to solve in his own way, never achieving a stable intellectual pattern but idiomatic unity. The idiomatic trio of path, choice and alternative proved the most popular tool to recover the agency’s role or to argue for the supremacy of historical necessity. Publicists questioned the actual outline of history and found a new map – a net of parting paths instead of stages – located USSR on a narrow side street or a dead-end, and rediscovered the human agency’s ability to choose a batter path out of the alternatives. Yet, this theoretical language gave little help in assessing the present and defining its realistic options. Igor Klyamkin most notoriously challenged the dominant way of thinking, while fully adopting its new language. This liberal thinker insisted that both past and present left little place for choices subjugated to the general law of increase of freedom in History following the stages of socio-economic development. Again, the rediscovery of agency’s freedom in history remained central as well as the underlying acceptance of the historical necessity as the key factor defining political options. Klyamkin hit the target: by simultaneously exposing his liberal preferences and accepting the necessity of the Stalinist period, he challenged the most widespread argument of the moment. An example of this reaction on Klaymkin’s position missing his “trick” provides a contribution to a round-table, where E. Shemyakin offers the standard counter-argument:

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., c.66

<sup>267</sup> Б. Грушин, «Возможность и перспективы свободы (10 полемических вопросов и ответов)», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №5, с.7

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., c.18

Let me focus on the most important point of the categorical disagreement with the main pathos of Klyamkin's article... This mental attitude can be characterised as "hypnosis of the actualised past". The scale and scope of what happened in 1930s-40s in our country are so great, and the truth on the events of this period is so tragic, that many of our contemporaries are attached by the invisible chains to what happened: they have no power even to imagine other possibilities of development... The interpretation of the laws of social development described above – is the direct consequence of inapprehension of the alternative character of the being in society. Here we face one of the most complex theoretical problems.<sup>269</sup>

Despite his conviction in his own rightfulness, the author mentioned the complexity of the problem which he seemingly had resolved. This combination of self-confidence and reference to the complexity of the problem is typical and telling. The intellectual and practical difficulty to embrace the freedom of agency as a too uncertain and risky foundation for political and social reforms constantly drove authors back to the acceptance of historical necessity in a variety of its forms and underlying arguments; the moral unacceptability of the revealed Stalinist crimes and of the present state of the USSR invited most authors to claim the primacy of alternativeness and choice – having no clear "ontology" and no real social experience of exercising them. Indeed, the reference to historical laws is the best protection for such a challenging enterprise as policy making in present tense, but they diminish the possibility to condemn the unacceptable actions in the past. While looking for better and missed alternatives in the past, the majority of publicists accepted a slogan discrediting this possibility of the choice in the present: *there is no alternative to perestroika*<sup>270</sup>.

In various historical or national contexts, public actors try to influence the perception of probabilities of different political options on the agenda according to a common scheme: overestimating the probability of their preferred options, and according to the situation – dramatising the threats or downplaying the real alternatives. The statement that perestroika follows historical necessity and that those resisting perestroika attempt to block the irreversible history in this sense is no exception. What is proper to perestroika is the attention to this highly theoretical if not scholastic terminology inherited from Marx and Stalin via the mediation of the presumed Spinoza's formula. Throughout perestroika, political theory attempted but could not emancipate from its historiosophical origin and its inherent theoretical paradox. Let us conclude this chapter by a long quote from an interview of M. Gefter taken by his pupil and future presidential adviser G. Pavlovksy published the same year in the cited above referential collection *There is no alternative*. In this interview Gefter formulated his supreme goal and justified his own attention to the concepts of alternative and choice as keys to understand the

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<sup>269</sup> «Сосредоточу внимание на главном, в чем, собственно, и состоит основной пафос статьи Клямкина и с чем я категорически не согласен... Эту духовную реальность можно охарактеризовать как «гипноз совершившегося». Масштабы того, что произошло в стране в 30-40е годы, так велики, правда о событиях того времени настолько трагична, что взгляд многих наших современников оказывается прикован незримыми цепями к совершившемуся: они не в силах даже представить себе какие-либо иные возможности развития... Охарактеризованная выше трактовка законов общественного развития – это прямое следствие непонимания альтернативного характера социального бытия. В данном случае мы сталкиваемся со сложнейшей теоретической проблемой». Я. Г. Шемякин, «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.60

<sup>270</sup> We refer to Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988

impossible or the irreversibility of the past and (only then) contribute to the renewal and opening in the political theory and action:

The conception of perestroika, which did not include its own genesis, would be not only incomplete, but defective... Today genesis becomes the topic of the day. This is not a mere repetition of the old, but something entirely new; this is slightly more than the three years old double formula: “ *where are we coming from?*, without which there is no answer to the question *where are we going to?*”

Here is the moment when historian connects to the contemporary actions – by his own acting. He enters politics (if he actually can enter) not with hints and advises, not with moral lessons, but with public thoughts, which mobilize all his professional and personal experience, freed from the tutelage of the superiors, from the general scheme, sent from “above”. When historian is independent – politician wins. Then historian learns to think not only with “pre-ordered” illustrations and with analogies, not even with the missed opportunities of the past. Then he faces (he may dare to face!) the deepest and the most intimate aspect of history – Impossibility: the prohibition, which generates the previously unknown, completely new opportunities.<sup>271</sup>

To acquire freedom in present, men have to embrace and assume the past in all its complexity and with all its alternatives and choices until the moment, he understands that it was not possible otherwise. Only then, the alternatives may cease to be “retrospective utopias” and connect to history in its intimate origin of action and freedom<sup>272</sup>. This was a draft for a major shift in the presumed Spinoza’s formula: today’s freedom comes from the awareness and full acceptance of the necessity of what *has happened*. This turn in the thought of M. Gefter as well as the attempted sophisticated solution for the dilemma of necessity and liberty made by Klyamkin had lower impact on the new adopters. The scheme of P. Volobuev prevailed. In 1988, most publicists actively looked for “missed opportunities” in the past and intended to master the historical necessity by the correct *choice* of the objective *path* of perestroika arguably having *no alternative*. The disturbing irreversibility of the past and open-endedness of future could not stand against the more comfortable open-endedness of the criminal past and irreversibility of the brighter future. In the battle of the Early Modernist realism accepting adverse necessity with the late Soviet trust in the wholesome and law-like history, the latter won. The perestroika policies could be justified only by historical necessity reliably as going *in the sense* of history. This political philosophy created no autonomous impetus for political action unless it was seen as an expression of law-like and wholesome historical necessity.

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<sup>271</sup> М. Гефтер, «Сталин умер вчера...», in Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.300

<sup>272</sup> М. Гефтер, «Россия и Маркс» [1977-1988], in *Из тех и этих лет*, Прогресс, М., 1991, с.39

This chapter is an attempt to identify the original perestroika language developed in the emerging public debates.<sup>273</sup> We tried to show that within one year the three related terms – choice, path and alternative – suddenly became central: they were used by the most influential publicists and politicians in all the five reviews we analysed; they were applied to a number of very diverse intellectual contexts; finally, many observers were aware of their idiomatic character. This spontaneous and rapid spread attests the intellectual and rhetoric efficiency of the new idioms. The central theoretical issue was the tension between the late Soviet reliance on progressive historical necessity and the new pressing demands to affirm the role of free agency – because History proved non-linear, the revealed mass crimes ought to be condemned, and finally, the unknown meaning of public politics was to rediscover. The major intellectual trend of 1988 consisted in rediscovering free agency's choice as the essence of politics, condition of integrity and moral responsibility and the cause of the factual diversity and non-linearity of historical paths in the world. The triumph of agency was partial; to argue and convince – the reference to historical necessity had an upper hand, while freedom was mostly mobilized to condemn and accuse. These issues, arguments and idioms revealed the core beliefs about history and politics common to the majority of Soviet citizens preoccupied with theoretical political questions in 1988. Concluding this chapter we outline some of them having the strongest impact on policy making beyond the ideological cleavages. Those few who famously argued against them were paying them tribute, but did not offer a “viable alternative” to justify public speech

The first assumption was addressed in the second chapter under the name of scientific objectivity illusion – it is the belief in the accessibility of the scientific knowledge on politics and history as direct guide for politics. The malleability of public convictions made the faith in socialism less solid than this more implicit assumption. It went beyond Marxism-Leninism in the narrow sense, and expressed a more general “positivist” reliance on social sciences connected to the way intelligentsia perceived the relation between intellectual freedom and attainability of scientific truth on nature or society alike.<sup>274</sup> The focus on the link between freedom and attainability of truth on society, understood in terms of objective scientific knowledge, had two major implications. First, it served to substantiate free public speech as the most efficient policy-making modality and second, this implied that public politics were a fundamentally peaceful matter of expertise rather than of clash, conflict, or negotiations between actors. Politics were welcomed as a matter of scientific knowledge produced by deliberation.

The supposition of the law-like [*zakonomernost* – scientific laws] or necessary [*neobkhodimost*] character of historical and political processes was the most widely shared historiosophical belief. This supposition reduced the general principle of causality to the possibility of a valid macro explanation of historical evolution in terms of progressive stages by a limited number of variables such as production

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<sup>273</sup> Debates were still not free because after Nina Andreeva case in Politburo Gorbachev clearly condemned the unconditional defence of the Soviet historical cults and at least in 1988 this fostered the historical criticism by administrative means and with due respect of hierarchy. But, the general intelligentsia's trust in the free scientific analysis of facts and laws would certainly make the blind defence of the historical cults difficult anyway – as we will see in the following years “conservative Communist position” found no theoretical expression at all. This signifies that in the 1980s the official late Soviet ideology was intellectually and politically defenceless. There was literary no one to defend it with facts, convictions, or arguments beyond civic cults.

<sup>274</sup> See the analysis of this relation in the second and third chapters.

relations, demography, class structure, technology etc. The laws of history were presumed to be global and universal rather than local and specific. The metaphor of historical paths subtly inscribed the features of holistic social systems, i.e. socio-economic formations, into historical time. The discussion of the global world threats, global trends and global imperatives tended to obliterate the discussion of the specific problems of the USSR in 1988. Moreover, when the official historiosophy proved grossly mismatching the reality, perestroika intellectuals started looking for the evidence in favour of a better set of macro historical laws and rediscovering the agency's role – but the ideal of law-like necessity as the moving force of history stood firm. In fact, the role of agency in the new frame was limited to choosing the right path at certain crucial moments, but then, the path was leading men. Thus, the new emphasis on free agency had to be *grounded on* the objective necessity, global trends and law-like regularities; the examination of contingency or specific constellations of circumstances in the given political situation were downplayed and dismissed as non-scientific.<sup>275</sup>

The third assumption we would like to highlight was ignored by observers and academic literature alike with very few exceptions<sup>276</sup> – but it can be integrated into the global accounts of perestroika. For perestroika men history was of a genuinely wholesome nature. This deeply rooted assumption was manifest in the official late Soviet historiosophy with its naively optimistic reliance on the laws-of-history ensuring the success of the USSR and in Gorbachev's bet on democracy and positive creativity of the masses<sup>277</sup>. In 1988 its manifestation was more subtle. The energetic and passionate quest for "alternatives" in the Soviet history among other things translated the idea that if the USSR in 1988 faced serious problems, and in the 1920s and 1930s serious crimes and deficiencies occurred, this was due to the fact that the country had lost a golden alternative path once upon a time in the past. The golden alternative was missed due to the erroneous and free choice [of the leader, ideology or groups], but it should have existed. The attention was shifted to the past because present seemed opaque and unpromising while the alternatives of the past and even Western historical evolution were understood as peaceful, wealthy and progressive – the way normal history should be.

The peculiar perestroika pattern of the backward-looking criticism shifting from Stalin and passing by Lenin, Boukharin, October and February 1917 was well identified by the researchers. We can see that this pattern was based on the specific mode of thinking history as naturally wholesome. When public

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<sup>275</sup> This is not to say that contingency and specificity of the contemporary political situation in the USSR was not taken into account by gifted individuals, but this layer of their analysis had no common language and therefore remained difficult to communicate about and refer to. The writings of Klyamkin, Migranyan, Prokhanov combined both the historiosophical quest and the attempts to find the new language of political analysis taking into account key political actors, interests, media, ideological debates, public opinion – and their contingent and moving configurations. *XX vek / Mir* offered its pages to a wide number of heterodox views and analytical approaches galvanizing the already boiling intellectual magma. However, the breakthrough was made by two newspapers *Kommersant* and *Nezavisimaya gazeta* found in 1990.

<sup>276</sup> The acute analysis of Joachim Zweynert is a rare exception – his analysis of the economic thought of perestroika served us as an enlightening case. Joachim Zweynert, "Economic ideas and institutional change: Evidence from soviet economic debates 1987-1991", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2006, №58 (2)

<sup>277</sup> To be sure, original Marxist views of the Russian chances to become a socialist country in the 1910s were much more controversial and far less optimistic, including Lenin's own views. See: Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution*, Paul S. Falla translator. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. 3 vols. Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the leap to the kingdom of freedom: the rise and fall of the Communist utopia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995

debates were freed from the ritual expression of loyalty and optimistic incantations of the objective progress, the new intellectually credible foundation bridging (or promising to bridge) the gap between values and reality was found. The assumption of the history's wholesomeness arguably played the central role as the political philosophy promising that values are compatible with reality. Looking at the facts, the compatibility of reality and values looked highly doubtful in the light of free critical exchanges, and after 1988 things were going only worse. In the next chapters, we follow the transformation of this belief in 1989-1991. We would like to find out how the historico-political belief that "in history things naturally go right" became self-confident and consolidated, when most things were manifestly going wrong.

Finally, the last significant historico-political belief of the Soviet intelligentsia and politicians concerned the historiosophical superiority of *socialism*. In 1988 this assumption was surely dominant and operational at least in the press – the debate was about the optimal historical forms of socialism. The socialist nature of the late Soviet regime but not the historical wholesomeness of socialism was publicly questioned by the major protagonists.<sup>278</sup> The peculiarity of this political belief was due to its abstract but persuasive character. Socialism vaguely understood as a just, humane and free society or else as an improved version of the Soviet socialism was expected to appear and triumph politically once the errors of the past were corrected. Historiosophical necessity favourable for socialism implicitly guaranteed and encouraged the reformers and the public, and to a significant extent it downplayed the need to publicly debate the present options in more specific terms.

The generation whose' views on history and society were disconnected from the possibility to practice them in public debate and policy-making, believed in the wholesome necessity of a just and productive society. This socialist variant of the main idea was then openly contested and found less support, but still exercised its influence. It was arguably replaced by other types of necessities – but wholesome historiosophical necessity remained the main argument in favour of one's ideological preferences. Concluding this chapter we would like to use a compound formula from the draft of *The Theses* of A. Yakovlev. Yakovlev, whose views could be described as loosely liberal or social-democratic, covertly and consistently attacked the most important foundations of the Soviet political system, such as one-party rule and state property, but he used the established views and vocabulary to advance his agenda. At the Politburo session, 27<sup>th</sup> of December 1988, the idea of choice, necessity, and global context (and anticipating further ideological re-evolution, the new positive emphasis on the non-violent character of the right kind historical evolution) appear at the heart of the Soviet policy-making:

It could have been the case that one after another of the "weakest links" of capitalism, according to Lenin's terminology, would have chosen the socialist path - often after a most difficult and exhausting struggle for those countries and human souls. This is how it was actually happening. In the 1970s, many countries that tried to step from early feudalism, and sometimes even from a tribal society, to socialism became socialist-oriented countries. With all respect to the aspirations of the people of those countries,

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<sup>278</sup> The exceptions could be easily counted on fingers – they were not close to the leadership and were mostly economists (or worked in the economic research institutes) such as Larisa Piasheva, Vasiliy Selyunin or Igor Klyamkin.



and with all our readiness to help them on this road, we have to see that socialism as a system, as an ideology, is not made stronger by this kind of “world march” [*Yakovlev’s emphasis here and later*], but weaker. It is a victory, but a Pyrrhic one. Or it could also have been the result of certain violent developments in the more developed countries because natural processes there obviously did not lead to socialism as we understood it in the 1970s.

However, socialism is the natural and logical – and not forcibly imposed – future of humankind. And as such, it cannot and should not live in separation or in isolation, or self-isolation, from the world.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation. Fond 10063, Opis 1, Delo 190 Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB168/yakovlev05.pdf>

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Deconstruction of the social order and Soviet humanism [rules in 1989-1991]**

The liberalization of public speech during perestroika led to a rather peculiar configuration in its last years: if in 1986-1988 public speech regained in vitality, then became the primary political activity in 1988-1989, and finally, it rapidly lost its authority during the last two years of perestroika. In this chapter we review the changes in the rules of public speech in their relation with the changes in the conception of truth, as well as the changes in the way people related their inner convictions with public utterances. The established Soviet conventions were questioned by reformers mainly because most protagonists felt that they could not provide for *integrity* in convictions and actions. The ideological revision and subsequent mobilization were easy to operate under the traditional rules of unity and hierarchy; but the sense that people were fundamentally lying in their public utterances haunted perestroika until its very end. Reformers tried to use both the privileges granted to them by the Soviet rules and the vitality of free beliefs, but the former worked in their favour better than the later.

In 1989-1991 the liberalization of the public speech was naturally accompanied by the reflection about and re- or de-construction of the established rules of public debates – previously underpinned by the power hierarchy, censorship and administrative sanctions against the trespassers – and, during this period left institutionally unprotected and subject to criticism. The early Gorbachev's call for scientific and bold quest for truth relied on the non-political conception of truth elaborated by the Soviet intelligentsia well before perestroika as the opposition to the official dogmatism and discipline. What was expected from the free critical debate under the sign of scientific truth was the formation of a consensual but psychologically authentic and efficient ideology of reforms. In the first section we analyse the relation between the quest of integrity and unity on one side and the critical deconstruction of the conventional ideological hierarchy and Marxist classics' authority. In the second section we outline the markers of the growing sense of miscommunication in the public debates as well as the possible intellectual frames contributing to this configuration – pluralistic conception of truth, unmediated clash of values, and to a certain extent, the imperative of non-violence.

## **Names of freedom: unfeasible unity, communication and integrity**

What could be now technically and politically designated as freedom of speech, under perestroika was discovered and defended under several names: first as glasnost, then as pluralism, criticism, dialogue, points of view, and occasionally as freedom of speech. In this section we review the stages of the dismantling of the administrative mechanisms of control in 1989-90 and focus on the idioms and arguments in which actors understood and promoted the new rules of communication – first imposed from above and *welcomed* by most actors in moral terms, whereby the hierarchical Soviet rules were exposed, criticised and changed. The hierarchy rule and the references to the classics were widely dismissed as hindering individuals to voice their genuine beliefs and opinions. The unity rule kept certain appeal throughout this period: the aspiration to harmonize the individual liberty of opinion with the political *unity* without sacrifices and any institutional base proved naïve, but strong. In other words, we have to do here not with an external and surface dogma, but with an interiorised belief on the nature of public speech and politics. It is possible to see in these two contradictory aspirations the indirect influence of the Orthodox doctrine of *sobornost*. The monastic Statutes and the early Bolsheviks' collective practices were arguably picking up the same symbolic resources; during perestroika however, the theoretical and political priority was given to personal beliefs, and the ideal of unity was reluctantly abandoned as unrealisable, however worthy.

### *Discussing the unity rule and its historical costs*

The Soviet unity rule remained attractive to a surprising number of actors until the end of perestroika and as such was rarely criticised; *de facto* it was considered as *inapplicable* in the current context. However, few authors pointed to the ban on factions at the X party congress as on a significant step in the formation of Stalinist model and argued in favour of platforms within the party. Gorbachev remained reluctant to the formation of factions until the very end of perestroika. The “correctly understood” unity remained a positive benchmark rarely challenged, but losing its practical weight. The manifest application of the unity rule in the Nina Andreeva case in 1988 served to disqualify only one ideological position as the position leading to the split within the party and society – it morally disqualified any positive political references to Stalin and Stalinism. But already when punctually applied against the designated anti-perestroika Stalinists the repressions of the dissenters proved unusually weak<sup>1</sup>. The reformers' trio of Gorbachev-Yakovlev-Medvedev had drawn on the moral authority of unity over dissent rule to exclude the “neo Stalinist” trend from Politburo and public debates, but they did not endorse it with administrative sanctions – relying on the fear of sanctions *implied* by the unity rule, not on sanctions. This tactic could be effectively used only once: for the second time one had to apply sanctions or face the consequences of the liberalization of the public

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<sup>1</sup> No direct dismissals, downgrading or legal charges followed, except the administrative pressure against the publication of the pro-Andreeva's readers' letters and gradual loss of Ligachev's political influence. The sanctions against the instigators and supporters of Andreeva remained limited to the moral condemnation, but sufficient to enforce the anti-Stalinist consensus.

speech<sup>2</sup>. In the last three years of perestroika, we see the factual erosion of the unity rule which still played as a positive reference and we witness the open deconstruction of the two other conventions of the Soviet period: the respect of hierarchy and the references to the classics. The respect of the ideological hierarchy and the authoritative references to the classics of Marxism were openly identified as such, then questioned, attacked, mocked or dismissed both in theory and in practice.

The majority of authors adhered to a new supreme norm which helped criticising the two secondary Soviet rules and downplaying the unity over dissent rule. The principle of *freedom of speech* in its different expressions shared by radical liberals, moderate soviet reformers, soviet puritans, nationalists and even neo-Stalinist did not yet become self-evident and had no univocal expression which we use. Therefore, it is worth noting, freedom of speech was not defended *per se*. We can distinguish two matching aspects of the way perestroika authors framed this new regulating principle of debate. Authors stated the need of *criticism* (implied by the scientific concept of truth) and praised the individual's ability to *judge* with one's own mind (as an expression of personal integrity, freedom and autonomy) over other external constraints and social rules. In 1986-1988, the reformers enforced the steady liberalisation of press from the direct administrative control relying on the natural attractiveness of the renewed ideology.

The first manifestation of organized disagreement with perestroika's criticism of the Soviet past in Andreeva case was met by the application of the unity rule against those disagreeing. This stopped conservatives, who timidly claimed the right to express their sincere opinions, but obeyed to the leader and to unity rule. During the last years of perestroika there appeared no trace of an ideological conservative platform except the defence of the Soviet cults from *blasphemy*. The Andreeva case also was a clear sign for the most opportunistic authors about what was in vogue – and the previous socialisation taught many people to follow the current party line in whatever form it was expressed. In 1989 the general line was to be open-minded and critical rather than patriotic and dogmatic. The short-lived and very partial hegemony of the liberal free-market is often mistakenly projected back from 1992 to the last two years of perestroika. We can identify the decisive break in 1990, when the last Soviet taboos were transgressed with the full publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* as a separate book and when the “party line” vanished along with any other authoritative ideological frame – there was no new positive frame. The widespread negative sense of intellectual miscommunication mirrored by the public speech with the positive affirmation of the reader's exclusive right to judge is the double witness on the situation in which no ideological hegemony was possible.

In 1989, the acceptance of the two mentioned aspects of the freedom of speech – sense of miscommunication and individuals' superiority in judging on public matters – took a number of forms depending on ideological beliefs and political positions of authors who also tried to conjugate this new

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<sup>2</sup> The built-in logic of threats of sanctions relied on the precedents of applications; if the threats loose their credibility the system of control of public speech inherited by the USSR of Gorbachev stops working. See a detailed analysis and the application of this logic to perestroika in Rasma Karklins, “Explaining regime change in the Soviet Union”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.46, N1, (1994), pp. 29-45

approach with traditional soviet conventions in a number of different ways ranging from claiming their full identity to asserting their mutual exclusion. Several pro-perestroika authors from *Kommunist* and *Voprosi Filosofii* argued that freedom of discussions, pluralism and the right for differing views for individuals and groups were the genuine Bolshevik norms defended by Lenin and corrupted only after his death. In this perspective, the question of the practical compatibility between free criticism, stable factions and unity principles of the party was presumed to be easily solvable, even solvable by definition; the reasons for the political corruption of the regime were attributed to moral weakness of the post-Lenin leadership and personally to Stalin who was counterfactually blamed as the originator of the formal ban on factions:

An important aspect of the Leninist understanding of democratic centralism is the recognition of interests and the guarantee of the rights of minority... In the current *Statute* of CPSU the formulation of the principle of democratic centralism, which takes its origin in the Stalinist ideological tradition, gives no right for the minority to defend its positions after the decision has been taken. We think, granting such a right will not harm the organisational unity of the party, as far as it does not exclude, but by opposite, it supposes the unity of action in accordance with the taken decisions. The history of the Bolshevik party gives us a very instructive lesson in this respect...<sup>3</sup>

The two historians of IMLI then refer to the split maintained by Lenin and Bolsheviks at the IV (*Unifying*) party Congress against the current Menshevik majority which then had to concede and revise the “previously taken wrong decisions” under the Bolsheviks’ pressure. Hence, the authors conclude Lenin was in favour of the minority’s rights to express their disagreement. The argument could be more convincing, provided its defenders could integrate into this picture the post-revolutionary decision of the Bolshevik party to formally ban fractions after the Kronshtad uprising and if they could approve some one else but Lenin in his ability to persist against the majority. In the following issue of *Kommunist* the same year, P. Volobuev, O. Kuleshov and V. Shelokhaev echoed this selective reading by stating that “...Lenin considered as acceptable the coexistence within the party of different factions and trends (naturally assuming acute struggle between them), departing from the standpoint that associates have the legal right to develop the nuances in their views and political tactics”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> «Важным элементом ленинского понимания принципа демократического централизма являются учет интересов и гарантия прав меньшинства... В содержащейся ныне в действующем Уставе КПСС формулировке принципа демократического централизма, восходящей еще к сталинской идейной традиции, не предусмотрено право меньшинства отстаивать свои позиции после принятия решения. Думается, что предоставление такого права не нанесет ущерба организационному единству партии, ибо оно вовсе не исключает, а, наоборот, предполагает единство действий в соответствии с принятыми решениями. Обращение к истории большевистской партии дает в этом смысле весьма поучительный урок. Как известно, IV (Объединительный) съезд РСДРП, на котором численно преобладали меньшевики, принял по основным обсуждавшимся вопросам меньшевистские резолюции. Большевики, руководимые Лениным, подчинились решениям съезда, однако оставили за собой право критиковать те из них, которые считали неправильными. Последовательно отстаивая свои идейные позиции, подтвержденные вскоре практикой политической борьбы, большевики добились скорейшего созыва очередного V съезда и пересмотра ранее принятых ошибочных решений». В. Корнев, А. Рябов, «Некоторые уроки истории и современность», *Коммунист*, 1989, №15, с.35

<sup>4</sup> «Одна из острых проблем историко-партийной науки - проблема партийности и фракционности... Таким образом, Ленин считал возможным наличие в партии различных фракций и течений (предполагая, разумеется, острую борьбу между ними), исходя из того, что единомышленники, создавая их, имеют законное право развивать свои особые

Volobuev and his colleagues clearly related the methodological question of historical alternatives with the concepts of "party unity" and the "general line"<sup>5</sup>. These authors claimed that the very assumption of historical *alternative* was essential for meaningful political unity achieved as a result of honest and critical evaluations of different options and opinions on such options. This position corresponded to Gobrachev's own bet on his natural ideological leadership in the Party without institutional constraints. To this genuine unity they opposed the wrong Stalinist conception of unity and general line, which left no place for debates but only for the accusations against any other voices<sup>6</sup>. A renowned official theoretician of Marxism-Leninism, A. Butenko contrasted Lenin's democratic call for unity embracing all the diversity of party members' opinions to Stalin's unjustified transfer of the logic of class struggle into inner party relations<sup>7</sup>. Another early adopter of the new historiosophical approach in terms of the choice and the alternativeness, professor Mogilnitsky from Tomsk University, established a significant parallel between the wrongly understood principle of unity and Stalin's monopolisation of "truthfulness to Lenin's heritage". B. Mogilnitsky like many of his colleagues argued about the supremacy of the reference to classics over the unity understood as the monopoly of interpretation of classics:

Unity of the party in its Stalin's interpretation was proclaimed as the superior guarantee of the country's national security, while he himself gradually became its symbol. Moreover, persistently calling himself "true disciple and follower of Lenin", and calling all his political rivals – dissenters from Leninism – he had appropriated the exclusive right of interpretation of Lenin's heritage...

Mogilnitsky failed to see that the acceptance of the authoritative classics *and* of the organisational unity gradually leads to the ideological monopoly and hierarchy in interpretations or to organizational splits. From historical experience Mogilnitsky drew a new historical ontology of alternatives making it compatible with the unity principle. Choosing between such alternatives after a free debate would

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оттенки взглядов и тактики" О. Волобуев, С. Кулешов, В. Шелохаев, "Историко-партийная наука: условия развития", *Коммунист*, 1989, №16, с.41

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, с.43

<sup>6</sup> "Принципиальное значение имеет утверждающий себя метод анализа развития партии и вырабатываемого ею курса под углом зрения альтернативного подхода. Для историков партии этот метод особенно сложен, а в чем-то и дискомфортен, ибо он вступает в противоречие с такими догматически и формалистически трактованными ранее категориями, как "единство партии", "генеральная линия", "коллективная воля" здесь места для альтернатив просто не было, ибо любой веер альтернатив неизменно рассматривался как "уклон" или "оппозиция". Сегодня ясно, что альтернативный подход, в том числе и при изучении дальнейших периодов истории партии, просто необходим... То, что дискуссии в партии были пресечены сначала "кулачными", а затем "дубиночными" методами, в первую очередь ослабило саму партию, деформировав ее ленинские основы... Этим-то самым, а не сохранением превратно понимаемого "единства" партия и давала главный козырь противникам социализма, ибо в качестве "генеральной линии" был провозглашен курс, в сталинском исполнении фактически знаменовавший отход от ленинизма". О. Волобуев, С. Кулешов, В. Шелохаев, "Историко-партийная наука: условия развития", *Коммунист*, 1989, №16, с.43

<sup>7</sup> "Под видом выполнения ленинского завета об укреплении единства партии, а на самом деле подрывая демократические основы внутрипартийной жизни, И. Сталин перенес на ленинскую партию, на внутрипартийные отношения, на споры о путях социалистического строительства принципы и нормы классово-борьбы; тем самым он превратил дискуссии вчерашних единомышленников в расхождения возглавляемой им партии с политической оппозицией со всеми вытекающими отсюда последствиями такой квалификации, если учитывать запрещение в партии фракционной борьбы... ведь В. И. Ленин не только спорил со своими теоретическими оппонентами, но и сотрудничал с ними... заботился об отражении всего многообразия подходов и мнений в руководящих органах партии". А. П. Бутенко, «О социально-классовой природе сталинской власти», *Вопросы философии*, 1989, №3, с.67

allow genuine democratic unity and would guarantee proper consideration of the current “needs” of society:

[We need to provide] a guarantee of the free struggle between opinions on all major issues relevant for socialist society and therefore a guarantee of a possible victory of the alternative which corresponds to the current needs [*nazrevshim potrebonst'iam*]... After all each of the alternative opinions has its basis in the objective conditions of social life, reflecting certain trends of its development.<sup>8</sup>

### *Unity and freedom: the missed institutional mediation*

This new historiosophical analysis in terms of unity, choice and alternative, as well as the conception of democratic unity based on the genuine convictions and embracing of all social diversity ignored the practical problem faced by perestroika's actors and observers: what to do if the party members genuinely disagreed on a major issue and if persuasion did not work? Whether free expression of individual opinions is the necessary condition of the formation of parties and whether free debates necessarily lead to negotiated agreements between political stakeholders? Gorbachev boldly relied on his ability to lead the free debates without censorship, without direct control over editors and finally even advancing no articulated political position, but only tactical proposals. Revealingly, in his memoirs he dwelt upon his initial admiration and a later partial disillusion in Lenin's actual (in)ability to lead the debates exclusively by the superiority of his arguments, speeches and charisma. Gorbachev limited his fallback solution of how to regain control in case if he failed to convince the majority; when this happened, he consciously *limited* if not abandoned the use of administrative and military force as political tools. Thus, leading intellectuals and politicians of perestroika not only theoretically exposed their commitment to the ideal of persuasion, but practically confirmed their commitment. We can speculate as to what extent they expected and assumed the price they had to pay for it – the loss of political power and influence. In 1989 most Gorbachev's supporters and Gorbachev himself saw no big question in marring unity and liberty. In 1990 and 1991 this duo proved highly instable.

Prolonging *Kommunist's* search of liberal pluralism in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, philosopher V. Krotus referred to Engels' “rarely cited” passages in defence of freedom of press in Germany in 1892, and Lenin's defence of freedom of literature as the means to maintain the adequate social form of responsible social criticism<sup>9</sup>. Philosopher and later political analyst, V. Amelin advances that Lenin's position on pluralism within the party was close to that of Gramsci: in the discussion preceding the

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<sup>8</sup> “Единство партии в его сталинской интерпретации провозглашалось высшим гарантом безопасности страны, а сам он постепенно становился его символом. Более того, настойчиво именуя себя “верным учеником и последователем Ленина”, а всех своих политических соперников - отступниками от ленинизма, присвоив себе исключительно право толкования ленинского наследия”. “Ведь каждое из альтернативных мнений имеет свое основание в объективных условиях жизни общества, отражая определенный тенденции его развития”. Б. Г. Могильницкий, «Альтернативность в истории советского общества», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №11, с.11, с.15

<sup>9</sup> В. Кротус, «Презумпция историзма. Статья В. И. Ленина “Партийная организация и партийная литература” в контексте нового мышления», *Коммунист*, 1989, №11, с.25-26, 32



adoption of the resolution of X party congress Lenin would maintain the necessity to grant the party with the right of inner discord on "major issues"<sup>10</sup>. Otto Latsis at the round-table of historians and economists organized by *Kommunist* in 1989 gave a more nuanced historical account of this episode distinguishing Lenin's position from the position of most Bolshevik leaders. He raised the question why other Bolshevik leaders accepted the supremacy of the unity principle and its impact on the factual ban of critical debates, but finally he also provided no explanation why only Lenin and Stalin – in their position of *leaders* – could afford the disrespect of unity, and he did not explain how one can combine the two principles in the *present*:

Nevertheless, communists of that generation, independently of their platforms, considered as absolute the idea of the will of the majority, the idea of unity. Lenin, by the way, did not take this principle into account as much as others... For him unity was not something religious as for all others. But why did Bukharin obey Stalin? We still keep the representations about the X congress, about its resolution in unity corresponding to the level of a schoolbook drawing on the *Short Course*... This resolution then turned into Stalin's "baton". And then another dramatic turn occurred when after the end of the period of calm, in 1923 there were new decisions on inner party democracy taken under Trotsky's pressure... But new resolution did not work<sup>11</sup>.

However, the difficulty to take into account the then hot historical problem of the institutionalisation of unity and pluralism weakened the humanist socialism's position, probably less than the actual political consequences of the very recognition of the right to open criticism. Whether these principles were indeed supported by Engels or Lenin mattered less, than their impact in the context of the economic problems, the raising nationalism and the revelations on the state crimes of the past. Indeed, only two years after the Soviet liberal reformers started to claim Lenin's commitment to free criticism, the charge against Marxism-Leninism for the country's multifaceted crisis became a common place<sup>12</sup>. In this context, by the end of 1990, a group of social thinkers united at the round-table "Whither Marxism?" opposed the blind condemnations of Marxism and... praised its originally critical drive as its main contribution. In this late and modest defence of liberal Marxism, there was no more pretension to

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<sup>10</sup> "Необходимо отметить определенную близость идей А. Грамши ленинским взглядам, особенно последних лет его жизни. Сошлемся на такой пример. При обсуждении резолюции о единстве партии на X съезде РКП (б) В. И. Ленин в ответ на поправку Д. Б. Рязанова о решительном осуждении выборов на партийный съезд по платформам заявил, что эта позиция неправильна. "Лишить партию и членов ЦК права обращаться к партии, если вопрос коренной вызывает разногласия мы не можем" (П.С.С. т.43, стр. 112). При этом основание невозможности закрепить единство партии раз и навсегда декретом В. И. Ленин усматривал в непрерывно развитии партии, которая, чтобы адекватно реагировать на различные ситуации, должна постоянно изменяться". В. Амелин, *Коммунист*, 1989, № с.30

<sup>11</sup> "Вопрос о субъективном факторе мы не должны сводить к анализу свойств одной личности. Здесь все понятно и даже не столь интересно. Все-таки у коммунистов того поколения, вне зависимости от их платформ, идеи единства, признания воли большинства возводились в абсолюте. Ленин между прочим, с этим в такой степени никогда не считался... Для него единство не было каким-то религиозным представлением, как для всех. Но почему подчинился Бухарин Сталину? У нас до сих пор представления о X съезде, его резолюции о единстве сохраняются на уровне хрестоматии времен "Краткого курса"... Эта резолюция X съезда превратилась потом в "дубинку" Сталина. И еще - драматический поворот, когда закончился период "штиля" и возникла дискуссия 1923, когда появляются новые решения о внутрипартийной демократии" Троцкий продавил резолюцию "если мы не имеем многопартийной системы, то должны иметь внутри партии такую систему, которая позволит обеспечить выражение различных социальных интересов в рамках единой партии", но резолюция не работала». О. Лацис, «Экономика и политика в уроках "великого перелома"». Круглый стол историков и экономистов», *Коммунист*, 1989, №5, с.103

<sup>12</sup> We focus on the ways this charge was formulated and less successfully dismissed in the next chapter.

rule the state on its basis, but a mere evocation of the initial critical spirit as its still valuable component<sup>13</sup>. Whither Marxism-Leninism!

Throughout these variations we can trace a general convergence towards the new understanding of the proper rules of public debates: free criticism and personal opinions were welcomed as the supreme norms, both by those who could benefit and by those who actually lost from their application. Authors often related and tried to combine the principle of unrestricted criticism with the Soviet unity rule thus revealing both the significance of the later and its obscurity for most perestroika authors who ignored its historic impact on the political system, but used its original idioms from the party *Statute*. Resuming the common position, we can schematically present it in the following form: the unity rule should be correctly used and should not downplay the right of criticism. This relative failure to address the issue of the compatibility of the two ideas revealed the weak *institutional* traditions of Soviet and Russian political thought focused on the morally due or on the historically inevitable – not on the practically feasible and reasonably good institutions.

The connection between the arguments used in the historical debates and the endorsement of the new norms of public debates in this period was striking. As in other cases, historical analysis was called to be the ultimate way to assess an institution, an ideology or a regulative norm. Political actors and publicists stated that the imperative of “pluralism” and “free critical exchange of opinions” relied on the lessons learned from the bitter historical experience when these rules were ignored. The future president of the Russian Constitutional court, one of the authors of the Russian constitution and by then a professor of law, Valentin Zorkin, expressed this common idea with clarity; he also incidentally linked pluralism and free debates with scientific norms:

And finally, probably, the most important historical lesson for our society in the light of the growing force of democratisation: dynamic development of society, as that was in 1920s, is only possible in the context of socialist pluralism, free exchange of opinions in the domain of science as well as in the domain of politics<sup>14</sup>.

As is evident in the publications of the first years of perestroika, the rhetorical transfer of the scientific standard of free criticism into the political sphere constituted the common argument in favour and also the main form of expression of freedom of speech. The transfer was motivated and enforced by the quest of individual integrity commonly lost in the Soviet doublespeak and practice. Reformers and their active supporters among intelligentsia counted to overcome the ideological alienation and obtain better politico-economical recipes for the country once these scientific principles were fully adopted. The rising tide of historical and historiosophical discussions dating from 1987-1988 continued with the

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<sup>13</sup> В. В. Межуев, С. Чернышев, К. Момджан, «Умер ли марксизм. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №10, с.45-46

<sup>14</sup> «Наконец, самый, пожалуй, важный в свете набирающей силы демократизации нашего общества урок истории: динамичное развитие общества, как это и было в 1920е годы, возможно только в условиях социалистического плюрализма, свободного обмена мнениями и взглядами, как сфере науки, так и в политике». Валентин Зорькин, «Советская правовая доктрина: опыт и уроки», *Коммунист*, 1989, №1, с.115

same intensity in the following years despite the emergence of new “competing” political, economic or social issues of high acuity. The defence of the right for the critical stance in this context naturally acquired a historical justification: criticism, pluralism and intellectual honesty appeared as the normative lessons of historical experience – devastating when these rules and norms were absent. Thus, in the theoretical articles published between 1989 and 1991 there were both explicit passages and bypassing remarks where critical discussion stands as the condition of the *scientific quest*<sup>15</sup> and where authors draw the similar conclusion on the benefits of critical pluralism in politics from *historical experience*<sup>16</sup>. The variety and the pathetic character of these passages indicate that at least in 1989 they are not yet the expression of a common place, but rather the newly assimilated rules and norms of public debates.

### *Some reservations about pluralism*

The new norm of pluralism in the public sphere had almost no opponents who would directly oppose it. The negative connotations appear as warnings against the inconsistent application of pluralism. In this period of maturation of public debates, a large number of the publicists from the Russian nationalist *Nash Sovremennik* denounced what they saw as asymmetry of different ideological trends in the access to the public or denouncing the non-scientific, self-interested and passionate deformations of pluralism. None of them would appeal to the unity rule or patriotism against pluralism as such. We will cite one atypical passage, closest to the direct challenge of the new pluralist rule to show its still limited character:

Pluralism – is a point of view, a conception, according to which reality – is a multitude of autonomous isolated entities, irreducible into the whole... in sociology pluralism serves to deny the common defining basis of society, it serves to justify the view of history as a flow of accidental events, therefore, it serves to reject the analysis of the objective laws of social life.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, the author of this self-made definition of the “initial meaning of the concept of pluralism”, Nikolai Fed', tells us more about his own way of thinking than about the genealogy of the concept.

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<sup>15</sup> «В обществе, где ученому заранее предписана охранительная позиция по отношению к существующей системе, общественная наука вообще невозможна. Она возможна лишь там, где общество перестает быть объектом священного почитания и восхваления и становится предметом научного анализа, а значит, и научной критики. Научность теории и ее критичность по отношению к действительности - взаимосвязанные вещи». В. М. Межуев, «Перестройка сознания или сознательная перестройка? Круглы стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №4, с.39

<sup>16</sup> Another typical example from a series: «Несомненно, что сегодняшний плюрализм, к которому наше общество еще только привыкает, должен быть глубже и осознанней, чем в 20-е годы, но есть вещи, особенно актуальные в современной обстановке. Речь идет, прежде всего, о культуре дискуссий, об уважении к оппоненту, о моральной недопустимости навешивания ярлыков и призывов к властям покончить с "зарвавшимся" противником в споре. Помнить о том, к чему это привело в свое время, - наш долг». А. Ковалев, «Плюрализм 20-х: из истории дискуссий о литературе и искусстве», *Коммунист*, 1989, №16, с.93

<sup>17</sup> "Плюрализм - точка зрения, концепция, согласно которой действительность - это множество самостоятельных изолированных сущностей, несводимых во что-то единое... в социологии плюрализм служит для отрицания единой определяющей основы общества, для взгляда на историю как на поток случайных событий, следовательно для отказа от анализа объективных законов общества". Н. Федь, «Послание другу или письма о литературе, продолжение с 6-ого письма», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №5, с.171

However, Fed' rapidly takes back his critical reconstruction of pluralism as a form of historiosophical agnosticism and notes that this is just the origin (which is important and may predict its destiny), but now "of course, the meaning has changed" and pluralism formally equates... "to the indicator of a life in a civilized society"<sup>18</sup>. Accepting this diffuse definition and its normative stance Fed's, as most authors of *Nash Sovremennik* reflecting on the contemporary morals and manners of polemic, bitterly denounce that pluralism is abused by one group supposedly dominating the public scene – "pushing, fussy heralds of pluralism"<sup>19</sup>. A. Kazintsev, V. Kozhinov, A. Shafarevitch, M. Atnonov or T. Glushkova in virtually each article expressed their concern with pluralism which allegedly was monopolised by "liberals" setting "all-human values" above national (and, shall we add, forgotten by most protagonists – class) interests.

In April 1990, a group of popular writers and publicists close to *Nash Sovremennik* addressed to the presidency and representative organs a collective appeal against the "unequal dialogue" between the Russian people supposedly represented by the authors and the unnamed "russophobic force" aggressively blackening Russian people and Russian history<sup>20</sup>. In support of the argument, the collective letter cites the ratio of 1.5 million patriotic copies of thick journals against 60 millions of russophobic copies, unwillingly showing their own unpopularity along with the alleged anti-Russian conspiracy in the distribution channels and the editorial boards<sup>21</sup>. In any case, the word *pluralism* often acquired a pejorative accent for this group of authors, but their claim was still to obtain an equal right for an open and honest "dialogue". How strong was the pledge to dialogue of this group? The editor's introduction to an essay of philosopher Arseniy Gulyga tried to set the right polemical frame when he found it appropriate to justify the "element of discussability" [*element diskussionnosti*] on the pages of *Nash Sovremennik* implying some unorthodox views of the newly introduced author as compared to the typical publications of the magazine. The editor expresses his hope, that despite some debatable ideas of A. Gulyga "the debate will be fruitful, as far as the authors are driven by the love of the homeland and by the desire to serve our Fatherhood"<sup>22</sup>. Tatiana Glushkova advances a similar idea of the common perimeter of values as the condition of free debates topically manifesting her historiosophical vision of politics:

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., с.172

<sup>19</sup> «напористые суетливые глашатаи плюрализма», Ibid. с.172

<sup>20</sup> «Не может быть равноправного диалога между народом, шельмуемым как нация "рабов", и представителями "высшей", привилегированной, "избранной" для господства и управления силой. Такие исходные принципы "диалога", восторжествовавшие в годы "демократической" перестройки, заведомо не предполагают для русских ни моральной, ни материальной, обеспечивающей реальное равенство базы. В этих условиях диалог клонится разве что к роковому поединку, в котором не будет победителей». В. Белов, Ю. Бондарев, А. Казинцев, Н. Федь и др., «Письмо писателей, деятелей культуры и науки России», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №4, с.144

<sup>21</sup> R. W. Davies suggested that the acerb anti-Semitism of the Russian nationalistic reviews found little public support. See R. W. Davies "History and perestroika" in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.128

<sup>22</sup> «Мы надеемся, что этот спор будет плодотворен, ибо авторами движет любовь к родной земле, стремление послужить Отечеству». Введение редакции к А. Гулыга, «Русский вопрос», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №1, с.168

Latynina [a well-know literary critic] supposes the possibility of a fruitful, really academic and mutually free "dialogue" in a fundamentally divided society, which loses its unity already on the most basic level – on the level of its supreme historical goal<sup>23</sup>.

A more moderate form of this kind of criticism of pluralism also sporadically appeared in *Voprosi Istorii* and *Kommunist*. The common argument condemns here the over-emotional or self-interested positions which contradict scientific standards<sup>24</sup>. These remarks confirm the crucial importance of the scientific paradigm of public debate for the acceptance of the practice of free speech under perestroika. Resuming these polemical reactions we can state that most authors praised and no one questioned the principle of critical debate and dialogue. But there were strong voices declaring that "under the flag" of pluralism *de facto* one point of view, for instance anti-Russian and liberal, took the dominant position, or that the general culture of discussions, as well as private interests did not allow a well reasoned collective search for truth. One can assume that, if more or less justified, this kind of remarks accompany the free debates everywhere. In case of perestroika they contributed to the general sense of chaos and miscommunication – which we will try to reconstruct in the subsequent section of the chapter along with the problem of the clash of values.

#### *Loosing fear and longing for integrity under full glasnost*

The word *fear* often occurring in the bypassing remarks on the undue practices in public debates reveals the hidden concern of many participants bearing the load of the old Soviet practices: "discussion which does not fear its own conclusions" [A. Butenko]<sup>25</sup>, "one should not fear the clash of opposed opinions" [V. Mezhuev]<sup>26</sup>, "no more fear to betray the principles" [editorial of *Kommunist*]<sup>27</sup> or else "I am afraid, indeed, of these writers who just recently wrote one kind of articles and today fearlessly write something opposite" [V. Kozhinov]<sup>28</sup>. In January 1991, Igor Dedkov could describe the signs of the time as "faint courage and faint truth"<sup>29</sup>. Fear to face the reality, fear of honest conclusions, fear of sanctions for uncommon view, fear of other's dishonesty and finally fear to betray

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<sup>23</sup> «Латынина полагает плодотворным, реальный академический, обоюдосвободный "диалог" в принципиально разделенном обществе, которое утрачивает единство уже на решающем уровне - в верховной своей исторической задаче». Татьяна Глушкова «О "русскости", о счастье, о свободе», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №7, с.177

<sup>24</sup> Ю. А. Дарский, В. С. Чулков, «Бездоказательных суждений не должно быть», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №1, с.183. Редакция, «Споры об Октябре вчера и сегодня. Круглый стол», *Кommunist*, 1990, №15, с.20

<sup>25</sup> Широкая дискуссия по этой проблеме, дискуссия, не боящаяся собственных выводов, существенно облегчила бы и решение вопроса о социально-классовой природе сталинской власти». А. П. Бутенко, «О социально-классовой природе сталинской власти», *Вопросы философии*, 1989, №3, с. 72

<sup>26</sup> «И не надо бояться столкновения порой противоположных мнений», В. М. Межуев, «Перестройка сознания или сознательная перестройка? Круглы стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №4, с.34

<sup>27</sup> «... Принятие Платформы ЦК закончило период "недомолвок" и "боязни поступиться принципами"». Ред. статья, «Партия не может быть вчерашней», *Кommunist*, 1990, №4, с.3

<sup>28</sup> «И я в самом деле боюсь литераторов, которые столь недавно писали такие статьи, а ныне безбоязненно пишут нечто прямо противоположное... Речь идет о литераторах, которые всегда безошибочно пишут и говорят именно то, что в данный отрезок времени выгодно». В. Кожин, «Самая большая опасность...», *Наш Современник*, 1989, № 1, с.143

<sup>29</sup> «мнимые смелость и правда», И. Дедков, «О «логическом винтике» и сорванной резьбе», *Кommunist*, 1991, №1, с.10

one-self form a gallery of semi-automatic fears which accompanied the liberalization of the public debates in USSR. In other words, Mezhev, Kozhinov and Dedkov put their doubt on whether the free debates in 1989 and even in 1991 were really taking place between free reasoning individuals, or they were driven by everybody's desire to fit the trend. These remarks are important markers of the same moral dissatisfaction which was one of the most significant factors contributing to the favourable reaction of the Soviet intellectual classes to perestroika. The new "party line" understood as the official criticism against the Soviet past and present stimulated those who actually were quite satisfied in the previous decades – to express grieves. These remarks witness at the difficulty to overcome the built-in fears, moral corruption or probably the *learned helplessness* in formulating strong personal position. Once, the new intellectual fashion was set, most people felt much easier to compete in the radicalization of criticism rather than in making a more reasonable and therefore convincing judgement. We can also see here the connection between the lack of integrity when speaking in public and the collective incapacity to face reality.

The other side of the quest of integrity after 1989 was more mundane and commonsensical; but it probably had a greater political impact by favouring the political rise of Boris Yeltsin. Mathew Wyman reports a very illuminating comparison of the way people perceived Gorbachev and Yeltsin as leaders in January 1991:

For Boris Yeltsin, the most commonly mentioned traits were 'openness and directness' (34 per cent), 'ambition and striving for power' (26 per cent), 'decisiveness' (24 per cent), and 'a willingness to consider the interests and moods of ordinary people' (19 per cent). For Mikhail Gorbachev, views were a great deal less complimentary, with 27 per cent saying 'two-facedness and hypocrisy', 20 per cent 'weakness and a lack of self-confidence', 19 per cent 'indifference to human suffering', and 18 per cent 'flexibility and skill at manoeuvring'.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, a more legitimate claim for power was linked with one's "directness and openness" as opposed to one's "two-facedness and hypocrisy". Yeltsin's ability to act and get hold of power was equally understood in connection with his frankness and his ability for compassion (!), while "weakness and a lack of self-confidence" were associated with Gorbachev's "two-facedness" and indifference to simple people. In other words, Yeltsin was seen as a fearless honest leader with a generous heart, while Gorbachev was seen as a faint-hearted politician.

As the other side of the fears to be true to one's self, there were also typical exclamations regularly reminding "one's own" or even "our common" *boldness* in publicly saying what "yesterday" could not be said because of the pending administrative sanctions (reprimand, dismissal, imprisonment). After the peaceful closing of Andreeva's case and with ever expanding horizon of accepted public criticism the public realized that even the censure of an author by the General Secretary did not imply censorship and sanctions against her. Fears and praises of one's boldness became a mere souvenir by 1990. Thus, the actual liberation of the public speech could not provide the sense of a genuine

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p.86

courage despite everybody's growing boldness? Yet, the censorship and sanctions were effectively annulled.

The two related factors contributed to the vanishing of these fears: first and foremost, the firm position of Gorbachev and his pro-reform allies - A. Yakovlev and V. Medvedev, committed to the non-intervention (with only two partial exceptions, Nina Andreeva and Vladislav Starkov, which is really surprising for such a revolutionary period), and second, the deep conviction of Soviet intelligentsia of the benefits and the rightfulness of critical debate. The growing self-reliance of the intelligentsia's politically active stratum encouraged by the firm defence from above was consolidated during the Congresses of People's Deputies. When the ongoing politico-economical crisis stimulated angry reaction against the destabilizing free press by several top party executives close to Gorbachev including N. Ryzhkov, A. Lukianov, E. Ligachev, V. Kryuchkov and even a "liberal" I. Frolov, the censorship orders were already disregarded by both the editors of the leading official editions and of *neformalnie izdani'a* circulating in thousands of copies<sup>31</sup>. According to L. Batkin, one of the leading perestroika publicists, the official centralized censorship lasted significantly less than the corporatist and informal censorship protecting few persons or organizations<sup>32</sup>.

Gorbachev personally trembled in his commitment to persuasion and glasnost only once - in early 1990, when after the publication of the first polls rating the Soviet politicians in the twenty million copies weekly *AiF*, he was given only fifth place after Yeltsin, Sakharov and other public figures. Gorbachev via the Central Committee ordered the dismissal of the defiant editor-in-chief Vladislav Starkov. The magazine's staff after a short hesitation opposed this decision and was helped first by a popular TV presenter V. Molchanov and then by the foreign media<sup>33</sup>. The General Secretary did not insist in his decision after the initial wrath passed. However, despite or rather *due* to this commitment to pluralism each year of perestroika the society was even more politically split and the authority of the central power dramatically diminished. This was the difficult learning how to openly discuss and criticise after generations of organizational unity protected by barely hidden violence. Socialist humanists headed by Gorbachev did not expect the negative effects of criticism on political authority of the reformers: serious economic difficulties and all the critical claims accumulated for decades amplified each other and undermined authority. First political order and then the state were disintegrating.

However, facing the negative results of free criticism Gorbachev seconded by V. Medvedev and pushed by A. Yakovlev assumed them and kept his commitment to glasnost as persuasion. A few

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<sup>31</sup> Б. Варецкий, *Шелест страниц как шелест знамен. Пресса России в трех политических режимах*, Информ-Форте, 2001, с.188-190

<sup>32</sup> One of the most known publicist of perestroika, M. Batkin reports that he have been constantly refused a critical article against the Union of writers of USSR until the end of 1990, while he could publish almost every thing critical on the political or ideological subjects. This attests that political censorship was abolished more rapidly than the corporatist solidarity of one of the most powerful intellectual corporation of writers in the Soviet Union. М. Баткин, *Возобновление Истории*, М. Московский Рабочий, 1991, с.15

<sup>33</sup> See a detailed account in David Satter, *Age of Delirium. The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2001, pp.267-269

months later, during the scrutiny of the warring results of the above mentioned elections to the Peoples Congress of Russia at a Politburo session, Ligachev supported Ryzhkov's complaints against the supposedly pro-reform press, which vehemently attacked reformers and Ryzhkov in person. Ligachev explained to his peers that the press became so aggressive: "[because] we applied no practical measure towards any press organ"<sup>34</sup>. In reply, Gorbachev quietly mocked his old ally and supposed that for comrade E.K. Ligachev "practical measures" meant "to fire, to dismiss, to exclude" implying the *obvious* unacceptability of this approach to the press<sup>35</sup>. Gorbachev's and Medvedev's presumably sincere but lukewarm calls and promises to frame the debates within "socialist pluralism" equated to Yakovlev's craftiness: his positive references to Lenin in public until 1990 combined with hidden support for a fervent criticism of Communist ideas.<sup>36</sup> None of the three men accepted coercion in public debates, and albeit with different degree of realism, all three were counting on the power of open persuasion.

The next practical step of the reformers in the guided dissolution of the administrative control on the media after the liberalization of censorship and the liberalisation of the subscription for the thick journals (in the Soviet Union the individual subscription for the press was limited in a variety of ways especially outside of Moscow; print-runs were equally assigned) on the threshold of 1988/1989 was the preparation and the adoption of the "Law on press" in force from 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1990 setting the most liberal frame for a genuinely independent press. Some commentators called this law "unique" or "miraculous" in this respect<sup>37</sup>. Significantly, the Communist party's "Committee on ideology" coordinated the preparation of this text otherwise lobbied by a group of lawyers and journalists – reflecting the emerging public consensus in favour of the right of free critical debates and open access to information<sup>38</sup>. In a letter dated February 1990, the head of Leningrad's department of Glavlit, N. Tsarev noted that considering the upcoming law "our supervising functions become a superficial administrative unit... transformed into a consultancy organisations"<sup>39</sup>. A local employee suggested a curious market model of censorship turning Glavlit into a self-funded [*khozraschetnoe*] agency providing free press services on a contractual fee basis in order to insure them against possible financial fines for the divulging of military and state secrets – the last domain of state control<sup>40</sup>. The new law banned all forms of censorship and announced the declarative character of registration for all periodicals with minimum conditions; the law also provided the editorial board with the right of collective "privatization". As a result, a large number of new editions were born in the following year of

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<sup>34</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны, 1985-2005*, АСТ-Астрель, М. 2007, с. 162-163

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., с.163

<sup>36</sup> Archie Brown misinterprets Yakovlev's position by implying that the later changed his mind and turned his veneration of Lenin into hatred during perestroika. It is clear from his numerous memoirs and his covert support of the most radical critics of Lenin that Yakovlev was a committed opponent of Lenin's political heritage from the beginning of perestroika. Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective*, Oxford, 2007, pp. 284-290

<sup>37</sup> See: М. Федотов, «Закон о печати как юридическое чудо», In *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007, с.463-502. Б. Варецкий, *Op. cit.*, 192-193

<sup>38</sup> The law planned already in 1986 has passed a number of dramatic changes; the final version reflected the consensual point – the legalization of the current practices, which were *de facto* extremely liberal. М. Федотов, *op.cit.*, с.467-493, с.494

<sup>39</sup> *Цензура в Советском Союзе 1917-1991. Документы*, РОСПЭН, М., 2004, сс.548-549

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., сс. 549-550



perestroika organised by local Soviets, trade-unions, political organisations, cooperatives, communities of cities under regime of secrecy, diverse semi-official associations, and finally by self-standing individuals as in case of Egor Yakovlev's *Obshaya gazeta*<sup>41</sup>. The reviews and journals' editorial boards systematically attached to their mother-organisations voted their independence and then registered as autonomous editions founded by their editorial staff. This vogue of separations meant that the CPSU, Komsomol, and powerful professional Unions had formally lost their media influence<sup>42</sup>. The editors-in-chiefs already independent from any external pressure became legally independent. Here again, *AiF* of Vladislav Starkov took the lead. Emancipating from the status of media organ of the association "*Znanie*" the editorial staff found the newspaper anew. Since, if in a moment of doubt Gorbachev had decided to dismiss the editor, he would have no legal means.

### *The implications of the unity rule discussed*

The uneasy relation between unity [party] and pluralism [freedom] supposedly solved in the official doctrine of "democratic centralism" and by the optimistic "liberal socialists", remained at the heart of debates around the rise of Stalin's dictatorship, Lenin's failure to prevent it, and around the conclusions one should draw for the present. In our corpus of articles four authors *critically* analysed the normative call for unity and its inner contradictions with pluralistic norms drawing on historical experience: but none of them dared to dismiss it – except A. Yakovlev. Igor Klyamkin explicitly opposed the two principles judged practically incompatible "even under Lenin" and even more in contradiction under perestroika:

But over there, above us, even under Lenin with his enormous authority, pluralism (democracy) with unity could not live together well. And today they cope only until the moment, when democracy serves unity, as its housemaid, called to clean the house from garbage. But when it raises its head and allows itself to judge about the house-owner, she is quietly punished<sup>43</sup>.

As we know now, the rehabilitation of the repressed democracy along with the foundations of the Administrative System leads to all kinds of unexpected upheavals not only from below, but at the very top, which is considered as an assault on unity (even by very pleasant and descent people)<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Б. Варецкий, *Op. cit.*, с.194

<sup>42</sup> М. Федотов, *Op. cit.*, с.498-499

<sup>43</sup> "А там наверху, даже при Ленине с его огромным авторитетом плюрализм (демократия) с единством не очень-то уживался. И сейчас уживается лишь до тех пор, пока демократия находится у единства на положении домработницы, взятой для выметания сора. Когда же она поднимает голову и позволяет себе высказаться о домохозяевах и о том, как они ведут хозяйство, ее ставят в угол". И. М. Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду? Выбранные места из истории одной болезни», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2, с.214

<sup>44</sup> "Как мы теперь знаем, реабилитация репрессированной демократии при сохранении фундамента Административной Системы ведет ко всякого рода незапланированным выступлениям не только внизу, но и на самом верху, которые воспринимаются как покушение на единство (даже очень приличными и симпатичными людьми)". *Ibid.*, с.216

Klyamkin got it wrong for the house-owner's reaction (Gorbachev's call for *unity* in Andreeva case did not imply *coercion* and he did not dare to send democracy away when clearly endangered by it), but he was right on the instability of coexistence of the two rules and the Gorbachev's personal presumption of their full compatibility. Convictions of the leader in regard of coercion mattered as much as the structural instability of the open criticism in the situation of crisis in a mono-organisational society with corresponding rules and conventions of public debates – in a society without pre-existing institutional channels for divergent positions. Open criticism especially in the period of economic difficulties destabilized the authority of the single ruling body incarnating the unity, but this criticism did not create new lasting institutions and new stable authority.

Andranik Migranyan, an influential self-made political consultant, questioned the repetitive calls for “genuine political unity” masking the growing but unarticulated divergence of social interests – instead one should seek alliances between the active groups under the guidance of an enlightened authoritative leader<sup>45</sup>. This perestroika's Machiavelli, combining pragmatic cynicism with passionate humanist ideology, warned against the rosy expectations of a rapid democratic transformation of the USSR referring to the historical experience of France and Italy – responsible authoritarianism was the only realistic “European path” to democracy, he argued against the vast majority of perestroika's publicists and commentators<sup>46</sup>. In other words, Migranyan saw in the contemporary calls for unity political weakness of those who seek the impossible consensus. The bare rhetoric of unity in the context of free criticism and without “certain limitations of democracy”, Migranyan argued, would lead to the loss of reformers' authority over the frustrated and impassioned population looking for a strong and reliable man, not for pluralism<sup>47</sup>. This offered a generally accurate prognosis for the upcoming two decades. These two authors portrayed the unity rule if not as erroneous or unjust, but surely as unrealistic. A. Yakovlev made his deep conviction in this respect public in 1990 and also referring to the practical unfeasibility rejected the unity rule as irrelevant:

On the unity. Well, first of all, in the name of what? And can there be unity in the political and scientific life? Presumably, not. The world is united in all its contradictions. Where should unity be? In the common understanding that we want to live freely in a democratic and humanist society. Let's discuss all the rest...<sup>48</sup>

In the summer 1989, Ligachev proposed to adopt a resolution “On Party Unity” at an important gathering of the CPSU first secretaries, but this proposal did not find enough support among his

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<sup>45</sup> "Если попытаться подытожить, почему мы качаемся, но не двигаемся с места, то следует отметить, что в обществе не сложился союз необходимых сил сторонников перестройки и согласованных действий между ними. Конфликт и противостояние в обществе пока что происходят под прикрытием призывов к полному единству" А. Мигранян, «Долгий путь к европейскому дому», *Новый Мир*, 1989, № 7, с.181

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-167

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, с.169, с.183

<sup>48</sup> «О единстве. Ну, во-первых, во имя чего? И может ли быть вообще единство в политической и научной жизни? Пожалуй, нет. Единый и целостный в своих противоречиях мир. В чем должно быть единство? В понимании того, что мы хотим жить в свободно в демократическом и гуманном обществе. Об остальном давайте спорить...», А. Яковлев, «Социализм: мечты и реальность», *Коммунист*, 1990, №4, с.16

comrades<sup>49</sup>. One year later, discussing the party platform on the eve of the XXVIII Congress, Ligachev in vain called on Politburo members to reaffirm the new edition of the infamous resolution of X Party Congress adopted in 1921<sup>50</sup>. By the end of 1989, A. Levinson, a leading sociologist from the first Soviet sociological agency VTsIOM, analysed the replies to an instructive question of a poll. The sociologists' question in the poll timidly but consistently deconstructed the unity over dissent rule almost paraphrasing the wordings of the party *Statute's* dilemma on the debates within the party. The answers of the Soviet citizens surprised the organisers of the poll:

When we asked voters, whether the majority was always right, and what is more important – unity of all the forces or the possibility for each group to defend its opinions, the ratio of answers was the following: 23-27% in favour of the first position and 62-65% in favour of the second. We saw for the first time, that much more people tend to “radicalism” than we used to think<sup>51</sup>.

At this round-table one could easily sense that Alexey Levinson shared the unexpected radical majority's rejection of unity over dissent rule. We can also note that this already very popular position was still qualified as “radicalism”. In other words, the perceived rightfulness of the unity rule under perestroika seems to be due not only to censorship, party rules or the opinion of the majority but may be due to the underlying understanding of the rightfulness of this rule *per se*. Beyond the conservative trend, the attractiveness of the unity principle was also manifest in later attempts in the chaotic 1990 and 1991 to re-appropriate the definitively lost Soviet norm under new names of *consensus* [Gorbachev, Medvedev<sup>52</sup>] or *sobornost* [Potapov], as an attempt to build a genuine and voluntary unity sensible to everyone's particularity.

Thus, in his article entitled “The battle with Leviathan” a literary critic reviewed the ideological components of contemporary fiction and qualified it as allergic to the very use of the single number (!) automatically associated with totalitarianism and state Leviathan. He then reflects on the impossibility of “ideological unity” which historically served to mask domination<sup>53</sup> and suddenly concludes his exposition with a sophisticated criticism of liberalism and democracy, which is finally transformed into a self-conscious and cautious utopia of *Sobornost* [“co-unitarianism”] oscillating somewhere between the Habermas' regulative ideal of communication and the call for self-limitation all dressed in Orthodox terms:

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<sup>49</sup> В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, М., Жизнь и Мысль, 2005, с.129

<sup>50</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., *По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991)*, М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.544

<sup>51</sup> Когда мы спрашивали избирателей, всегда ли право большинство и что важнее – единство всех сил либо возможность каждой группы отстаивать свое мнение и т.п., соотношение ответов было таково: 23-27 % в пользу первой позиции и 62-65 % в пользу второй. Мы впервые увидели, что к “радикализму” тяготеет больше людей, чем можно было предположить”. А. Левинсон, «Общественный выбор. Круглый стол социологов», *Коммунист*, 1989, №12, с.30

<sup>52</sup> See as an example: «Историческое сознание общества - на уровень задач перестройки», Совещание историков с членом политбюро, член-корреспондент АН СССР, В. А. Медведевым, *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.22-23

<sup>53</sup> «Собственно, претензия на моноидеологичность, на «идейное единство» общества, всегда была именно претензией власти и одним из ее мифов, но когда вспышка энтузиазма, недолгая эйфория хрущевской оттепели сошла на нет... стало ясно, что симфония с властью невозможна и необходимо размежевание». Владимир Потапов, «Схватка с Левиафаном», *Новый Мир*, 1991, №1, с.232

As a matter of fact, there could be a much more collectivist spirit [unacceptable for the current individualism] in democracy when the majority “mechanically” wins over minority. But *sobornost* which is not “interrupted” by votes, but continuing until the full consent, taking into account the autonomy of minority’s views, ultimately – each personality. In other words, each person exists within *sobornost* alike, as Russian religious philosophers explained, the co-existence of each of three persons in the Holy Trinity.

In any case, the idea of *sobornost* could be shared by all, - at least as a “project”, as an ideal... Assuming that there is a variety of ideologies and that they often speak different languages, probably, there is no sense to insist on the very term “*sobornost*”. The implied idea of consent via voluntary self-limitation – is of course, just a distant goal, towards which one should gradually approach...<sup>54</sup>

This curious position is quite typical for the late perestroika phase when most authors proposed their original but short-lived cocktails of ideas. The exploration of the Slavophil ideal of the Russian *sobornost* as a means to palliate for the lack of unity specifically translated both the attractiveness of the ideal of political unity and the realization of its practical unattainability within the existing institutional and ideological frames. More fundamentally, the ideal of *sobornost* incarnated the organic fusion of one’s inner Christian freedom of convictions and binding collective decisions.<sup>55</sup>

### *The ghosts of unity*

In 1989-91, the ideological disarray was compounding the organizational disarray of the party-state. Most people were not ready to pay the price of unity by sacrificing one’s convictions for a more general cause; similarly, there were no new ideological alliances in the theoretical debates. The new political networks formed behind the scene and without prior ideological debates. The display of the ideological unity in public was no more possible in the given intellectual and political context. Under the pressure of the radical members of the Congress of the Peoples’ Deputies threatening to raise the vague of demonstrations and strikes Gorbachev accepted to give up the 6<sup>th</sup> article of the USSR’s Constitution in exchange for the introduction of the institute of non-party Presidency; this step formalized the passage to the political pluralism in March 1990. The last CPSU’s Congress went under the fear of the party split that would “lead to disaster” adopted a very liberal programmatic document also modified the party’s Statutes; in its last version the party Statutes hesitantly allowed the formation

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<sup>54</sup> «На самом деле гораздо больше коллективистского духа может оказаться в демократии, при «механической» победе большинства над меньшинством. Соборность же, не «обрывающаяся» голосованием, а идущая до согласия, учитывает именно автономию взглядов меньшинства, в пределе – одной личности. То есть личность существует в соборности подобно, как не раз объясняли русские религиозные мыслители, существованию каждой ипостаси в Святой Троице.

Во всяком случае, идея соборности могла бы быть разделена всеми – пусть лишь как «проект», как идеал... Понимая, что идеологий много и говорят они подчас на разных языках, может быть нет смысла настаивать и на самом термине «соборность». Обозначаемая им идея согласия через добровольное самоограничение – это, конечно, лишь отдаленная цель, к которой следует идти...». Ibid., с. 235

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

of “platforms” but not “organized fractions”<sup>56</sup> while the main political theme of the Congress was the need of *consolidatsia* of the CPSU and society<sup>57</sup>. The unity rule proved unworkable, the country was splitting, Constitutional hegemony was lost, but the fractions were still unacceptable – this attests a deep cultural idiosyncrasy.

We can see that the erosion of the unity rule proceeded relatively slow; even at the end of perestroika it looked still attractive, however, there was a growing awareness of its current irrelevance – the common descriptions of the present state of debates in 1989-1991 were in terms of “chaos”, “disarray” or “liberalisation”, but never “unity” – and its incompatibility with the requisites of glasnost, pluralism, dialogue, critical debates or individualism. In this new context, Nina Andreeva could with total impunity establish an association, i.e. a fraction, called “Unity – for Leninism and communist ideals” in May 1989, pursuing her own personal vision of politics and deepening the organizational split within the party while claiming to restore its unity. Indeed, being true to one’s inner convictions and building political unity proved impossible although few actors noted the link<sup>58</sup>. The hot and passionate debates between organized platforms of CPSU took place at the last Party congress in July 1990, when the party lost control over the ideological, economic and political agenda. Stephen White empathically resumed the debates at Congress in the following words:

The mood in favour of conciliation was sustained by a fear that a party split would lead to a disaster... The danger of political disintegration, of anarchy and disorder, and of reversion to authoritarian rule was stressed by many delegates. A dominant theme which emerged during the Congress was the need of consolidation (*consolidatsiya*) of the CPSU and society<sup>59</sup>.

The ghost of the split and the rule of unity kept the most conservative members together with Gorbachev humanist-socialists, social-democrats and radical liberal “democrats” within the discredited CPSU until the later fraction had quitted<sup>60</sup>. Y. Prokofiev, the last first secretary of the Moscow party committee, in his memoirs offers an excellent illustration of the ambiguity in his relation to the unity principle: eagerly denouncing the hidden plans of Gorbachev to split the CPSU as “provocation”, he ends up approvingly citing the first secretary of the Polish Workers’ Party Jaruzelski that the only way to save the party was to allow the split between the betrayers and the true believers<sup>61</sup>. In other words, even when convinced in the tactical and strategic necessity of a split, a well disciplined and loyal party official could not see it otherwise as the treason. The reason why unity principle under different names remained attractive until 1991 is probably revealed in a penetrating article of V. Yaroshenko, an

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<sup>56</sup> See: Stephen White, “The politics of the XXVIII Congress”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.49, pp.52-53

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 50

<sup>58</sup> Н. Андреева, *Неподаренные принципы или Краткий курс истории перестройки*, Саранск, 1993, с.37-48

<sup>59</sup> Stephen White, “The politics of the XXVIII Congress”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, 1992, p.50

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Fifteen years after the events, Prokofiev as many of his peers, still did not decide whether the split was a provocation or a remedy; but he laments about those who messed up “the party” and “the country”, confesses his deep Orthodoxy and proudly mentions his successful business after CPSU: Юрий Прокофьев, *До и после запрета КПСС*, Алгоритм, М., 2005, с.95-97.

associate of Egor Gaidar and Boris Yeltsin, who was clearly not an ideological admirer of Bolsheviks: "The history of XX century has shown that the power lies in unity, not in number. Bolshevik party seized power in Russia with only 300 000 members. Today, CPSU has millions of members, but it has no power; as there could not be unity, when there is no goal"<sup>62</sup>. In other word, the respect of the unity principle created an agency capable of efficient collective action in history. Yaroshenko approvingly cited the idea that parties should be forbidden in all the state institutions defended in the recent essay of Solzhenitsyn. Does this imply that in fact there was no more need for political agency? Indeed, Yaroshenko closed his acute although fragmented article with the following summary: "Politicization of the ordinary people, of the whole life – it is like a fever, like an illness. Politics in fact is not real life, it is the sublimation of life; it is the substitution of deeds by words, of court's judgement by reprisal, of investigation by condemnation".<sup>63</sup> We will return to this article later on.

Solzhenitsyn's political treaty known in English under the title "Rebuilding Russia" and massively published in Russian in autumn 1990 among other issues addressed the theme of the appropriate place for political parties.<sup>64</sup> One of the strongest challengers of the Communist party power and its ideology, Solzhenitsyn proved quite sensible to the problematique of inevitably wicked factionalism that we identified as one of the pillars of the Soviet rules of communication and one of the typical concerns of the Early Modern political philosophy in Western Europe. Solzhenitsyn's democratic solution was different from both. For him the very idea of the representative party seemed as usurpation of the national whole – the representation by the parties' electoral lists was the cause of electoral manipulation, bureaucratic oligarchies and national split.<sup>65</sup> The unitary party professing a unitary ideology was unacceptable; however, the competition between the parties and fractions was unacceptable too. No fundamental issues related to "the fate of the state" can not be found on the "parties paths" and should be left to the parties, but only to responsible individual deputies competing in the by single-sit electoral districts around the country. Bolsheviks condemned the fractions;

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<sup>62</sup> В. Ярошенко, «Энергия распада», *Новый мир*, 1991, №3, с.175

<sup>63</sup> В. Ярошенко, *op. cit.*, с.187

<sup>64</sup> The total print run was 27 millions of copies – one of the most popular daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and literary weakly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* simultaneously published the treaty announcing the return of Solzhenitsyn in the contemporary public debates. Solzhenitsyn's new program received a vivid public reaction, it was especially provocative as the author was writing out of the context and was clearly stating his position which seemed both unusual and brutal. For instance, the very frame of the essay was challenging: for Solzhenitsyn the USSR was over and he was meditating on the future of Russian *beyond* the USSR. For the majority of the readers the end of the Soviet Union was far from obvious, although the Communist ideology was discredited. In 1990 his theses often seemed shocking, unacceptable or displaced despite his uncontested moral and intellectual authority; over time, many ideas of this treaty found their way to people's minds. А. Солженицын, «Как нам обустроить Россию. Посильные соображения», *Комсомольская Правда / Литературная Газета*, 18 сентября 1990.

<sup>65</sup> «... «Партия» -- значит ЧАСТЬ.

Разделиться нам на партии -- значит разделить на части. Партия как часть народа -- кому же противостоит? Очевидно -- остальному народу, не пошедшему за ней. Каждая партия старается прежде всего не для всей нации, а для себя и своих. Национальный интерес затмевается партийными целями: прежде всего -- что нужно своей партии для следующего переизбрания; если нечто полезное для государства и народа произошло от враждебной нам партии -- то допустимо и не поддерживать его. Интересы партий да и само существование их -- вовсе не тождественны с интересами избирателей. С. Крыжановский считал, что пороки и даже крушение парламентского строя происходят именно из-за партий, отрицающих единство нации и само понятие отечества. Партийная борьба заменяет где уж там поиск истины -- она идет за партийный престиж и отвоевание кусков исполнительной власти. Верхушки политических партий неизбежно превращаются в олигархию." А. Солженицын, *Op. cit.*

Solzhenitsyn condemned parties – partly on the similar grounds, but with radically different political consequences and already reflecting on the catastrophic Communist experience of XX century. More specifically, Solzhenitsyn deduced from these reflections that it should be forbidden to form “party groups” at all levels of the state representation in the future “Russian Union” – and this, to ensure the harmony between general People’s will and each citizen’s individuality and his personal *opinions* opposed to partial parties *ideologies*.<sup>66</sup> If the freewill unity of the Russian nation was to be attained, parties, fractions and group dissent were unacceptable. Leninist norm of the party’s unity around the leader was initially seen as a hard pledge of its efficiency; by the end of perestroika it survived as a utopian ideal of a wholesome polity without mediation.

*The hierarchy practically broken and theoretically discredited*

The conventional *hierarchy* in public debates and in the social sciences became in the last years of perestroika an object of a direct criticism. In the Soviet context the respect of hierarchy played a stabilizing function eliminating the ground for a possible ideological-organizational split. The built-in strict hierarchy between political leadership and social scientists reflected the general model. Strategic ideas and positions taken by the leader in the official party documents served as benchmarks for other public figures, social scientists and publicists who could otherwise hide their intentions in Aesopian language or almost freely discuss other issues as far as they were not already treated by the superiors in the ideological hierarchy. The counter-influence of scientists and publicists on the party leaders also played a minor role under Stalin and significantly grew under Brezhnev who had no ability to write any theoretical texts<sup>67</sup>: speechwriters and some academicians personally close to the party leadership could influence the agenda and propose their own views articulated and signed by their superiors<sup>68</sup>. The crucial feature of this backward movement of influence consisted in the fact that it took place *behind* the public scene – and never in public or without prior consultation.

The first public challenge to Gorbachev and Politburo made by Yeltsin at the party Plenum in the end of 1987 shook both the hierarchy and unity rules. The reaction was traditional and firm – the rebel was removed from his position as first secretary of Moscow’s party organisation. Ligachev’s attempt to build the opposition to or most probably to adjust Gorbachev’s ideological line signalled the next public challenge when a modest teacher pedagogically reminded the General Secretary his own words and principles which he was going to forget. This time Gorbachev made his position clear and enforced the unity norm to influence his peers in the Politburo, but he did not dismiss or persecute the editors of *Sovetskaya Rossia*, Nina Andreeva or Ligachev. This implicit signal was stronger than words for those who respected the rules and conventions out of fear rather than out of inner conviction in their rightfulness as this was the case for most Politburo members. Live TV transmissions of the Congress

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<sup>66</sup> «Соперничество партий искажает народную волю. Принцип партийности уже подавляет личность и роль ее, всякая партия есть упрощение и огрубление личности. У человека -- взгляды, а у партии -- идеология.», Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> А. Колесников, *Спичрайтеры*, АСТ, М., 2008, с.29

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. с.32, с.56-60

of People's Deputies sessions where General Secretary could be challenged by any Deputy started in June 1989 and broke away the already undermined hierarchy<sup>69</sup>. Liberal reformist V. Medvedev reports in his memoirs how one month after the end of the first People's Deputies Congress the Prime Minister N. Ryzhkov had criticised Gorbachev's and Politburo's policy at the conference of all the first secretaries representing the party's most influential stratum<sup>70</sup>. Vadim Medvedev felt concerned and tried to reframe and limit this kind of public criticism against the leader and at the next Politburo session he suggested that "when criticising the leadership by the PB members certain ethical norms should be respected"; criticism should be made first within the PB and only if this did not give the result, "one could appeal to a wider audience"<sup>71</sup>. This was a more liberal articulation of the established practice existing before perestroika. But colleagues including Gorbachev simply ignored this proposal re-iterating the convention assumed by default only one year earlier and now losing its credit. A letter sent to *Kommunist* in 1990 attests the reader's unease with the fact he reported to the editors: the last theoretical article "Socialist idea and perestroika" written by Gorbachev left no traces – most Communists as well as their opponents uncared for the article<sup>72</sup>. In this period, the theoretical and ideological debates lose a visible structure of the protagonists and their relative weights: *De facto*, any respect of the ideological hierarchy ceased by mid 1989, approximately at the same time when philosopher D. Olshansky tried to analyse the historical origin of the conventional hierarchy of power and ideas:

On the background of almost total illiteracy in Russia the advancement of somehow educated people was natural. However, the use of authority of the knowledge [of history] became unnatural way of usurpation of power and of the right to decide for all the others. This followed a simple logic: namely due to one's advantage in knowledge of Marxism (understood as the closeness to the Original Source, which actually was measured by one's place in the pyramid of power, not by the knowledge); hence the representative of the System were in their right to guide millions even if they resisted... let us repeat [this was true] not only for Stalin, but also for Lucaks, Trotsky and others<sup>73</sup>.

The unmasked hierarchy convention as the core Bolshevik rule in the public sphere, received little arguments in its support as well as it lost its practical sense. Let us cite two complementary episodes from a typical round-table of social scientists and philosophers which took place in March 1989. Philosopher V. Mezhev dressed his criticism against the bureaucratic "administration of thought" with a quote from Lenin: "We understand well the meaning of Lenin's saying "Don't command!"... The

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<sup>69</sup> See: В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с.349

<sup>70</sup> Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева, Взгляд изнутри*, М., «Былина», 1994, с.115

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, с.116

<sup>72</sup> «... проявляется едва ли не равнодушие к документу, которые может стать основой для новой Программы партии. По-видимому, это не случайно. Для части членов КПСС, исповедующих социализм сталинского толка, эта статья является политической ересью. Другая часть, возможно, ее просто не читала». «Социализм. Настоящее и будущее», Письма-отклики на наши публикации, *Коммунист*, 1990, №3, с.83

<sup>73</sup> «На фоне почти поголовной безграмотности России выделение хоть сколько-нибудь образованных людей было естественным. Неестественным стало использование авторитета знаний для узурпации власти, права решать за всех остальных. Однако это произошло согласно простой логике: именно в силу преимущества в знании марксизма (близости к Первоисточнику, которая реально измерялась, конечно же, не самим знанием, а местом в пирамиде власти) получалось, что представитель Системы вправе вести за собой миллионы, даже если они тому сопротивлялись... повторим, не только Сталин, но и Троцкий, Лукач и др». Д. Ольшанский, «Социальная психология "винтиков"», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №8, с.98.



administration of thought is the most dangerous and the most disgusting kind of administration". Mezhuiev then opens his cards and exposes the motivation of his previous quote: "Whom to blame for the stagnation in our theoretical thought – theoreticians, philosophers or those bureaucrats... which had the power over the whole social science?"<sup>74</sup>. Thus, several other authors denounced the hierarchy rule as a means to diminish social scientists' responsibility – as they were suddenly accused by the leadership for years of non-productive and repetitive work. Ironically, in one of the following remarks, the organizer of the round-table, V. I. Tolstykh attempted to reactivate the hierarchy convention; and even better than Mezhuiev's condemnation of this practice he unwillingly attests its current irrelevance. Tolstykh self-critically highlighted the responsibility of social scientists along with the responsibility of bureaucrats for the theoretical stagnation, and concluding his self-criticism he pointed out that "our social scientists still did not provide any profound philosophical and politico-economical reflection on the program of perestroika which is outlined in the well know party decisions"<sup>75</sup>. Tolstykh actually called to reproduce the hierarchical scheme he had just condemned, but which as it follows from his remark did not function any way – scientists still did not provide any reflection or commentary "on the program of perestroika" because the program suddenly seemed irrelevant. Redirecting the criticism of intellectual hierarchy against the new opponents, T. Glushkova accused the "cruel law of hierarchy" in the camp of liberals where "young should obey to the old ones"<sup>76</sup>. The criticism of the irrelevant ideological hierarchy when even the ideas of the party leader received no particular attention implied that the power and the influential ideas had become divorced.

As mentioned, this divorce was made more tangible by the revocation by the People's Deputies of the 6<sup>th</sup> article of the Brezhnev's constitution explicitly granting the Communist party "the leading role" in USSR. Moderate socialist and quasi-dissident Roy Medvedev exposed with rare optimism the new format of the CPSU' leadership based on persuasion and renewal of the social science despite the pervasive political and theoretical crisis (fully acknowledged in his previous paragraph):

Now the party will influence the development of all sides of society's life not via the multitude of resolutions, orders and coercion, but via persuasion... Under these conditions, Communists should constantly prove the rightfulness of their conceptions. And this will be possible first of all on the basis of a multilateral dialogue and... deeply connected to the socialist conception of the social sciences<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> "Мы хорошо понимаем смысл ленинского "Не смей командовать!"... Нельзя насильственно навязать человеку идеологию, отрицающую насилие. Это противоречит самой сути этой идеологии... Администрирование в сфере мысли - самый опасный и отвратительный вид администрирования" результат экономический застой. И кому теперь предъявлять обвинение в застое мысли - теоретикам, философам или тем бюрократам... которые имели власть над самой общественной наукой?". В. М. Межуев, «Перестройка сознания или сознательная перестройка? Круглы стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №4, с.32

<sup>75</sup> «Наши обществоведы до сих пор не дали глубокого философского и политэкономического осмысления программы перестройки, социальный и политический смысл которой раскрыт в известных партийных решениях». В. И. Толстых, «Перестройка сознания или сознательная перестройка? Круглы стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №4, с.37

<sup>76</sup> Татьяна Глушкова, «О "русскости", о счастье, о свободе», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №7, с.169

<sup>77</sup> «Теперь партия будет влиять на развитие всех сторон жизнедеятельности общества не путем всевозможных резолюций, приказов и принуждения, а посредством убеждения... В этих условиях коммунистам необходимо постоянно доказывать правоту своих концепций. И в первую очередь через всесторонний диалог... тесно связанный

This seemingly naïve view of the party “as ideological vanguard” was fully shared by M. Gorbachev who in his speeches and most importantly, by his deeds confirmed his faith that the power of a “real vanguard party lies not in issuing orders, but in influencing minds”<sup>78</sup>. Gorbachev counted on his ability to exercise power and conduct reforms by inspiring the right kind of ideas; but he also refused to specify solutions, trying to escape the new *dogma*, instead, he saw his own and his party’s role in giving the general direction of reforms just by affirming humanistic values and creating conditions for socialist pluralism. During the official meeting with historians and social scientists V. Medvedev as the CPSU ideologue already knew about the upcoming formal loss of the party’s “leading role” and incidentally assessed the efficiency of persuasion in an anticipated response to both, his optimistic hewing Roy Medvedev and to an unnamed pessimist who saw the party’s real role in a sharp decline:

There was an opinion voiced that the victory in an ideological fight is impossible. Indeed, some speeches and articles will hardly change others’ way of thinking. But this does not mean that there should not be benchmarks in an ideological discussion. This does not mean that consensus [with the party’s critics] should be achieved on the unprincipled basis<sup>79</sup>.

But there was also a backward movement and constant calls for the need for more guidance. Early in 1989, Secretary of the Academy of Science, I. Kovalchenko denounced the dogmatism, illustrativity, factuality, and the theoretical dependence of certain historians still expecting that the “key judgments will be made in the official party documents”<sup>80</sup>. The academician, whom we just have cited praising the independence of scientists in 1989, slightly changed his mind in 1990 when he was present at the same meeting with Vadim Medvedev. Dissatisfied as many of his conservative colleagues<sup>81</sup>, with the party’s Secretary for ideology who provided no significant guidance, Kovalchenko complained: “The general situation on the ideological front is chaotic... On the key issues there should be a more developed position of CC CPSU. Scientists can agree or disagree with it, but it should be there and it should be known”<sup>82</sup>. In other words, not only the very principle of the ideological hierarchy lost its

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с социалистической идеей общественных наук». Рой Медведев, «Взаимосвязь идеологии, политики и общественных наук», *Коммунист*, 1990, №16, с.14

<sup>78</sup> Quoted by S. White: Stephen White, “The politics of the XXVIII Congress”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.59.

<sup>79</sup> «Прозвучало мнение, что победа в идеологической борьбе невозможна. Наверное, какими-то выступлениями, статьями трудно заставить человека думать иначе. Но это не означает, что не должно быть ориентиров в идеологической дискуссии. Это не значит, что консенсус должен достигаться на беспринципной основе». «Историческое сознание общества - на уровень задач перестройки», Совещание историков с членом политбюро, член-корреспондент АН СССР, В. А. Медведевым, *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.22-23

<sup>80</sup> «теоретико-методологическое иждивенчество, то есть упование на то, что наиболее принципиальные оценки прошлого и подходы к нему (особенно по истории советского общества и истории партии) будут даны не самими историками, а выражены в партийных и государственных документах». И. Ковальченко, ««Исследование истины само должно быть истинно», Заметки о поисках исторической правды», *Коммунист*, 1989, №1, с.86

<sup>81</sup> Analysing the debates on the XXVIII Party Congress, E. A. Rees qualifies V. Medvedev as “the much criticised Secretary for ideology”. E. A. Rees, “Nationalities Policy” in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.107

<sup>82</sup> «Общее положение на идеологическом фронте, по мнению И. Д. Ковальченко, можно охарактеризовать как состояние разброда. Без каких либо оснований и доказательств отвергаются коренные положения марксистской теории общественного познания... В этих вопросах должна быть более развернутой позиция ЦК КПСС. Ученые могут соглашаться или не соглашаться с ней, но она должна быть, и ее должны знать». *Ibid.*, с.6

credit; the top CPSU ideologue had *no agenda* in which he wanted to persuade his former subordinates and wider public, and on top of all that, he did not believe one could persuade others just with “some speeches and articles” any way. The chief party ideologue could only call the Soviet social scientists to “abandon dogmatism”, offer “deeper explanations” and make a “honest account” of the dramatic past and unrecognizable present “while strengthening our basic [socialist?] positions”.<sup>83</sup>

*“There is and there was no canon”*

Finally, the references to the canonical texts of the three classic authors of “Marxism-Leninism” constituted the natural pillar of the official ideology; public argumentation of any significant point naturally relied on such references. We argued in the second and third chapters that the classics played their role within a frame where two other norms of unity and hierarchy were accepted as superior to the classics’ citations – openly under Stalin, tacitly after his death. Between 1989 and 1991 the supremacy of unity rule lost its practical significance keeping some attractiveness; the respect of hierarchy had been totally eroded. The proper use of references to classics first became an object of public attention and three attitudes towards this convention, which were dominant in the final three years of perestroika, can be distinguished:

- a) *rediscovery* of the plurality of ideas and unpublished texts of classics,
- b) open *censure* of concrete ideas and positions of classics,
- c) *rejection* of the principle of the classical canon and authoritative citations.

The present order of exposition of these three attitudes roughly matches the key stages of re-evaluation and rejection of the legitimating reference to the canon backing the formal cohesion and authority of the ideology. One can enumerate the findings of the perestroika publicists and historians rediscovering the forgotten warnings, hidden passages, and promising but under estimated insights of Lenin, Engels and Marx. In 1989 these discoveries do not all converge with Gorbachev’s general line as was the case in 1988, although in most cases newly found classics passages confirm what can be described as moderate reforms aiming to transform the Soviet system into a more democratic and humanist socialism.

Engels’ criticism of “Prussian socialism” in *Anti-Duhring* and Marx’s criticism of “barrack socialism” helped the main revisionists such as Afanassiev, Butenko, Lisichkin, Frolov, Vodolazov or his more liberal PhD student Klyamkin, to dismiss the established regime with the direct authority of the classics<sup>84</sup>; Lisichkin used as a sub-title the Russian saying *Kak v vodu gladeli* (it could be translated as

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<sup>83</sup> «... нужны глубокие непредвзятые исследования, и новый взгляд на вещи, и окончательное искоренение прежних представлений и догм. Вместе с тем делать это надо так, чтобы укреплялись наши основные позиции». Ibid.с.5

<sup>84</sup> See: Г. Лисичкин, «Мифы и реальность» in Осмыслить культ Сталина, М. Прогресс, 1989, especially с.273-283. А. Бутенко, «О социально-классовой природе сталинской власти», *Вопросы философии*, 1989, №3; И. М. Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду? Выбранные места из истории одной болезни», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2. Г.Г. Водолазов, «Ленин и Сталин», *Октябрь*, 1989, №6. The importance of this move was also manifest in the personal interview made in the framework of our research in 2004 with O. Latsis. Having social-democratic self-presentation and

“they had told us!”) referring to classics’ ability to foresee the Stalinist deviations. In an open reference to Stalin, Butenko reused Marx’s forgotten distinction between two kinds of power usurpation: “normal class domination” and “domination of an adventurer pretending to be the all-classes saviour”<sup>85</sup>. The previously unpublished Marx’s letter to Vera Zasulich where Karl Marx dwelt upon the possibility to base socialism upon the Russian peasants’ *obshina*, skipping the capitalist stage, gave to some people reasons to believe that bloody collectivisation could be avoided, had the letter have been published earlier and to others it gave additional arguments to inculcate Marxism for the misfortunes of Russia<sup>86</sup>. The specialists of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism prepared the first Soviet publication of Marx’s *Revelations of the Diplomatic history of 18<sup>th</sup> century* ; the central theme of Russia’s backwardness and especially “anti-Russian” remarks still bear the taste of sensation, but the editorial made no political use of them<sup>87</sup>. Attempting to set the ideological benchmarks after the political destabilization caused by the first Deputies Congress, M. Gorbachev wrote the above mentioned article on the “Socialist idea and revolutionary perestroika”; his commitment to Lenin and founding fathers was already expressed in loose terms emptied from any bounding or specific content: “We act according to Lenin. And acting according to Lenin means inquire how the future will grow up from the present reality. And in accordance to this analysis build our plans”<sup>88</sup>.

The most significant discovery in the classic’s heritage made in this period by the Soviet leaders and the intellectuals revolved around the liberating formula that the classics left no recipes for socialism as opposed to Stalin’s schematic and arbitrary approach<sup>89</sup>. Lenin’s, Engels’, and Marx’s own words suddenly confirmed this point that “we don’t know and can not know now” how concretely socialism will find its way<sup>90</sup>. This formula played a double role of freeing the Marxism from the imputed *responsibility* for Stalinism but left the ideological field wide open, too wide to set any ideological backing for concrete *policies*<sup>91</sup>; classics were called to sanctify their own de-sacralisation to discharge them from responsibility for the present crisis and the crimes perpetrated in their name. The ultimate and common conclusion was thus well resumed in a simple formula: “one can prove anything with

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calling socialism “economic illusion” he spontaneously evoked Marx and Engels’s warning against the sliding from the collective to bureaucratic property.

<sup>85</sup> А. Бутенко, *op.cit.*, с.66-75

<sup>86</sup> Борис Итенберг, Валентина Твардовская, «Завершился ли диалог в "Диалоге"? К. Маркс и "русский путь"», *Коммунист*, 1989, №18, с.86-87

<sup>87</sup> Введение к К. Маркс, «Разоблачение дипломатической истории XVIII века» *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №1

<sup>88</sup> «Мы действуем по Ленину. А действовать по Ленину - значит исследовать, как будущее вырастает из нынешней действительности. И в соответствии с этим строить свои планы». М. Горбачев, «Социалистическая идея и революционная перестройка», *Коммунист*, 1989, №18, с.4

<sup>89</sup> «На самом деле у Ленина такой завершенной программы построения социализма не было» *Ibid.*, с. 8, see also с.5, с.7,

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, с.8

<sup>91</sup> "Вопрос об "ответственности марксизма" правомерен, на мой взгляд, лишь в отношении того, насколько последовательно применялись марксистские методы теоретического анализа действительности, когда в середине 20-х годов принимались стратегические решения, и прежде всего при обсуждении проблем построения социализма в отдельной стране. Тогда надо было ответить на вопрос: какой именно социализм возможен в данных условиях. Убедительного ответа не нашли. Это потянуло за собой целый ряд острых вопросов. Например, о соотношении нэпа и социализма" с.96; мешало особенно представление о "бестоварном социализме" В. А. Козлов, «Экономика и политика в уроках "великого перелома". Круглый стол экономистов и историков», *Коммунист*, 1989, №5, с.98

reference to classics” – used both to defend and to dismiss the classics<sup>92</sup>. This double use of the formula indicated that classics were becoming *intellectually* irrelevant for both, their numerous accusers and few defenders.

Before perestroika an open revision of the classics could only be made by the top of the ideological hierarchy and was traditionally presented as the “creative development” and “update to the new historical conditions”. The classics’ passages too openly contradicting current policies were ignored or even remained unpublished; the questions on the historical inaccuracy of their prognostics could not be raised. Accepting new norms of debates when all opinions could be questioned also meant opening the way for criticising the classics as an *organizing* ideological authority. The “scientific standard” enforced by reformers made the defence of the principle of the classics’ authority – very weak if at all present. We can review the classics’ key points which proved *intellectually* vulnerable in the eyes of perestroika’s publicists who made their rational disagreements explicit once their conventional authority was undermined: the prediction of the inevitable world revolution and the destruction of capitalism (instead, the long world competition between two systems, and the recent techno-scientific revolution driven by the capitalist countries)<sup>93</sup>; the numerical growth and the impoverishment of the working class (instead, fewer workers, and socially responsible capitalism), the generally linear and universal character of historical progress (instead, the victory of socialism in relatively backward countries, vitality of capitalism in most advanced and mixture in developing countries)<sup>94</sup>. Finally, from pointing at certain errors or faults, several authors publicly claimed that the classics and their pupils “*were constantly wrong*” in their views on capitalism, socialism, reliance on state property and in their views on politics, society and morality<sup>95</sup>.

The organizing function of the reference to classics as the basis of the party’s political platform was lost under the pressure of rationalistic and historical criticism, and due to the peculiar reluctance of the new leadership to formulate a new – be it only seemingly Leninist and actually incoherent reform agenda.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, the very idea of the classical Marxist canon became dubious and several authors deconstructed *Marxism-Leninism* as the tool of control over the classics’ heritage by

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<sup>92</sup> This is the opening phrase of the critical article by A. Tsypko in 1990: А Ципко, «Противоречия учения Карла Маркса», in, А.А. Протащик (сост.), *Через тернии*, М., Прогресс, 1990, с.60. Compare with a pro-Lenin’: «Ленинское наследие настолько обширно и богато, что в нем можно найти цитаты на все случаи жизни. Более доказательной мне представляется сама логика политической борьбы, в принципе исключавшей сколь-нибудь устойчивые комбинации большевиков с меньшевиками и эсерами». П. Черкасов, «Ленин или Корнилов?», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №2, с.263

<sup>93</sup> See: «Параллельное существование двух систем оказалось не просто кратким эпизодом, предвещающим скорую гибель одной из них, а длительным процессом трансформации того и другого строя... мы оказываемся свидетелями процессов, которые могут быть описаны лишь с помощью каких-то принципиально новых категорий. И от марксистов сегодня требуется определенная научная смелость, чтобы не только признавать факты, но и найти эти новые научные категории, осознать новые перспективы развития всего человечества». О. Лацис, «Эта клякса не считается», *Коммунист*, 1991, №1., с.38, с.39

<sup>94</sup> See: Е. Плимак, «В школе великих революций», *Коммунист*, 1989, №7, с.86-92

<sup>95</sup> А Ципко, «Противоречия учения Карла Маркса», in, А.А. Протащик (сост.), *Через тернии*, М., Прогресс, 1990.

<sup>96</sup> After 1989, Gorbachev and his advisors or allies could state their values, or enumerate the features of the society they envisaged; they also had some historiosophical backing of their ideals and values provided by the intellectuals believing in the convergence of socially responsible capitalism (ignoring the Reagan and Thatcher’s legacies) and market socialism; but they had no public program of actions.

Stalin<sup>97</sup>. The disagreement with or censure of the concrete ideas and forecasts made by the classics were still exceptional or coded in 1989. Larisa Piasheva in an article entitled "Property and liberty" defended the absolute superiority of the market economy in *Noviy Mir* in November of the same year, but did not challenge Marx or Lenin in their status of classics<sup>98</sup>. At the same moment, V. Selyunin suggested that economics could not be considered more or less bourgeois no more than the physics of Newton, and gently mocked the "bearded founders"<sup>99</sup>. The open censure with the classics rapidly became current practice a few months later. In April 1990 Pantin and Plimak routinely stated in *Kommunist* that "Marx and Engels often made theoretical mistakes, sometimes on the most significant issues"<sup>100</sup>. Another representative of the left-wing humanist socialists, Z. Mlynar, also a close University friend of Gorbachev and one of the key intellectuals of the "Prague's spring" calmly stated in an interview to *Kommunist*:

If one can illustrate with some quotes from Marx and Lenin that their considered classic social revolution to be governed by law of necessity, that only means that in this question they made a mistake. We can not build our contemporary understanding of socialism on this mistake<sup>101</sup>.

Another speaker at the roundtable pessimistically called "Wither Marxism?" defended the general sense of Marx's prognostics (which proved correct as applied to the history of USSR) because this history confirmed Marxist thesis that politics can not dominate the underdeveloped economic basis<sup>102</sup>. By this move, K. Kh. Momdzhhan implied that the Soviet system was not genuinely socialist and resulted not from the historical necessity, but from an arbitrary violence against historical laws in a backward country. That was a standard yet strong revisionist argument, which partly undermined the standard references to the classics. Most curiously Momdzhhan defined Marxism not as a unified doctrine, but as "heterogeneous ensemble of theories united by the common authorship, which have paradigmatic bond, which does not cancel, however, their significant diversity"<sup>103</sup>. Marxism was a "paradigm" or a "heterogeneous ensemble", but not a doctrine. V. I Tolstykh addressed the issue in a more confused way: "I agree that Marx was one, but there are many "Marxisms" – and in each case, one should find out which of them has to do with Marx?"<sup>104</sup> Without an accepted political hierarchy, an opinion on Marx is just an opinion? The *theoretical* defence of Marx or Lenin typically had no political

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<sup>97</sup> С. А. Мдоянц, «Формация или цивилизация. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10 с. 43. Г. Лисичкин, «Большой подлог», *Коммунист*, 1990, №5, с.43.

<sup>98</sup> See: Лариса Пиашева, Борис Пинскер, «Собственность и свобода», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №11

<sup>99</sup> В. Селюнин, «Черные дыры экономики», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №10, с.171

<sup>100</sup> «Маркс и Энгельс нередко допускали ошибки, порой принципиального свойства», И. Пантин, Е. Плимак, «Идеи К. Маркса на переломе человеческой цивилизации», *Коммунист*, 1989, №4, с.39

<sup>101</sup> «Если и можно отдельными цитатами из Маркса или Ленина проиллюстрировать, что они считали классическую социальную революцию правилом или неизбежностью, то это означает лишь, что в этом вопросе они ошибались. На этой ошибке нельзя возводить современное понимание социализма, отвечающее реалиям нашего времени». З. Млынарж, «Понятие социализма и исторический опыт», *Коммунист*, 1990, №5, с.105

<sup>102</sup> Момджан, «Умер ли марксизм. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №10, с.50

<sup>103</sup> «В действительности речь должна идти о гетерогенной совокупности объединенных общим авторством теорий, между которыми существует определенная парадигмальная связь, не отменяющая, однако, их значительной неоднородности», *Ibid.*, с.47

<sup>104</sup> «Я согласен с тем, что Маркс один, а "марксизмов" - много, и надо в каждом конкретном случае разбираться, какой из них имеет отношение и какое к Марксу?», В. И. Толстых, «Умер ли марксизм. Круглый стол», 1990, №10, с.20-21

implication: it defended their intellectual capabilities from a too barbarian criticism, but not as a reliable ideological platform.

### *The responsibility of the Marxist classics for the present crisis*

The pioneering series of articles written by A. Tsipko in 1988, 1989 and 1990 more and more openly dismissed the whole Marxist tradition from Marx to Kautsky, Lenin and Stalin as a coherent single doctrine and a horrible ideology fully applied in USSR – this left no space for a more humanist socialism drawing on Marx<sup>105</sup>. R. W. Davies points out the direct influence of A. Yakovlev who personally encouraged this early critical move<sup>106</sup>. Since the publication of the first chapters of *The Gulag Archipelago* the responsibility of Marxism-Leninism became central and critical accounts of Lenin or Marx became public; in 1990-1991 each new critical publication against Marxism-Leninism encouraged the next<sup>107</sup>. O. Latsis was, probably, among the last defenders of the intellectual and political authority of Lenin. Whatever the motivation of this defence in 1991<sup>108</sup>, it reveals the scope of criticism and the weakness of the counter-arguments available to defend Lenin:

Exaggerated faith in statehood and cooperation as the path of socialism... denial of parliamentary democracy and bourgeois liberties and Soviets seen as the organs of the power of workers – those are the real contradictions moving Lenin's thought. The mere combination of these contradictions inevitable for any honest politician of the revolutionary period, exclude for every conscientious scientist or politician the possibility to canonize every word of Lenin. The contemporary "reverse canonisation" does not look more productive – the sweeping denial of the whole of Lenin's heritage...<sup>109</sup>

In other words, the issue of responsibility or guilt of Marxism-Leninism and its founders shook its conventional authority more than rational arguments on their fallibility or the widespread awareness that "one can prove anything" with Marx's or Lenin's multivolume heritage. The rational criticism deprived the classics of their intellectual and political authority, while the presumed guilt of Marxism-Leninism swept away all the nuances. A few intellectuals deplored this swiping negation of the yesterday's canon, but no one could and actually wanted to seriously challenge the dominant opinion with, say, a ten pages text revitalizing Lenin or Marx as applied to 1990 or 1991. The eradication of the heresies in the 1920s-1940s and the ritual veneration of the last decades left no followers able to lead.

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<sup>105</sup> Ципко А.С. «Хороши ли наши принципы?», *Новый мир*, 1990, № 4. Ципко А.С., «Истоки сталинизма», *Наука и жизнь*, 1988, № 11-12; 1989. № 1, 2.

<sup>106</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.7

<sup>107</sup> *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7-11

<sup>108</sup> In his private interview given in 2004, Latsis explained this position as the will to protect Gorbachev against both conservatives and radicals rather than as the defence of Leninism or any other specific ideology.

<sup>109</sup> Чрезмерная вера в государственное начало и кооперация как путь социализма... отрицание парламентской демократии с буржуазными свободами и Советы как орган власти трудящихся – таковы реальные противоречия, двигавшие ленинскую мысль. Уже сам факт наличия таких противоречий, неизбежных для всякого честного политика революционной эпохи, исключает для всякого добросовестного ученого или политика возможность канонизации каждого слова Ленина. Ничуть не плодотворнее и современный вариант «канонизации наизнанку» - огульное отрицание всего ленинского наследия...». О. Лацис, «Эта клякса не считается», *Коммунист*, 1991, №1., с.38, с.39

*No theoretical significance of Marxism-Leninism: reformers, conservatives, putschists*

Anew on the pages of *Kommunist* in his article "The test of history" V. Medvedev re-stated the official pro Gorbachev position timidly implying some form of Soviet social-democracy. Then he addressed the question of the ideological heritage of the classics resuming the new much more liberal perspective in a typical bureaucratic-imperative style:

Therefore, one should follow certain and strict criteria – the correspondence of the theoretical views with social practice, while keeping the guiding principles [*printsipialnost*] and without giving in to the fashionable winds, to provide a passionless analysis of what we call our theoretical and ideological heritage, liberate from dogmatism, stereotypes and at the same time to defend its imperishable values.

The theory of socialism should be purified from everything which makes it similar to religious teaching with its "holy scriptures", dogmatism and verbalism, with its orthodoxy and heresy. This is not God's revelation, not a set of *a priori* truths, but a lively reflection of actual reality.<sup>110</sup>

In brief, Medvedev rejected any supreme authority of Marx or Lenin's writings for CPSU instead indicating only two pillars for the political theory of socialism: (actually undefined) *socialist values* and *historical experience*. Attachment to Lenin remained purely iconic but deprived of any political sense and content. This is of course, no ground for ideological and political unity of the vanguard party; but potentially the iconic function could be effectively compound with almost any ideological position presented as Leninist (provided, of course, that the real deeds of Lenin are not openly discussed because of censorship or due veneration). The point is that reformers *did not want* a new canon and actually escaped stating their position, most probably, because they had none. The revisionist steps of reformers found its logical continuation in the disappearance of the term "Marxism-Leninism" from the preparatory documents of the last XXVIII Party Congress<sup>111</sup>. As Stephen White implied, in reaction to this revisionist trend, Egor Ligachev at the Congress distinguished three *currents* in the party – the Marxist-Leninists, the social-democrats, and the national separatists – and defended without a pause that the party should remain "a genuinely Marxist-Leninist party free of dogma and stereotypes"<sup>112</sup>. Ligachev's major political opponents A. Yakovlev along with V. Medvedev confessed a genuine

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<sup>110</sup> "Поэтому надо, руководствуясь надежным и строгим критерием - соответствием теоретических взглядов и воззрений общественной практике, сохраняя принципиальность и не поддаваясь поветрию и моде, дать беспристрастный анализ того, что мы называем нашим теоретическим и идеологическим наследием, освободиться от догм, стереотипов и вместе с тем защитить его непреходящие ценности". "Теория социализма должна быть очищена от всего, что делает его похожим на некое религиозное вероучение со своим "священным писанием", начетничеством и буквоедством, со своими ортодоксами и еретиками. Это не откровение божье, не свод априорных истин, а живое отражение реальной действительности". В. Медведев, «Испытание историей», *Коммунист*, 1990, №17, с.3-4

<sup>111</sup> Nicolas Werth, *Histoire de l'Union soviétique, De l'empire russe a l'Union soviétique 1900-1991*, PUF, 1990, p.526;

<sup>112</sup> Stephen White, "The politics of the XXVIII Congress", in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.38, also see p. 40-43



respect for Lenin's pragmatic ability to change his mind when facing reality<sup>113</sup>; Gorbachev on the occasion of the 120 anniversary of Lenin's birth in April 1990 stated that "Lenin remains with us as the greatest thinker of the XX century... we must rethink Lenin, his theoretical and political works, liberating ourselves from both deformations and canonisation of his conclusions"<sup>114</sup>.

To assess this *anti-dogmatic* unanimity of the key party leaders we can compare it with the typical Soviet critique of dogmatism exemplified already in the *Short Course*. Functionally, those condemnations always co-existed with the currently dominant interpretation of the classics or the "general line" by the *current* leadership – drawing on the authority of the classics, but preventing other party members from potentially dissenting claims based on the classics quotes in contradiction with the leadership. They would be indeed called dogmatic readers – ignoring the specificity of the current historical moment. What is peculiar for this phase of perestroika is that the competing party leaders accepted the anti-dogmatic norm in a completely new way: no more an imposed single reading of Lenin to legitimize current policies. Beyond this point their anti-dogmatism diverged as much as their political positions.

We can now artificially distinguish two aspects in the references to classics: the use of *symbolic or iconic continuity* with the classics (no matter the actual content) and the actual attempts to use the political and *intellectual legacy* (whatever the result of such a use). As we saw, Gorbachev started denying the first aspect as "religious" in the name of rational standard against the conservatives; then the second turned empty in his own interpretation. Gorbachev confessed rereading Lenin in this period and his aides confirm it; but it did not provide him new keys for strategy, while by denying the idea of the current "canon" as "dogma" Gorbachev lost a tool of control over the debate and unwillingly by denouncing dogma Gorbachev actually refused to take a position.

We can compare the attitudes of perestroika's leaders to Lenin's authority in these two aspects. At one extreme A. Yakovlev implied Lenin's theory was irrelevant and harmful; and he covertly fought against Lenin's aura of the founding father, referring to Lenin to advance his own agenda; Medvedev considered Lenin's intellectual heritage as insufficient in the modern context, but respected him as an icon; Gorbachev hoped but had doubts as to whether Lenin could serve as a real intellectual background and crucially misunderstood the nature of its symbolic cult (personally venerating Lenin's icon he criticised religious cult-building around Lenin, thus opposing "conservatives" and "Andreeva"). Finally, Ligachev remained fully committed to Lenin's image; he wanted but had no ability to develop new policies from Lenin's texts in the new context. Perestroika did not give the stage to a politician on the other extreme – Nina Andreeva does not qualify. This neo-Leninist should hide his reverence to

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<sup>113</sup> А. Яковлев, «Социализм: мечты и реальность», *Коммунист*, 1990, №4, с.21

<sup>114</sup> «Ленин остается с нами как крупнейший мыслитель XX столетия... нам необходимо переосмысление Ленина и его теоретического и политического творчества, освобождаясь при этом и от извращений, и от канонизации его выводов... Пора покончить с бездумным до нелепости обращением с именем и образом Ленина, когда его превращали в «икону». Слово о Ленине президента СССР, Генерального Секретаря ЦК КПСС, М. С. Горбачева, *Правда*, 1990, 21 апреля, с.1 – Cited by A. Yurchak in А. Юрчак, «Если бы Ленин был жив, он бы знал, что делать», in *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007, с.190

the unpopular and criticised Lenin, but promote the agenda based on its legacy. Thus, truthfulness to Marxism-Leninism “free of dogma and stereotypes” (or even to the dogmatic one) in 1990 lacked any theoretical or political articulation except the bitter criticism of others’ threatening plans and of untamed criticism of “our values”; the puritans only managed to block the change of the party name and reduced the new social-democratic *Party Program* to a *Programmatic Declaration*. The absence of any conservative program reflected that absence of conservatives in the theoretical debates.

Still accepting the Soviet rules (amended with the right to voice a personal opinion, but not assuming the consequences) traditionalists blamed Gorbachev or Medvedev for insufficient ideological leadership, but retreated every time Gorbachev threatened resignation: they lacked both ideological and political leadership. We don’t think that “Marxist-Leninist” analysis and the pragmatic plan of action *a priori* could not be made in 1989 or in 1991; indeed, once a leader or a group could set up any basic policies, the corresponding Leninist quotes would not be difficult to find. Crucially there were many voices defending Lenin’s image, but no programmatic texts claiming their ideological continuity with Lenin’s thought. The absence of any political program claiming its *continuity* with Lenin is the rarely noticed sign of the low intellectually vitality of the conservatives still having a majority in the Central Committee; but no more ideological wit<sup>115</sup>.

In contrast with stereotypes and Yeltsin’s rapid banning of the CPSU as punishment after the failed putsch, the conservative manifestos announcing this position in August 1991 – “The Word to the People” and “The Address of GKChP to the Soviet People” – had not a single mention of the CPSU, Lenin, Marx, socialism or Marxism-Leninism. GKChP and a strain of the Russian state-power patriots, of course, purposefully avoided any references to Soviet imagery and symbols: they wanted to save the Soviet Union, the state, but not the symbolic let alone ideological continuity with Lenin or October<sup>116</sup>. In August 1991 even the most conservative forces abandoned the Soviet ideology, icons and rhetoric. Republican nationalisms for three years contested the executive and legal authority of Moscow. When the quasi-imperial ideology was abandoned, there were simply no arguments but the use of military force and the ideological claim to guarantee “order and stability” which could hardly convince Estonians, Ukrainians or Georgians after 1989. If the idea of re-establishing the “order” had some public appeal in Russia, the use of armed force was discredited as well as the remnants of the authority of the Marxism-Leninism. The rapidity of its loss was striking and it clearly sheds a new retrospective light on the previous years.

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<sup>115</sup> «Уже к середине восьмидесятых годов обнаружилось полное отсутствие даже намёток, даже чернового варианта консервативной контрреволюционной программы, в ответ на которую Горбачев или кто-либо с ним смог бы четко сформулировать хотя бы ближайшие цели своей революции... Два последних (пусть ненавидящие друг друга, это нормально) консерватора, которые могли произнести сложнопридаточное предложение, не потеряв нить мысли, Андропов и Суслов, умерли, а мозги молодых были заняты грядущим дележом власти». See a joint text by A. Pyatigorsky and Oleg Alexeev: <http://www.polit.ru/research/2008/08/13/absoutrev.html>

<sup>116</sup> See a useful discussion of this distinction between state and regime in a series of articles around Stephen Cohen’s interpretation of the downfall of the Soviet Union in *Slavic Review*, 2004, Vol. 63, No. 3

## **No connection<sup>117</sup>: pluralisation of truth, clash of values and non-violence**

The scientific concept of truth potentially contradicted most of the established rules and conventions of the Soviet public sphere. In the previous periods, the open tension between the political and scientific conceptions manifested only in cases of dissidence and otherwise, the superiority of the political truth as officially interpreted and its conventions remained unquestionable. Reformers with broad humanistic, socialist and social-democratic orientations did their best to replace the presumed “dogmatic reading” of the classics’ heritage not with the new dominant reading, but with the what they saw as scientific conception of truth leaving no place to the idea of an authoritative canon or for an ideological hierarchy unwillingly but consecutively damaging the organisational unity of the reformers. By contrast, the most radical economic reforms in 1992-1993 were launched anew on the basis of a unified ideological vision by a small group of convinced companions-in-arms; but its wide public reach was very limited.

The raising issue of political guilt of Marxism-Leninism pushed the socialist-minded reformers to a more radical deconstruction of the Soviet canon: as there would never be a canonical scheme of socialism to be applied, only values; therefore, the argument went, socialist ideology or Marx could not be judged for the tragic crimes and errors of the past. This deconstruction of the canon was the shielding of the moderate reformers against the political accusation of the radicals as well as the expression of an epistemological belief; at the same time this was a shield against the passive and hesitating majority of the CPSU executives who felt uneasy with the market and vehement public criticism of the past. Finally, we can suppose that Gorbachev, Medvedev or even Yakovlev had no articulated political position to advance in the situation of competitive public speech. Deconstructing the monopoly of truth, reformers escaped the duty to formulate anything resembling to a political position.<sup>118</sup> This difficulty may have deeper causes, than the personal deficiency of the most liberal part of the late Soviet establishment: in 2009, Russian political regime still had no articulated theoretical self-justification and political leaders controlled the public agenda without stating their position.

In addition to this political shielding and rationalistic conception of truth there was yet another regulative conception of truth, which contributed to the ideological chaos. A relativistic conception of truth applied to the self-knowledge of the society replaced the temporal reign of the scientific conception by a new assumption: there was no more single universal knowledge about society. Between thus defined “individual opinions” there could hardly be any debate. The difference between freely voicing arguments, ideas, and opinions on one hand and freely stating one’s position on the

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<sup>117</sup> We borrow this title from an article of Maxim Sokolov. <http://www.globalrus.ru/opinions/141027/>

<sup>118</sup> We specifically refer to the passage from the conclusion drawn by the editor-in-chief of *Kommunist*, that we discuss in the next subsection: “By the end of our meeting, I would like to note the open character of the first discussion about the freedom of religious consciousness, which delivers us from the necessity to formulate any specific conclusions, or precisely balanced totals... The time of the ready-made recipes for all life situations is over. I believe readers are able themselves to find their way in the intermingling of the expressed ideas and positions”. Н. Беккенин, «Свобода совести и возрождение гуманизма», *Коммунист*, 1990, №3, с.80

other seems crucial – the difference concerns both the intentions of the speakers and the expectations of the audience. In case of individualist free expression, no real impact on the audience is intended by the author and no attention is paid by the reader or listener. Putting it more radically, in this case free public speech does not produce social bonds. We can only attempt to uncover some of the conditions or immediate causes making free speech irrelevant, once it destroyed the Communist party-state authority.

### *No monopoly of truth – no communication?*

“That there is no monopoly on truth became the topic of the day” prophetically noticed M. Gefter when the pluralism had been just timidly announced<sup>119</sup>. The former head of the Military Intelligence Service of the USSR, Leonid Shebarshin noted in his diary five years after perestroika was over: “The truth is not unitary. [But] It is impossible to understand”<sup>120</sup>. We can see how the rationalistic claim of Gorbachev and Yakovlev that there *should* not be any *monopoly* of truth – announced in 1984 and current from 1986 – gradually transformed into a relativistic claim that there *was no* one truth. This transformation went on under the pressure of several factors: the leadership’s inability to offer an ideological edge in the new and rapidly changing context, the new humanistic values of individual dignity favouring an anti-dogmatic and anti-collectivist relativism, the indirect influence of the “post-modernist” or “hermeneutic” arguments understood and adopted by the protagonists as the new authoritative norm of cognition, and finally, the awareness of the factual inconclusiveness of the supposedly free and rationalistic public debates.

The passionate, complex and yet inconclusive character of the free public debates from mid 1988 sharply contrasted with the Aesopian or scholastic discussions of the preceding decade; the new inconclusiveness was both *praised* by contrast with the recent scholastic unanimity and *deplored* as contradicting scientific standards and giving no pragmatic guidance<sup>121</sup>. When positively judged, this phenomenon was understood in terms of the “ongoing discussions”, “different points of view” or in Gorbachev’s own words, in terms of “intellectual ferment”<sup>122</sup>; negatively, the same phenomenon was described as “plurality of monologues”, “turmoil” and “chaos”. Both critical and approving descriptions addressed the same empirical evidence: sometimes accepting it as a new norm and sometimes rejecting it in the name of a positivist or pragmatic conception of truth. The passage from rationalist to

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<sup>119</sup> Already in summer 1987 M. Gefter, who had a particularly fine “ear”, notice this trend and starts his interview with this formula: «То, что монополии на истину нет, стало лозунгом дня» М. Гефтер, «Сталин умер вчера», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988, с.298

<sup>120</sup> “Истина не едина. Понять это невозможно” - Леонид Шебаршин. Хроники Безвременья (Заметки бывшего начальника разведки), М., “Русский биографический институт”, 1998 с.76

<sup>121</sup> The repetitive and desperate calls in the editorials, introductions and conclusions of the round-tables to meet the high standards of the scientific search of truth free from passions, interests and political pressure from above, underlined and contrasted with the actually emerging culture of public debates. See: «Сомнений нет: спор, дискуссия, столкновение мнений - это идеальная среда для познания истины, в том числе исторической. Проблема состоит в том, чтобы в этих спорах и дискуссиях выбрать правильную, научно обоснованную позицию, не поддаваться эмоциям и какому-либо нажиму извне, будь-то директивное вмешательство “сверху” или давление митинговой стихии “снизу”». Редакция, «Споры об Октябре вчера и сегодня. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1990, №15, с.20

<sup>122</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.511

relativist conception in part resulted from and also increased – even *reified* – the feeling of the public miscommunication. With a bit of bitterness and a bit of cynicism, Boris Kagarlitsky pointed out this new situation in 1990 when public speech was suddenly becoming irrelevant and powerless (adopting the critical stance of the Frankfurt school, Kagarlitsky attributed this irrelevance of public speech to the Western liberal culture driven by the logic of market):

Writers and those who pursued writers, silencing them, both believed the WORD is omnipotent, and can be dangerous itself. This traditional Russian and eastern belief, alas, is collapsing before our eyes. The cult of WORD is replaced by the REPRESSIVE TOLERANCE – traditional principle of the liberal Western culture: you say, what you want, but this will not change anything. Writer does not change the world any more. He just provides goods to the book market.<sup>123</sup>

We can examine some of the benchmarks in this transition from omnipotence to the powerlessness of public speech which can be situated in 1990 as suggested by the Kagarlitsky's contemporary witness. First and foremost, M. Gorbachev and his closest associates approximately in 1989 refused to draw a clear ideological line anymore<sup>124</sup>. According to an informed insider's account, L. Onikov, an ideological consultant of the Central Committee of CPSU for decades, Gorbachev felt irritated by the constant demands from within the party apparatus for concrete organisational and theoretical solutions provided "from above" – these demands were dismissed as lack of autonomy: "we have the main basis: socialism, interests of the people, democracy, glasnost and party; for the rest one has to think and act by oneself"<sup>125</sup>. Denouncing both the party apparatus's ability to subvert all meaningful reforms and Gorbachev's unwillingness to reform the party, Onikov himself, revealingly, advocated the (deplorably missed) solution of the prior democratisation of the party "breaking the barriers retaining the involvement of millions of Communists in the application of the party line"<sup>126</sup>. This was precisely the way Gorbachev realised *perestroika in general* while indeed he halted the democratization of the party. However, there is absolutely no evidence that the democratisation within the CPSU would make it an efficient tool – most probably, as it happened in other domains, the real effect would be the party paralysis. On several occasions, Gorbachev and his close collaborators stressed that the time of ready-made "schemes" and "recipes" was over – as noted, the reformers lacked the ability to formulate the new persuasive ideological benchmarks in the new context, but also had some theoretical arguments on why not to have them. Instead of submitting his own position to competition, Gorbachev preferred to remain above by suspending his judgement. This tactics of "democratic" top-down communication gave poor immediate results: it could not enhance leader's popularity anyway

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<sup>123</sup> «И писатели и те кто преследовал писателей, затыкал им рот, верили, что СЛОВО всемогуче, оно может само по себе быть опасным. Это традиционное российское и восточное представление, увы, разрушается на глазах. На место культу СЛОВА приходят РЕПРЕССИВНАЯ ТЕРПИМОСТЬ - традиционный принцип либеральной культуры Запада: ты можешь говорить все, что хочешь, от этого все равно ничего не изменится. Писатель больше не преобразует мир. Он лишь поставляет товары на книжный рынок». Б. Кагарлицкий, «Интеллектуалы против интеллигенции», *Горизонт*, 1990 №5.

<sup>124</sup> This point is shown by A. Barsenkov in a detailed way – however, his quotes from Onikov discussed below are slightly misleading – Onikov focused on *the reform of the party*, while Barsenkov refers to this passage to qualify *perestroika in general*. See: А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.164-165

<sup>125</sup> Леон Оников, *КПСС: Анатомия распада*, М., Республика, 1996, с.71

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*,71

and in the situation of rising discontent there was no positive and authoritative general line spontaneously evolving from below [in a dialogue of peers].

Outstanding specialists in cultural history such as L. Batkin or A. Gurevitch fragmentarily exposed the foundations of the new relativism in its sophisticated anthropological or historicist forms<sup>127</sup>. The editorials of the Party's theoretical journal *Kommunist* exposed the most surprising traits of this relativism rapidly taken as a natural ground for public debates. We can trace its evolution comparing the editorials of three consecutive years. In summer 1988, an editorial rejected the "chaotic clashes of personalized points of views" instead praising scientific principles<sup>128</sup>; one year later *Kommunist* precludes his exposition of the new perspective on socialism with a proviso: "This is just a beginning of a discussion, a review of existing opinions. Offering this article... the review *Kommunist* hopes to generate a fruitful discussion"<sup>129</sup>. In 1990, the editor-in-chief N. Bikkenin sums up the debates on the round-table "Historical memory of a renewing society. Socialist choice" with a staggeringly inconclusive, although by then typical conclusion: "Although, of course, this problem has no definitive, once for all time given solution, and it will arise again"<sup>130</sup>.

The expression of this understanding of truth and of the political role of public speech is given in a recurrent call: "Let the readers make their judgement!". From 1989, the authoritative position of the official ideologues of perestroika did not imply the presumption that the authors knew better, than the readers; from 1990, the reader knew better. No intellectual authority was assumed – "of course, the readers will judge" says *Voprosi Filosofii* after a non-conclusive debate on the methodology of history<sup>131</sup>. Let us cite another passage closing a round-table of *Kommunist* in terms of this individualistic relativism:

By the end of our meeting, I would like to note the open character of the first discussion about the freedom of religious consciousness, **which delivers us from the necessity to formulate any specific conclusions, or precisely balanced totals...** The time of the ready-made recipes for all life situations is

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<sup>127</sup> «Есть слово, которого очень боятся наши обществоведы. Это - "релятивизм". Между тем, культурная антропология давно уредила тех, кого вообще в чем-то можно убедить, что только преодоление "абсолютизирующей" универсальной схемы и принятие гипотезы о самоценности и своеобразии каждой культуры и цивилизации отвечает современной непредубежденной точке зрения науки». А. Гуревич, «Теория формаций и реальность истории», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №11, с.42

<sup>128</sup> «Мы же, по существу, эти сущностные гносеологические противоречия размениваем без остатка на хаотические столкновения персонализированных точек зрения» «Философия и историческая наука. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1988, №10, с.62

<sup>129</sup> «Настоящая статья не претендует на описание в деталях облика нового общества... Это лишь начало дискуссии, обзор имеющихся мнений. Предлагая читателям эту статью... журнал "Коммунист" надеется на плодотворную дискуссию», «К новому облику социализма», *Коммунист*, 1989, №13, с.3

<sup>130</sup> «Хотя, разумеется, проблема не имеет своего окончательного, раз и навсегда данного решения, будет вновь и вновь возникать перед человеком, устремленным в будущее». Н. Беккенин, «Историческая память обновляющегося общества. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.22

<sup>131</sup> «Задачей ставится анализ целых комплексов состояний общественного сознания и способов деятельности, исторических тенденций их складывания и изменения. Насколько это удалось участником, судить, конечно, читателям». «Формация или цивилизация? Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10, с.59

over. I believe readers are able themselves to find their way in the intermingling of the expressed ideas and positions. [Our emphasis]<sup>132</sup>

The most striking slip here is the suggestion of the editor-in-chief that discussions and readers' ability to decide "deliver us from the necessity to formulate any specific conclusions". The man responsible for formulating and defending the official theoretical Party position attested his sincere satisfaction with the ambient relativism *freeing* the author from his role (he could not assume) and *freeing* the reader from any intellectual tutelage. Both sides were indeed satisfied, but the communication seemed less and less meaningful as means to influence each other's opinion and create bonds of solidarity, voluntary subjection or opposition. On the basis of the new relativist understanding of pluralistic truth, Bekkenin assumed this situation as a *new norm* and did not expect to influence or persuade other participants in the discussion; his patron Vadim Medvedev was equally convinced that "mere words" can not change other people's minds. The debates were thus seen as a display of passing views where authors and readers enjoyed their full intellectual sovereignty nearing a kind of collective solipsism.

The shift from scientific positivism aiming to reconstruct the objective facts and causal links towards pluralistic relativity found its specific form when applied to knowledge of *history* – the shift is reflected in all the magazines from our corpus but *Nash Sovremennik* once again. The supreme individual right of the reader to judge is declared in a series of new books by professional historians replying to the hottest historiographical questions on the public agenda<sup>133</sup>: "the indispensable participant of the dialogue here is – the reader himself"<sup>134</sup> (*Kommunist*). We can also see a new specific standard of the right kind of historical reconstruction: true history should embrace and reproduce all the competing points of view, rather than providing a general explanation, which is associated with only one acting side<sup>135</sup> (*Novyi Mir*). Prominent historian and philosopher Y. Polyakov clarified this new approach: "The new approach is clear; its sense consists in showing not only one winning side, but all the antagonistic forces as equal actors of the historical process"<sup>136</sup>. It is though clear that "all the antagonistic forces" were not and could be equal actors of the historical process; but the new norm of public debates here overrules the common sense of historian. History should be represented according to the same matrix

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<sup>132</sup> «В конце нашей встречи хочу отметить открытый характер состоявшейся впервые в журнале дискуссии по проблеме свободы совести, что избавляет всех нас от необходимости формулировать какие-то развернутые выводы, точно выверенные итоги... Пора готовых рецептов на все случаи жизни все дальше отодвигается в прошлое. Думаю, читатели сами способны разобраться в сплетении высказанных мыслей, взглядов, позиций». Н. Беккенин, «Свобода совести и возрождение гуманизма», *Коммунист*, 1990, №3, с.80

<sup>133</sup> А. М. Самсонов, *Знать и помнить. Диалог историка с читателем*. М., Политиздат, 1989, 414 с.; *Переписка на исторические темы. Диалог ведет читатель*. М., Политиздат, 1989, 494 с.; *Историки отвечают на вопросы*, Сборник, М., "Московский рабочий", 1988, 240 с. *Историки спорят. 13 бесед*. М., Политиздат, 1988, 510 с.

<sup>134</sup> «Непременный участник разговора здесь - сам читатель. Учитывая его запросы, полемизируя с ним, помогая разобраться в сложных вопросах нашей истории, авторы стремятся направить его самостоятельный интеллектуальный поиск к более глубокому и научно обоснованному осмыслению прошлого», С. Хижняков, «Слово берут историки», *Коммунист*, 1989, №8, с.119

<sup>135</sup> «Научная история - глазами победителей и побежденных», П. Черкасов, «Ленин или Корнилов?», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №2, с.264

<sup>136</sup> «Ясны новые подходы, суть которых в том, чтобы показывать не одну, - победившую сторону, а все противостоящие друг другу силы как равноправных участников исторического процесса». Ю. Поляков, «Познание прошлого: преодолен ли застой? Заметки историка», *Коммунист*, 1990, №15, с.46

of free debate between “opinions-alternatives”<sup>137</sup> (*Voprosi Istorii*). Then, the reader can choose the actor he feels close to, and make up his own mind<sup>138</sup>. Individuals should choose alone and by exercising their own judgement; the actual conclusions mattered less, than the fact of exercising one’s individual ability to judge.

This *positive* evaluation of the inconclusive debates partly expressed and partly increased the difficulty of pro-Gorbachev historians and ideologues to provide a convincing and positive account of Soviet history, which could stand in the face of the recent revelations and outweigh the current economic and political crisis. Relativism offered a sort of methodological refuge. By contrast, the Russian nationalist authors of *Nash Sovremennik* attested their frustration with the readers so easily subverted by their more successful ideological rivals and accused other periodicals of the coordinated manipulations of the readers’ opinions:

We have to acknowledge that we face not the sincere attempts to understand the sense of the Russian history, not with “historiosophical reflections”. We face the activity of quite a different kind: this is journalistic, publicistic propaganda which strives to instil in the readers certain thoughts and feelings predefined in advance.<sup>139</sup>

Instead of the rational scientific debate or of the plurality of individual judgments nationalist authors saw evidence of the organized manipulation against truth<sup>140</sup>. The suspicion or even the conviction that the blackening of Russian national history constituted a premeditated and coordinated attack against Russia (rather than against the USSR or in continuity with it) and against Russian patriots made *Nash Sovremennik* an exception from the otherwise widespread acceptance of critical pluralism and of the supreme ability and right of every reader to decide on his own.

The *negative* accounts of what we called the inconclusiveness of debates in this period focused on the equally ambient feeling of intellectual chaos, vacuum of values and the sense of *the loss of contact with reality* – the point theoretically captured much earlier at the very beginning of perestroika. *Kommunist* gradually losing its audience, refused to draw conclusions and promoted the right of the

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<sup>137</sup> Б. Г. Могильницкий, «Альтернативность в истории советского общества», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №11, с.11, с.15

<sup>138</sup> «... журнал планирует публикацию серии статей "История советского общества в новом освещении". При этом журнал, конечно, не будет претендовать на то, что все, что в них написано, есть истина в последней инстанции... Авторам этих статей предложено изложить разные точки зрения на проблемы, включая мнения, существующие в зарубежной историографии». А. Искендеров, «Проблемы исторического образования. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №1, с.169»

<sup>139</sup> «Приходится признать, что мы имеем дело не искренними попытками понять смысл русской истории, не с "историософскими размышлениями". Перед нами деятельность совершенно другого типа: это журналистская публицистика, пропаганда, стремящаяся внушить читателям некоторые заранее заданные мысли и чувства». И. Шафаревич, «Русофобия», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №6, с.172

<sup>140</sup> «В сознание читателей одно за другим вторгаются сообщения о прискорбных, мрачных, наконец, поистине чудовищных событиях и явлениях прошлого, и этот нарастающий поток нередко не дает возможности для сколь-нибудь основательных размышлений, взвешенного понимания и оценки усваиваемой информации. Нельзя не отметить еще, что подавляющее большинство авторов, занятых сегодня разоблачением негативных или трагических фактов прошлого, делают это с как бы не допускающей сомнений и возражений уверенностью... Особенно это характерно для таких авторов, которые несколько лет назад писали нечто совершенно иное». В. Кожин, «Самая большая опасность...», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №1, с.141



reader to judge and draw his own conclusions as a sign of the genuine intellectual and ideological *liberalization*, at least partly masking its inability to offer a sufficiently coherent and appealing agenda; in other leading theoretical and thick magazines most authors underlined the *deficiencies* of the available intellectual language and values. The established Soviet idioms describing social reality generated a feeling of inadequacy. Authors energetically spoke about the inadequacy of virtually all the available intellectual tools and theories: methodology of history<sup>141</sup>, ethno-national relations<sup>142</sup>, general categories of the social sciences<sup>143</sup>, key words of the political language<sup>144</sup>, theory in general<sup>145</sup>. In July 1989 Gorbachev publicly stated that there were no answers on the fundamental theoretical questions and that social science was in a dead-end<sup>146</sup>. The editor-in-chief of *Noviy Mir* by then reaching the circulation of 1 500 000 copies thanks to the publication of previously censored fiction and publicistic articles on the Soviet history, opened the publication of the *Gulag Archipelago* with a praise of Solzhenitsyn's unique ability to present a coherent account of history as opposed to the widespread incoherence of historical thinking:

Solzhenitsyn is significant for us by his view of history and by that coherence, by that logic of his research... which we are still lacking, still could not elaborate despite the colossal problems and tasks we face... How many new books and authors, who not only destroy certain political dogmas and approaches – this is just half of the problem - but, on the way, they destruct the very logic, the coherence of our thinking in general.<sup>147</sup>

In his earlier article S. Zalygin also spoke about “our loss of the objective representation of the world”<sup>148</sup>. A. Yakovlev slightly downplayed what he called “all that turmoil of minds” as “superficial and passing”<sup>149</sup>. Leading philosophers discussing the degree of “consciousness” [*osoznannost*] of perestroika were unanimous on society's profound misunderstanding itself: “This may seem strange,

<sup>141</sup> «Формация или цивилизация. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10, с.59-60

<sup>142</sup> «Национальный вопрос и межнациональные отношения в СССР: история и современность. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №5 (А. А. Искендеров «методологический, теоретический тупик в осмыслении национального вопроса» с.4; “Нужны теоретические разработки” М. К. Козыбаев с.9; “65 лет вопрос научно не рассматривался”; Р. Г. Симоненко; “мы не имеем сегодня теории национального вопроса и его возможных критериев”, Р.Ф. Итс с.29; “общепринято, что у нас нет хорошей теории национального развития”, Я. К. Ребане с.36)

<sup>143</sup> Ю. Левада, «Динамика социального перелома: возможности анализа», *Коммунист*, 1989, №1, с.34

<sup>144</sup> «На наших глазах произошло подобное тектоническому сдвигу изменение всего политического языка, вообще тех слов, понятий, образов, которыми пользуется общество. В результате мы узнали много нового, а с другой стороны, совершенно лишились возможности разговаривать на старом языке. Но нельзя забывать, что британские газоны выращиваются в течение столетий» Ю. Замошкин, «Общественный выбор», *Коммунист*, 1989, №12, с.30

<sup>145</sup> А. Мигранян, «Демократия в теории и исторической практике», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №1, с. 42

<sup>146</sup> For a detailed account of this speech on the meeting of the all the republican and regional first secretaries of CPSU see В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, М., 2005, с.128

<sup>147</sup> «Солженицын значителен для нас своим взглядом на историю и той последовательностью, той логичностью в исследовании... которых мы при таких-то колоссальных проблемах и задачах все еще лишены, все еще не выработали для себя. Для нас нынче важен уже сам факт существования последовательности. Ведь сколько новых книг и авторов, которые разрушают не только те или иные политические догмы и установки - это бы полбеды, это их достоинство, - но попутно разрушают еще и логику и последовательность нашего мышления в целом!» С. Залыгин, «Год Солженицына», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №1, с.238-239

<sup>148</sup> «Мы об этом забыли, и это опять-таки значит, что мы утратили объективное представление о реальном мире и стремимся усовершенствовать мир нами выдуманный». С. Залыгин, «К вопросу о бессмертии», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №1, с.38

<sup>149</sup> А. Яковлев, «Ответ на анкету «Как мы проживем этот год», *Литературная газета*, 1990, №1; cited in И. Каспэ, «Апокалипсис-1990: «настоящее», «прошлое», «будущее» в литературной публицистике», in *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007, с.542

but for a long time we live and act in the conditions of unawareness and unconsciousness of being. Just recently we discovered, that we don't really know the society we live in (the point made by Y. Andropov in 1983)".<sup>150</sup> The lack of self-knowledge here is understood in the Spinozian terms of "realised necessity". S. Kordonsky, the future head of the analytical department of the Russian presidency under Putin, attested that society lacked "an adequate cognitive apparatus for understanding the reality" necessary for reforms<sup>151</sup>. In 1991, the renowned publicist I. Dedkov wrote about the recent "turn of the logical screw", when coherent public thought suddenly gave place to the blind reversal of the old truths, echoing the classical Korolenko's description of the new public mindset in 1917. Dedkov pointed that this time the "thread was stripped"<sup>152</sup>.

The editors and publicists who could be identified as the leaders of public opinion attested or confessed their embarrassment with the intellectual chaos which was reigning. Why did the editor of the most influential thick magazine *Noviy Mir*, which has more than doubled his readership in a year, along with many other outstanding authors complained about the intellectual crisis? Why did the editor of *Kommunist* (steadily losing its audience) praised the reader's ability to judge as the replacement of the official ideology? Presumably, the editor-in-chief of *Kommunist* found an excuse for his inability to steer in the intellectual autonomy of readers. By contrast, the editor-in-chief of *Noviy Mir* realised that his great influence was mostly negative: what Bekkenin saw as reader's supreme ability to judge on their own, and what Zalygin saw as an incoherent public political thinking translated the actual lack of *authoritative* positive accounts. These views diversely manifest the awareness that the critical accounts of history-and-society actively destroyed the old established and pro-Gorbachev's recent Leninist interpretations, but no new positive narrative became truly dominant. Overall, the awareness of the "self-ignorance" of society was dramatically increased; although we can trace its origin back to the Andropov's public acknowledgement and to the first years of perestroika. There was a crucial radicalization in 1990-1991, the acknowledgement of self-ignorance by Soviet intellectuals attested that the rational-critical guidance proved fundamentally insufficient for policy making even under the conditions, which following the 1985-1987 assumptions should lead to scientific truth. The scepticism over the quality of the self-understanding of the society-in-history contributed to the rise of the historiosophy with its central idiom and value that we describe in Chapter VI: *natural-historical development*, as opposed to the vain and ruinous attempts of agency to rationally understand, predict, guide but in fact violate history and society.

Perestroika's *values* as well as its intellectual tools were seen as deficient. The moderately liberal editor-in-chief of another journal struggling for readers, *Voprosi Istorii*, A. Iskenderov was appointed to

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<sup>150</sup> «Как ни странно, мы давно уже живем и действуем в условиях неосознаваемого и неосознанного бытия. Лишь сравнительно недавно открыли для себя, что не очень-то знаем общество, в котором живем (тезис, сформулированный Ю. Андроповым в 1983г.)». Н. В. Любомирова, «Перестройка сознания или сознательная перестройка? Круглы стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №4, с.35

<sup>151</sup> С. Кордонский, «Реальный социализм: история, структура, парадоксы», *Вопросы Философии*, 1991, №3, с.43

<sup>152</sup> Compare with the commentary of R.W. Davies using this Korolenko's metaphor to describe the sudden shift to a blunt anti-communism of intellectuals recently holding important positions in the party and propaganda apparatus. R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, p.40. И. Дедков, «О логическом винтике или сорванной резьбе», *Коммунист*, 1991, №1.

promote perestroika in historiography. In September 1989, he acknowledged the absence of the “new elaborated conceptions of the Soviet history” when introducing an article on the origins of the October revolution. Iskenderov deplored a “very complex situation” in which he had to operate: “the old system of values and many new conceptions became fully bankrupt, but the new ones are still unavailable. This created a sort of vacuum which was filled by non-scientific arguments”.<sup>153</sup> The director of the Institute of the World History, A. O. Chubaryan stressed the same problem: historians can not satisfy and reply to the tremendous private readers’ demand of explanations and criticism of the official historiography. Thousands of readers’ letters triggered by the critical publications in other magazines found no professional reply. This inability was *not* due to the lack of access to the media, he stressed, but to the fact that historians had nothing to reply to the “challenges of our times”. Why? Because, there were no more values to defend: “Many people justly note, that historians should defend the founding values in the present context. But here is the question: which values should we defend, and most importantly how?”<sup>154</sup> How to defend values in the situation when every reader is the sovereign judge and words do not matter could, indeed, be a more important question. If the readers were gaining in power, the authors seemed to lose it altogether. But whose’ texts are the sovereign readers going to read? To be sure, there were many authors defending their positions and values, however, the described above “relativism” signalled the intellectual collapse of the humane socialist centre and was the crucial component of the theoretical debates of the last three years of perestroika.

### **Value-based ideological cleavages and an unnoticed consensus**

When arguments are difficult to share and common sense had not enough time to consolidate, values rather than arguments offer a more solid foundation for finding friends and foes in free public exchanges. At the beginning of perestroika the critical-scientific rationalism and later on the pluralistic relativism – replacing the ideological conception of *truth* and skipping the intermediate level of ideological *positions* – exposed the official Soviet values and cults to criticism, which could not be stopped any more by the censorship or the references to the need for political unity. Moreover, after the self-compromising manifesto of Nina Andreeva in defence of the Soviet cults, such as the pride in the forefathers, pride in history and October revolution, using neo-Stalinist language and calling for the

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<sup>153</sup> Сложилась очень непростая ситуация: прежняя система ценностей и многие концепции полностью обанкротились, а новые идеи пока не выработаны. Образовался своего рода вакуум (который заполняется не научными рассуждениями)” В. П. Булдаков, «У истоков советской истории: путь к Октябрю. Вступление А. Искендерова», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №9, с.62

<sup>154</sup> “А. О. Чубарьян, директор института всеобщей истории АН СССР, отметил, что мы переживаем сейчас период крайне обостренного чувства истории в самых широких слоях общества, не имеющий аналога в жизни страны. Это ощущается не только в сотнях публикаций толстых журналов и ежедневных газетах. Их редакции получают огромное число писем, в которых читатели радуются и негодуют, одобряют или опровергают сокрушительной критике те или иные публикации на исторические темы... Но дело не в том, что профессиональные историки не могут найти путь к средствам массовой информации. Вопрос заключается в том, с чем историки могут выйти на широкую аудиторию, как они ответят на вызов времени... Многие справедливо замечают, что именно историки должны, на этом этапе, защитить наши основополагающие ценности. Но возникает вопрос, какие ценности мы должны защищать, а главное как их следует защищать”. «Историческое сознание общества - на уровень задач перестройки», Совещание историков с членом политбюро, член-корреспондентом АН СССР, В. А. Медведевым, *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.9

ideological discipline, the Gorbachev counter-attack drew on the unity over dissent rule in order to promote a more rationalistic criticism of history (collaterally) affecting the core Soviet values and beliefs. On the background of the late Soviet ideological cynicism of the most active strata of the society and of the currently deepening crisis, the criticism of Soviet history and its sacred iconic values such as Lenin, pride in fathers, October revolution or the CPSU's political supremacy strengthened and received more credit from 1988 onwards. The outcome was a pluralisation of political and historical values entering into open competition. We can distinguish several relatively stable sets or patterns of values some latent and others more manifest in this period:

- a) [Soviet puritans] Pride in forefathers and Soviet history, Lenin, Socialism, Victory in the WWII, October revolution, Great power status, Equality, Austerity, anti-Capitalism
- b) [Humanist socialists] Human dignity, Lenin, October revolution, Democracy, Social justice, Intellectual liberty, Imperatives of the global world, Imperative of non-violence, anti-Stalinism
- c) [Market liberals] Liberty, Self-interest and market, Democracy, Civilised world, Imperative of non-violence, anti-Communism
- d) [Russian nationalists] Pride for forefathers and Russian history, Russian Peasantry, Orthodox spirituality, Ecology, Imperative of non-violence, anti-Communism, anti-Capitalism, anti-Semitism

In the five theoretical magazines of our corpus the first pattern was virtually absent in this period, except a few items in *Nash Sovremennik* and *Voprosi Istorii* – it was mainly a vanishing benchmark. However, this does not mean that these values had no more supporters as the debates at the CPSU Plenums and at its last Congress attested. Their weak representation in the selected magazines reflected both editorial boards' informal "censorship" as well as the theoretical weakness of the Soviet puritans or conservatives, and their political disorganisation. Following the Andreeva letter and few relatively weak articles against Y. Afanassiev or M. Shatrov in 1988, there were no more significant texts promoting the theoretical agenda of the conservatives, including the August putsch.

The main *articulated* manifestation of this position was the sour criticism of unjustified criticism against core Soviet values repetitively denouncing "the blackening of our history"<sup>155</sup>. Such defensive reposts had little persuasive impact beyond the true believers worshipping the cult of the past. The "criticism against criticism" was the main form of symbolic presence of Puritans and conservatives in the public debates: they had no counter-agenda or new theoretical arguments. The reactions of Russian nationalists echoed the Puritans' defence of values: the attempts to halt public criticism of their cults – such as heroic deeds of our forefathers – as *blasphemous*. This kind of requests could be more receivable in terms of religion or minorities; but Soviet Puritans reluctantly accepting Gorbachev's non-orthodox leadership could not dare to reclaim a monopoly on the interpretation of Lenin's words and

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<sup>155</sup> See: В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.463, 544

deeds, and they would not naturally think of themselves as a religious minority. The motivation behind the conservative (and Russian nationalist) reaction on the “abuses of glasnost” criticism revealed the consequences of the sudden public clash between competing values<sup>156</sup>. Thus, under full glasnost, Puritans and conservatives, short of theoretical and factual arguments had to argue *ab homine* accusing their hegemonic critics of treason and ill intentions. As the Soviet Puritan values were not exposed in the theoretical journals, in order to give a sense of this pattern let us quote a bitter personal letter of a former party top-official, Moscow region’s first secretary of CPSU, V. I. Konotop, addressed to Gorbachev and Politburo after the first Peoples’ Deputies congress in July 1989:

I agree that the ongoing processes in our society are irreversible and that it is too late to discuss these issues, but nevertheless I ask you: does not the example, say of the recent Polish “experience”, indicate to you where our country is going? Democracy and glasnost in their contemporary form, unfortunately, regenerated Zionists, nationalists, Bukharinists, Trotskyites, thieves of all kinds, neo-fascists and other evil spirits [*neshist*]. Cosmopolites, using all the media especially TV and press, have entangled the working masses in the tight web of pessimism, distrust of the party, reduce to oblivion the original patriotism of the Soviet people, while Zakharov and Karyakin, I am ashamed to write, the people’s deputies of USSR, with their Jesuit intentions, already raised their hand against the holy of holies [*svataya svatikh*], - Vladimir Ilyich Lenin... Unforgettably early we are burying the plan system, without perfecting it, but relying on “non-capitalist self-regulating economy”, too early we bury the leading role of the party relying on the mythical good will and self-rule without due discipline and strict order.<sup>157</sup>

The religious character of this defence is evident. “Evil spirits” guided by “Jesuit intentions” raise their hand against the “holy of holies”. Beyond this grotesque language we can sense here both an almost realistic assessment of the current trends and the resignation in the face of these “ongoing processes”. Conservatives who expressed their views were indeed “true believers” whose support to the Soviet regime was based on a deep cultic adhesion, using no historiosophical arguments on the right interpretation of the world’s history and having no theoretical reference to Marx or Lenin. Moreover, we can dare to say that observing Gorbachev’s leadership and the mishandlings of perestroika they increasingly felt that God has abandoned the USSR to the disguised Pope of the Evil. The negative selection and the practices which allowed most of these Believers to make successful careers in the 1970s and 1980s made a new Communist Luther a purely hypothetical personage.

The second pattern of values commonly described as humanist or democratic socialism found its expression in the writings and speeches of Gorbachev and his closest reform-minded advisors and collaborators such as V. Medvedev, G. Shakhnazarov, A. Chernyaev, I. Frolov and many others. In a wider sense, we can presume that humane democratic socialism represented the ideal for the vast majority of the Soviet intelligentsia on the eve of perestroika; we extensively discussed this trend in the previous chapters. Notoriously associated with the generation of *shestidesyatniki*, this set of values

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<sup>156</sup> Religious wars and the contemporary scandals with caricature on Muhammad published in the Europeans press sprang from the same source, although perestroika’s authors would not recognise these terms.

<sup>157</sup> «Демократизация и гласность воскресили нечисть...», Вестник архива Президента Российской Федерации, 1993, №3, с.157-158; quoted in Russian in: Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, 1985-2005, АСТ-Астрель, М. 2007, с.141-142

appealed to the growing stratum of the educated urban population<sup>158</sup>; the values of the humanist democratic socialism defined the core of the political reforms of perestroika. In the late phase of perestroika, these values were overwhelmingly dominant in *Kommunist* and widely present in *Voprosi Filosofii*. The authors of *Novyi Mir* referred to them significantly less than before – instead stating the supremacy of the market liberal and Russian national values. The decline in the *Kommunist's* circulation from 1988 to 1991 and the gradual disappearance of the values of humanist socialism from the pages of the leading magazine *Novyi Mir* suggest that they lost their actuality. Why did socialist humanist values declined and gradually lost their hegemony? We can point out three reasons, which can be identified analysing the content of the articles in our selected corpus.

First, by 1989 Gorbachev, other political actors and influential publicists professing these values had fully articulated and applied the political program deduced from this core: glasnost, democratisation, alternative elections, power to Soviets, cost-accounting, cooperatives, and management elections in the enterprises. The effect of these measures was counterproductive. Socialist liberals (not totally unjustly) attributed their failure to the old system and bureaucratic resistance. But once the remedies derived by the protagonists from this set of values – and underlying assumptions on history and society, were fully applied, Gorbachev and his supporters found no specifically humanistic answers to the pending question on the agenda<sup>159</sup>. Widely accepting the *theoretical* shortcomings of humane socialism, most authors persisted in their value-statements stripped from any practical outlook<sup>160</sup>. The sudden economic paralysis set harder practical questions for policy makers, to which socialist humanists in 1990 still had the same answers as in 1986. The central values of human socialisms taken as the direct guide for policy making obscured decision to liberalize prices and privatize the trade channels – which otherwise was the only (non-violent) remedy to the threatening shortage in food supply<sup>161</sup>. Once the *market* as the inevitable mode of economic regulation was openly accepted

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<sup>158</sup> See: И. Стародубровская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Вагриус, 2004 (2ое изд.), с.181

<sup>159</sup> The most unpractical policies of were withdrawn such as the management elections, earlier seen as both viable and morally coherent. See the discussion above in the third chapter and in E.A. Rees, "Economic policy" in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.63

<sup>160</sup> Gorbachev and Medvedev repeatedly called social scientists to deepen the theory and provide the new scientific basis for perestroika policies and reply to the acute questions of the day; if in 1985-1988 Gorbachev received and consolidated the upcoming proposals, since 1989, we mostly encounter articles assuming the "absence of an elaborated theory" of humanist socialism neither in the past, nor today. See as two typical examples, the articles published in *Kommunist* early in 1989; then the situation only worsened: «Одной из острейших проблем является отсутствие разработанной философии обновления, а значит, и нет пока действенной его идеологии. Не было еще идеологии без убеждений, а наши остаются прежними: гуманизм и свобода. Теперь рождается программа, реализующая социализм гуманный и демократический, осуществляющий самоуправлению как ассоциацию, в которой "свободное развитие каждого является условием свободного развития всех". Философия должна вписать наше обновление в контекст мировой истории, проверить его масштабом всемирно-исторического процесса». А. Разумво, «Новое мышление и "старая" философия?», *Коммунист*, 1989, №1, с.68. «Плана не было. Была концепция. Ленин ушел из жизни на пороге создания новой парадигмы.... Бухарин был "на пороге" и мог бы ее выработать, не будь он в одиночестве», О. Лацис, «Экономика и политика в уроках "великого перелома"». *Круглый стол экономистов и историков*, *Коммунист*, 1989, №5 ,с.105

<sup>161</sup> The other options rapidly dismissed if at all considered were linked with the forced expropriation of the goods from the commercial stocks, where they were upheld by the management selling them on the black market prices, persecution of speculators and the return to the planned economy of the military type. The main obstacle for this solution was namely ideological: widespread rejection of violence and enforcement in all their forms – the trait we discuss extensively later on in this section. Since winter 1990, Gorbachev and Ryzhkov engaged the public consultations on the transition to the "market economy" lead by L. Abalkin and S. Shatalin; Gorbachev did not make the decisive move until he lost power in August 1991.

by socialist reformers and Gorbachev in 1990, the actual role of socialist values in the future transition towards market system remained *vague* even for the most refined advocates of this imposed acceptance of the market and socialism, who timidly defended this union as “not necessarily impossible”<sup>162</sup>. We can see here significant doubts and unwillingness to address the challenging issue in any detailed and meaningful way.

Second, the use of Lenin’s rule as a *precedent* and the means to legitimize and root social humanist values in history made them vulnerable to the factual evidence against Lenin’s words and deeds<sup>163</sup>. Historical evidence on Lenin’s acceptance of violence eroded the ideal and compromised it as a precedent. One must recall that the theoretical and historical criticism against socialist humanists had their impact in the context of freedom of speech and of the generalized social crisis favouring criticism of the CPSU. Third, and probably, most importantly, the imputation of *responsibility* for the terror and for the current crisis to Communist ideology became more convincing as soon as the reliance on Lenin’s precedent proved a vulnerable basis of legitimacy exposed to factual criticism<sup>164</sup>. Those discarding their faith in Lenin under the pressure of historical evidence turned into social-democrats or liberals (albeit, humanist socialists and wider public kept their deep emotional attachment to Lenin’s figure until 1990 and even beyond<sup>165</sup>); on the other hand, socialist reformers would be again subject to criticism for utopianism if they simply posited their values without reference to historical precedent, i.e. if they abandoned the reference to Lenin and NEP. The “contradictions” of socialism with a human face revealed by the outer criticism laid in the simultaneous acceptance of the *Lenin’s* precedent-setting image of a practical humanist and of the genuine humanistic aspirations and the new *imperative of non-violence*. Nevertheless, the last preliminary draft of the program of the Communist party finally adopted on the XXVIII Congress in July 1990 was specifically entitled “Towards a humane, democratic socialism” and it rejected “the denial of the ideals of October and the nihilistic attitude towards the Soviet people’s revolutionary gains”, willing to trace the tricky middle path between cult of ancestors, faith in Lenin’s integrity, revealed historical facts and the constraints for the political struggle for power when unpopular and non-humanistic decisions had to be taken<sup>166</sup>.

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<sup>162</sup> As an example, we can cite O. Latsis already aware of the necessity to liberalize prices when in 1991, he tried to convince reluctant socialist humanists and puritans that if the crash of the planned economy was full and left no place for debates, the compatibility of the liberalized market economy and socialism remained if not practically proven by precedent, but “not excluded” and worth a try. In other words, Latsis suggested first adopting the market economy and then see if it is compatible with socialism: «Сейчас, когда крах планоно-распределительной системы стал совершившимся фактом, именно противники социалистического выбора предрекают нам неудачу предстоящей попытки соединить рынок и социализм. Что ж, пока мы не попробовали, наша уверенность в совместимости этих начал не может быть подтверждена практикой. Но ведь и не опровергнута. А теоретических оснований отвергать такую возможность – нет». О. Лацис, «О смысле слов», Коммунист, 1991, №2, с.5

<sup>163</sup> We refer here not only to the pioneer articles of Tsytko and Sulyunin, but also to the publication of *Archipelago Gulag*, and other historical fiction accusing Lenin for terror and massive political violence. See: Ципко А.С. «Хороши ли наши принципы?», *Новый мир*, 1990, № 4. Ципко А.С., «Истоки сталинизма», *Наука и жизнь*, 1988, № 11-12; 1989. № 1, 2.

<sup>164</sup> *Kommunist* authors repetitively denied the implication of Lenin in the policies and norms of the later period, deploying a lot of energy and space for this defence. Here the weakest point was the political violence and ban on factions largely indorsed by Lenin in 1921 and later; these facts were more or less accurately reported living no little doubts. Also see the detailed account in R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, pp.6-20; 26-37. We address this issue of responsibility as one of the central axes of public debates in the separate section of this chapter.

<sup>165</sup> John Gooding, “Lenin in Soviet Politics, 1985-91”, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3. (1992), pp. 403-422

<sup>166</sup> Stephen White, “The politics of the XXVIII Congress”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, 1992, p. 51

The third relatively stable set of values, which can be approximately described as *market-liberal*, shared many values with those of humanist socialists: the focus on the human being and its dignity, commitment to democracy and liberty as well as the recognition of the global world context as a natural intellectual and normative basis for national politics. In between the two, leaning towards humane socialists we can note an important group of intellectuals such as A. Sakharov and L. Karpinsky who developed the ideas of *convergence* between socialism and capitalism in the context of perestroika. Rejecting Lenin's intellectual and moral authority, they accepted the market economy, but focused on social protection, welfare and "full realisation of every free and wholesome personality"<sup>167</sup>. The "return to civilization" or "civilized world" did not mean for them liberal capitalism, but a fine-tuned combination of market and social security in the service of human dignity<sup>168</sup>. Gorbachev supposedly embraced this historiosophical vision of gradual convergence of socialism and capitalism on the global scale. In his private conversation in May, 1990, he confessed to his aide Shakhnazorov defending the need to keep the name Communist for CPSU: "You know, it is not a matter of title. I am sure there will be convergence. What is good in our and their models will come together. How it will be called – is not that important. There will be integration, a new quality. And what is most important for us now – is not to rash"<sup>169</sup>. The editor-in-chief of *Voprosi Filosofii*, V. Lektorsky also welcomed this optimistic and in the short run radically misleading view like many other leading intellectuals of perestroika<sup>170</sup>.

The most important difference marking the liberal-market pattern concerned the definitive priority given to self-interest in the market economy over "self-fulfilment" or "social justice", and the shift from the

<sup>167</sup> «Можно ли дать такое определение: социализм - это развитое товарное производство в условиях подлинного народовластия? Сохранится ли в таком определении все, что нужно, или необходимо что-то добавить? Прибавить следует свободную и целостную развитую личность, реализующую свои способности на базе прогрессивной научно-технической и нравственно-правовой цивилизации. Тогда, мы, кажется, укажем все важное» Лен Карпинский, «Будущее социалистического идеала», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №4, с.54. See also the publication of the classic Sakharov's article with a new preface: А. Сахаров, «Размышления о прогрессе, мирном сосуществовании и интеллектуальной свободе», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №2.

<sup>168</sup> See as an example of this interpretation: "За исключением нескольких лет после 1921 г., когда была сделана попытка - на платформе нэпа - вернуться на магистральную дорогу цивилизации, признав многообразие хозяйственных укладов, рынок и некоторые другие инварианты процесса человечества. Таким образом, мы еще просто не начинали социализм, а перестройку следует считать попыткой начать этот строй". Лен Карпинский, «Будущее социалистического идеала», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №4, с.48

<sup>169</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., с.595

<sup>170</sup> The concerns about the global world threats common during perestroika, both legitimate and acceptable in other context, diverted the attention of socialist humanists as well as the supporters of the "convergence" approach, from the current problems of a state on the verge of dissolution. See the typical evasion from the concrete problems of perestroika to the "global problems", which supposedly were similar and had to be solved at once: «Наверное, невозможно представить тревожащую нас внутреннюю ситуацию, пути выхода из нее и дальнейшего движения, не учитывая процессы, происходящие в мире в целом. Ведь глобальные проблемы, вопросы национальных отношений, проблема человека и его духовного развития, стоят не только перед нашей страной, а и перед человечеством как единым сообществом людей. И видимо, нельзя решать их также в полной мере, не вписываясь в более широкий контекст острых проблем, уходящих своими корнями в прошлое и тех, которые можно назвать проблемами техногенной цивилизации в целом». А. Лекторский, «Круглый стол журнала "Коммунист и "Вопросы Философии" по проблемам перспектив настоящего и будущего человечества», *Коммунист*, 1989, №15, с.81. After discussing the difficulties and the desirability of the self-management another author resumes: «Перестройка предоставляет уникальную историческую возможность перехода к собственно социализму... Она выводит стиснутый национальными рамками социалистический импульс Октября в пространство всего человечества. Возвращая Россию в ансамбль народов, она вносит свой вклад в совокупное движение к лучшему мироустройству, которое невозможно без творческого освоения всем миром российского - великого и страшного - опыта XX века». Владимир Миронов, «Перестройка в контексте истории XX века», *Коммунист*, 1990, № 13, с.33



mere recognition of “all-human values” to the recognition of the moral and economic superiority of the “civilized world” over Soviet state socialism identified – and rejected – as the only possible form of socialism<sup>171</sup>. A. Yakovlev roughly outlined these benchmarks in a private draft program written in 1985; his general vision influenced by his long stay in Canada may be cautiously described as both liberal and socio-democratic<sup>172</sup>. L. Piasheva in a reader’s letter (1987) and V. Selyunin (1988) first elaborated this ideology in public, precisely in terms of the market *values* in opposition to the “socialist *values*” in a merely covert and easily detectable way on the pages of *Novyi Mir*<sup>173</sup>. These were still exceptions, and most liberal authors tried to disguise their views before 1989. Starting from 1989 all the arguments became explicit and more authors adopted and expressed support for the *market*, referring to historical experience they argued that self-interest was the only reliable driver of the economy and hence the market was superior to planned economy in the long run<sup>174</sup>. Larisa Piasheva and her husband Boris Pinsker co-signed an article simply entitled “Property and liberty” (we cited this article in this chapter) published in *Novyi Mir* in November 1989, where against the socialist-minded reformers they argued that the free market was the only real basis for democracy<sup>175</sup>. The mutual conditioning between market and democracy formed the nexus of the liberal arguments, promoted by V. Selyunin, B. Grushin, and I. Klyamkin *against* perestroika’s mainstream intellectuals, gradually leaving off or downplaying their socialist values. However, at least until the end of 1990 this set of liberal *values* remained a rising but numerically minor trend in the theoretical magazines; while at Politburo meetings the market was discussed as a necessary next step. This is to say that reformer had rather *limited intellectual and theoretical* tools to discuss one of the major issues on the agenda.

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<sup>171</sup> Gorbachev’s insistency on the priority of the all-human values (over the class-struggle values) was a major shift operated in

1987. In the given period, the priority or compatibility (depending on the authors) was asserted in *Kommunist* and *Voprosi Filosofii* as one of the central points of the perestroika’s ideology. See the editorial of *Kommunist* “Creative energy of Leninism” in 1989: «Чем полнее и глубже изучаем мы наше прошлое, тем очевиднее становится для нас каким колоссальным ущербом и какими невосполнимыми жертвами сопровождалось отступление от ленинизма, его извращение и вульгаризация. В мрачные годы культа личности и в период застоя было предано главное в ленинизме - его демократическое и гуманистическое содержание, органическое сочетание в нем классового подхода и общечеловеческих ценностей». Редакция, «Творческая энергия ленинизма», *Коммунист*, 1989, №7, с.7

<sup>172</sup> «Итак, основные слагаемые Перестройки: а) рыночная экономика с оплатой по труду; б) собственник как субъект свободы, в) демократия и гласность с их общедоступной информацией, г) система обратных связей». А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.379

<sup>173</sup> «В статьях на тему экономики сейчас особенно много ссылок на В.И.Ленина, которого используют как высший авторитет в деле защиты «социалистических» рыночных идеалов... Я давно спрашиваю себя: ответственно ли утверждать, что Владимир Ильич Ленин, для которого слово «либерал» (либерализм, свобода в западном смысле, конкуренция) было ругательным, принципиально стоял за рыночные отношения? ... социализм, и это мое глубокое убеждение, несовместим с рынком по сути своей, по замыслам своих создателей, по инстинкту тех, кто сознательно воплощал и продолжает воплощать в жизнь соответствующие начала и порядки». Л. Попкова, «Где пышнее пироги», *Новый мир*, 1987, №5; см. также Василий Селюнин, «Истоки», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №5.

<sup>174</sup> «Итак, исторический опыт учит: да, командная система способна поддерживать стабильные финансы, способна упреждать разрыв между денежной и товарной массой, но исключительно за счет директивного планирования нищенского уровня жизни. Неизбежная при ее господстве крайняя неэффективность экономики не очень препятствует достижению амбициозных целей государства, претензиям на мировое лидерство, по той причине, что растратенное при дурном хозяйстве удавалось (до последнего времени) возмещать сокращением пая трудящихся в произведенном продукте» В. Селюнин, «Черные дыры экономики», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №10, с.157

<sup>175</sup> Борис Пинскер, Лариса Пиашева, «Собственность и свобода», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №11

Two years later, the ongoing covert privatization of the Soviet internal trade<sup>176</sup>, inflation and the resulting collapse of the legal distribution channels posed the fundamental problems with food supply in the cities, which broke away any complex socialist or social welfare considerations: the threat of famine was perceived as real<sup>177</sup>. Facing the choice between the armed expropriation of food and the price liberalization Gorbachev and other socialist politicians and intellectuals reluctantly opted for the market solution, obliterating the question of its compatibility with socialism. They actually did not dare to pass the threshold of price liberalization and open privatization<sup>178</sup>. In the sixth chapter we see how the arguments on the natural-historical evolution smoothed and blurred the challenge represented by the widely praised transition to the market economy. We could say that Soviet intellectuals gradually accepted the “market” but not “capitalism”.

Along with the Soviet puritans – having no theoretical media-outlet, the majority of publicists and writers of the Russian nationalist strain were eager and vocal opponents of the market and capitalist economy in most of its forms. The most influential and regular authors of *Nash Sovremennik*, such as V. Kozhinov, A. Kazintsev, T. Glushkova, M. Lobanov severely condemned the market economy, self-interest, and money-commodity relations. This rejection was based on the reference to the superior values endangered by the market: traditional Russian spirituality (A. Kazintsev, M. Antonov, M. Lobanov, T. Napolova), autonomy of high culture (V. Kozhinov), values of pre-global pre-technocratic civilization (V. Kozhinov, T. Glushkova), and ecological imperatives (V. Rasputin, A. Kazintsev, V. Kozhinov). In this respect, a partial exception on the pages of *Nash Sovremennik* was the position of O. Platonov who attempted a peculiar blend of Lenin’s ideals, NEP, and the Russian *spiritual* tradition of collective work in *artels* – as the natural basis for the Russian path to the market<sup>179</sup>. Another

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<sup>176</sup> This aspect of the perestroika’s economic collapse is significantly underestimated; however, there are few accounts of this process: “A parallel process was unfolding within the hierarchies of control at the municipal level, particularly over retail establishments. *The New York Times* reported on one typical case in the early post-Soviet days. Under the centrally planned system, employees of a Moscow retail clothing store submitted all of their receipts to a regional administrator. This administrator paid their salaries and authorized all purchases of supplies. When the state announced the store would be sold for 2.2 million rubles, several employees (led by the store manager) hoped to buy the store themselves, guaranteeing their continued employment, but lacked the necessary capital. In anticipation of the sale, the store manager began withholding revenues from the administrator (presumably by inflating prices above official levels) to build up a purchase fund.” In addition to facilitating the managerial takeover, the ruse presumably deflated the apparent profitability of the property, discouraging alternate purchasers. On the day of the sale, the manager paid cash”. Solnick, Steven Lee, *Stealing the state: control and collapse in Soviet institutions*, Harvard University Press, Russian Research Center studies, 1999, p.230

<sup>177</sup> Chernyaev reports the M. Gorbachev’s announcement on one of the Security Council’s meetings in March 1991 on the eminent threat of famine “within few months” – although there was “bread in the country”. Significantly, he compared the situation with that of the end of NEP in 1927 triggering the collectivisation and expropriation. А. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с.438

<sup>178</sup> We would like to stress here not the “objective incompatibility” of the free market and of the values of humane socialism, which were arguably made significantly compatible in several Nord-European countries, but the obliteration of this very question in the period when the market was accepted in 1990, revealing the unaddressed gap between policies and values. The late perestroika’s context of pressing economic shortages and the discussed above weak theoretical elaboration of the socialist humanism made this gap between political values and adapted policies wide open and obliterated.

<sup>179</sup> See: О. Платонов, «В двух шагах от обрыва. Истоки», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №1: «Ленинское понимание содержания труда в новые исторический период было во многом созвучно идеалам традиционной крестьянской культуры труда. В вопросах труда Ленин предлагал основываться на самодеятельности масс, демократии, гласности, авторитете общественного мнения, добровольного коллективного объединения людей...» с.11. «Итак, артель, была своего рода гениальной формой народного труда, в которой находило свое выражение свободное, самостоятельное развитие народного духа» с.5

nationalist, M. Antonov also praising the virtues of the Russian *artels* framed them as socialist and “non-money-commodity” forms of cooperative work:

Cosmopolitans welcome the full integration of our country into the global world economy, which in the present context can only lead to its transformation into a colony of trans-national corporations. Patriots defend the independence of the country and an autonomous path of its development. They assume that the peoples of our country and the Russian people in particular, for centuries lived a communitarian life in *artels* and thus, see our future not on the principles of bourgeois individualism, but in a certain form of socialist way of life.<sup>180</sup>

Nationalists also shared with Soviet puritans the virtually religious respect of the community’s history as the central political value. One of the leading Russian writers, V. Rasputin metaphorically formulated the common credo of the patriotic and nationalist camp assigning the respective roles to economy, politics and historical memory: “economics, politics – are the main leverages in the social machine, but the guiding memory of such machine should be not a computer... but a historical consciousness”<sup>181</sup>. Many puritans, as the cited above first secretary Konotopov, shared with the overwhelming majority of the Russian nationalists an overt anti-Semitism regularly and publicly expressed. Thus, the common and steady rejection of the historical criticism (“*blackening of history*”) and of the liberal market by the Russian nationalists and the Soviet puritans made them hardly distinguishable for their opponents – prefiguring their future post-perestroika alliance. In this sense, the nationalists were imputed the role to *represent* the helpless Soviet conservatives or puritans in the thick magazines and in this quality were even (unjustly) disqualified as allies of Stalinist N. Andreeva or of the internationalist puritan E. Ligachev<sup>182</sup>. The obvious point of discord marking the difference between the two was the Soviet period in history and especially the October revolution, the civil war and collectivization – sanctified by Soviet puritans and considered as a tragic error and a crime against the Russian people – by nationalists. Condemning and deploring the extinction of the Russian peasantry by the Bolsheviks but positively referring to the egalitarian and anti-Western character of socialism in 1989, in 1990-1991 the nationalist and patriotic authors radicalised their *historical criticism* of the Soviet period. Thus, although favourable for the positive identification with the national past, Russian nationalists were *strengthening the common trend* deconstructing the Soviet historical cults.

By the end of perestroika, among the new “anti-Bolshevik” heroes of the nationalists were White officers, Kornilov, Stolypine, Witte and the Emperors’ family making the historical controversy with

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<sup>180</sup> «Космополиты ратуют за полное и всестороннее включение нашей страны в единую мировую экономику, которое в сегодняшних условиях может привести страну только к превращению в колонию транснациональных корпораций. Патриоты отстаивают независимость страны и самостоятельный путь ее развития. Они исходят из того, что народы нашей страны, в особенности русский народ, на протяжении веков жил общинной или артельной жизнью и потому мыслят свое будущее не на принципах буржуазного индивидуализма, а в тех или иных формах социалистического уклада жизни». М. Антонов, «Выход есть! Когда и чем закончится перестройка. "Западники", "Самобытники" и чернь», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №9, с.143

<sup>181</sup> «Экономика, политика - главные двигательные рычаги в машине общественного устройства, но направляющей памятью для такой машины должно быть не компьютерное устройство, ... а историческое сознание». Quoted in: А. Широпаев, письмо читателя, «Козлиный дух, или на дворе "двадцатые годы"?, *Наш Современник*, 1989, №1, с.184

<sup>182</sup> See: «Хочется покоя и мира для несчастной России. Обзор писем за 1990 год». *Наш Современник*, 1991, №1, с.170

Soviet puritans defending Lenin's image extremely painful. The Russian Orthodox Church and the militant anti-atheism of nationalists caused a constant clash of their values with those of Soviet puritans. Alexander Prokhanov was the first who attempted a deliberately selective synthesis of Russian nationalism with Great power Soviet patriotism (downplaying the key components of the official Marxism-Leninism such as atheism, internationalism, and also class-struggle), but he remained an atypical figure until 1991.<sup>183</sup> The so called "red-brown" synthesis took political shape as a reaction to the collapse of the USSR and economic catastrophe of the early 1990s – KPRF saddled this ideology as a means of electoral longevity while emptying it from any real political content. Putin's public rhetoric by a combination of symbolic gestures and omissions, rather than by his statements about history, also attempted the synthesis of these two components more nobly and more accurately called "white-red" by reference to White Russians and Red Communists.

Thus, *Nash Sovremennik* played the role of the recognised flag-ship of Russian nationalism and its core values, typically expressed in a bitter and critical manner with a pronounced accent on its *anti*-values shared by several Communist puritans; from this set of values nationalists deduced little if any specific and credible policies. In contrast with the common presentation of its ideological orientation as "liberal" most of the values of Russian nationalism were present in *Novyi Mir* throughout the last years of perestroika by such different authors as Solzhenitsyn, Tsytko, Myalo, Kozhinov, Likhachev and to a wide extent its editor Zalygin himself – three of these authors also published in *Nash Sovremennik*<sup>184</sup>. In other words, *Novyi Mir* succeeded in positioning itself as the ideological and theoretical leader providing the forum for a genuine diversity if not synthesis of voices.

### *A new common value*

Across these proto-ideological sets of values, the passionate debates of this late perestroika period crystallised one historiosophical value shared by the vast majority of authors and magazines. The revelations about the horrific crimes committed in the names of political ideals triggered the moral condemnation of the ideologically motivated violence. We can qualify this new value as the imperative

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<sup>183</sup> A. Prokhanov co-authored with S. Kurginyan the collective appeal *A Word to the People* co-signed by Russian nationalists and G. Zyuganov in July 1991 as a foreword to GKChP – but then and there the Communist rhetoric is *not* used. The defence of the USSR is presented purely in terms of ancestors cults, Great Power pride and as "a home and stronghold" of Russia. This is clearly not an appeal to Marxism-Leninism or the whole USSR but a longing for the disappearing empire addressed to those *Russians* who *deplored* the eminent loss of Empire, not its ideology: "An enormous, unforeseen calamity has taken place. Motherland, our land, a great power, given to us to ward with the nature, glorious ancestors, it is perishing, breaking apart, falling into darkness and non-being. And this collapse takes place at our silence, toleration and accord... Soviet Union, this is our home and stronghold, built with enormous efforts of all the peoples and nations, that has saved us from disgrace and slavery at the times of hideous invasions! Russia - unique, beloved! - she is crying for help." This may contain the germs of Fascism, but it is by no means a Fascist ideology as it is suggested by J. A. Gregor. Compare: James A. Gregor, *Phoenix: Fascism in Our Time*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1999, p.153

<sup>184</sup> We refer to Solzhenitsyn, Kozhinov and Myalo. In a very different ways, such authors of *Novyi Mir* as A. Solzhenitsyn, A. Tsytko, K. Myalo, D. Likhachev, V. Kozhinov, and the editor-in-chief S. Zalygin himself adhered to most of the values identified above under the common title of Russian nationalism: pride for forefathers and Russian history, Russia, bygone Russian Peasantry, Orthodox spirituality, Ecology, Imperative of non-violence, anti-Communism, anti-Capitalism, and anti-Semitism.

of non-violence, which presumably had an impact on the relatively peaceful collapse of the USSR. There were several complementary and interchanging arguments and tropes which contributed to the formation of a broad consensus around the superiority of the strict moral norms in history and politics:

- moral lessons of the historical experience of terror and revolution<sup>185</sup>
- the negative role of progressive and scientific-like ideologies in revolutionary violence<sup>186</sup>
- the revolutionary violence to history Vs organic history (natural-historical evolution)<sup>187</sup>
- the absolute imperative of non-violence in politics and history: "ends don't justify means"<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> See as an example: «Мы говорим "опыт истории" и думаем, что пользуемся им, но на деле, прошлое уникальное но если мы различаем прошлое, тогда начинаем учиться ... Тогда-то мы и овладеваем "опытом прошлого" и в соответствии с ним создаем ту новую шкалу оценок... с точки зрения которой и начинают переоцениваться такие представления, как "правильно" и "неправильно", как "цель" и "средство", как "догма" и "теория", и многие-многие другие"; Цель-средство, переоценка критериев опытом истории; "Ведь если все, что со мной происходит, лишено самостоятельного нравственного значения, если все это всего лишь средство достичь великой цели, то в настоящем становятся оправданными не только бытовые неудобство, но и предательство родных и друзей, преступления, всеобщий страх, подозрительность...". И. Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду? Выбранные места из истории одной болезни», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2, с.229

<sup>186</sup> «Можно не принимать революции. (Это в конце концов дело личных убеждений). Можно говорить о страданиях и бедах, которыми богата история любой революции. Можно сожалеть, что классы и партии... встают на путь борьбы, на путь насилия... Можно даже сказать, что в конце XX века мир подошел к иному пониманию роли насилия. Но как бы то ни было, как бы мы не относились к насилию, нужно признать, что без насилия тогда невозможна была революция. И нельзя принять революцию с ее светлыми идеалами и отринуть насилие. Это невозможно. Более того, только эпоха великих революций, только ее обретения и потери подняли нас до сегодняшнего понимания общечеловеческих ценностей, демократии, построенной на взаимной терпимости и т.п. Научиться бы теперь всему этому на практике». Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, В. Логинов, «Послушная история, или новый публицистический рай, грустные заметки», *Коммунист*, 1989, №14, с.79. А. Я. Гуревич, «О кризисе современной исторической науки», *Вопросы Истории*, 1991, №2-3, с.24. Вадим Кожин, «Самая большая опасность...», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №1, с.168. "Однако, вполне ясно, что идея создания "совершенного" общества подразумевает: нравственным является все, что способствует этому созданию, - в том числе и массовый террор..." В. Кожин, Послесловие к «Скорый помощник и молитвенник наш от междоусобной брани», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №4, с.173. В остальных странах - желание "ускорить" историю насилием; с.6 из этого желания ускорить - "абсолютизация революционного насилия"; Б. Г. Могильницкий, «Альтернативность в истории советского общества», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №11, с.6.

<sup>187</sup> "В шуме газетно-журнальных баталий, в стычках литературных партий и групп общественная мысль все ближе подступает к пониманию роли сложившихся структур власти... Новая власть отвергла всю прошлую "органику"... она нашла твердую опору, всеобъемлющий принцип разрушения старого - насилие. Оно же стало главным инструментом в руках создателей нового мира". В. Шубкин, «Трудное прощание», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №4, с.164. «Будущее общества, пережившего сегодняшнюю драму, не в революционных конвульсиях, а в эволюционном замедленном развитии. Консерватор в устах "либерального авангарда" - слово скверное, бранное, но сегодняшний процветающий мир управляется консерваторами" "Категория консервативности должна пройти через наше изуродованное революциями сознание, занять достойное место среди установок и ценностей». Александр Проханов, «Идеология выживания», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №9, с.5-6

<sup>188</sup> See as examples: An editorial of *Kommunist* declares the variety of "paths towards the socialist ideals" and as something natural, excludes the paths "absolutely forbidden by the norms of morality" (абсолютно запрещенные нормами морали). Редакция, «К новому облику социализма», *Коммунист*, 1989, №13, с.15.. "Ведь если все, что со мной происходит, лишено самостоятельного нравственного значения, если все это всего лишь средство достичь великой цели, то в настоящем становятся оправданными не только бытовые неудобство, но и предательство родных и друзей, преступления, всеобщий страх, подозрительность...". И. Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду? Выбранные места из истории одной болезни», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2, с.229. "Рассматривая проблему нравственного консенсуса применительно к будущему, по-моему, нельзя упускать из виду трудный период нашей истории, своеобразиие сегодняшнего дня... Общая идея как будто исчерпала себя, вызвала разочарование, сомнения и т.д. Отсюда духовная сторона жизни многих людей не насыщена нравственным содержанием... Милосердие, просто сочувствие, сострадание к людям - отправная точка процесса развития человека, важная составляющая его ориентира

D. Granin at a round-table spoke about the “moral consensus in relation to the future” resulting from the disillusion in big ideas and in violence<sup>189</sup>; A. Nuikin, A. Tsytko and many other publicists opposed the philosophy of Kant and his categorical imperative to the historicist philosophy of Hegel, Marx and Engels where noble goals and historical necessity justified immoral means<sup>190</sup>. The reference to Kant suddenly appeared as natural and authoritative, as it gave credible theoretical backing for the conclusion made elsewhere: reflecting on the violent history of the XX. The imperative of non-violence indeed was consensual, and although it did not constitute a basis for a political platform, the moral imperative was with a variety of connotations and uses integrated by the main ideological trends that had their voice in the thick magazines. An editorial review of readers’ letters published in January 1991 entitled “For rest and peace in unfortunate Russia” condemned the possible liberalization and the program of 500 days, co-authored by the leading Soviet economists such as Shatalin, Yavlinsky, Yasin, Petrakov, Zadornov, Fedorov and others, as a new destructive and forced revolution carried in the name of the “neo-Bolshevik” market ideology:

Let us repeat again, that the majority of readers of our magazine reject the path of a radical reformation (i.e. next unpredictable experimentation). Thus, as an example, the reader from Leningrad, A. Sedov writes to us: “History of all the revolutions, including our October revolution, should finally teach all of us, that the really progressive path can only be the evolutionary path of development without any overturns”<sup>191</sup>.

The authors of *Nash Sovremennik* who perceived the ongoing changes as a catastrophe for the Russian people but at the same time, embraced the imperative of non-violence as superior. They never allowed any public hint on the possibility of armed resistance to these otherwise totally unacceptable changes. The attempts of armed repression against the formally illegal actions such as secession, sabotage or inter-ethnic conflicts such as the military interventions in Tbilissi and Vilnius were condemned in the press from 1989 through 1991 (and later, in case of the assault of the rebellious Parliament in 1993) and were perceived as illegitimate – in the name of the *superior principle* and irrespective of the concrete political situation and political opinions<sup>192</sup>. This lesson learned from the bloody political history of the XX century was directly applied to the present.

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движения: стоит ли он на месте, идет вперед или назад?” Д. Гранин, «Круглый стол журнала "Коммунист и "ВФ" по проблемам перспектив настоящего и будущего человечества», *Коммунист*, 1989, №15, с.75-76

<sup>189</sup> Д. Гранин, «Круглый стол журнала "Коммунист и "ВФ" по проблемам перспектив настоящего и будущего человечества», *Коммунист*, 1989, №15, с.75-76.

<sup>190</sup> . А. Нуйкин, «Новое мышление и старая совесть», in, А.А. Протащик (сост.), *Через тернии*, М., Прогресс, 1990, с.98-99. А Ципко, «Противоречия учения Карла Маркса», in, А.А. Протащик (сост.), *Через тернии*, М., Прогресс, 1990, с.60-62

<sup>191</sup> «Между тем, повторю, большинство читателей нашего журнала отвергает путь радикального переустройства (сиречь очередного непредсказуемого эксперимента). Так, например, ленинградец А. Седов пишет: «История всех революций, включая нашу Октябрьскую, должна все же научить нас, что действительно прогрессивным может быть только эволюционный путь развития, без каких-либо переворотов». «Хочется покоя и мира для несчастной России. Обзор писем за 1990 год». *Наш Современник*, 1991, №1, с.170

<sup>192</sup> Mau and Starodubrovskaya rightly point out the unacceptability of violence in post-Soviet Russia inherited from perestroika, described as “philosophy of non-violence”; but they presume that “although it was never declared as a political doctrine, practically speaking the majority of the population leaned towards the refusal of violence” – as we try to demonstrate in this chapter, non-violence was a widespread *theoretical* position with a complex and multilevel argumentation in its favour. Mau and Starodubrovskaya also show that this attitude was shared by the supposedly neo-

For the first time in the Russian history of revolutions and unrest, political violence in its physical and metaphorical sense was genuinely compromised as a *principle*. The individual ability to judge and the principle of non-violence halted the galvanization of free debates into ideological parties and halted political violence. As we try to demonstrate in the next chapter, non-violence was not only the dominant value in this period, but also a widespread theoretical position with a complex and diverse argumentation in its favour. Political, economic, and social order was crumbling virtually without political violence. We should also note the link between the new pluralistic and individualist conception of truth, the widespread sense of miscommunication and the imperative of non-violence. This setup attenuated the clash of values at the level of both debates and politics. The shift in the concept of truth and the observation of the actual impact of public debates on politics affected the perceived meaning of public debate. If there is no possibly authoritative truth on history and society, then no one can make others change their minds by his own authoritative judgments, which is arguably the essence of public politics. For the majority of people, sharing and meaningfully opposing one's views and judgments to others views and judgments seems to be the natural condition of having meaningful individual opinions in the first place. Similarly, when people lack the habit of making their own judgement and therefore have no ability to autonomously validate the judgements of others, public debates lose their intellectual teeth.

The imperative of non-violence in history and politics, as well as the superiority of personal opinions became the common "lesson" learned from the late Soviet experience of ideological alienation and from the official Soviet historiography by the leading ideologues and publicists by the end of perestroika. How one can rule a society accepting non-violence, relativity of truth and impossibility to persuade others, especially when society is torn by antagonistic values, national identities, emergent economic interests, when contradictory laws are edited by sixteen independent assemblies and food is not delivered in shops? In this context claims for authoritative public speech were seen by most other actors as suspicious, violent and misleading, unless it was used to protect individuals' right to speak in public freely, and to behave freely in his private life. The weakness of the state institutions in the Russia of 1990s and civic passivity of the 2000s could have an *intellectual* foundation in this rapidly acquired prejudice against the political efficiency of public speech.

The short-lived and very partial *de facto* hegemony of the liberal free-market is often mistakenly projected back from 1992 to the last two years of perestroika. During 1990 there was a radical ideological break, when the last Soviet taboos were transgressed and when the "party line" vanished along with any other authoritative ideological frame. Perestroika reformers had hoped that free rational discussion would lead to a consensual and scientifically solid political program and would not be "misused" as a tool of political struggle or the expression of personal and group ambitions. The

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Bolshevik radical liberal reformers such as E. Gaidar who confessed his "fear of civil war" as an important retaining factor in his decisions. See: И. Стародубовская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Варриус, 2004 (2ое изд.), с.194-196

outcome of this attempt was surprising. The emphasis on the individuals' sovereign right to judge along with the inherited malleability of people's beliefs (both resulting from the late Soviet rules of public speech) contributed to the communicational context, in which publicists' ideas and positions could not be demonstrated to each other or consolidated; they were mutually and harshly attacked by other authors and readers. But probably the main factor contributing to the sense of disconnection of the speech from reality was the perceived patent failure of most perestroika's policies, recently welcomed and consensual. As noted, public speech is highly reflexive. The widely perceived negative feeling of intellectual miscommunication attested by the influential intellectuals and mirrored by the positive affirmation of the reader's exclusive right to judge provide the double witness for the situation in which hardly any ideological hegemony was possible. We can also compare this decline in the status of public speech with the imperative of non-violence and the trust in the wholesome natural-historical evolution – outlined in the next chapter. Let us conclude with the cited above passage from the essay of Victor Yaroshenko who thus concluded his sober overview of the current economic and political trends: **“Politicization of the ordinary people, of the whole life – it is like a fever, like an illness. Politics in fact is not real life, it is the sublimation of life; it is the substitution of deeds by words [our emphasis, T. A.]”**<sup>193</sup>

P.S. In the *Post Scriptum* to this warring and disillusioned essay just cited above and entitled “The energy of dissolution” we can discover a curious denouement. After referring to the beneficial time distance given by the reading of *History of Rome* by Titus Livius speaking about the corruption of virtues as the cause of Roman downfall, the future head of PR of the party *Democratic Choice of Russia*, added the last and surprisingly more optimist sentence: “God grant it will all come right in the end”<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> В. Ярошенко, *op. cit.*, с.187

<sup>194</sup> «Бог даст, образуется...». Ibid., 187





## **CHAPTER VI**

**Civilization, non-violence and natural-historical evolution  
[idioms in 1989-1991]**

Political thought in the last three years of perestroika embraced the peculiar idea that men *should not* master history. Sceptical about the ability of men to steer, intellectuals entrusted to the wise free flow of history. Thus, in 1989-1991, the theoretical language of public debates marked the subtle evolution of the agency centred idioms of *choice*, *alternatives*, and *paths*, where the first two articulated the agency's ability to act on its own, and the last one – historical necessity. As we tried to show, the three idioms surged in 1988 and they allowed the revision of the official Soviet historiosophy placing the accent on the agency's ability to master history by choosing between alternative paths. This innovation ascribed to the emergent public the role of actor; it made public debates a politically meaningful activity in the eyes of the protagonists using the new language of public debate. The same historiosophical vocabulary was in steady use in 1989-1991 but the accent was subtly changed - towards a new focus on the virtues of the *natural-historical* evolution [naturally] leading to *civilized* life.

As the unfolding of perestroika's reforms brought the economic shortages, break up of the satellite regimes in Eastern Europe and the growing sense of anarchy within the USSR, most intellectuals started to reflect on historical experience and politics in new programmatic terms: *natural-historical* [flow], *evolution* [as opposed to revolution], *world civilization* [as opposed to Soviet backwardness], and simultaneously adhered to the imperative of *non-violence*. The linguistic shift reflected and framed the change in the vision of politics and history, which made the final stage of perestroika an atypical revolution justified by the discourse on organic evolution. Ideologues of different strains agreed that no ideology justified violence and that history was wiser than the best ideologues; deliberate human actions only perverted or violated the normal historical evolution of nations and humanity. Scholars have to explore this original phase of perestroika's political thought, which greatly contributed to a purposefully unrestrained and relatively peaceful course of the revolution until 1993 and beyond.

There is at least one reason, why this strand in the perestroika ideologies could pass virtually unnoticed<sup>1</sup>. The factual consensus on the supremacy of the organic historical evolution and the common idioms were veiled from both the actors and the scholars studying perestroika by the ardent debates on the distribution of responsibility between groups for the mass crimes and missed opportunities of the Soviet period. The passionate quarrels on "who is guiltier" eclipsed more consensual and profound moves in the political thought on perestroika, which can be also seen as the theoretical basis for the soft anarchy of the 1990s<sup>2</sup>. Yet, this debate over historical responsibility as

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<sup>1</sup> The established scholarship did not take into account this historiosophical turn towards the acceptance of the organic and *natural-historical* in the late perestroika political thinking. The *non-violent* character of perestroika's thinking received more attention of actors and observers. I. Starodubrovskaya and V. Mau convincingly argued that while the perestroika's stages fitted well the typical stages of the Great revolutions, its major political actors were consciously seeking to avoid the revolutionary bloodshed in the radical transformation. To this emphasis on the ideology of non-violent noted by Mau and professed by M. Gorbachev, A. Yakovlev or Gaidar in their interviews and then memoirs, we would like first to add a wider intellectual context and second, to highlight the theoretical arguments of the late perestroika on the inability of men to *master history* and on the ability of the *natural-historical* evolution to bring the fruits of civilization if men do not impose their own wills on it. И. В. Стародубровская, В. А. Мау, *Великие революции, от Кромвеля до Путина*, Варриус, (2-ое издание), 2004, Глава 6.

<sup>2</sup> The further evolution after 1991 took on this pattern of thought. In substance, the accusation advanced against the Gaidar's seemingly radical reforms starting from 1992 and prepared since 1989 was that "liberals" acted *against* history and anew imposed their ultra-liberal vision on society. In response, Gaidar's team claimed that their reforms merely re-framed what was already happening *naturally*. There is substantial evidence that this later claim was largely justified: legal

most other crucial theoretical issues was also articulated in the familiar terms. During the last three years of perestroika, most authors of the central magazines actively used the three related idioms of *choice*, *path* and *alternative*. In this sense, the rapid surfacing of the new idioms around 1988 reflected the real need and offered good replies: the steady deregulation of public speech by reformers opened the competition for an adequate theoretical language and arguably these idioms won the central roles.

Publicists were continually using the three new idioms in a variety of ways from 1989 to 1991 as they first did in 1988; the key *theoretical issues* remained similar to those originally discussed in these specific terms, although answers partly changed. First, **remapping** the map or stages of History remained the crucial theoretical question defining what was seen as historical and therefore political necessity and how the scope of choices was framed; second, the issue of one's historical **guilt** for the crimes of the past and for the present crisis set the stage for the discrediting of the CPSU and Soviet ideology as well it generated a chain of mutual accusations by competing intellectual groups; and finally, the most abstract and the most practical issue of **agency's** capability to master historical necessity found its stable and original solution. It is noteworthy that "historical" equated here to "society" and "politics". For late perestroika men History taken in its national and world dimensions remained the vantage point of understanding politics both theoretically and practically. We can note regular attempts of emancipation of the "properly political" mode of thinking – from the widely prevailing historical and historiosophical modes of thinking and its language – and state the relative failure of these attempts: few of the new non-historical idioms have achieved the degree of recognition and acquired the usage comparable to historical idioms<sup>3</sup>. We distinguish the three mentioned themes

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privatization, price liberalization and the drastic cuts in social security spending in 1992-93 largely formalized the factual trend of 1987-1991. Alexander Barsenkov, who throughout his pioneering study of the history of perestroika exhibited his inclination towards what he calls "patriotic" position and his critical stance against "democrats", surprisingly concluded his book by stating that liberal reforms in 1992 were a system of "forced stabilization measures", rather than a voluntarism of liberals. The violent clash for power in 1993 between groups and individuals confirmed both the general ideological rejection of the use of violence and *also* the inescapable character of violence for the regulation of political communities: violence can not be evacuated from politics by a moralistic ideology, but can be framed by counter-violence, custom and laws. Of course, one can question the then dominant historiosophical assumption on the impossibility to frame or improve the "natural-historical flow". Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, М. Роспэн, 2007. А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.363. Compare with the first theoretical warnings against the proposals of liberal market reforms: «Попытка своенравно отменить старый, во многом уже саморазвивающийся "исторический эксперимент" слишком смахивает на экспериментирование новое. Она исходит из той же теории рукотворности общества, одушевлена все тем же пафосом "делания" истории. "Более благородного" делания - в сравнении с "менее благородным", но - более ли ответственного?» Татьяна Глушкова «О "русскости", о счастье, о свободе», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №7, с.181. Also, compare with the later accusation of Solzhenitsyn against Gaidar: "Никогда не поставлю Гайдара рядом с Лениным, слишком не тот рост. Но в одном качестве они очень сходны: в том, как фанатик, влекомый только своей призрачной идеей, не ведающий государственной ответственности, уверенно берётся за скальпель и многократно кромсает тело России". А. Солженицын, *Россия в обвале*, Русский Путь, 2006, с.20.

<sup>3</sup> By the properly political language of political communication we do not mean a single "right kind of political language"; our purpose is rather to distinguish the historiosophical and historical idioms (and the related modes of thinking) dominant under perestroika from the public political language, which *could* potentially form and mix other codes and images such as legal, financial, economic, philosophical and religious ones. We can note that *moral* arguments and idioms, such as *repentance* and *Pravda*, took an important place along the historical ones, often tightly connected. The numerous individual attempts of the leading authors to offer a genuine language of political analysis revolved around the identification of groups of interests, but few got credit and common usage. There are only few successful non-historical idioms – the words "bureaucracy" and "nomenklatura", which had a widespread usage: they negatively designated the ruling group along with the key expressions "Administrative system" and "command-administrative system", but they were first introduced to analyse the history of Stalin's rule, thus offering a perestroika analogy to "Ancient regime". The rest of the properly political

in separate sub-sections, keeping in mind the connections between each of them, reinforced by the common vocabulary and by the common referential experience – Soviet past in the world context.

*The historiosophical representation of the political action – anti-Machiavellian moment*

The new philosophy of history framed new ideologies and exercised its virtual theoretical monopoly over minds because no other intellectual tradition was as influential as historiosophy. Yet this kind of political reasoning by 1990 showed its limited grip on reality: revolutions of the past and today's reforms guided by historiosophical insights, failed. Thus, the fragmentation of the Soviet polity and the spontaneous privatization of state property in 1988-1991 culminated in a historiosophy that one can describe as the *anti-Machiavellian moment*. This historiosophy states that agency cannot and should not deliberately master history – instead it should fully rely on its natural-historical flow (a more liberal idiom) or organic evolution (a more Russian nationalist one). The reflection on the relation between political action and historiosophy led the majority of perestroika's intellectuals to the idea that human agency should let history go on its own. The reliance on the deduction of the global sense of history as the *guide* for political action took a paradoxical form of agency's self-negation, and remained the most articulate mode of political thinking. The logic of global history and its law-governed development was the main authoritative and convincing way of justifying, empowering or objecting political actions and thus rendering social reality available to the society as a *reading public*.

The new conviction in the normative supremacy of the natural-historical flow was strengthened by its moral twin – the imperative of non-violence negating illegitimate but also legitimate use of force. These two normative ideas defined the ultimate stage of Soviet political theory fusing humanist, conservative, liberal and anarchist, nationalist and socialist strains into an original blend, which we will attempt to outline. Natural-historical or organic evolution was opposed to mobilizing goals, to theoretical speculations and to physical violence. We could qualify this phase in perestroika's political theory as purposely a-political. Men would have to let history evolve, putting aside great projects and refusing collective claims on truth: letting history evolve naturally would mean the end of political activity. The only meaningful deliberate political action remained preventing people to impose their will and vision on others and on the natural flow of History. In fact, this was still an active political role.

The suddenly current adjective "*natural-historical*" and the imperative of non-violence both expressed the rapid and deep disillusion in human agency's ability to choose between alternatives more effectively and to reform society more wisely than its presumably natural flow. If we were to note one common and distinctive feature of late perestroika's political thought this would be the reliance on the self-organizing flow of history as opposed to any institutional and ideological forms of regulation,

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language allowing to analyse and to debate the current politics remained the matter of *individual* craft and individual preferences. In other words, authors tried to express themselves on their own, but they could less efficiently *communicate* (convince, negotiate, argue) outside the historical and historiosophical idioms. Legal, economic, philosophical and religious idioms had much less currency.

revolutionary break or reformation. This distinctive anti-political pathos transcended the main ideological divergences and pacified or immobilized adversaries in a deliberate inaction; as opposed to other revolutionary period, the political thought of this period did not encourage violence, unity, mobilization, or action *tout court*. To be sure, this special theoretical mindset could not stop the real political and ideological changes in 1991, but it certainly contributed to some of the most admired and most bewailed aspects of the last phase of perestroika – by blocking the escalation of hatred and undermining the group and class solidarity.

The doubt about the ability to influence the historical process in a deliberate and meaningful way resulted from the collective reflection on the double failure: that of the humanistic aspirations of the October revolution and the ongoing failure to reform Soviet state socialism and its world system. Bolsheviks' post revolutionary bloodshed, as well as perestroika policies failures were widely attributed to the originally fatal ambition of *deliberately mastering* and thus violating wholesome organic History. The reference to the “civilized world” and to the “world-historical” context sketched the positive ontology where self-organized historical process could naturally lead to liberty, justice and prosperity. Thus, political thought found historiosophical and moral grounds to dismiss any ideologically motivated political project as such. The nascent political theory came to the conclusion that meaningful political action had no ontological and historiosophical foundations other than letting history do. This could be described as a neo-liberal or else as a conservative view on the role of the state in the life of society if it relied on a legal, customary or institutional reasoning of an established political tradition or a group. But it did not. This position could also be described as anarchist if it relied on the self-ruling associations (or else if it assumed the abolishment of the legitimate use of violence, if not the resulting chaos). But consequences were not assumed and institutional issues were mistaken for singular choices or expressions of values. Perestroika publicists did not pay much attention to the right kind of political institutions: institutional designs were taken in a general and abstract form of a few diverging paths associated with and wishfully ensured by the declared values rather than by the account of the social mechanisms – choosing the right kind of path was *choosing the right everything as a bundle*.

The social setup was widely considered in 1988 as a matter of a big historical choice, which should be correctly taken. But a few years later it was seen as a natural-historical product of evolution that guarantees the becoming of civilization as soon as men stop violently imposing their visions of society on history and on their fellow men. The polished image of the “civilized world” obliterated the role of institutions, virtues, integrity, struggles, violence, colonisation, religions and religious wars, legalistic mindsets, contradictory ideologies, and centuries which formed Western European setups contemporary to perestroika. This wrong historiosophical image of the natural-historical civilization created the sense of familiarity and accessibility of the complex institutions underpinning the *vivre ensemble* of the “civilized world”. Historiosophical lens allowed sharp criticism of the established social and political institutions and values, but did not allow meaningfully debating of specific institutional issues, which arguably occupied the Western reflection about the uneasy relations between polity, disposition of power and freeholders, about the proper political representation, dangers of the

commercial society, or corruptibility of men – in other words, this specific historiosophical language and its way of reasoning veiled many of the real challenges met elsewhere in Europe, while providing a tranquilizing effect – first by promising a rapid return of free human agency into History and second, by stating that History knows and does better than men, which after all may not be as unreasonable a hypothesis as it may sound, but it is one which is certainly harmful for legitimating public politics. The better question in this respect is how this hypothesis should be used to guide the political debate. Perestroika debates focused by the historiosophical lens revolved around the new vision of global history, around the place the USSR occupied there and around the direction one should most naturally take, once the historiosophical benchmarks were correctly identified. On the other hand, we can note that this historiosophical attitude was quite realistic if understood as an *assessment* of the society's current in-ability to actively regulate itself or impose upon itself formal rules; it reflected well the *local* loss of the self-understanding and the low ability of the self-regulation although heightened as a *universal* invariable for politics and history. This thinking helped to cope with the dramatic situation in 1989-1991 and beyond, but without improving it.

The widespread feelings of intellectual disarray and the awareness of the practical helplessness of reforms made the public theoretical debates more bitter, fragmented and passionate. In the last two years of perestroika we can speak about plurality of angry monologues rather than about angry debates. What influential authors shared in this period was historiosophical reasoning, absolute moralizing and the focus on the Soviet past. Apart from the historiosophical idioms and the consensual moral imperative of non-violence, perestroika authors had little in common torn as they were by different political values and by the question of the recently revealed collective guilt for the massive Soviet crimes. Intellectuals with different political sensibilities came to the negation of plans-as-violence, while morality became the superior way of judging politics-as-history. A mostly negative consensus emerged: only the natural-historical stream would palliate the incapacity of human agency to steer its boat in history<sup>4</sup>. Drawing on the dialectics of agency and necessity, and reflecting on the failure of the Revolution and later reforms to bring the promised justice, prosperity, human dignity, fulfilment and liberty perestroika's intellectuals gave up their bet on the free human agency and submitted to historical necessity understood as *natural-historical*. Spinoza's paradox found anew its old solution: freedom is the deliberate dissolution of agency into the causal chain, represented by the natural flow of historical necessity. In this section we will outline the evolution of the perestroika's specific idioms, then the sliding to an "anti-political" vision of history, and the spread of the new concepts of *natural-historical* and *civilization* both taken in the world-historical context.

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<sup>4</sup> This core metaphor, among the series of other metaphors related to the image of men choosing their paths in history, was developed by M. Gefter, who equally explored the limits and assumptions of his own idioms. Unlike the majority of his contemporaries, Gefter was convinced in both inability of men to establish the correct "map of the ocean" and in the inability of men to refuse its role of the helmsman. Men should face the risks of the historical sailing and he will bear the responsibility for his inevitable errors. See: «Спор или потасовка», М. Гефтер, *Из тех и этих лет*, Проросс, М., 1991, с.300-304

## Rediscovering historiosophical map: setting the limits of social reality

The right design of the “map” of global history occupied the best minds in the last years of perestroika. According to the dominant presumptions, the key political decision, the available alternatives and the choice of the path, should be determined by a proper understanding of History. The official doctrine of the 1970s claiming that USSR had accomplished its movement towards socialism was officially put in doubt by Gorbachev and his ideologues in 1987 – the then officially recognized *Administrative system* turned to be a deformation of socialism. How this deformation was possible and what was then the correct map of history-as-politics?<sup>5</sup> The disappearance of censorship made the claims in this respect more diverse and more radical, while the language of paths and alternatives remained central. As in 1988 the historiosophical idioms provided arms for the new revisionist claims and for the expressions of the conflicting views about the global historiosophical map and about the place the USSR-Russia occupied there. The political battle started as a historiosophical one: the design of a better political and economic “system” (which would replace the morally unacceptable and economically weak system) allegedly should be deduced from *a global understanding of world history*, its stages, its sense and its cross-roads. This global historiosophical perspective on politics and political reforms as the normative horizon can be found in Modern and contemporary politics far beyond the context of perestroika. The specificity of the relation between historiosophy and politics of the last phase of perestroika lay in the overemphasis of this historical component probably due to the weakness of other autonomous fields of widely shared social knowledge. We can also note two peculiar presumptions of perestroika that first, there should be *one correct path* which would provide for the solutions to political problems and, second that this could happen *naturally-historically*, without deliberate plans and great projects.

Let us recall the central revisionist metaphor of perestroika – world history as the network of diverging and converging paths with their cross-roads. States or nations follow their different historical paths (rather than mount through the universal ladder, stages or formations) and irregularly arrive at the crucial points of choice between alternative paths, which, once chosen, would tightly determine their evolution until the next cross-road, where nations anew should choose. Historical roads were broadly assimilated with socio-economic and political formations or local national pathways. The precise typology of the different paths available in world history remained widely debated: these metaphorical idioms allowed accounting for both generic universal and specific national paths without specifying the precise relationship between the two. Authors could pick up from this metaphor what suited best their sensibility. The destination to head on this imaginary world historical map found more specific articulation for the majority, although not for all, of perestroika’s influential publicists. “Civilized world” was the new temple on the hill. Igor Klyamkin famously exemplified the metaphor of the road to the

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<sup>5</sup> As we discussed in the earlier chapters, the question on the nature of Stalinism acquired its significance precisely as its qualification defined the new historiosophical map, which for Soviet and Russian intellectuals served as the main political compass. See the formulation of this point by Mogilnitsky in 1989: «Острота дискуссий, которая ведется о природе сталинизма, его исторических предпосылках и теоретических истоков, а главное - тот огромный резонанс, который она находит в самых широких кругах общественности, свидетельствует, что глубинная суть вопроса не сводится к оценке прошлого и даже настоящего. Речь идет прежде всего об оценке исторического места социализма в контексте понимания механизма исторического действия, его подлинных закономерностей» Б. Г. Могильницкий, «Альтернативность в истории советского общества», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №11, с.5



temple in the title of his influential article published in 1987 and was continually using the idioms of the path and road in his later writings in 1989-1991, in order to stress the need of recognition of the universal liberal logic of history and of the particular national pathways: "We'd better find, I believe, our own road to the world family of nations, rather than seeking one more time to take over from them"<sup>6</sup>. The road *should* be "our own", Klyamkin presumed, not a copy of others', but the *destination* was common – in his words – "the family of nations" or "the civilized world"<sup>7</sup>.

During this period, the vast and growing majority of publicists assumed the normative role of the "civilized world" (not yet exactly the "West"), including the republican non-Russian nationalists and surprisingly, some of the Russian nationalists too<sup>8</sup>. "The main road of humanity" was very widely opposed to the "dead-end branch" of history incarnated by the Stalin's Administrative system. The ideological rejection of Communism took first of all a historiosophical form of rewriting the global *sense* of History. Thus, a liberal adept of the authoritarian transition to democracy, A. Migranyan in an article entitled "A long path towards European home" spoke about the "trunk path of humanity towards representative democracy" as opposed to the "dead-end path to the new slavery"<sup>9</sup>. A. Tsytko, a liberal-nationalist thinker, called to follow the "road of humanity towards the normal life"<sup>10</sup>, and the dissident and liberal socialist L. Karpinsky referred to the "trunk path of civilization combining different types of property rights" as of the road to the socialist ideal<sup>11</sup>. Russian nationalist I. Shafarevitch described socialism and liberalism as "two roads of humanity to one precipice"<sup>12</sup>. These idioms of the path articulated and solidified the general turn: on the new 1989 map of global history the Soviet path was a side-branch of the main road. In 1990-1991 Klyamkin becomes more specific about the destination and refers not merely to "world civilization", but to "contemporary Western society": "We

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<sup>6</sup> "Лучше, по-моему, попробовать все же найти свою дорогу в мировую семью народов, чем очередной раз тщиться вознестись над ними". Игорь Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду?», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2, с.238

<sup>7</sup> This originality of the national path was the regular concern for Klyamkin, as opposed to the pro Western liberal straw-man drawn by the Russian nationalists, accusing Westernizers and liberals of neglecting the particularities of the national path.

<sup>8</sup> We would like to thank Olga Malinova for providing the useful highlights on the ambiguous attitude of the Russian nationalistic authors towards the "civilized world" and "West": its positive normative character for many of them can be identified along with the more explicitly stated opposition and rejection.

<sup>9</sup> We can refer to a number of passages of the more and less renown liberal, liberal-nationalist and socialist humanist authors writing in 1989-1991 about the self-evident mainstream road to civilization. Compare: "Наше преимущество заключается в том, что мы не являемся первопроходцами на этом пути, каковыми мы были еще совсем недавно. На магистральном пути движения к представительной демократической системы человечество выработало две основные политические системы и одну промежуточную. К первым относятся английская парламентская и американская президентская системы, а ко второму - французская президентско-парламентская система" [Нужно увеличить объем благ, производимых в обществе, а не перераспределять их] "Иначе путь на перераспределение имеющихся благ - это тупиковый путь в грядущее новое рабство. Очень скоро оказывается, что нечего распределять. А дальше... террор, репрессии" А. Мигранян, «Долгий путь к европейскому дому», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с.177.

<sup>10</sup> «Некоторые авторы до сих пор не могут взять в толк, почему в один миг, как только стало ясно, что мы не прибегнем к авторитету танков и пушек, страны Восточной Европы сбросили с себя навязанное им коммунистическое счастье и возвращаются к нормальной жизни, на ту дорогу, по которой уже тысячелетия идет человечество». А. Ципко, «Хороши ли наши принципы?», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №4, с.193.

<sup>11</sup> «За исключением нескольких лет после 1921 г., когда была сделана попытка - на платформе нэпа - вернуться на магистральную дорогу цивилизации, признав многообразие хозяйственных укладов, рынок и некоторые другие инварианты процесса человечества. Таким образом, мы еще просто не начинали социализм, а перестройку следует считать попыткой начать этот строй». Л. Карпинский, «Будущее социалистического идеала», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №4, с.48.

<sup>12</sup> Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7

should move towards the contemporary western society. But towards which one? Following our logic [choice, paths and cross-roads] we should again, on the second and third time – start the movement along the path, on which we have already stepped before, but could not get to the finish...”<sup>13</sup> Announcing the new Platform of CPSU before its last, XXVIII Congress, the editorial written by sincere and disoriented Left wing intellectuals, members of the *Kommunist's* board expressed a highly suggestive worry of the non-existence of the Marxist path on the world historical map:

Finally, on a theoretical level the debate goes... around the question of what have we constructed – a “bad kind of socialism” or a certain social setup, which is somehow situated out of time and space of contemporary world civilization. Moreover, critically reviewing the classic works, some people ask another question: if History foresaw any place on its road for socialism of a Marxist type?<sup>14</sup>

Presuming that Soviet history was literally a *u-topia*, a period of temporal and spatial non-existence, the editorial revealed the basic topological imagery, and the readiness to accept seemingly scholastic if not absurd questions and arguments as essential political issues. In this passage, convinced socialist humanists doubted whether Soviet history could be at all inscribed in world history. If this question obviously contradicts our common sense today, this means that it had a revelatory power in the perestroika intellectual context which is not perceptible from outside. Saving the coherence of a sort of evolutionary social-democratic Marxism, and excluding the Soviet case as contradicting the universal logic of socio-economic stages, the editor was ready to face the conclusion that Soviet history had felt out of historical logic and did not exist. The factual reality of the Soviet model and its seventy years suddenly mattered less than the need to inscribe the experience within the frame of historiosophical stages on the map of history. Historiosophy, as earlier the universals of Scholastics, framed what could be theoretically perceived and discussed within human experience and what was non-existent or accidental. Humanist neo-Marxists sitting at the board of *Kommunist* genuinely refuted all forms of ideological dogmatism, but were imprisoned by the assumption on the *universal* character of the global historical evolution and its stages: if Soviet experience could not be inscribed in the well understood Marxist stages of world history – then in a long term, it was non-existent or impossible and should be simply abandoned. Thus, the polemical logic of this passage was arguably more pragmatic and advanced the new agenda: the promotion of the essentially social-democratic draft of the CPSU program on the eve of the XXVIII Congress implied, against the Party's conservatives and sceptics, that Soviet socialism was “historically nonviable”, if not non-existing.

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<sup>13</sup> «Нам надо идти к современному западному обществу. Но к какому? Следуя этой логике, необходимо опять, во второй и третий раз - начинать движение по пути, на который мы встали, но не смогли дойти до финиша...». «Историческая память обновляющегося общества: Социалистический выбор», Круглый стол, *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.18

<sup>14</sup> «Наконец, на теоретическом уровне идет спор... о том что же мы построили - "плохой" социализм или некое общество, находящееся как бы вне времени и пространства современной мировой цивилизации. Более того, критически оглядываясь на классиков, задаются вопросом: а предусмотрела ли история вообще какое-либо место на этой дороге для социализма марксистского толка?». «Партия не может быть вчерашней. КПСС перед съездом», *Коммунист*, 1990, №4, с.3

As a rule, the political agenda was formulated and debated mainly as the choice of historical paths, which would then more routinely lead the society to the proper destination, to a dead-end (or even out of time and space as in the cited above editorial of *Kommunist*). Hundreds of articles were written outlining this generic historiosophical map and its roads by authors with socialist, nationalist and liberal views. Mikhail Gorbachev still occupying the top position in the political hierarchy vocally and repeatedly spoke about the *socialist choice* (the expression we discuss in this chapter) and about the current choice, “a choice that has been made, the move to a humane democratic socialism” being not a “change of direction” but providing for fidelity to the chosen road<sup>15</sup>. In other words, Gorbachev, socialist reformers and market liberals shared this image of the parting roads in history as the main political metaphor. A rare voice tempting to articulate a reactionary communist platform in autumn 1989 belonged to a pensioner Ignat Chebukin, yet another reader of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* where Nina Andreeva won notoriety. Chebukin worshipped the Soviet Union’s achievements in social and job security, literacy and called for Soviet pride; partly ceding to the ambient anti-Stalinism he affirmed that “in spite of all Stalin’s power he was unable to turn us away from the socialist path”<sup>16</sup>. For Chebukin the socialist path was a straight line on the historical map, despite “all Stalin’s power deployed to curve it”, but as R. W. Davies noted, this time no one paid attention to this conservative manifesto, as times had changed and after moving the mountains between 1987 and 1989 words rapidly had lost much of their clout over things<sup>17</sup>. To make the case on the design of historical map stronger let us look at a more vigorous ideology presenting itself as *opposition* – Russian nationalists<sup>18</sup>.

We can witness the persistency of the three historiosophical idioms and the significance of the world-historical perspective in 1989, by reviewing a highly polemical article written in a typical manner by an atypical Soviet thinker. A brilliant mathematician, dissident and author of a villainous anti-Semite treaty first published in samizdat and later in *Nash Sovremennik*, I. Shafarevitch exposed the prevailing (as he says “intuitively present”) historical landscape on the pages of the main thick review of perestroika *Noviy Mir*.

The Western conception of the uniqueness of historical path generates the notions of “advanced”, “backward” and “developing” countries... (Stalin already stated: we have dropped behind the advanced countries for 50-100 years). Intuitively, history presents itself as if some bugs were creeping along the

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in E.A. Rees, “Economic policy” in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.67

<sup>16</sup> Quoted and translated in R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.12

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13

<sup>18</sup> We already noted the relative failure of the purely Russian nationalist editions such as *Nash Sovremennik* to capture the public – the most successful editions were more liberal and progressive, as the two million copies thick liberal magazine *Noviy Mir*, which however regularly published the most interesting Russian nationalist or patriotic authors such as Rasputin, Likhachov, Solzhenitsyn, Myalo, Shafarevitch, or Zalygin, the editor-in-chief himself, along with the liberal and socialist authors who represented the supposed perestroika’s mainstream. Nationalisms in the fourteenth non-Russian republics of the USSR played much more important role than Russian nationalist ideology – however, the all-Union perspective of our research does not allow capturing their presence in the public debates, as they were publishing in the republican and not all-Union magazines.

branch: one bug is ahead, the other is lagging behind. In a certain place a shoot branches off, the bug turns there – this is a dead-end line of development.<sup>19</sup>

Here the Western universalism and imperialism were imputed for the specific perestroika newspeak and criticised for its deficiencies. Another passage written by a moderate nationalist and one of the most renowned Russian novelists, V. Rasputin, vividly witnessed the dominant way to discuss politics as the choice between historical paths and pointed out at its evident limitations or inadequacy; yet, obviously, one could hardly offer a viable alternative:

The passions over the political, economic and spiritual paths of our country, which today are boiling over the borders, along with a very dangerous aspiration to jump from one compromised roadside to another one, while avoiding stepping on the road of salvation – these passions and inconstancy, which can not properly look at the past, need an authoritative opinion [here, that of A. Solzhenitsyn].<sup>20</sup>

### *World civilizations Vs historical formations*

As we can see from our analysis of the authoritative references to the Marxist classics a small revolution took place in 1990: in 1989 the new quotes and forgotten passages from Lenin, Engels and Marx helped sustaining the revised official socialist ideology, often stating the opposite of what was said yesterday, but still relying on classics' authority – in 1991, no intellectual authority whatsoever was conveyed by reference to Marx or Lenin; since 1990, those few still citing them felt obliged to justify their citations<sup>21</sup>. Few bold intellectuals claimed that Marx was one of the influential social thinkers – among others. The global historiosophy was the central point of revisionism and then of refutation of Marxism-Leninism in terms of its prognostic and factual validity<sup>22</sup>. The major idiomatic and world-view shift in this sense was the introduction of the concept of “civilization” and its plural

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<sup>19</sup> "Западная концепция единственности исторического пути порождает понятия "передовых" и "отсталых" и "развивающихся" стран... (Сталин утверждал: мы отстали от передовых стран на 50-100 лет)... Интуитивно история представляется так, как если бы какие-то букашки ползли по веточке: одна букашка уползла вперед, другая от нее отстала. В одном месте от веточки ответвляется отросток, букашка свернула на него - тупиковая линия развития" Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с.162

<sup>20</sup> "Страсти о дальнейших путях страны, политических, экономических и духовных, бурлящие сейчас через край, а вместе с тем и чрезвычайно опасное стремление перескочить опять с одной скомпрометировавшей себя обочины на другую, лишь бы не ступить на спасительную дорогу, - эти страсти и метания, не умеющие оглянуться на прошлое, очень нуждаются сегодня в авторитетном мнении. Трудно рассчитывать, что даже мнение Солженицына остудит "горячие головы"... однако не настолько одурачен еще наш соотечественник, чтобы не прислушаться". В. Распутин «Слово о Солженицыне. Комментарии», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №5, с.67

<sup>21</sup> S. Chernyshev, one of the most attentive observers of this period, in his deep revision of Hegel, Marxist humanism and Western post-industrial societies denounced the silence around Marx “who went out of fashion” and will be soon exposed to the public trial, when the meaningful arguments and the classics' texts do not matter: «Судебный процесс еще не начался, обвинения не предъявлено. Покуда Маркс всего лишь выходит из моды. Говорит о нем, ссылаться на него становится дурным тоном. Он окружен стеной молчания. Общественное мнение в классическом сталинском стиле исподволь готовится санкционировать расправу над своим былым кумиром. Естественно аргументы по существу дела никого не интересуют», С. Чернышев, «Новые вехи», *Знамя*, 1990, №1, с.156

<sup>22</sup> In 1990, even the authors who declared their broad Marxist orientation raised the question of the presumed “theoretical responsibility” of Marx for his prognostic mistakes: «Естественно, что в ситуации духовного разлада и сумерек идеалов встал вопрос о теоретической ответственности марксизма. Под удар поставлена сама сердцевина теории Маркса - его концепция истории как последовательной смены одной общественно-экономической формации другой», Владимир Миронов, «Перестройка в контексте истории XX века», *Коммунист*, 1990, № 13, с.23.

“civilizations” to complement or to oppose the Marxist “formations”. A round-table in autumn 1989 bringing together Soviet philosophers and historians witnessed the significance and the official status of this change, which had a long lasting effect on the post-Soviet historiography in Russia and other post-Soviet republics<sup>23</sup>. The presumably Marxist “five stages” or five formations were justly reframed as a simplification imposed by Stalin, in a number of less persuasive attempts to preserve the broader Marxian outlook on History<sup>24</sup>. The new civilizational approach potentially allowed both opposing the progressive linearity and “formational reductionism” when stating the uniqueness of different *civilizations*<sup>25</sup> – civilizations in plural – and reintroducing it back in a more politically neutral and subtle way, when one spoke about the path towards the “civilized world” or “contemporary civilization” and its distinctive setups – the civilization in singular<sup>26</sup>. Civilizations and their variety introduced the second dimension to perestroika’s world historical map, while the neo-Marxist idea of the structural inequality between the *centre* and the *periphery* (which in the late Soviet context was not directly linked to Wallerstein’s world-system approach) accounted for a certain hierarchy between different civilizational or national paths<sup>27</sup>. The alternative idea of the gradual *convergence* between capitalism and socialism understood as different “branches” leading to the same “fruit” appealed to more socialist-minded and humanistic authors, one of whom found necessary to specify that he used “*branches*” as an equivalent of “*paths*”<sup>28</sup>. Neo-conservative nationalists called to multiply civilizations, while opposing liberalism and

<sup>23</sup> In the beginning of 1991, M. Barg, who was among the pioneers of this problematique in the 1960s-1970s, asked whether “civilizational approach” was a tribute to the fashionable trend or a scientific imperative? Barg concluded that beyond its trendy character this approach was a methodologically necessary improvement of the formational analysis as the former allowed to analyse the inner intentions, goals and values of the acting historical agents. In 1999, G. Bordugov and Bukharev identified the civilization approach as one of the cornerstones in teaching history in the post-Soviet space; while the established academician A. Sakharov in 2002 published a methodological book based on the combination of the civilizational and formational approaches as the new standard in the discipline. See: М. Барг, «Цивилизационный подход к истории. Дань конъюнктуре или требование науки?», Коммунист, 1991, №3, с.33-35. Г. Бордюгов, В. Бухарев, «Национальная историческая мысль в условиях советского времени», in К. Аймермахер, Г. Бордюгов, (изд.) *Национальные истории в советском и постсоветских государствах*, М., АИРО-XX, 1999. А. О. Сахаров, *О новых подходах в российской исторической науке. 1990е годы*, Мир историка. XX век, М., 2002

<sup>24</sup> See as an example: “Сформировавшаяся в итоге этих двух процессов историософия, видевшая в “пятичленке” универсальный путь исторического развития человечества... Будучи канонизированной в кратком курсе “Истории ВКП(б)” в качестве “квазисакральной”, нефальсифицируемой истины, она уже не нуждалась в верификации ни со стороны постоянно расширяющегося знания фактов развития реальных обществ, ни со стороны аутентичного прочтения теоретического наследия самого К. Маркса”. С. Мдянец, «Формация или цивилизация? Круглый стол историков и философов», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10, с.43

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the above cited passage from Shafarevitch: “Уничтожение возможных запасных вариантов, которыми человечество могло бы воспользоваться в случае кризиса цивилизации. В период кризиса античной средиземноморской цивилизации человечество обладало целым спектром возможных путей развития. Еще сравнительно недавно можно было надеяться, что Россия, Китай, Япония, Индия, страны Латинской Америки сохранили достаточное разнообразие укладов, чтобы в случае кризиса технологической цивилизации человечество могло среди них найти альтернативный вариант развития”. Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с.158

<sup>26</sup> I. Klyamkin spoke about “one’s own road towards the contemporary civilization”, «своя дорога к современной цивилизации», Игорь Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду?», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2, с.237

<sup>27</sup> For example, A. Alayev in his report aptly combined the formational, civilizational and centre-periphery vocabularies along with the idioms of path and choice. See: А. Б. Алаев, «Формация или цивилизация? Круглый стол историков и философов», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10, с.35-37

<sup>28</sup> «Исторически сложились в насыщенном... мировом поле развития в XX в. две альтернативные (в исторической перспективе, по-видимому, сходящиеся) мировые ветви формационного становления социалистической цивилизации с присущими им своими рядами закономерностей... Впоследствии стали вырисовываться некоторые достаточно устойчивые признаки такого пути (*мировой ветви*) к социализму стран, находящихся на более низкой по сравнению с передовыми капиталистическими странами, ступени развития” В. Алтухов, «Формация или цивилизация? Круглый стол историков и философов», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10, с.57-58

communism as the branches of the same technocratic Western civilization, doomed to failure<sup>29</sup>. The active use of the concept of civilization and civilizations made the historical landscape of paths and cross-roads more sophisticated. Concluding the analysis of the new idiom, we can attest with the authority of I. Klyamkin that in 1990 the expression *one's own path towards civilization* became an "established term" - this acute awareness of the famous publicist confirms the successful blending of the notion of civilization with the already established idiom of "historical path"<sup>30</sup>.

### *Historiosophical arguments around the market economy and capitalism*

The growing shortages of most basic goods in the state shops alerted the leadership, intelligentsia and wider pollution. The shortages were directly caused by the spontaneous privatization of the distribution channels and the generalized passage of the retail sales to the black market under the double pressure of uncontrolled money supply and expectations of the price liberalization; as it is often the case, the actors tended to attribute this manifest problem to the causes that confirmed their own presumptions. Empty shelves were seen as a failure of political liberalization, of planned economy, or that of Russians. Skipping for a while the distribution of responsibility for this failure, we can review the theoretical debate framing the political reaction to this challenge.

One of the main *ideological* arguments on the superiority of the path of the civilized countries over the Soviet path (going beyond the factually perceived economic failure of the Socialist block compared to the abundance of the Western countries, both highlighted by late-Soviet consumerism) was the argument on the superiority of self-rule, autonomy and individual motivation over ideology and violence as means of historical progress. This argument hit against the established late Marxism-Leninism, but opened a wide ideological field between the temporally undistinguished *self-rule* (autonomy) and *self-interest* (greed). Gorbachev's official concept, *human factor* – recovered the whole field of expectations on the spontaneous self-regulation and *creativity of masses* (*Soviets*) and economic growth based on socialist humanistic principles of socio-political organization (central place for cooperatives, supposedly bringing together private and collective property, coexistence of different types of economic property). The economics and ideology of NEP were purposefully and sincerely advanced as a strong precedent; while NEP's historical failure sent a strong warning, it was largely unnoticed or discounted by the majority of pro-perestroika writers as the wrong choice of a wrong man, which this time, at the present cross-road, could be easily corrected. In a nutshell, the arguments on the superiority of *money-commodity* economics and *market* over administrative, political or ideological regulation and planning were publicly developed in the main theoretical magazines from the beginning of 1987 in the articles of the leading economists-publicists (chronological order): G.

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<sup>29</sup> See the review of Shafarevitch's views in this section.

<sup>30</sup> «Идти от нее можно только по собственному пути к цивилизации, если пользоваться данным устоявшимся термином... Таким образом, историческая память должна нам помочь выявить особенности переживаемого периода и сделать правильный выбор пути развития». И. Клямкин, «Историческая память обновляющегося общества: Социалистический выбор», Круглый стол, *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.18

Khanin and V. Selyunin<sup>31</sup>, L. Piasheva (Popkova)<sup>32</sup>, N. Shmelev<sup>33</sup>, N. Petrakov<sup>34</sup>, L. Abalkin<sup>35</sup>, O. Latsits<sup>36</sup>, V. Kantor<sup>37</sup>, K. Kantor<sup>38</sup>, and I. Klyamkin<sup>39</sup>. Departing from the discussion on the consumer goods' shortages and the unreliability of Soviet statistics on one side, and from the analysis of the NEP and of the failure of the later economic reforms, economists using the ideologically "neutral" cybernetic vocabulary in 1986-89 cautiously argued that the established Administrative system distorted valuable economic information by imposing wholesale and retail prices and thus blocked the feedback on the quality and prices, ultimately blocking the development of the forces of productions. The recent major upgrade of the "forces of production" known in the USSR as the Scientific-Technological Revolution [NTR], which took place in the developed countries but not in the USSR, gave the strongest evidence against Soviet economic planning. *Noviy Mir* and to a lesser extent *Kommunist* and *Voprosy Filosofii* advanced these arguments reflecting the consensus among the most influential Soviet economists – total state planning and centralized price control could not insure economic growth under perestroika as it allowed neither innovation, nor accounting; instead it encouraged the unaccounted waste of resources. Yet, the new frame remained abstract. Making the next step and providing the concrete outlook for economic reform and providing the more specific ideological arguments in favour of particular solutions naturally revealed more diversity and less certainty. The non-distinction between humanistic socialist ideal of the self-rule and the egoistic self-interest spared most ideologues from assuming hard choices.

There appeared no Mandeville's provocative defence of the bare self-interest and its paradoxical benefits which partly can be attributed to the fact that perestroika publicists never experienced the envisaged "market economy". The apology of the market integrated two basic arguments: the evidence that economic competition was historically lost by Soviet planning, and the belief in harmonious and natural combination of individual and social interests by the market. The second more ideological argument in favour of the new economic policy (and then, in favour of its radicalization) emerged already in 1987 and was well resumed by a famous A. Nuyikin claim that *self-interest united with public good can create economic miracles*<sup>40</sup>; this typical formula was reproduced by one of the less known authors of *Kommunist* stating that "Lenin could distinguish in cooperatives such a form of combination of the personal, group and public interests, which as the inner sources of socialist

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<sup>31</sup> В. Селюнин, Г. Ханин, «Лукавая цифра», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №2

<sup>32</sup> Л. Попкова, «Где пышнее пироги», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №5

<sup>33</sup> Н. Шмелев, «Авансы и долги», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №6

<sup>34</sup> Н. Петраков, «Золотой червонец вчера и завтра», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №8

<sup>35</sup> Л. Абалкин, «Опираясь на уроки прошлого», *Коммунист*, 1987, №16

<sup>36</sup> О. Лацис, «Проблема темпов в социалистическом строительстве», *Коммунист*, 1987, №18

<sup>37</sup> В. Кантор, «Трудный путь к цивилизации», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №6

<sup>38</sup> «Безынициативный труд громадных масс мог еще как-то конкурировать с простым машинным производством, но производству, основанному на автоматике, телемеханике, информатике, биотехнологии, он уступил полностью и безоговорочно», К. Кантор, «Актуальные проблемы исторического материализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1987, №11, с.92

<sup>39</sup> И. Клямкин, «Какая дорога ведет к храму?», *Новый Мир*, 1987, №11

<sup>40</sup> «... соединение частного интереса" человека с интересом общественным, общенародным. А слившись воедино, эти интересы способны творить чудеса», А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы» (часть 2), *Новый мир*, 1988, №2, с.216

development would guarantee labour efficiency and economic growth"<sup>41</sup>. A rude quote of Lenin still appropriate in 1988 ensured and simplified the claim: "Without personal interest there will be no damn results"<sup>42</sup>. A. Yakovlev with his background experience of living in welfare Canada insisted throughout his public interventions that cooperatives and finally market exchange "most efficiently combined and harmonized personal interest with collective interest, collective with state interest and state interest with public one"<sup>43</sup>.

As we discussed earlier, in 1987-1988 full-scale price liberalization was widely recognized as needed, but politically costly and was postponed; price liberalization was replaced by the de-centralisation of the decision making process in the favour of the management and by shifts in investment priorities. When it was becoming clear that cooperatives did not trigger high economic growth, that self-management and democracy in the factories did not work, and that the under-carpet privatization blended Soviet bureaucracy, black market and organized criminals, there was no debate on the optimal institutional settings making the desired combination of personal, group and public interests viable. Most people did not want to face the hard reality, while those who got it dispensed their energy to make it happen, instead of the reluctance of the majority, rather than to make it in a better way. The evidence on the difficulties of combining self-interest with common good was ignored by Soviet humanists, liberals and deplored by nationalists. The common focus of economists was on the need to dismantle the Administrative system, which selfishly resisted further economic reforms and constituted a political threat.

*Market and money-commodity relations* were taken in a relatively abstract form – the fact that the market worked well in contemporary civilized countries hid from the majority of intellectuals and economists the tensions and preconditions of politics based on the economic self-interest. Socialist reformers such as Nuikin, Lisichkin and Zaslavskaya, following Yakovlev and Gorbachev claimed that economic reforms of perestroika were directed against the bare self-interest of the bureaucracy and black marketers in the name of the real producers of wealth and against their *alienation*: those resisting market economic reforms and presenting reforms as capitalistic in essence, in fact defended their black incomes (bribes, speculation, racket) that would be guaranteed *only* under the existing Administrative system<sup>44</sup>. Self-interest was denounced by Russian nationalists too, who in line with many Western thinkers saw it as the corruption of society, and unlike their predecessors in Early Modern Italy or England, saw it as the wicked Western influence.<sup>45</sup> Vasilii Selyunin, one of the most

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<sup>41</sup> «В кооперации Ленин сумел различить такую форму сочетания личных, коллективных и общественных интересов, которая гарантировала эффективный труд и хозяйственный рост как внутренние источники развития социализма». «Кооперация: ленинский замысел и воплощение», В. Липицкий, *Коммунист*, 1988, №16, с.20

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, с.20

<sup>43</sup> This passage is taken from a report on the local Party conference in Perm, in December 1988. A. Yakovlev, *Перестройка: 1985-1991, Документы*, МФД, М., 2008, с. 285, also see: сс. 386, 417, 418, 425, 453, 479, 486, 514, 652. A. Yakovlev, *Муки прочтения бытия. Перестройка: надежды и реальность*, Новости, М. 1991. с.160-161.

<sup>44</sup> See: А. Нуйкин, «Идеалы или интересы (2 часть)», *Новый Мир*, 1988, №2, с.206, 210, 222. Т. Заславская, «О стратегии социального управления перестройкой», in Ю. Афанасьев (ред.), *Иного не дано*, М., Прогресс, 1988.

<sup>45</sup> See as an example: «Можно ли осуществить гигантское дело нашей перестройки, опираясь прежде всего на материальный интерес, на идею "колбасы"? Думается, что нет! Приоритет материального интереса не свойственен



radical liberal economists of perestroika, not only argued against the Administrative system and on the bankruptcy of planning, but also stressed that the share of the social welfare funds in USA and Western Europe was strikingly higher than in USSR “(absolute figures being simply incomparable)”<sup>46</sup>. Rising political star, A. Sobchak argued on the pages of *Kommunist* that even in USA property rights on large factories and banks were distributed among the population and not in a few private hands<sup>47</sup>. Another respected economist, Yury Goland reproduced this standard double move in a more moderate form. Soviet economic planning was doomed from the beginning, argued Goland commenting on the re-discovered works of B. Brutskus first published in 1922; second, “the setup now established in the developed capitalist countries is in many respect closer to socialism (although still quite far away from it), than the one existing in our country”<sup>48</sup>. Viktor Yaroshenko an economist and a close associate of both Egor Gaidar and Boris Yeltsin, concluded his article denouncing the “groups of interest” or lobbies: “Several paths already were tried out before us; however, in our case, we will have to follow the unbeaten track, but without losing sight of the strategic goal – the liberation of society from selfish private interest”<sup>49</sup>. A less known publicist Victor Legler examined the “Lessons of cooperatives’ movement” and argued in *Novyi Mir* that despite the massive and covert privatization of the state property by the Soviet nomenklatura the future belonged to the renaissance of the traditional Russian collective *art’els’*. His article was written in November 1990 and published only in May 1991 (formally, in the delayed April issue!) because of the problems with paper delivery. In the Post Scriptum the author stated that six months was in the present context quite a long period and realistically conceded that new private firms were emerging mostly as middle-men and not as producers, however his optimism did not dramatically diminish: “The newly emerging market often takes non-civilized forms due to the current circumstances. But overall, what happens is inevitable and necessary [*neizbezhno i neobkhodimo*]”<sup>50</sup>.

Thus, the ideological apology of market went alongside the affirmation of the *socialist-like* or at least socially harmonious character of market relations – guaranteed and dictated by the general world-historical trend. Except atypical authors, such as liberal Andrey Fadin or Soviet-Russian neo-imperialist Alexander Prokhanov, who boldly faced the inevitability of the wild and uncivilized market

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большинству наших соотечественников». О. Платнов, «О, Русь, взмахни крылами! часть вторая. Какую дорогу мы выбираем?», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №8, с.132

<sup>46</sup> «Но вот недавно экономист А. Зайченко опубликовал расчеты: в США и в большинстве стран Западной Европы в общественные фонды потребления поступает более весомая доля национального дохода, чем у нас. Заметьте, доля. Абсолютные же суммы просто несопоставимы», В. Селюнин, «Черные дыры экономики», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №9, с.157

<sup>47</sup> А. Яковлев, «Социализм: от мечты к реальности», Выступление и дискуссия в МГУ 12 февраля, *Коммунист*, 1990, №4, с.20, 21. «В прямо эфире», Диалог Ю. Денисова, секретаря Ленобкома КПСС и А. Собчака, *Коммунист*, 1990, №1.

<sup>48</sup> «Во многих отношениях строй, который сейчас утвердился в развитых капиталистических странах, ближе к социализму (хотя еще далек от него), чем существующий в нашей стране». Ю. Голанд, введение к Б. Бруцкус, «Социалистическое хозяйство. Теоретические мысли по поводу русского опыта [1922]», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №8, с. 214

<sup>49</sup> «Кое-какие пути уже опробованы другими; впрочем, в нашей реальности в любом случае придется идти непроторенным путем, видя, однако, главную стратегическую цель - освобождение общества от власти своекорыстного частного интереса». Виктор Ярошенко, «Партии интересов», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №2, с.141.

<sup>50</sup> Виктор Леглер, «Уроки кооперации», *Новый Мир*, 1991, №4, с.181

leading to third-world Russia<sup>51</sup>, contemporary *market* and *money-commodity relations* were mostly understood and accepted as a natural, efficient and socially just economic setup, in which efficiency was broadly attributed to the “human factor”, liberty, better account of individual and social interests and better systemic “feedback”. Bourgeois capitalism, large private property, and bare self-interest were rejected as morally unacceptable by reform socialists and Russian nationalists (who tended to identify capitalism and market) and as outdated by liberals and liberal socialists (who tended to distinguish them). **The cost, viability and variants of the transition to this modern market setup were not in the focus of debates.** Thus, contrary to the established view, public debates of perestroika did not prepare USSR for market and capitalism but rather blinded society and politicians to the real stakes and options within the transition from the spontaneously and illegally privatized state economy to the legalization and institutionalization of capitalism.

Those more lucid intellectuals such as I. Klyamkin, A. Prokhanov, K. Myalo, G. Pomerants or A. Fadin, who publicly warned about the *hardships* inherent in a rapid transition to market economy, did not find much to debate on this issue as “nothing could be done” in this respect<sup>52</sup>. L. Piasheva again stood apart when she argued in 1989 that the passage to a full-scale market economy through price liberalization should be made as soon as possible in order to “avoid multimillion unemployment and social unrest”, thus paying tribute to the social aspects of liberalization and calling for action – but she was almost literarily alone and her sound voice found little practical echo or support from the peers<sup>53</sup>. Departing from radically different ideological perspectives these lucid intellectuals considered the rapid Soviet transition to the market as both, an inevitable and inevitably painful process, but even fewer people called others to discuss how the pains could be diminished and what measures were most appropriate to guide economy and society throughout this process; further discussion about the options within this path resulting from a “historical choice”, “betrayal” or “natural-historical process” seemed worthless. In other words, the most acute practical issue on the political agenda in 1989-1991 was the least debated in the theoretical terms.

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<sup>51</sup> There were few exceptions among the nationalists and liberals publicists – and, as far as we know, - none among the humanist socialists. Liberal journalist and one of the most insightful observers of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period, Andrey Fadin argued in 1991 that a non-economic ethos of the elites was a necessary ingredient complementing the bare self-interest, otherwise leading not to a capitalist modernisation, but to the third-world corruption and backwardness. Fadin saw the sliding of the “Third Rome towards the Third world” as mostly inevitable trend, which one should honestly and decently face. A. Prokhanov called for a union of Communists and Russian nationalists which would bear fruits, when Russian people will wake up and face the heavy social consequences of the now cherished Western market. А. Фадин, «Третий Рим в третьем мире», *Век XX и мир*, 1991, №9. А. Проханов, «Идеология выживания», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №9

<sup>52</sup> Let us cite here just one poetic and disquieting warning written by Ksyania Myalo: «Российская история всегда изобиловала парадоксами, но сегодня, кажется, из них комических и трагических, соткан воздух. В отличие от Марса Меркурий не любит парадов, но сейчас он - впервые, быть может за всю историю человечества - видит дефилирующие перед ним и падающие ниц колонны, над которыми реет девиз: "Рынок!"», Ксения Мяло, «Посвящение в небытие», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №8, с.229

<sup>53</sup> In 1991-1992 Piasheva headed the Department of privatization in Moscow, called by G. Popov who was soon to leave the political scene; her plan was rejected by the Gaidar’s government. Piasheva proposed the wide scale “popular” privatization, while Gaidar and Chubais made the bet on the privatization by the limited number of most efficient individual owners. «Придется сделать выбор между дальнейшим ускорением инфляции и структурной перестройкой. И если этот выбор окажется не свободным и своевременным, а будет навязан стране ситуацией широкого и всестороннего кризиса... нам не избежать многомиллионной безработицы и социальных волнений». Борис Пинскер, Лариса Пиашева, «Собственность и свобода», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №11, с.198

Meanwhile, most publicists and writers and arguably the wider public shared the glimmering hope that once correctly found, the *natural* historical path should be moral and straightforward; even if the expected combination of humanist socialism and economic efficiency was accepted as a “difficult” one:

The creation of a democratic and humanist socialism will be successful, if it will happen as a natural-historical improvement of people’s life, once the conditions are created for the resolution of a difficult task of unification of the efficient economy and humanistic values of socialism.<sup>54</sup>

Publicists, economists and politicians did not discuss how society should arrange the already ongoing privatization. Historiosophical visions of inevitability of the market disabled meaningful debates about “alternatives” in transition for those who could foresee its immediate socially painful impact and for those who saw modern market as a miraculous, natural and socially harmonious path to follow. With few exceptions, realists accepted the bad fate, optimists blindly hoped<sup>55</sup>. This picture can be completed by the analysis of an exceptional text, which did not fit the established genre of public theoretical debates, by its dissonant tone highlighting the genre of the dominant chorus. A group of Leningrad economists around A. Chubais published a fragment of their “Analytical note about the conception of the transition to the market economy in USSR” in June 1990 in a free-spirit magazine *XX Vek i Mir* under the shorter title again evoking the metaphor of the chosen path: “On the hard course...”<sup>56</sup>

The published fragment of the analytical note openly and pragmatically discussed how to deal with the heavy social costs of the rapid and radical transition to the market. The need of such a “great leap” was assumed by default; however the unnamed authors foresaw great social and political resistance to this course, which should be hard and authoritarian. In line with the earlier historical and theoretical conclusions of Klyamkin and Migranyan on the inevitably authoritarian character of the transition to the market and democracy, this fragment unveiled a radically different perspective – that of an active group pursuing its goals and aware of the external boundaries considered not as commanding “objective necessity” but as obstacles to be dealt with. The five-pages announcement of the pragmatic agency’s attitude only briefly surfaced in the public debates in an exocentric intellectual review *XX vek I Mir*. Otherwise, the debates were dominated by the historiosophical thinking, devastating criticism of the artificial Soviet institutions and moralism. The authors, who were going to head the Russian

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<sup>54</sup> «Создание демократического и гуманного социализма будет иметь успех, если оно реализуется как естественноисторическое улучшение жизни народа, при создании условий для решения трудной задачи соединения эффективной экономики с гуманными ценностями социализма». В. Ж. Келле, «Умер ли марксизм? Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №10, с.36.

<sup>55</sup> As noted, L. Piasheva probably stands as the only exception among “realists” – her failure to influence policy-making and even her marginalization signals that both intellectual community and wider public were unwilling to discuss the real options and real costs of the capitalist transformation. Piasheva warned about the social costs of the market transition already in 1988, and urged the price liberalization *before* the deeper phase of the economic crisis in order to *minimise* the otherwise inevitable damage to the population. Борис Пинскер, Лариса Пиашева, «Собственность и свобода», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №11

<sup>56</sup> «Жестким курсом...», *Век XX и мир*, 1990, №6.

government less than two years later, did not try to convince or justify their actions, clearly ignoring the logic of public rhetoric; they honestly and methodically outlined the expected resistance and support to the already decided application of the “hard course”. A small group of the radical liberal economists preparing the action-plan for the radical shock therapy, “great leap”, did not enter into and did not openly influence *public debates*. The recent Polish reforms of Balcerowicz warned the intransigent Communists mostly opposed to the blasphemous denigration of the Soviet cults like Ignat Chebukin, but this was not an object of public reflection, comparison or debate of better options. What these group of radical economists shared with other intellectuals was their attachment to a historiosophical frame which dictated the right (but hard) course.

### *Zweynert on the teleology in the economic thought of perestroika*

The idioms of path, choice and alternative in the last phase of perestroika spread outside of the initial context of the Soviet historiography to the domain of *economics*. Joachim Zweynert in a recent study of the Soviet economic debates during perestroika concluded that assumptions on History remained the paradigm or the main “pattern of thought” for Soviet economists<sup>57</sup>. This thought pattern, which according to Zweynert formed the core of Soviet ideology and which in its new forms framed the economic debates of the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s, was the “*teleological interpretation of history as a path to the wholesome society*”<sup>58</sup>. This precise and illuminating conclusion drawn by Zweynert from the analysis of the economic debates in the specialised magazines fits the results of our analysis of the public theoretical debates on history and politics – historiosophy of a teleological path framed the debates. According to Zweynert, the passage from Marxist-Leninist economic theory to the (short lived) neo-liberal consensus of the leading economists did not fundamentally affect this underlying historiosophical reasoning – in Lakatos’s terms – the *hard core* of the Soviet ideological program<sup>59</sup>.

To compete his analysis we can see now how the historiosophical idioms of path, choice and alternatives developed by Gefter and Volobuev were spreading into the economic debates in 1989-1991; the language was the vehicle of this “paradigm” and finally it have modified the ideological core: there could be different paths in history, dead-ends and choices between them and thus, the

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<sup>57</sup>“ My analysis uses a methodology that was developed by historians of economic thought like Karl Pribram and Mark Perlman & Charles R. McCann Jr, and aims at detecting the ‘patterns of thought’ or ‘patristic legacies’ which form the background to economic ideas and debates”. Joachim Zweynert, “ Economic ideas and institutional change: Evidence from soviet economic debates 1987-1991”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2006, №58 (2)

<sup>58</sup> “However, the notion of history as a purposeful process was not given up even by the Soviet adherents of monetarism. The utopian liberalism which became fashionable among Russian economists for a short period of time, it is argued, provides evidence that paradigm shifts and path-dependence in the evolution of economic ideas are not mutually exclusive”. *Ibid.*, p.169

<sup>59</sup> “According to this theory, the interpretation of history as a path to the holistic society can be interpreted as the hard core of the Soviet ideological programme, for it was excluded from ideological discourse”. “In the last years of the Soviet Union the hard core of Soviet ideology—that the country had been on the holy road to the wholesome society—was replaced by the conviction that it had, in fact, been moving towards a dead end. What was not altered, however, was the notion of history as a purposeful process. The Soviet telos was replaced by a liberal telos.” *Ibid.*, p.177, p.191-192

wholesome society was not always insured by the path. The teleological character of history thus weakened, but it did not disappear – more precisely teleology was made compatible with responsibility<sup>60</sup>. The historiosophical map remained the lens through which most perestroika intellectuals including economists perceived and debated the key theoretical and practical issues. Showing these changes of the hard core and their limits, Zweynert cites a typical overview of the economic options of USSR made by two rising star economists, A. Auzan and A. Radaev. This account of perestroika's economic options focused on the previous course of Soviet history and appeared on the pages of the main economic review *Voprosy Ekonomiki* in September 1989:

Figuratively speaking, the road that has been travelled by socialism can be depicted as a straight line, as a zigzag, and as a blind alley. The strategy for overcoming the crisis is therefore also different [depending on the kind of road]: the extension, the 'improvement' of elements of positive experience accumulated in preceding phases; recognition of results of movement and rejection of methods of attaining them in the new forms of development; 'backsliding' and the search for a new road from the old historic 'fork'.<sup>61</sup>

This passage written by economists reproduces exactly the same metaphor that we saw in the texts of publicists, historians, literary critics, mathematicians and takes it as the real basis for further discussion.

As we tried to demonstrate, there was no single dominant interpretation of world history that would define a political agenda, but there were strong assumptions on the inevitability of the [Western] civilization and common idioms revolving around core historical metaphor enabling the full spectrum of converging and diverging interpretations: choice, path, alternatives with their numerous derivatives, since 1989 completed by the "civilizational approach". Let us cite a PhD student in history making a synthetic review of the current approaches in historiography at a round-table, thus attesting his personal adherence to the new theoretical languages and showing the power the dominant idiom exercised over its new adepts:

To my mind, Japanese scientists introduced a very suitable term "branches of development". Every civilization represents a distinctive "branch of development"... Probably, oversimplifying, we can represent the whole path of development of a civilization in terms of the constant process of "challenges" and "responses". One should combine the civilizational approach with the formational approach, or more precisely and broadly, "stagerial"; however, presumably, industrialisation is not the universal Good for everybody, and is not the main criterion defining different stages of progress... In other words, we hardly should turn the axiological axis of historical process into an absolute. I would risk a hypothesis that on the

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<sup>60</sup> P.V. Volobuev in his *Choice of the paths* explicitly claimed that his contribution rejects the simplistic view of Marxism as the theory of the "predetermination of the path of development". «Как и прежде, марксизм трактуется как учение о предуготованности, предопределенности пути развития. Но еще 100 лет назад первый русский марксист Г. В. Плеханов... показал несостоятельность подобных обвинений в адрес философии марксизма». П. В. Волобуев, *Выбор путей общественного развития: теория, история и современность*, М., Политиздат, 1987, с.14

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Zweynert, *Op. cit.*, p.98: A.A. Radeav & A.A. Auzan (1989) 'Sotsializm: Vozmozhnye varianty', *Voprosy ekonomiki*, 9, pp. 109 – 119 [English trans.: A.A. Radeav & A.A. Auzan (1990) 'Socialism: Possible Variants', *Problems of Economics*, 1, p. 71]

path of such absolutisation we can find ourselves in the dead-end, which could be an alternative (*sic!*) to the current dead-end of the “five-stages”.<sup>62</sup>

An editorial to a highly representative round-table organized at the end of 1990 by *Kommunist* to discuss the central role of the “historical memory in the renewing society” provided another case of such idiomatic exuberance: “Are we sure that historical memory plays only a positive role? How, for instance, can we distinguish the cultural-historical traditions, which by uniting the joint of time, lead us along the right path, and the preconceptions, which push the society to the dead ends of history”<sup>63</sup>. The recurrent and grossly awkward second-order usage of these idioms to describe the *state of public debates* about history (on top of the primary usage applied to different intellectual domains) shows that new idioms rapidly acquired the status of a *langue de bois*.

We can draw now a more synthetic view of the newly emerging historiosophical plot. The superiority of the civilized world over the failing Administrative system and planning in the USSR was assumed by the majority of intellectuals.<sup>64</sup> In 1990-1991 an increasing number of influential intellectuals condemned the whole Soviet path. But it did not imply agreement about the whole historiosophical picture: the dichotomy capitalism-socialism and its precise ideological, economic, and geographic meaning acquired a number of diverse interpretations blurring the clear-cut distinctions. **The normative quality of the path of world civilization did not mean “capitalism” or “West” for all protagonists**<sup>65</sup>. Its appeal precisely lay in its neutral reference to the *world civilization* as opposed to

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<sup>62</sup> «По-моему, весьма удачен термин “ветви развития”, используемый японскими учеными. Каждая цивилизация \представляет собой отдельную “ветвь развития”... Вероятно, сильно упрощая, можно представить себе весь путь развития цивилизации в виде постоянно возобновляющегося процесса “вызовов” и “ответов”. Надо сочетать цивилизационный подход и формационный, точнее и шире “стадиальный”; но, возможно индустриализация не всегда и не для всех благо и основной критерий стадильности... Другими словами, вряд ли имеет смысл абсолютизировать аксиологический стержень исторического процесса. Рискну высказать предположение, что на пути подобной абсолютизации мы вполне способны зайти в тупик, альтернативный современному тупику “пятичленки”». И. В. Белов, аспирант ИМЭМО, «Формация или цивилизация? Круглый стол историков и философов», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №10.

<sup>63</sup> «Все ли то, что несет в себе историческая память играет позитивную роль? Как, например, отличить культурно-исторические традиции, которые, связывая нить времен, ведут нас вперед по верному пути, и предрассудки, следование которым загоняет общество в тупики истории» Ibid., с.7

<sup>64</sup> «Насколько это осмысление удалось участникам, судить, конечно, читателям... [Появилось] понимание необходимости рассмотрения формационного и цивилизационного подходов в качестве взаимодополняющих элементов по существу уже новой научной парадигмы... Но каковы же конкретные результаты применения этой идеи, воплощаемые в предложениях и выводах проводимых исследований? [результатов нет потому что сейчас] эпоха глубинных изменений, когда начинают размываться уже привычные “берега” и начинает прокладываться новое русло в локальных или даже глобальном масштабе» Ibid., с.59

<sup>65</sup> Apart from Shafarevitch’s qualification of the two as “two roads to precipice”, the adopters of the *convergence theory* between socialism and capitalism had yet another outlook rejecting the liberal capitalism and betting on the midway between European social-democracy and Soviet socialism; pro-Gorbachev authors such as Lisichkin, Latsis or Nuikin sought to defend the existence of the genuine Soviet reformatory path combining different types of economic setups with broad socialist guarantees and full political freedoms. Migranyan and Klyamkin pointed at the need of an authoritarian phase of transition towards a more efficient and liberal society, which seemed unacceptable for more socialist, democratic, liberal or “humanistic” authors. V. Krivorotov and S. Chernyshev attempted to dismiss the “established myths” and concluded on the non-capitalist character of the contemporary Western societies fitted well into the general mood of conceptual reversals – still operated within a common language: “С. Ч. Те, кто указывает на современный Запад, не сомневаются, что там капитализм. То, что они предлагают заимствовать, - свободный рынок частного капитала. То есть речь идет... о реставрации капитализма, об импорте буржуазного строя девятнадцатого века, который к тому же давно не существует. В. К. Между контрреволюцией и реакцией застряло наше мифологическое общественное сознание. Противоборствующие партии зовут в прошлое, оба вектора направлены назад. Направление вперед, в будущее в

barbarianism or backwardness rather than to a particular ideology or to specific political tradition. There was no *neo-liberal* and *pro-capitalist* consensus about the historiosophical landscape and about the place the Soviet Union occupied there in 1989 – the organizers of a round-table offered a fair and typically non-conclusive conclusion in this respect. According to the sociological polls, the majority accepted *market* and *democracy*, but without clear understanding of its implications for the USSR or prior discussions on the proper conditions of functioning of these institutions in the *civilized world* – while the failure of the Soviet economy was becoming ever more evident<sup>66</sup>. The attractiveness of the market and democracy as the benchmarks on the path to the civilized social setup was gaining ground, but it did not gain in clarity. The public self-justification, let alone legitimation of capitalism, merely began under perestroika. The temple to which anxious Soviet society decided to find back its historical path was not capitalism, but “normal” world civilization. In tight connection with core political values, we can identify three readings of the historiosophical map:

**Human-socialist map:** the world moves towards a global community harmoniously combining market and social security, solving the pending ecological, economic and social problems

**Liberal map:** the world moves towards the increase of individual liberties, which would not contradict social and ecological concerns; each nation finds its own pathway to liberty

**Nationalist map:** the world faces the global ecological, spiritual and social catastrophe caused by technical progress, liberal (and socialist) ideologies and naked economic greed

There was no *theoretical* defence of the alleged Communist conservative map of history. Stressing the necessarily conditional character of this classification, we can inscribe the vast majority of perestroika thinkers into one or two of these cartographies. The humanistic map was arguably the most popular until the end of 1988 – beginning of 1989; since, the liberal and nationalist maps were attracting new adepts with a slight advantage for the liberal map and a regular common emphasis on the eminent *global threats* in 1990-1991<sup>67</sup>.

The existence of these three and a half moral-ideological poles signals that if personal positions of most authors evolved during perestroika, the poles can be traced back to the *wheel of ideologies*

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этой битве мамонтов с динозаврами не представлено вообще. То, что можно заимствовать из экономики Запада, вовсе не рынок, а общественная собственность... С.Ч. Обобществление собственности, преодоление отчуждения – магистральный путь развития всей человеческой цивилизации [stressed by the authors]». С. Чернышев, В. Криворотов, «Мифы нашей революции», *Литературная газета*, 1990, №10

<sup>66</sup> The gradually spreading support for *market* and *democracy* as a new standard cannot be equalled to the genuine support of a liberal agenda: they were accepted as the common features of the civilized life, and combined in incredibly diverse ways with other often contradicting values, institutions and traditions. Using E. A. Rees's word, we can rather qualify the general situation as intellectual “disarray”. There was a momentum of the relatively superficial “liberal” consensus among professional economists in 1990-1992; but it did not concern the publicists, historians, philosophers, political commentators and other intellectuals. See: E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992. Joachim Zweynert, “Economic ideas and institutional change: Evidence from soviet economic debates 1987-1991”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2006, №58 (2) For an account of the popular attitudes towards the market and their contradictions see Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, pp. 174-213

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed and insightful account of the apocalyptic rhetoric of perestroika in 1990 see: И. Каспэ, «Апокалипсис-1990: «настоящее», «прошлое», «будущее» в литературной публицистике», in *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007

drawn by Andrei Amalrik in the 1970s; otherwise, the three of the four dominant positions were symbolically represented by the three most known Soviet dissidents: Andrei Sakharov [Liberal], Alexander Solzhenitsyn [Russian nationalistic] and Roy Medvedev [Human-Socialist].<sup>68</sup> As in case of other revolutions, the open public debate does not immediately create new beliefs, but mostly diffuses the intellectual and ideological beliefs previously nurtured beneath the surface of public communication.

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<sup>68</sup> Timour Atnachev, *Perestroïka : lire le passé au présent*, IEP de Paris, 1998, diplôme de DEA, section "La dissidence : trois versions du passé national"



## The allocation of responsibility for past crimes between ideological strains

The second major theoretical issue widely, although by no means exclusively, discussed in terms of path, choice and alternative was the issue of the *political guilt or responsibility* for the revealed crimes and failures of the past and by extension for the ongoing systemic crisis in USSR. The issue took the central place in most public controversies: the most passionate theoretical *debates* in the proper sense of the word, i.e. situations when authors meaningfully disagreed with and engaged each other, revolved around **the double question of political responsibility for the Stalinist terror and for finding oneself into a dead-end branch of the world history**. The reassessment of the sense of history on the imaginary world-historical map provided the context for the second problematique of responsibility for the newly discovered errors and crimes of the Soviet past. In the previous chapters we exposed the underlying logic and paradoxes of responsibility, freedom of historical agency and historical necessity. The acceptance of the objective historical necessity – imposing onto actors its fate – would imply the negation of historical responsibility of men for the worse crimes, which was morally unacceptable in the context of the common humanist aspirations. Conversely, the imputation of historical responsibility to an agent would likely imply the negation of objective historical necessity, which was intellectually unacceptable or at least problematical for the vast majority of intellectuals.

If there was no historically viable alternative to forced collectivization and industrialization, *if there was no choice*, then – following the dominant perestroika argument – Stalin and Bolshevik leaders *could not* be condemned for the massive violence of this period. By implication, the Stalinist system would be historically justified and therefore, the current crisis of perestroika could not be attributed to past errors, but – and here the theoretical coherence could weaken – to more recent mishandlings of the contemporary leadership, which this time would not be “objectively necessary”. This chain of conclusions departing from objective historical necessity contradicted not only the official denunciation of Stalinism and its Administrative system by Gorbachev and reform-minded socialists, but it also contradicted the growing public indignation in the face of the mass revelations about the Soviet crimes. If there were state crimes committed on such a scale, there should be guilty ones – this commonsensical conclusion echoed strong historical presumption on the natural goodness of historical necessity which we will outline and discuss in this chapter. In the new context of free public communications this raised a political question: who was guilty for the wrong choice? Both, necessity and free agency constituted the complementary and contradictory aspects of the basic understanding of history and politics in the intellectual context of perestroika. None of the two could be easily sacrificed and keeping both of them within one frame posed challenging (logically unsolvable) theoretical puzzles. If Klyamkin and Gefter were calling to look for necessity in what had happened and for open-endedness in the present, the majority of publicists and intellectuals were doing exactly the opposite. Few methodical attempts to solve the theoretical puzzle and the common sense whispered that the *whole community*, or namely every one, was responsible for past crimes and for

the present crisis<sup>69</sup>. This responsibility proved unbearable for the vast majority: the chase for the guilty was open. In March 1991, an author wrote in the radical pro-reform weekly *Ogoniek*: “There is a need to rehabilitate all of us. *They* have to repent and ask us to excuse *them*... The authorities must ask us to excuse them for an absurd and criminal century which was stolen.” [*Italic is ours: TA*] <sup>70</sup>

Maria Feretti has forcefully pointed out the dramatic incapacity to assume collective responsibility for Soviet state terror during perestroika and in the post-Soviet Russia: the mourning about the traumatic events of the past was not completed<sup>71</sup>. Russian philosopher and specialist of psychoanalysis, Alexey Routkevitch without mentioning particular names, acutely criticised the very methodological possibility to apply the insights of psychoanalysis to collective representations as is often done in “memory studies” on genocides and mass murders<sup>72</sup>. This criticism departs from the idea that the memory of the traumatic event is individual: first, it depends on the precise role of the individual in the events and second, the memory is also reframed individually according to the present situation of the person, while no real “collective soul” has been traumatized<sup>73</sup>. Thus, even a really shared experience does not lead to a shared way of remembering, unless there are social institutions providing for the unification of “collective memory” which is therefore by no means *spontaneous* or *individual* and thus, cannot be described in terms of the individual psychology<sup>74</sup>. A. Routkevitch notes that in this context psychoanalysis brings little more than an imprecise metaphor, while historians invest themselves with the role of a therapist of the collective soul. This sometimes acerbic criticism has an awakening effect and recalls that the “collective trauma” (which professional historians would face, study or heal

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<sup>69</sup> We analysed in the previous chapter, two independent attempts made by I. Klyamkin, M. Gefter and I. Shafarevitch to bring together the two aspects of the established understanding of history while facing their mutually exclusive character. Their solutions implied the gap between the responsible and open present-future and the irreversibly necessary past for which, once it has happened, the whole nation would share the ultimate responsibility. This theoretical solution remained a sketch rather than a common reading and the three authors experience major difficulties in fully assuming this radical claim of shared guilt.

<sup>70</sup> Илья Мильштейн, «Свидание в тюрьме», *Огонек*, 16.03.1991

<sup>71</sup> «Переживание траура - процесс, посредством которого коллектив примиряется с собственным прошлым, принимает прошлое, вписывая травматический опыт своей и истории в память, не замалчивая и не забывая его. Переживание траура - публичный труд в той степени, в какой ритуалы и церемонии обеспечивают рамки, в которых может происходить социализация горя отдельных людей и возникает возможность делиться своими переживаниями в пределах ограниченного времени и пространства; в этом случае эмоциональный заряд памяти одновременно и находит себе выражение, и сдерживается в определенных границах. Таким образом, прошлое мало-помалу становится объектом принятия. И это позволяет ему действительно уйти в прошлое и не омрачать настоящее. Иными словами, переживание траура - это тот процесс, который позволяет памяти стать менее мучительной, а коллективу - освободиться от груза прошлого, при этом храня воспоминание о прошлом, каким бы горьким оно ни было». Мария Феретти, «Расстройство памяти: Россия и сталинизм», <http://old.polit.ru/documents/517093.html>. See the other contributions: M. Feretti, *La Memoria Mutilata. La Russia ricorda*, Corbaccio, 1993, 491 p.; “Le stalinisme entre histoire et mémoire: le malaise de la mémoire russe. Historiens et usages publics du passé”, *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, 2002. № 68. p. 65—81.

<sup>72</sup> А.М. Руткевич, «Психоанализ, история, травмированная «память»», in И.М. Савельева, А.В. Полетаев, *Феномен прошлого*, ГУ ВШЭ, 2005, с.221-250

<sup>73</sup> Routkevitch also indicates that the individual relation towards the traumatic events are by no means limited to resistance and oblivion, which is taken for granted in the collective psychoanalysis; there are typical cases of obsessive memory of the traumatic event, as *Ibid.*, с.241-243

<sup>74</sup> This point stands in a partial contradiction with M. Halbwachs’ famous analysis of the “social frames of memory”. Halbwachs claims that individual memory is mainly structured by the collective and repetitive commemoration of the events within certain groups, rather than by the logic of the individual and autonomous memory. What matters for both, however, is not the *individual memory of the actual event* and its psychology, but the ways it is framed by the groups and their practices of “remembering” or rather evoking the events. Hence, the psychoanalytical logic focused on the individual is inappropriate.

entering on the public stage) in most cases is not directly caused by mass murder, not by the traumatic event, but by the situation of public revelations about the hidden crime and by the incapacity to face it: when the guilt is publicly attributed to symbolic *social groups* rather than to individuals, the accused groups typically resist by setting counter claims against other groups or by obliterating facts.

We would like to add on to this revisited psychoanalytical approach, which reminds where to locate the real *lieu de memoire* (i.e., not personal memories of butchers and victims but *public space* where appear revelations about the massive crimes and debates about the distribution of responsibility), and helps accounting for the resistance to assume the collective responsibility for crimes – a new systematisation of the actual forms of escaping collective responsibility. The public revelation of a large-scale crime forces actors speaking in public to redesign collective identities and draw their new borders in such a way as to escape responsibility and symbolically exit doubtful groups. This escape from one's responsibility as a member of a symbolic community "under suspicion"<sup>75</sup> can be operated by a) framing the culpable others, and b) by drawing one's own group identity as that of victims, c) of innocent observers or d) that of uninformed contemporaries; e) the affirmation of a radical individualism also helps escaping the dark halo of collective responsibility.

It is striking to see to which point complex theoretical arguments deployed by perestroika's publicists when discussing the massive state crimes, can be reduced to the allocation of responsibility between different groups within the Soviet political community. Despite the established assumptions, the experience of the post-Nazi Germany, post-Vichy France or post-Franco Spain shows that this underlying logic of the gradual and reluctant re-distribution of public responsibility (as opposed to repentance or assuming responsibility) is widespread and knows no noteworthy exceptions. This argument is developed on the basis of the various kinds of empirical evidence ranging from psychology to social polls by Stanley Cohen in his book *State of Denial: knowing about atrocities and suffering*. Cohen, however, focuses on the psychology of perpetrators of the crimes and bystanders, while in the perestroika case the issue was purely symbolic as more than three decades separated the crimes and their publication.<sup>76</sup>

In the face of the recently *revealed* (not necessarily recently *committed*) crimes, the symbolic community which assumes the responsibility, if not the guilt, runs a heavy political load: *immediately* assuming the responsibility proves an unbearable tactics for the polity's identity<sup>77</sup>. This recognition of

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<sup>75</sup> Cf.: "Больше того, когда открылся гигантский масштаб этих преступлений, стало ясно, что их невозможно было совершить без участия, активного либо пассивного, миллионов советских людей, а значит, почти невозможно провести четкую демаркационную линию, отделяющую жертв от палачей: вся страна оказалась под подозрением. По-видимому, именно это сознание и сделало переживание траура невыносимым, груз коллективной вины оказался слишком тяжел", Мария Феретти, «Расстройство памяти: Россия и сталинизм». <http://old.polit.ru/documents/517093.html>.

<sup>76</sup> See: Stanley Cohen, *State of Denial: knowing about atrocities and suffering*, 2001, Malden, Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>77</sup> Even when the temporal oblivion of the recent criminal past played a clearly pacifying function as in the post-Franco Spain historians often address their criticism of these "false solutions", but without noting the *timing*: « [In Spain] The transition to democracy was accompanied by fear of remembering the immediate past ; the future counted more than a history full of failures which some might use as weapons against others... In the new atmosphere of the late 1990s we begin to see signs of a personal and collective need to recover the past in a different way, far removed from commonplaces

responsibility needs preparative work and should be gradual. Recent acceptances of collective responsibility for crimes of the past by states' and institutions' leaders which had considerable conciliatory effect, took place decades after the first shock of the public revelation and first attempts to recognize the collective responsibility. In this particular sense, even the post-Nazi case despite its singularity in many respects is hardly an exception in this one – the mass crimes were publicly assumed by the statesmen more than two decades after their unambiguous revelation<sup>78</sup>. We should thus distinguish the *memory* of the real butchers and victims and the *public reception* (rejection) of the revelations on the crimes committed on the scale and thus in the name of the whole polity. When plainly evident, the individual responsibility can be defined by the court, while only the public and the conscience can account for symbolic, political responsibility or metaphysical guilt of groups. We consider the “gradual, multifaceted and contradictory process”<sup>79</sup> of public revelations on the state crimes distinguishing these two levels: penal and moral responsibility of perpetrators, and symbolic responsibility of groups. The task is not easy, but methodologically justified<sup>80</sup>.

The intentions of perestroika's leaders in addressing the question of the Soviet terror were certainly various: moral, subversive and pragmatic, but mostly naïve Gorbachev, many of his political allies and pro-perestroika intellectuals significantly underestimated the real scale of the Soviet crimes and the possible impact of their revelation to the emergent Soviet public<sup>81</sup>. The reformers' intention to bring to the surface the “whole truth” [*Pravda*] about the past crimes and “purify ourselves” carried a double political load: to morally accept the reality of the crimes and pragmatically to support the idea that the established political system should be reformed, as it still did not break its continuity with the concealed mass terror. Alexander Yakovlev was the only influential politician aware of the scale of the crimes who partly foresaw the effects of public revelations: he was convinced that the Russian people should be forced to overcome and reject a “thousand years of slavery” and the inhumane Soviet period<sup>82</sup>. The public reception of state terror posed a symbolic challenge for the Soviet *community as a*

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promoted by the old ideologies and from oblivion that falsely closed the wounds of the past during the transition. », Jaques Revel, Giovanni Levi, (ed.), *Political Uses of the Past*, The recent Mediterranean Experience, Frank Cass, London, 2002, p. 98

<sup>78</sup> Twenty years separating the publication of the essay “Die Schuldfrage” in 1946 and the beginning of the wider public discussion about the responsibility and scope of the Nazi crimes in the end of 1960s, these twenty years marked the change of the generation after the first public revelations without any public echo. The formation of the new form of collective identity assuming the guilt, the “constitutional patriotism” took considerable time. We rely in particular on the contributions of Hans Mommsen, Sergey Averintsev and Alexander Boroznyak to the interesting comparative conference of the painful and gradual character of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the post-Nazi Germany and in the post-Soviet Russia organized by *Friedrich Nauman Stiftung* and АИРО-XX in 2002. See: К. Аймермахер, Ф. Бомсдорф, Г. Бордюгов (изд.), *Преодоление прошлого и новые ориентиры его переосмысления. Опыт России и Германии на рубеже веков*. М., АИРО-XX, 2002

<sup>79</sup> See the quoted formulation in: А. Борозняк, «Уроки Германии в России еще не востребованы», in К. Аймермахер, Ф. Бомсдорф, Г. Бордюгов (изд.), *Преодоление прошлого и новые ориентиры его переосмысления. Опыт России и Германии на рубеже веков*. М., АИРО-XX, 2002, с.71-72

<sup>80</sup> Jorn Rusen developed the most comprehensive methodology of interpretation of the public history writing as the attempt to overcome the trauma to the collective identity explicitly taken on the level of public narratives looking for symbolic unity in history, rather than on the level of individual experience. J. Rusen, *Zerbrechende Zeit. Über den Sinn des Geschichte*. Köln, 2001

<sup>81</sup> See for example, R.W. Davies, “History and Perestroika”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.119.

<sup>82</sup> The analysis of his memoirs shows that A. Yakovlev at least partly realized that the revelations about the crimes could be politically devastating, but considered them as a moral imperative and a means to overthrow the ideological resistance of the bureaucracy to radical reforms. Yakovlev has kept his conviction a secret until 1991, and his general stance in this

*whole* as soon as the rules of debates loosened: a multitude of the group identities re-emerged claiming that they were and remained the victims' groups.

In the face of the evidence on mass terror of 1917-1953, constructing a dissenting group identity challenging the identity of the whole political community, i.e. Soviet people and the USSR, proved the dominant and winning strategy under perestroika. In the tightly controlled public space, the leadership could publicly recognize the past crimes and still keep a "balanced" discourse on the victories and errors of the Soviet people limiting the scope of the claims and blame and thus maintaining the community's integrity. The reshaping of identities after the liberalization occurred in the shadow of the suddenly revealed and unbearable past crimes – this was probably the main factor making the original search of integrity by purification pointless. The late Soviet human psyche proved different from what Dostoevsky described in his passionate dialogues. The tragedy of Alexander Yakovlev was to bet on purification through the radical revelation of the past crimes, in fact leading to a state of denial, greater disillusion and cynicism. The sudden revelations on the mass crimes posed the question of collective responsibility and the initial longing for virtuous integrity turned into the formation of victim-identities escaping responsibility and blaming others. More virtuous people assumed their *personal* responsibility for the past, and most of them still kept their faith in the natural wholesomeness of history for the future. Even when accepting responsibility for the past, people were not ready to accept it for the future and to draw the corresponding agency-centred social ontology.

The acceptance of the Communist party's responsibility for the past took place, but did not help Gorbachev capturing public support in 1989-91, while other symbolic and executive resources of his power-basis diminished<sup>83</sup>. This historical fact and its political consequences are in direct contradiction with the arguments independently advanced by Maria Feretti and Richard Sakwa; they imply that the Gorbachev's failure to assume responsibility for the past crimes was one of the reasons of his political failure. In the context of freed public speech and rampant economic crisis, the logic of the public revelations about mass crimes naturally favoured not the Gorbachev consensual reformism with his balance of victories and crimes, but the radical criticisms between different groups blaming each other and affecting the "wholeness" of the community. According to Maria Feretti and Richard Sakwa, the legitimacy crisis may be attributed to the *failure of repentance*, one of the central themes of discussions in 1988-1989:

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respect was subversion. He also remained true to this conviction two decades later and confirmed them in his memoirs pointing out that the task of assuming the past crimes and errors, was far from being completed and remained a moral duty. See as an example: «Россия тысячу лет страдала от нищенства и несправедливости... От прошлого, однако, не спрячешься. Мертвые все равно догонят живых и жестоко потребуют нравственного покаяния. От прошлого не спрячешься, от самих себя – тоже. И нам не обойтись без нового прочтения многих исторических явлений и событий, многотрудных и противоречивых процессов, имена которым революция, контрреволюция и эволюция, свобода и анархия». А. Яковлев, *Сумерки*, Материк, М., 2003, с.5-6

<sup>83</sup> See: М. Горбачев, «Социалистическая идея и революционная перестройка», *Правда*, 26.11.1989. Also: Л. Вартазарова, В. Розанов, О. Туманова, «К новым ценностям. Ученые о демократизации КПСС», *Коммунист*, 1990, №3, с.17

Destalinisation challenged the Soviet regime to face up to its own past, and when the test came at this time the system failed critically to acknowledge its own crimes or to express genuine repentance for the horrors it had inflicted on its own people. This failure, perhaps more than anything else, undermined the bonds of trust between the government and people that Gorbachev had begun to create.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the critical argument made by Feretti and Sakwa on the fatal failure to assume the responsibility and repent, Gorbachev and CPSU in its new draft program did publicly assume their “moral responsibility” for Stalin’s crimes in 1990<sup>85</sup>. We argue that this recognition could not and it did not bring more public support to Gorbachev or to CPSU. By opposite, assuming one’s political responsibility *shortly* after the *public revelations* of the crimes is a courageous act, which may bring long-term benefits, but in the short-term it diminishes one’s popularity and power basis – it is politically risky. What is more significant is the time-span between the *public revelation* of the crimes and the political settlement, and not only the time-distance with the period when the crimes were committed. In other words, the sudden revelation and recognition on the massive terror in the perestroika press could have and had mostly negative effect on the legitimacy of the regime and on the popularity of Gorbachev as far as he remained General Secretary of CPSU – the immediate effect was destabilizing and negative, although depending on the political conjuncture the instant ideological impact could be more like an unpleasant punch, or more like a knock-down in an troubled fight, as this was in the perestroika case. It seems that the optimal strategy in this respect was to combine gradual revelations with the differed acceptance of responsibility. Gorbachev and Yakovlev intended these revelations as an arm against the opponents of reforms and this worked; however, in the free public space they returned as a grater arm against reformers themselves.

The inner logic of most of the *theoretical discussions* unfolding between 1989 and 1991 actually had to do with this heavy but inescapable load of responsibility and guilt, rather than with the explanations of the past, with methodological divergences or with the positive programs of reforms<sup>86</sup>. This does not imply that historical explanations, methodology or political programs posed no questions, triggered no interest or benefited from a wide consensus – rather, they created less solidarity or antagonism between authors and therefore created fewer occasions for polemical exchanges. The questions of historical responsibility openly attributed or implied when interpreting the Soviet past catalysed the most vivid reactions and discussions: the result was the escalating chain of symbolic *exoduses* from the *Soviet collective identity* and from USSR as its legal political form. Curiously, we could not find the

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<sup>84</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective*, Routledge, Second edition, 1998, p.78

<sup>85</sup> For the quotes and analysis of the corresponding passages from the Party’s draft program in English, see R. W. Davies, “History and Perestroika”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.144-145

<sup>86</sup> Stephan Wheatcroft comes to a similar point resuming the debates under perestroika but using the language of the *Short Course* (“wreckers”) – which slightly misplaces the accents proper to perestroika (“guilt”, “responsibility”), but gives the correct general overview: “All these groups tend to place the greatest emphasis on the wreckers and the fight against the wreckers, rather than on who were the true believers, on what they believed in and on why they believed it. These groups are no longer interested in trying to discover what socio-economic and political forces might have contributed to people making the decisions that they did and in acting the way they did”. Stephen G. Wheatcroft, “History in Russia Since the Unleashing of the Energy of History (January 1987) and the Fall of the USSR (December 1991): Ten Years on the Archive and Historical Front, 1987-1996”, in Vladimir Tikhomirov ed. *In Search of Identity Five Years Since the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Centre for Russian and Euro-Asian Studies, University of Melbourne, 1996, p.94

conservative side of the major political cleavage of perestroika **Reformers Vs Conservatives** in the theoretical debates.

There were no influential publicists or intellectuals who took a clear stance in favour of the conservative position, e.g. that of the defence of the main traits of the established late Soviet regime, its community, its virtues. Researchers often take this political cleavage for granted, following the self-presentation of perestroika intellectuals<sup>87</sup>: however, on the other side of the symbolic barricade there were strikingly few people. The historical responsibility pending on the Soviet community as a whole made this ideological cleavage virtually empty. Or, there was social and institutional basis for and a real *opposition* to reforms, but it lacked sound *ideology* except the emotional defence of the denigrated values and forefathers' memory<sup>88</sup>. If this analysis is accurate, then we can witness the collapse of the moral authority of the CPSU and of its ideology one to two years prior the political dissolution of the USSR. Even the post-Soviet nostalgic rehabilitation of Soviet symbols is purposefully non-ideological – the continuity with the Soviet past is asserted beyond or without ideas, values and principles. The Soviet civilization brought up no ideological heirs in its last days.

The actual quarrels in the central press took place between Socialist reformers, market liberals, and Russian nationalists. Several influential authors combined various aspects of these orientations and all agreed in their condemnation of Stalinism. Looking for a meaningful synthesis of Hegel, Marx and liberalism, Sergey Chernyshev deplored the superficiality of the current theoretical debates and acerbically described the general mood: “We have done away with Stalin. But it did not prove satisfying; we are still blood-thirsty”<sup>89</sup>. The implicit question - which among these three groups was *guiltier* of the Stalinist crimes? - stimulated debates and the construction of cleavages. The impossibility to escape the guilt in this symbolic competition made the articulated conservative position untenable, Russian political traditions – suspicious, and socialist reform position vulnerable, as the revelations about the state terror gradually covered the Leninist period. R.W. Davies summed up the central thrust of the debates:

In 1989 and the first six months of 1990, the October Revolution and Leninism were on trial before the country at large. Had Russia been on the wrong path ever since 1917, so that the whole post-revolutionary development must now be superseded? This was the central question about Soviet history which was debated in the Soviet media.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See for example, the otherwise stimulating and well documented work: Elaine McClarnand, “The Politics of History and Historical Revisionism: De-Stalinization and the Search for Identity in Gorbachev’s Russia, 1985-1991”, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 31, No. 2. (Feb., 1998), pp. 153-179;

<sup>88</sup> As we could conclude in the previous section from the analysis of the political values as they were publicly stated, the only articulated and largely shared point which can be seen as conservative in the theoretical debates was the quasi-religious defence of the “truthfulness to the memory of the grand-fathers” against the “blackening” and disrespect: this hardly makes for an ideological platform.

<sup>89</sup> С. Чернышев, «Новые веки», *ЗНАМЯ*, 1990, №1

<sup>90</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.16

The radical revision of the global historiography and of the place USSR occupied in history implied the question of responsibility and guilt. Thus, the question which was most vividly *debated* by intellectuals in this last phase of perestroika was the question of responsibility for the mass repressions and the historical failure of USSR. The perestroika's list of the actors and factors incriminated or indulged for the wrong choice of the Soviet path included politicians, social groups and ideologies: Stalin, Lenin, CPSU<sup>91</sup>, Bolsheviks<sup>92</sup>, Mob and masses<sup>93</sup>, Russian people and old Russian traditions<sup>94</sup>, State<sup>95</sup>, Marx

<sup>91</sup> We can count the public imputations of responsibility to the party from the Gorbachev's article published in November 1989 in *Pravda* where he assumes the full responsibility of CPSU for "promises, achievements and debts" of the Revolution: «КПСС тоже возвращается к истокам и принципам революции... чтобы в полной мере принять на себя ответственность за дело революции, за ее обещания, свершения и долги». In March 1990, A. Kiva made a direct charge against the CPSU and its leadership on the pages of *Novy Mir* still suggesting that "socialist ideal" could be saved if the party would split into reformatory and conservative entities: "Будем же последовательны. Вина за все то, что случилось с нашей страной и ее народом, прежде всего ложится на правящую (и единственную!) партию. Она определяла стратегию развития, она формировала все звенья управления сверху донизу. Партия ответственна за все, что делалось в стране после ее прихода к власти. Иная постановка вопроса просто безнравственна" А. Кива, «Кризис "жанра"», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №3, с.212. М. Горбачев, «Социалистическая идея и революционная перестройка», *Правда*, 26.11.1989. In September 1990, Solzhenitsyn re-iterated his accusation against CPSU leaving no possible excuses and no place for any future role. «Нет, не откроется народного пути даже к самому неотложному, и ничего дельного мы не достигнем, пока коммунистическая ленинская партия не просто уступит пункт конституции – но полностью устранится от всякого влияния на экономическую и государственную жизнь, полностью уйдет от управления нами, даже какой-то отраслью нашей жизни или местностью. Хотелось бы, чтоб это произошло не силовым выжиманием и вышибанием ее – но ее собственным публичным раскаянием: что цепью преступлений, жестокостей и бессмыслия она завела страну в пропасть и не знает путей выхода». А. Солженицын, «Как нам обустроить Россию?», Специальный выпуск. *Комсомольская правда*, 18.09.1990.

<sup>92</sup> Bolsheviks were accused both collectively as the old guard and individually. Among the first Bolshevik leaders denounced individually along with Lenin and Stalin we can cite first Trotsky, who for the Russian nationalists played the role of the collective Jew (hence, the expression "inheritors of Trotsky"), with rare mentions of Kaganovitch and long lists of less known Jewish names. Historians Loginov, Bordugov and Kozlov writing for the mainstream *Kommunist* in their (unwillingly?) ambiguous advocacy of Trotsky against the accusation for the terror demanded the accusers to "be honest" and openly point out at Lenin who actually stood behind these denounced policies. A group of the Peoples' Deputies from Russia issued a declaration "To the People's Deputies of the USSR" stating that the first Bolshevik leaders including Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Rykov betrayed the interests of the Russian people. In the mainstream press after the relatively short period of public rehabilitation and promotion of Bukharin, the public interest towards his figure felt down – Bukharin's personality probably had not enough appeal and the short time of his public exposure was not enough to attract influential intellectuals beyond the narrow circle. О. Платонов, «О, Русь, взмахни крылами!...». «Начиная с 1922 года русские как нация, а РСФСР как республика были лишены полноценного политического представительства... Вряд ли кто-то всерьез будет утверждать, что такие лидеры партии, как Сталин, Троцкий, Зиновьев, Каменев, Бухарин, Рыков, игравшие ведущую роль в 20е годы, в период, когда закладывался фундамент все государственной системы СССР, адекватно представляли национальные интересы русского народа». *Наш Современник*, 1989, №8, с.131. «Но если кто-то не хочет принять политику Троцкого в военном ведомстве, то пусть в таком случае будет последовательным и откровенным. Не надо под псевдонимом Троцкий возводить хулу на Ленина», Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, В. Логинов, «Послушная история, или новый публицистический рай, грустные заметки», *Коммунист*, 1989, №14, с.76 «Обращение к народным депутатам СССР», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №12, с.3

<sup>93</sup> «Сталин победил, потому что военно-коммунистическая идеология была доступнее и ближе миллионам новобранцев индустриализации, чем идеология рынка и товарно-денежных отношений», И. Клямкин, «Почему трудно говорить правду? Выбранные места из истории одной болезни», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №2, с. 229. «Это лишь внешне была тирания, культ личности: на деле во многом это была тирания серой, усредняющей все и вся массы над индивидуальностью, культ «мы» восторжествовавший над «я» в широком социальном измерении, но прикрывавшийся культом героя» Д. Ольшанский, «Социальная философия «винтиков»», *Вопросы Философии*, №8, с. 98. «В этой близости психологии массы и вождя скрывается один из важнейших источников победы сталинской альтернативы», Б. Г. Могильницкий, «Альтернативность в истории советского общества», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №11, с.10. «Самоуправление и массовое участие... заканчиваются бюрократией и диктаторскими режимами», В. П. Булдаков, «У истоков советской истории: путь к Октябрю», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №9, с.74

<sup>94</sup> «ВНУСИТЬ РУССКИМ КОМПЛЕКС ВИНУ», В. Белов, Ю. Бондарев, А. Казинцев, Н. Федь, и др., «Письмо писателей, деятелей культуры и науки России Президенту, ВС СССР, ВС РСФСР, Делегатам 28 съезда КПСС», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №4, с.141

<sup>95</sup> «Справедливо возложив главную ответственность за происходившее на сильнейшего - государство, мы все же нередко слишком категоричны в утверждениях о всеобщей покорности, неведении, казенном единомыслии». О. Хлевнюк, «1937 год: противодействия репрессиям», *Коммунист*, 1989, №18, с.99



and Engels personally, Marxism as ideology<sup>96</sup>, Our Fathers<sup>97</sup>, Soviet or Bolshevik ideology (Marxism-Leninism)<sup>98</sup>, Western technocratic civilization<sup>99</sup>, Western liberalism<sup>100</sup>, Atheism<sup>101</sup>, Workers and Peasantry<sup>102</sup>, Jews<sup>103</sup>, and finally, Freemasons<sup>104</sup>. This most probably incomplete list of suspected actors and factors makes clear the scope of the controversy in the central press around the guilt for the terror and for the misfortunes of the Soviet history in general. Most of these actors were *contemporary* social groups, “icons” or ideologies of these groups: incrimination and advocacy framed the reactions to the public revelations about the crimes and missed historical opportunities. Blaming Stalin implied criticism of contemporary “Communist conservatives”, blaming Lenin, Marx, Marxism-Leninism and socialist utopianism – hit humanist socialists, blaming Russian traditions of slavery and backwardness – Russian people and Russian nationalists in particular, blaming Western influences and technocracy – hit pro-Western liberals, while accusing the mob or ‘Lumpen’ psychology indirectly advocated the liberal intelligentsia as opposed to the resentment of the mob<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>96</sup> We can witness both explicit theoretical accusations and explicit theoretical apologies of Marx in 1989-1991: «Маркс связывал переход к социализму с переходом от вторичной к третичной формации, от классового к после-классовому обществу, от полосы преимущественно стихийной эволюции к полосе в основном и главном сознательного развития. С этой новой чертой связана не только возможность ускорения общественного прогресса... но и опасность схода с естественноисторической линии поступательного развития, утраты его некоторых необходимых механизмов, как это стало очевидным в XX в.», А. П. Бутенко, Т. Г. Кадочникова, «Становление социалистического общества и казарменный социализм», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №6, с.47. «Гроссман ошибается в главном... Нетерпимость Ленина к политической свободе, о которой пишет В. Гроссман, идет не от русского характера, а прежде всего от марксистского учения о диктатуре пролетариата, от марксистского убеждения, что буржуазные права и свободы... должны пасть в ходе победоносной пролетарской революции». А. Ципко, «Хороши ли наши принципы?», *Новый мир*, 1990, № 4. с.178; «Естественно, что в ситуации духовного разлада и сумерек идеалов встал вопрос о теоретической ответственности марксизма. Под удар поставлена сама сердцевина теории Маркса - его концепция истории как последовательной смены одной общественно-экономической формации другой», Владимир Миронов, «Перестройка в контексте истории XX века», *Коммунист*, 1990, № 13, с.23. "И чем сильнее осознавалась вождями пролетариата эта связь событий в России и Европе, чем больше русское освободительное движение воспринималось как часть европейского, тем меньше, как это ни парадоксально, их занимала судьба собственно России. Упускалась из виду цена, которую ей придется заплатить за соц. преобразования, жертвы, которые будут принесены всемирному освобождению пролетариата», Борис Игенберг, Валентина Твардовская, «Завершился ли диалог в "Диалоге"? К. Маркс и «русский путь»», *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.91.

<sup>97</sup> «Конечно же, массовое участие в такой мистерии стало возможно только в атмосфере десталинизации, резко обозначившей проблему вины "отцов". Однако, эта - в сущности вечная тема могла бы проигрываться в иной интонации, вероятнее всего – болевой». Ксения Мяло, «Посвящение в небытие», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №8, с.235

<sup>98</sup> «Вину за такой фанатизм нельзя возлагать на саму марксистскую теорию. В фундаменте их теории, что и давало основание говорить о науке, а не утопии, было как раз представление о постепенном вызревании условий для победы социализма... Главный источник негативных явлений - утопическое сознание наших партийных лидеров». Г. Шахназаров, *Коммунист*, 1990, №4, с.48

<sup>99</sup> See: Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7.

<sup>100</sup> Таисия Наполова, «Преемственность зла», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №1.

<sup>101</sup> See: В. Карпец, «Скорый помощник и молитвенник наш от междоусобной брани», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №4

<sup>102</sup> These supposedly basic social groups were not on the front line of the debates, however, we can refer to both accusations and advocacy of the two classes: «Считается желательным, чтобы прошлое страны изображалось таким, каким его переживали простые труженики, что рабочая масса могла участвовать в бесчинствах и преступлениях минувших десятилетий только потому, что была соблазнена и обманута... Растущее пролетарско-плебейское чванство должно блокироваться широким фронтом исследований и публикаций, посвященных критической истории российского рабочего класса...» В. И. Толстых, «Умер ли марксизм. Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №10, с.30. «Сегодня во всех бедах модно обвинять социалистический выбор рабочих и крестьян в Октябре 1917 года», И. Полозков, «За социалистический характер перестройки», *Коммунист*, 1991, №1.

<sup>103</sup> We discuss this issue later in more details. See as an example: Валентин Сорокин, «Свои чужие», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №8

<sup>104</sup> С. Журавлев, «Честь собственного имени. Интервью с В. Пикулем», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №2

<sup>105</sup> We refer in particular, to an ironic and lucid review of the use of the term “Lumpen” between the end of perestroika and early Yeltsin’s era by R. W. Davies who concluded as follows: “Russian intellectuals after 70 years of the Soviet rule blamed the ‘lumpen’ lower depths of society for the faults of the system and dismissed as lumpens the many ordinary Russians who

We will briefly examine some of the political charges made against Stalin, Lenin and Jews between 1989 and 1991. The personal guilt of Stalin for the mass terror was assumed virtually by all authors across the political spectrum. This followed the Gorbachev's formula on the "great and unpardonable personal guilt of Stalin" pronounced in his report on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of October revolution – accompanied with the recognition of Stalin's great contribution to the defence of the cause of Leninism, but then typically cited by others without this softening context.<sup>106</sup> Once Stalin's guilt was widely recognized, a significant number of publicists insisted that one should not hide other responsible actors behind the curtain of the personal guilt of Stalin alone. In 1989 the large collection of essays "Understanding the cult of Stalin" continuing the official series *Perestroika: glasnost, democracy, socialism*, marked the focus on Stalin's personal role, and also the attempts to understand the phenomenon in a wider historical context. Several publicists linked Stalin and bureaucratic apparatus as well as the recently urbanised uneducated masses as *co-responsible* with Stalin.

In 1990-1991, the personal guilt of Stalin was gradually extended to Lenin, and a number of other ideologues, leaders and groups; if after the N. Andreeva case, the condemnation of Stalin was close to unanimous, the later critical versions of Stalin's personal role were much more diverse and integrated the inculpation of other persons, as well as the condemnations of ideas and groups.<sup>107</sup> R. W. Davies identified the period covering the whole 1989 and beginning of 1990 as the "Onslaught on Leninism", which resulted in the emergence of the "new intolerance", as Davies provocatively puts it, "this time directed against Lenin".<sup>108</sup> The public inculpation of Lenin was initiated by A. Tsytko, V. Selyunin, and Y. Affanasiev, some of them encouraged by A. Yakovlev, and later taken on by the million-copies publications of the decisively anti-Leninist interpretations of the Soviet history written by Soviet émigrés or dissident authors well before perestroika such as Solzhenitsyn, Grossman, Autorkhanov, and Voslensky.

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opposed the drive to the free market. This is perhaps the crucial difference between the Russian intelligentsia today and the democratic and revolutionary intelligentsia before the revolution, who strongly supported greater social equality and spoke up for the underprivileged. Vadim Rogovin, who has defended socialist values throughout perestroika, suggests that 'a genuine Communist mentality was destroyed by the flames of Stalinist terror together with several generations of Bolsheviks'. This is of course, not the whole story. The provision of privileges for the new political elite was well under way during the Civil War, twenty years before the Stalinist terror." R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.63

<sup>106</sup> «В докладе М. С. Горбачева 2 Ноября 1987 г. впервые был поставлен вопрос об ответственности не только Сталина, но и его окружения... Теперь мы хорошо знаем, что не какие-то исполнители, стрелочники, а именно сам И. Сталин, утверждая свою безраздельную деспотическую власть как раз для поддержания своего господства...», А. П. Бутенко, «О социально-классовой природе сталинской власти», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №3, с.75

<sup>107</sup> Х. Кобо (ред.), *Осмыслить культ Сталина*, [серия Перестройка: гласность, демократия, социализм], М., Прогресс, 1989, 651с. We can cite typical passages: «Первое о чем нужно сказать, - о громадной личной вине Сталине как руководителя, обладавшего все полнотой власти. Уточняя его вину, мы должны учесть, что личность в те времена чрезвычайным образом сказывалась на конфигурации всех политических событий». Эдуард Скобелев, «В поисках истины», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №6, с.143. «Осмысливая прошлое с позиций сегодняшнего дня... можно утверждать, что Сталин очень скоро предал забвению и ленинскую заповедь и собственную клятву», В. Зотов, «Национальный вопрос: деформации прошлого» *Коммунист*, 1989, №3, с.84. «Разгром крестьянства и религии был разгромом народной культуры и нравственности, расцветом... насилия... и одновременно подготовкой кадров для продолжения репрессий. Это был тот аппарат, который хотел создать и создал Сталин», В. Шубкин, «Трудное прощание», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №4, с.170. А. В. Антонов-Овсеенко, «Сталин и его время», *Вопросы Истории*, 1989, №1

<sup>108</sup> R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, p.11

As Jon Gooding showed, the popular positive attitudes to Lenin resisted to these attacks for long time; but the defence of Lenin's political heritage lost its *intellectual* credit before 1991. We can also note a growing *irrelevance* of Lenin for the intellectual debates: as those who defended Lenin actually did not claim that Lenin's ideological and political heritage provided any good recipes for the present day.<sup>109</sup> This controversy made manifest the *cultic functions* of Lenin in the late Soviet context and its ideological irrelevance if not oblivion. From different perspectives, Davies, Gooding, Yourchak, Scherrer and Brossart showed the importance of attacks against the Lenin's *sacred cult*, which, according to Gooding, was playing the double role within the official Soviet ideology: "legitimising the party rule, it at the same time provided consolation, guidance and sense of an overarching moral order needed by people who were denied access to orthodox religion."<sup>110</sup> The convincing thesis made by Jon Gooding on the (retrospectively surprising) persistency of the Lenin's popular cult until as late as 1991 despite sharp historical criticism, had antecedents made by Alain Brossat and Jutta Scherrer already in 1990, one year before perestroika led to the formal disintegration of the state and its party<sup>111</sup>. Exploring this dimension in an anthropological perspective, Alexey Yurchak addressed the role of Lenin and his cult as the sacred "Master-signifier" for the whole Soviet ideology, which according to this analysis, collapsed because of its officially assumed incapacity to reconstruct Lenin's guiding thought in the present context "as if Lenin was alive"<sup>112</sup>. Once, the rulers acknowledge they do not really speak as Lenin would speak, they loose their intellectual and political authority set by the logic of reference to the Master-signifier. Yurchak suggests that Soviet ideologues in 1990-1991 suddenly realised that the *post mortem* spiritual guidance of Lenin was actually impossible. Once they realized that they did not really incarnate Lenin's speech, their own speeches turned empty. The interpretation of the ideological collapse of the Gorbachev's leadership in terms of the mishandling of the Master-signifier seems to misinterpret the real conditions and functions of the Lenin's cult and its place in the rules of public communication. We argue that in 1991 the CPSU's leaders did not want to pretend that they knew "what Lenin would have thought" anymore because Lenin was discredited. Moreover, Gorbachev and his allies simply did not know anymore which words to put in Lenin's mouth, as they lost the ideological and intellectual initiative and were clearly confused. This seems to be more immediate causes of the Soviet ideological collapse.

<sup>109</sup> Also see: А. Авторханов, «X съезд и осадное положение в партии», *Новый мир*, 1990, № 3; А. Ципко, «Хороши ли наши принципы?», *Новый мир*, 1990, № 4; М. Восленский, «Номенклатура, фрагменты книги», *Новый мир*, 1990, №6; А. Ланщиков, «Диктатура диктатуры», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №7; Д. Волкогонов, «Сталинизм: сущность, генезис, эволюция», *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №3; В. П. Булдаков, В. В. Кабанов, «"Военный коммунизм": идеология и общественное развитие», *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №3; Редакция, «Ленинское наследие и перестройка», *Коммунист*, 1990, №5; Г. Бордюгов, В. Козлов, В. Логинов, «Личность, доктрина, власть. Интервью с вопросами читателей», *Коммунист*, 1990, №5. John Gooding, "Lenin in Soviet Politics, 1985-91, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3. (1992), pp. 403-422.

<sup>110</sup> John Gooding, "Lenin in Soviet Politics", op. cit. 412

<sup>111</sup> John Gooding, "Lenin in Soviet Politics", 1985-91, in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3. (1992), p. 423. Jutta Scherrer, L'érosion de l'image de Lénine, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1990 — Volume 85, Numéro 1, pp. 54-69. Alain Brossat, "Les statues meurent aussi (Le culte de Lénine et son avenir en URSS et en Europe de l'Est)", *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 1990, Volume 19, Numéro 1, pp. 2-9. Jutta Scherrer, "L'érosion de l'image de Lénine", *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1990 — Volume 85, Numéro 1, pp. 54-69

<sup>112</sup> А. Юрчак, «Если бы Ленин был жив, он бы знал, что делать», in *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007

We argue that the sudden incapacity to rely on Lenin resulted at least from three independent factors – first, the leadership’s theoretical weakness and second, from the publication of historical facts incompatible with the saint’s Lenin’s image and, finally from the “blasphemous” mockery amplified by glasnost. The curious and disturbing phenomena – attention to the physical and bodily aspects of Lenin’s last days in the final stage of perestroika – well identified by Yurchak, reflected the painful fading of Lenin’s cult in the eyes of his many sincere believers under the scrutiny of both rational criticism and irony.<sup>113</sup> Lenin’s cult played an important legitimating function and it was strong, but not strong enough to trigger mass fanatical resistance. For a growing number of people the information on Lenin’s extreme cruelty and responsibility for terror contrasted with and enforced the new imperative of non-violence and anti-ideological pathos. Within three years, Lenin turned from the main legitimating icon of the regime into the main accused, suddenly compromising those who would like to be still associated with his name. By opposite, in the context of free public speech and prior ritualisation, Lenin’s ideological heritage was *intellectually* irrelevant for both Soviet humanists and Soviet Puritans. Their incapacity to articulate the new political program was the inner reason of this surrender, while the public discredit was the external one. Yurchak does not distinguish them at all and argues that reformers somehow mistakenly stopped referring to Lenin when they realised that he was dead and indeed could not guide them “as if he was alive”. This was not an error within the discourse deployment but the inability of men to respond to the new situation in which public speech changed its social meaning and produced new effects. Putting the new words in the Lenin’s mouth would *not* be a problem if they knew what to say.

The responsibility of Jews in the Bolshevik terror and even for the wrong Socialist path of Russia was one of the main themes of *Nash Sovremennik*, which saw these considerations as the response to the attacks against the Russian people, or against *russophobia*. Acerbic criticism of Trotsky, who remained one of the most negatively viewed and actually unknown figure in the Soviet history, was first used as the way to imply the guilt of the Jewish community for the Soviet terror and for the worse aspects of Stalin’s policies.<sup>114</sup> By 1990 the Anti-Semitism in *Nash Sovremennik* became fervent and open – as R.W Davies pointed in this respect: “the Soviet Union is, I think the only part of Europe in which such rabidly anti-Semitic views would be published in a serious literary journal” – fortunately, this ideological line had relatively weak public appeal during perestroika despite its open and unregulated propagation.<sup>115</sup> If the logic of *allocation of responsibility* did not exhaust the richness of

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<sup>113</sup> Yurchak himself demonstrates striking examples of the mockery on the sincere, anxious and sometimes morbid interest in the last days of Lenin’s life, his physiology and his mummified body, and ending up with a provocative TV show produced by a vanguard musician Sergey Kourekhin in the pseudo scientific verbiage. The show broadcasted in May 1991 convinced millions of spectators that Lenin was in fact a magic mushroom; the subsequent official refutation of this “information” created a sense of ridicule around both Lenin and his fellow compatriots.

<sup>114</sup> «Однако ленинскому пониманию содержания труда в новую эпоху противостоял довольно многочисленный фронт политиков и публицистов, идейным лидером которых был Л. Троцкий... Государственные и общенациональные вопросы Троцкий предлагал решать командно-бюрократическими методами, опираясь на репрессивный аппарат», О. Платонов, «В двух шагах от обрыва. Истоки», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №, с.12.

<sup>115</sup> «Почему мы сейчас не показываем черную роль, зловещую роль в нашей литературе Льва Авербаха? ... Кто творил беззакония? Разве один Лев Авербах? Разве сам Сталин занимался отправкой на каторгу писателей? Где та

individual beliefs, it animated and framed the debates between most writers. We can review the benchmarks in the debates about the responsibility for the massive violence in USSR by analysing more in details, the charges against and the advocacy of a few groups from the long list. We focus on the typical idioms used and on the ways perestroika authors framed the role of symbolic groups (and, hence their own) in their accounts of the Great terror of 1937-1938 and of the post-revolutionary period of 1917-1953 in general, and of the Soviet path in order to re-distribute responsibility among the contemporary actors.

The logic of responsibility was articulated with the mediation of the recognizable Christian vocabulary of free choice. The very situation of historical choice was not held for evident. The responsibility attributed to Stalin, Lenin, Bolsheviks, Marx and Engels was typically debated in such a way as to rediscover and to *prove* that there was a situation of choice, and *then*, the logic goes, politicians could be condemned as *responsible* or *guilty* for the historical misdeeds. According to one of the most sophisticated polemicists of this period, Otto Latsis, "Historical choice – that is what defines historical responsibility".<sup>116</sup> In the spotlight of debates was not the question on exactly why and how actors were acting and which the results of different decisions and circumstances were, or what we shall do today, although these issues were addressed, but debate focused mostly on framing the situations of the past choices and on the imputation of responsibility for those presumably free choices. Thus, the polemical logic of trial superseded the logic of explanation or pragmatism – as accusations were intellectually less demanding, politically more rewarding, and triggering a "virtuous" cycle of mutually enforcing accusations. Time distance spared the vast majority of discussants from bearing any *personal* guilt for the worse crimes. The imputation of the symbolic responsibility for past crimes to the contemporary groups and their values (or ideologues), generated vivid reactions, and counter charges. The attempts to retrieve the whole complexity of dramatic historical events and to agree on a positive reform agenda led to the outward fragmentation. In the *central press*, agreement and alliances were forming mainly around the negative points, such as the discrediting of Marxism-Leninism and CPSU, unacceptability of violence and the reliance on the natural-historical evolution. Similarly, in the public spheres of the national Soviet Republics the anti-Russian (ethnic-cultural), anti-Soviet (ideological), anti-Moscow (central state) were combined in different proportions. Their intersection

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мафия? Где ее щупальца теперь?... Ягода, Шай, Миронов, Слуцкий, Шанин, Добродицкий, Берензон, Иоффе... Почему русский человек в стихах Евтушенко отвечает за всех, виноват один во всем? ... Считать, что русский - уже здорово, даровито - глупость. Но и вину класть на одних русских - преступление!», Валентин Сорокин, «Свои чужие», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №8, с.169, с.174. «Нельзя констатировать еврейскую национальность авторов под страхом "антисемитизма"... ибо права "высшей" нации на деле включают в себя все разом: и сокрытие национальной принадлежности... и национальное самозванство, маскировку под чужим именем, и национальную гордыню. Это обеспечивает в итоге свободу от исторической ответственности и тем паче от того национального "покаяния", какое вымогают у других народов страны, в первую очередь - у русского народа», В. Белов, Ю. Бондарев, А. Казинцев, Н. Федь, и др., «Письмо писателей, деятелей культуры и науки России Президенту, ВС СССР, ВС РСФСР, Делегатам 28 съезда КПСС», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №4, с.142. Compare: R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.13-14

<sup>116</sup> «Выбор, сделанный Сталиным, привел к отчуждению от собственности, а затем был закреплен отчуждением от власти. Исторический выбор – вот что определяет историческую ответственность», Отто Лацис, «Термидор считать брюмером», *Знамя*, 1989, №3, с.198

resulted in a formation of non-USSR identities and anti-USSR alliances<sup>117</sup>. The avoidance of the overall historical responsibility structured the cleavages and alliances in public debates more efficiently than common knowledge, values and political programs. The debate on the wrongness and responsibility for the Soviet path took place in the unfavourable context of severe food shortages and in sharp contrast with affluent images of the West brought by glasnost.

Historiosophical arguments and new historiosophical idioms mattered, to a large degree because they provided *theoretical ground* for the attribution of responsibility for past crimes and historical dead-end which was becoming more “profound” as perestroika was obviously failing. The straight anti-imperial logic of the national liberalization dominant in the Caucasian and Baltic republics or Ukraine, allowed the most satisfying solution for the question of historical responsibility. In the non-Russian republics the roots of the historical drama could be consensually identified as Communist ideology, Russification and Moscow. This ideological pattern naturally prepared and accelerated the fragmentation of the established political order, but it could not be fully reproduced in the *central Soviet press*. Four out of five thick magazines that we analysed represented the all-Union’s public space and all were published in Russian and in Moscow. We can review in detail certain typical arguments between liberal socialists, liberals, and Russian nationalists on the *distribution of historical responsibility* within the Soviet polity and on its theoretical pre-conditions.

As a case in point, we would like to examine the structure of the key argument presented in the article written by Alexander Tsytko and published in *Novyi Mir* under the title “Whether our principles are good?” This publication crowned a series of other polemical articles on Soviet ideology by Tsytko considered in this period as one of the boldest and most controversial publicists. As analysed by R. W. Davies, the target of Tsytko’s articles was Marxism in its very basic foundations: Stalin’s terrifying rule was not a deformation, but an accurate development of the logic outlined by Marx and followed by Lenin. This corner-cutting genealogy mirroring the official Marxism-Leninism meant that rejecting Stalinism, terror and the Administrative system one should logically reject and condemn Marxism and Communism as a whole<sup>118</sup>. Davies points out that Tsytko was instrumental in what he tellingly called the “Onslaught on Leninism” backed by A. Yakovlev. The second layer of Tsytko argumentation also mentioned but quickly passed by Davies deserves more attention: the argument against Marxism, indeed so boldly and openly formulated in the mainstream press for the first time it moved the frontier

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<sup>117</sup> G. Kasyanov in his account of the historical debates in Ukraine concludes about a surprising consolidation which occurred in 1990: “History from a battle-field turned into the territory of agreement between the newborn “sovereign-communists” and “national-democrats””: «Бои за историю развернувшиеся в Украинской ССР во второй половине 1980-ых годов, к 1990 году вышли на завершающий этап – коммунистическая номенклатура, поначалу активно отстаивавшая эту территорию, стала сдавать позицию за позицией, а затем часть ее перебежала в лагерь своих оппонентов и стала использовать их аргументы как подспорье в своих претензиях на власть... и торгах с центром. История из поля битвы превратилась в территорию согласия между новорожденными «суверен-коммунистами» и национал-демократами, значительная часть которых тоже пришла из номенклатурных рядов». Георгий Касьянов, «Украина-1990: «бои за историю»», In *1990: опыт изучения недавней истории*, НЛО, т.1, №83, 2007, с.78.; К. Аймермахер, Г. Бордюгов, *Национальные истории в советском и постсоветских государствах*, М., АИРО-XX, 1999.

<sup>118</sup> «Трагедия нашего общества состояла не в том, что Сталин отступил от ленинского учения об обобществлении, как оно было сформулировано в 1918 г., а в том, что он вернулся к нему вскоре после смерти Ленина и слепо следовал ему». А. Ципко, «Хороши ли наши принципы?», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №4, с.189.

of glasnost (which, one should remember, was softly defined and purposefully kept unguarded by Gorbachev trusting his own charisma, the natural appeal of socialist humanism and committed to glasnost as a principle), and set the new benchmarks in the underlying debate on the way historical responsibility should be “shared” with Stalin between contemporary groups and ideologies. In this debate, Tsytko took a strong position against those who kept their attachment to Lenin and Marxism in general, but also against the “incrimination” of the Russian political tradition, which was exemplified in Vasilii Grossman’s bitter novel on the World War II, *Vse techet* [Everything Flows]. For Tsytko, this second advocacy seemed more acute than the first charge:

Grossman got it wrong about the most important issue... The intolerance of Lenin to political liberty, which Grossman depicts, originates not in the Russian character, but first of all from the Marxist teaching on the dictatorship of the proletariat, from Marxist conviction that bourgeois rights and liberties... should ultimately fall down in the course of the victorious proletarian revolution.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, Tsytko argued in his historiosophical apology, the Russian intelligentsia “as a rule” could not accept Marxism in its heart, as the teaching on the class struggle and violence as the mid-wife of history, since it contradicted Christian values and spiritual heritage of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky<sup>120</sup>. Lenin and Bukharin lacked the essential “Russianness” in their feelings and convictions<sup>121</sup>. The other line of arguments addressed the responsibility for economic failures of Soviet socialism: can’t we see that Russian, Polish, German or Chinese nations “had nothing to do” [*ni pri chem*] with the inability of the collective organization of labour and state property to foster initiative and innovations?<sup>122</sup> In substance, neither Soviet terror and violence, nor poor performance of the socialist planned economy could be attributed to Russian traditions or to the Russian people. Tsytko reasoned in terms of accusation and apology on a symbolic trial for the misdeeds on the Soviet path: he heavily charged against democratic Leninists, while making an apology for Russia. This stance mobilizing liberalism, nationalism and organicist visions as means to redirect collective responsibility was more typical for the non-Russian republics framing their separate and innocent identities. Alexander Tsytko prepared the ground for an “innocent” collective identity splitting or emancipating from the Soviet polity – Russia or the Russian people. He underlined that only the respect of our “dear fathers’ graves”, culture, traditions and spirituality can be the solid base of a community<sup>123</sup>. This position had influential opponents among his associates. Alexander Yakovlev while encouraging the anti-Leninist pathos of Tsytko’s writings and politically “covering” him, refused to absolve Russians from their historical guilt. In September 1991, after the failed putsch he openly declare his deep conviction that perestroika was

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<sup>119</sup> «Гроссман ошибается в главном... Нетерпимость Ленина к политической свободе, о которой пишет В. Гроссман, идет не от русского характера, а прежде всего от марксистского учения о диктатуре пролетариата, от марксистского убеждения, что буржуазные права и свободы... должны пасть в ходе победоносной пролетарской революции». А. Ципко, «Хороши ли наши принципы?», с.178

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., с.179

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, с.179

<sup>122</sup> «Разве теперь не видно, что народ, какой бы он ни был, российский, германский, чешский китайский, польский здесь ни при чем? Всюду куда ни кинь коллективизация организация труда в национальном масштабе (то есть мечта Маркса о превращении национальной экономики в одну большую фабрику) вела к одним и тем же плачевным результатам: к свертыванию хозяйственной инициативы и предприимчивости». Ibid., с.184

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., с.203

the “first non-violent revolution in the Russian history” which broke with the centuries long “dark tradition of authoritarianism”<sup>124</sup>. Yakovlev regularly implied this negative view on the Russian history before the failure of putsch and regularly declared it afterwards<sup>125</sup>.

Naturally, humanistic socialists refused both ways of distributing historical responsibility. For instance, one of Gorbachev’s closest ideological advisors exculpated Marxist theory, noting that fanaticism did not belong to its scientific and anti-utopian nature: “transformation of the theory into “Holy scriptures” took place not because of the founders’ fault. They... did not pretend to have a monopoly on truth”<sup>126</sup>. This line of defence as well as the claims that the classics actually did not give any firm recipes for socialism and communism and thus could not be held accountable for the results of their misapplications by fanatic followers, gradually led socialist humanists towards the conclusion that Marx, Lenin and their writings are not “guilty”, because they were mistakenly used as political principles and programs beyond their original historical context. Lenin was not guilty, because he should not be taken as a superior ideological authority; was he thus *irrelevant* for today’s policy making? Who and how could then define socialism and what insured the viability of socialist ideology!? Shakhnazarov honestly replied: “We can endlessly argue what is socialism and what is not. But socialist society will be shaped by the crucible of world history, by the purposeful and spontaneous actions of all nations”<sup>127</sup>. Classics were irrelevant if not guilty, while socialism became indefinable. Escaping the guilt for the past, Soviet socialism became an indefinable future state – only humanistic values defined this goal, knowable *laws of history* and Soviet institutions and practices of building socialism being replaced by “purposeful and spontaneous actions”.

The public debates around the reallocation of historical responsibility with all their variations and different protagonists and symbolic allegiances gradually converged to one central point of agreement – Communist party and its ideology were to be blamed. In their prognosis of the outcome of elections of the first Russian president, the *official analytics* of the CC CPSU argued that the election of the official representative of the Communist Party was the impossible option because society was dominated by the idea about “historical guilt of the CPSU for all what happened and its incapacity to stop the country’s sliding into the precipice”.<sup>128</sup>

### *Responsibility for Stalinism and reformer’s ideology: “socialist choice”*

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<sup>124</sup> А. Яковлев, ««Сильная рука» невольно тянется к тормозу», *Комсомольская Правда*, 20 Апреля, 1991.

<sup>125</sup> А. Яковлев, *Перестройка: 1985-1991, Документы*, МФД, М., 2008, с.: 419, 249, 433, 548, 648, 670

<sup>126</sup> «Вину за такой фанатизм нельзя возлагать на саму марксистскую теорию... В фундаменте их теории, что и давало основание говорить о науке, а не утопии, было как раз представление о постепенном вызревании условий для победы социализма" превращение Марксистской и Ленинской "теории в вариант "священного писания" произошло не по вине их создателей. Они самым почтительным образом отзывались о своих великих предшественниках и не претендовали на единоличное владение истиной» Г. Шахназаров, «Обновление идеологии и идеология обновления», *Коммунист*, 1990, №4, с.48

<sup>127</sup> «Можно без конца спорить, что есть социализм, а что нет. Но социалистическое общество будет таким, каким оно выйдет из горнила мировой истории, целеустремленных и стихийных действий всех народов». Ibid., с.57

<sup>128</sup> Quoted in: Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, стр.287



The rarely noticed ideological *innovation* of M. Gorbachev and V. Medvedev – the promotion of “socialist choice” as the way to delimit the new perimeter of official ideology (while balancing between radical reformism and continuity with the Soviet symbolic heritage) revealed its vulnerability as the debate on the overall historical *responsibility* reached its peak in 1990-1991, in the context of the newly established politico-historical rhetoric. G. Gusseinov in his *Dictionary* mentions two entries for “socialist choice” and “already my grandfather made socialist choice” as Gorbachev’s linguistic innovations; however, according to the passage Gusseinov quotes already in 1991 these expressions looked like “plaine banalities” and their novelty was not perceived<sup>129</sup>. Debates about historical necessity, choice and accident were in fact debates about historical responsibility, about the precise historical moment marking the original wrong choice somewhere between 1917 and 1932, and about the deconstruction of core Soviet values and cults. The editorial in *Kommunist* registered the problem that sincere democratic socialists faced when caught between new radical critics and yesterday’s orthodoxy:

Nowadays, some of these critiques, trying to find the “guilty ones” for the socialist choice of 1917 and its consequences, reach Marx, Engels, but they are especially partial towards Lenin. Lenin is not guilty for what was done to him, to his name... Vladimir Ilyich Lenin today needs a defence [from accusations]. He needed it for a long time, if not since the first days of his immortality [here, from dogmatism]...<sup>130</sup>

In this passage published at the beginning of 1990, the editors confessed that from a symbolic resource Lenin and October revolution suddenly turned into a burden, which needed to be defended and which did not help to convince (or to attack). The idea of *choice* and *guilt* were here clearly connected. For its sincere defenders Lenin’s heritage shrank from a foundational act to a mere promise, *unfulfilled* and *compromised* by the consequent course. Hence – the crucial attention to the idea that NEP was successful. Imputing to Stalin and his allies the wrong choices made at the end of 1920s, Pavel Volobuev stated that there were choices and alternative paths; but preserved Lenin’s period as both necessary and valuable. In 1990-1991, Volobuev saw that his innovation became more powerful than his own design and had to retract, although in 1989 he still firmly called for the “courage of self-understanding”<sup>131</sup>; but, the logic of choice was spreading beyond the explanation of Stalinism.

The initially innocent expression “socialist choice” played the role of symbolic evidence against Soviet path by implying a different logic of argumentation. Since, Volobuev as well as other defenders of the

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<sup>129</sup> «Я долго все никак не могу понять, чем мне вчера опять не угодил Горбачев. И, кажется, начинаю понимать. Мы все... рассчитываем на отказ от попугайного повторения банальностей касательно выбора, сделанного его дедом, и дедовских же ценностей...» in Г. Гусейнов, Д. С. П. – *Материалы к Русскому Словарю общественно-политического языка XX века*, М., 2003, стр. 107-108.

<sup>130</sup> «В наши дни какая-то часть такой критики, стараясь отыскать “виновных” за социалистический выбор 1917 года и его последствия, достает до Маркса, до Энгельса, но особенно пристрастна к Ленину. Ленин не виноват в том, что сделали с ним, с его именем... Владимир Ильич Ленин нуждается сегодня в защите. Он нуждался в ней давно, едва ли не с первых дней своего бессмертия». Редакция, «Ленинское наследие и перестройка», *Коммунист*, 1990, №5, с.3

<sup>131</sup> Compare: «Однако, боязнь пересмотра устаревших положений, полного возвращения марксистской теории ее революционно-критического духа... довлекла над сознанием тогдашнего руководства партии [после XX съезда]. Поэтому возобладали охранительные тенденции». В.П. Волобуев, «Мужество самопознания», in В. Афанасьев, Г. Смирнов (изд.), *Урок дает история*, ИПЛ, Москва, 1989.

Soviet humanist heritage such as Startsev, Arab-Ogly and Logvinov<sup>132</sup>, had to re-stipulate that there were no democratic alternatives to the October revolution (some others accepting the potentially more bloody Kornilov dictatorship as the only alternative to socialist choice):

We witness the denial *en masse* of the faith in Marxism and socialist values by the former defenders of socialism who were active during the period of stagnation. This is nothing but treason. And vice versa, those who were criticised during the period of stagnation [as Danilov and Volobuev himself] today defend socialism. The attack on the ideological front goes through the identification of Stalin and Lenin... apology of Stolypin, attacks against October... We have to elaborate practical measures of the ideological-political struggle to defend socialism and socialist values. The emerging quest for alternatives to the October revolution by reviving Menshevik views has no scientific perspective.<sup>133</sup>

In this passage Volobuev unwillingly shifted back from the complex methodological and even philosophical arguments against Stalin to Stalin's favourite military register of ideological struggle and treason in order to defend his "scientifically correct" and most probably sincere revisionism. But by then Volobuev lacked both, the official position in the political hierarchy and the coercive means to promote this military language. The director of the Institute of the World History, academician A. O. Chubarian had respectfully replied to Volobuev's call for arms during their official meeting with V. Medvedev: "Many of us justly note that historians should be the first to defend our founding values in the present context. But there is a question to know which values should we defend and most importantly how?"<sup>134</sup> Medvedev had ended this meeting by a sketch of the official baseline – manifesting the gap between perestroika's core values and bitter lessons, which the reading public was already drawing from the Soviet past, the gap seemingly bridged (and actually widened) by the reliance on the standard of scientific integrity:

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<sup>132</sup> «В этих условиях историк-профессионал просто обязан дать обществу исторический материал для размышлений по вопросу об альтернативах. Выше мы рассмотрели в строгом соответствии с фактами один из возможных вариантов событий в октябре 1917 года... Идеи противники большевиков могут сколько угодно произносить гневные филиппики против них, но никуда не деться от единственно научно обоснованного вывода: победа большевиков в октябре 1917 года не была случайностью или искусственным нарушением естественного хода событий». Виталий Старцев, «Альтернатива. Фантазии и реальность», *Коммунист*, 1990, №15, с.41. «Тем, кто пытался и пытается поставить под сомнение историческую правомерность Октябрьской революции и противопоставить ей Февральскую, уместно напомнить, что объективную логику революционного процесса в России так же невозможно было ограничить деятельностью Учредительного собрания, как в XVII веке ограничить Английскую революцию "долгим парламентом" или в XVIII веке Французскую революцию вмести в дебаты сословий на Генеральных штатах». Э. Араб-Оглы, «Перестройка - наша демократическая революция», *Коммунист*, 1990, №6, с.9

<sup>133</sup> «Наблюдается массовое отречение бывших поборников социализма и активных деятелей периода застоя от марксизма и социалистических ценностей. Иначе как предательством это не назовешь. И наоборот, те кто был во времена застоя под ударом, сейчас оказались в числе защитников социализма. Наступление на идеологическом фронте явственно обозначилось по линии отождествления Сталина с Лениным, сталинизма с ленинизмом... апологетики Столыпина, разнуданных нападок на Октябрь... Необходимо выработать конкретные меры идейно-политической борьбы, защиты ленинизма и социалистических ценностей. Наметившийся в последнее время поиск альтернатив Октябрю на основе воскрешения меньшевистских взглядов представляется П. В. Волобуеву бесперспективным». «Историческое сознание общества - на уровень задач перестройки», Совещание историков с членом политбюро, член-корреспондентом АН СССР, В. А. Медведевым, *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.12

<sup>134</sup> А. О. Чубарьян, «Совещание историков с членом политбюро, член-корреспондентом АН СССР, В. А. Медведевым», *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.14.

We have to stand up for the main principles – Lenin, October revolution and socialist choice. Here, we can not make concessions. Yet, one has to judge about Lenin on the basis of a realistic historical analysis. One should not correct Lenin in order to make Lenin's views and actions fit our present-day conceptions and emotional reactions. Hence, there is a wide field for historical research and debates, which promise to be even hotter. We should actually keep in mind, that there will be a series of publications providing their own [wrong and radical] version of history. I am referring in particular to the works of Solzhenitsyn... it's important not to let the ideological aspects of such publications without attention.<sup>135</sup>

Whether Vadim Medvedev (who was among the few strong advocates of the full-scale price liberalization already in 1987, who adhered to the core ideas of the modernization paradigm, was sensible to the ideas about convergence between socialism and capitalism, and who, thus, could be said to be an independent-minded thinker), whether in 1990 Vadim Medvedev was sincere in his plain defence of Lenin, October and socialist choice and if yes, why he was so feeble? The criticism from conservatives, nationalists and even humanist socialists at the XXVIII party Congress against Medvedev and their warning on the state of the official ideology signalled the awareness of his peers that there was no good answers provided<sup>136</sup>. Reporting this episode on the Congress a few years later, Medvedev described his own reaction, which he judged opportune and thought it was welcomed by his angry listeners: "My answer was in a form of a counter-question addressed to the audience: "Tell me, what kind of ideology is it, if one man [*me*] could spoil it? Which kind of ideology is dead then, if no new is available? If the old one is the ideology of Stalinism and stagnation, probably things are not that bad?... Don't we confuse the agony of the past with the labour pains of the new?" We believe that Medvedev honestly attempted to combine humanistic socialist values, faith in Lenin as a role model, a realist appraisal of the Soviet economy and of the global context, and, finally, a deep conviction in the superiority of anti-dogmatism. In his memoirs and later theoretical writings he never attacked Lenin and remained moderately positive in his judgments about the Soviet history in general. Medvedev's failure to provide for genuine ideological leadership, like the failure of other socialist reformers in this period, to establish a platform and *convince others* proceeded from their inability to pragmatically deal with the issue of the CPSU's moral responsibility for mass violence (they were disoriented themselves) and from their inability to provide a historiosophical account of the Soviet past giving new benchmarks for current reforms. Besides professing their humanistic values and moderately optimistic reliance on history, Gorbachev, Medvedev and their supporters among the

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<sup>135</sup> «Надо отстаивать принципиальные позиции Ленина, Октябрьской революции, социалистического выбора. Тут не может быть уступок. Хотя и к Ленину должно быть реалистическое отношение, и здесь необходим конкретно исторический анализ. Нельзя поправлять Ленина, подгонять его взгляды и действия под нынешние концепции и эмоции. И так, есть широкое поле для исторических исследований, дискуссий, а они, по-видимому, будут еще более жаркими. Следует иметь в виду, что нас ожидает ряд публикаций, которые дают собственную версию истории. Речь идет, в частности о произведениях Солженицына... важно не оставлять без внимания идейно-политическую сторону таких произведений». В. Медведев, Совещание историков с членом политбюро, В. А. Медведевым, «Историческое сознание общества - на уровень задач перестройки», *Вопросы Истории*, 1990, №1, с.23

<sup>136</sup> Illustrating the open dissatisfaction of the reform-minded democratic socialists we can cite the article of Roy Medvedev in the aftermath of the XVIII Party Congress: "И все же необходимо с сожалением отметить, что на съезде вопросы теории и идеологии социалистического общества, проблемы выхода общественных наук на уровень современных требований рассматривались недостаточно полно и основательно" Рой Медведев, «Взаимосвязь идеологии, политики и общественных наук», *Коммунист*, 1990, №16, с.14

intelligentsia could designate no reliable description of the new “middle way” to follow – their program was in fact realised and Gorbachev’s virtuosity allowed him to keep on the edge of events by navigating between the subtle threats of military crackdown and willingness to preside over the gradual transition to the market and the signature of the new voluntary Union between sovereign and not necessarily socialist republics. In substance, this was not his program of action but an attempt to follow the events and programs he was rather sceptical about; presumably, his second thought was to counter the possible conservative reaction – in both cases this was not a positive program. In 1989, neither the Swedish model, nor NEP provided the sensible guidance for reforms once the inefficiency of the first measures was clear. Socialist humanists had to invent their own path in history. They failed to do this, but they also refused to define it by fear of imposing another *straightjacket* on life, instead relying on the natural kindness of world history.

By 1989 Gorbachev and his colleagues lost the intellectual initiative as he and his closest allies could not and were not willing to provide responses to the ideological questions resulting from the public recognition of new facts, new values and new rules of debates, which they promoted in the first stage of perestroika, and from the new historiosophical idioms, which they passively approved and partly used. How did perestroika leaders react? Rhetorical questions formulated by crafty A. Yakovlev were becoming more subversive: the responses of M. Gorbachev or V. Medvedev were witnessing their faith in the fundamental *possibility* to find genuine socialist responses. In substance, Gorbachev’s and Medvedev’s responses to the major theoretical challenges of the moment could be resumed as follows: *we believe that there might be a way USSR could fulfil socialist humanistic values – as Lenin could turn to NEP after the civil war; yet, we don’t know how history can help us to fulfil them, and why it crucially failed before, while we assume our part of responsibility for this drama; finally, we would not like to impose any new dogmatic answers.* Thus, three leading reformist ideologues, with different thoughts in mind – remained unanimous in admiring Lenin’s ability to find radically new answers when circumstances changed. “Doubt everything” is a self-negating proposition – it could offer no stable political platform for the ruling group.

Yakovlev’s list of “open questions” exposed in one of his benchmark-setting articles about Soviet history put in doubt Marxist-Leninist political heritage and enumerated merely dissimilated charges: Were there *doctrinal failures* in the writings of Marx and Engels and how did they influence the formation of “state socialism”? Was the Administrative system *determined* by Leninism and Trotskyism of the War communism era? Was the one-party system a “*fatal error*”? Why was Lenin’s testament *not fulfilled*? What kind of “historical formational entity” appeared as a result of Stalin’s revolution from above? Whether a historical convergence [between socialism and capitalism] “unpredicted by Marxism” took place? Did not socialist practice *denigrate morality*, “by accepting violence as the midwife of history?”<sup>137</sup> We can compare Yakovlev’s list with two other lists of “main questions”,

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<sup>137</sup> А. Яковлев, «Очерки истории КПСС: концепция, подходы, контуры», *Коммунист*, 1990, №9, с.7-8. R. W. Davies offers a comparison of this list of questions with its earlier version made by Yakovlev in 1987 and then focused on Stalin. R. W. Davies, “History and Perestroika”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, pp. 145-146.

appearing in *Kommunist* approximately at the same time and addressing the same issues, but unlike Yakovlev, using more typical idioms; one list was summed up by the editorial of the leading party magazine:

Was the October revolution necessary and law-like or was it an unexpected accident, a result of a "putsch" from above, which would interrupt the "normal", natural course of historical development? Was it not more sensible to stop at the February [revolution's] achievements? Were there alternatives to October and weren't the opportunities of a peaceful solution missed in autumn 1917? Should Bolsheviks hurry up in seizing power or should they act with non-revolutionary means... Those who ask themselves these questions not only want to clear up their understanding of the past, but also to identify their place in today's political struggle. This is why these questions are politically "coloured". Diverging, sometimes directly opposed attitudes to October are used in the vivid debates about the paths of exit [*vihoda*] from the present crisis.<sup>138</sup>

The editorial called for a "scientific, responsible and honest" judgement and accepted that there were no such judgements available yet: the quasi-religious attachment to October and Lenin as political symbols of the Soviet *state* and of the *ideological project* insuring a humanistic and economically efficient non-capitalism (socialism-communism) did not allow socialist humanists to conceal their values and the new historiosophical map. Yuri Polyakov, a respected Soviet academician, has made another review of the big historical questions: "How can we characterise the regime [*stroj*] formed in our country during the 70 years as a result of unprecedented and unknown socio-political processes? Which alternatives appeared during this development and how real were they? Was the revolution necessary and law-like or did it result from the activism of a group of fanatics?"<sup>139</sup> Polyakov warned that accepting 70 years' path as a *chain of errors* would have such unacceptable political outcomes as the loss of the Baltic countries and the Caucasian war, before calling for a more scientific account of our historical path<sup>140</sup>. For him, only scientific honesty and the whole truth about the Soviet history could save the USSR and its values<sup>141</sup>. Yet, honestly applying the criteria of necessity, choice, and alternative along with the imperative of non-violence to the whole truth about Lenin and October led to their *moral* and *historical* disqualification: this discredited the faith in both the main *cult* of the Soviet state and in its *historiosophy*. Without the later, one could take on this reasoning, humanistic ideology was losing its implicit driver: men of perestroika could not *go against* the sense of history. If laws of

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<sup>138</sup> «Была ли Октябрьская революция неизбежна и закономерна или явилась неожиданной случайностью, результатом верхушечного "путча", прервавшего "нормальный", естественный ход исторического развития? Не разумнее ли было остановиться на февральских рубежах? Существовали ли какие-либо альтернативы Октябрю и не были ли осенью 1917 года упущены возможности мирного исхода? Следовало ли большевикам торопиться со взятием власти, нельзя ли было действовать иными, неревOLUTIONными методами... Люди, которые задают себе эти вопросы, хотят не только внести ясность в представления о прошлом, но и определить свое место в сегодняшней политической борьбе. Вот почему и ответы на них имеют четкую политическую окраску. Разноречивые, порой диаметрально противоположные оценки Октября используются в бурных спорах о путях выхода страны их нынешнего кризиса». «Споры об Октябре вчера и сегодня / Социалистический выбор», *Коммунист*, 1990, №15, с. 19

<sup>139</sup> «Как характеризовать строй, возникший в стране за 70 лет в результате небывалых, непознанных социально-политических процессов? Какие альтернативы возникали в ходе развития страны и насколько они были реальны? Была ли революция закономерной и неизбежной или явилась результатом деятельности кучки фанатиков?» Ю. Поляков, «Познание прошлого: преодолен ли застой? Заметки историка», *Коммунист*, 1990, №15, с.43

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, с.43-44

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, с.45

history proved unknowable, if predictions of the founders were wrong and their policy led to bloodshed, what insured the humanistic socialist future? Faith in the socialist providence!?

We can presume that Gorbachev and Medvedev were sincere although probably half-hearted in their attachment to Lenin and socialist choice. They were less specific about the political conclusions these beliefs were implying. Gorbachev personally did not adhere to the inner logic and language of Volobuev's apology of Lenin and October as necessary and condemnation of Stalin's choices as historically accidental and arbitrary; his *personal* views seemed to be more pragmatic and commonsensical, i.e. not sensible to the official historiosophical code and its paradoxes. Stalin simply was wrong and his system of rule unacceptable – historiosophical problems arising from the mere recognition of “the new fall after the October salvation” did not bother the General Secretary, but this problem distressed most intellectuals worshipping democratic socialism and their rivals. The main new twist Gorbachev borrowed from the Volobuev's interpretation and his new vocabulary was the expression “socialist choice”. This expression allowed him to combine the touch of the new historiosophy with the principle of truthfulness to forefathers.

Gorbachev stated that the Soviet people had chosen socialist path in 1917 and therefore today their descendants should be *truthful* to their choice. But in a free debate, the question on the foundation of the Socialist political commitment was pending. Indeed, once socialism was [just] a collective choice among others, why today should we follow on this path rather than on any other? As many authors shared a historiosophical language of political theory, the basic political imperatives should be formulated as historiosophical imperatives of necessity. The revelations of the Soviet state crimes, blasphemous criticism and mockery of Lenin and October revolution undermined the quasi-religious ingredient of the regime's legitimacy. Gorbachev's emphasis on people's choice and indifference to the law-like necessity deprived the October revolution and the whole Soviet history of its second, historiosophical self-justification.

We can see how the downplaying of historical necessity as the most important type of theoretical argumentation allowed new actors claiming that they could better interpret and represent the meaning of the *popular choice* than socialist reformers. Certain Alexey Sergeev published in *Nash Sovremennik* a curious reflection entitled “From the crisis to a dead-end. Market: a panacea or a trap?” In his article Sergeev partly reproduced the ideas of the *Narodniki*, and argued that traditional Russian collectivism was a natural form of socialist economy based on self-rule, cooperative property, solidarity and full employment. Hence, Baltic nations or Western Ukraine would not qualify for socialism, as they had a different culture. Anticipating objections to his program from humanist or orthodox communists, Sergeev rejected the “scientific” arguments altogether:

The problem of the socialist choice lies in a different field, than the problem of the scientific criteria of socialism and “socialist nature of society”. Choice – is a category of the socio-psychological practice of the masses. That is why when speaking about socialist choice we have to establish not which kind of socialism objectively fits better the laws of history – that of Leninists, Stalinists, Euro-Communists, of the

"democratic platform of CPSU", of socialist revolutionaries or that of Swedish socialists who still call themselves socialists. What matters is what the masses, who made the socialist choice, mean by socialism.<sup>142</sup>

If this neo-Narodnichestvo remained an exceptional case, the "*socio-psychological*" argument of Sergeev strongly pointed at the inadvertently precarious potential of the concept of "socialist choice". Fully deployed, this logic of people's choice set no *objective* limits to socialism, i.e. no reliable rhetoric tools to define the right kind of socialism and no benchmarks or strongholds for socialist policy making. The reformers intended to carry on major socialist reforms, but resolutely refused to set up any "dogmatic limits". Reformers professed their values refusing to indicate the passage from here and now to this ideal state.

### *Looking for the original lapse*

Publicists and rising politicians were left by Gorbachev, Yakovlev and Medvedev with only indicative benchmarks and a multitude of open questions, while the dominant logic of political debates put in doubt the major assumptions of perestroika using facts, beliefs and language most pro-perestroika intellectuals shared. In his book *In face of the post-industrial challenges* (2003), V. Medvedev approved the idea that NEP and Lenin's radical revision of the earlier conceptions would insure more natural and peaceful "path towards humanistic values of socialism" than Stalinism. The unpredictable outcome of the political struggle with Stalin nullified this option "which now can be discussed only hypothetically"<sup>143</sup>. After ten years of reflection, Medvedev partly reproduced the established perestroika pattern and then downplayed the significance of this pattern by referring to its purely hypothetical and inopportune character. So, why did Medvedev bother to reproduce this insignificant and untimely pattern, as did many other writers before him? Because, in short, publicists and ideologues were looking for *the moment of lapse or wrong choice in the past*, as the theoretical means to define who was guiltier and what had to be done today. The simplified usage of the new historical idioms and metaphors imposed this perspective.

During perestroika the analysis of present day institutions, groups and political options was ideologically secondary compared to the search for the original fatal moment, when society lost the right and necessary path and started to move to its current dead-end. That is why in order to escape the guilt for terror and economic ruin of perestroika, socialist humanists had to prove that the October revolution was historically necessary but Stalin's rule was not. Their opponents and those socialist

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<sup>142</sup> «Проблема социалистического выбора находится совсем в другой плоскости, чем проблема научных критериев социализма, "социалистичности общества". Выбор - категория социально-психологической практики масс... Поэтому в разговоре о социалистическом выборе важно установить не то, чей социализм объективно лучше отвечает законам истории - коммунистов-ленинцев, сталинистов, еврокоммунистов, "демократической платформы КПСС", эсеров или той части шведских социалистов, которые еще соглашались использовать это слово. Важно то, что именно понимают под социализмом массы, которые сделали социалистический выбор». Алексей Сергеев, «Из кризиса в тупик; Рынок: панацея или ловушка?», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №9, с.126

<sup>143</sup> В. А. Медведев, *Перед вызовами постиндустриализма*, Альпина Паблишер, М., 2003, с.274-277

humanists, who were changing their minds, concluded on the immoral, accidental and voluntaristic nature of the October revolution:

- A. Bolsheviks relied on terror and violence as a means towards a noble historical goal. This was an unnecessary and *wrong choice*, as most publicists adhered to the *imperatives of non-violence*.<sup>144</sup>
- B. USA and Western Europe did better by choosing *another path*. Thus, the Soviet path was neither socialist, nor necessary, as otherwise USSR-Russia would naturally prosper<sup>145</sup>.
- C. October revolution was a wide-scale experimentation and *voluntarism*. Or, there was a consensus that *natural-historical evolution* was the optimal path<sup>146</sup>.

Most perestroika intellectuals could not accept that there was *no* certain and right path in history, and they could not stand for values unless history itself was their major ally. The three mentioned points of criticism of October as well as the current disarray (discrediting the hopes on the new NEP or on the market socialism) were convincing publicists and readers that the whole Soviet path was due to an *original error*.

In 1988 the viability and efficiency of the NEP policy as an alternative to the Stalinist path stood as the key argument (and its dismissal as the counter-argument) for the credibility of the current reform – this past mattered more than the arguments on the current situation, very different from NEP. With a time distance, V. Medvedev, the last official perestroika ideologue, recognized that Stalin's victory and the failure of NEP resulted from a struggle, in which other politicians, institutions or visions could take over, as others than Lenin could take over earlier in October, but he still exposed his respect to Lenin – an impossible combination for a typical perestroika mind. In the intellectual context of 1989-1991 this pragmatic and open-ended world of struggle and opportunities coexisted with another implicit but more appealing world of *right and necessary path*. In this historiosophical logic present in nucleus in Volobuev's conception and clearly discernable in the typical lists of historical questions cited above, the agency following the historically necessary path could not be morally condemned for bloodshed or failure, because a necessary historical path could not lead to an economic dead-end or unjust bloodshed. Tragic historiosophy was unacceptable and unthinkable for the vast majority of Soviet

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<sup>144</sup> As this is often the case the dominant view is better reflected by the sensible dissidents who disagree with the main trend; see an interesting account of the generalized rejection of the "revolutionary tradition" and its non-orthodox advocacy in 1990: «Поэтому столь часты и понятны экскурсы современной публицистики в историю русской общественной мысли. Их общим местом, точкой схождения нередко становится отказ от наследования революционной традиции - незыблемого исторического канона недавних времен». «Говоря о приоритете общечеловеческих ценностей, мы должны отдавать себе отчет в том, влечет ли это за собой необходимость ретроспективного переписывания истории... Как бы трагически-зловеще не выглядел в наших глазах российский революционный опыт, он не может быть просто отброшен, он достояние истории... насилие для истинных революционеров никогда не выступало самоцелью». В. Китаев, «Прогулки по российской словесности», *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.79, с.82. See the account of this moral imperative in the previous section dealing with the statements of values in 1989-1991.

<sup>145</sup> This empirical statement took a number of theoretical interpretations, described in the first part of this section dealing with global historiosophical accounts. The common agreement was that Soviet model led to a "historical dead-end", while the underlying teleology whispered that a necessary historical path existed and could insure rightfulness and prosperity.

<sup>146</sup> We analyse the consensual view on the superiority of the natural-historical development in the next part of the section.



intellectuals. As we seen in the previous chapters, Igor Klyamkin was the one who identified and purposefully “pressed” at this painful point manifesting the assumptions of his contemporaries by simultaneously claiming that Stalin’s terror was a necessary, although morally unacceptable result of Lenin’s earlier policies and Russian history. By another un-stated assumption contemporary polity should remain truthful to and follow the established historical road *unless* an accidental and unnecessary turn, i.e. morally wrong choice was made; in this later case, contemporary polity should symbolically return to the past fork to start again<sup>147</sup>.

That was the political meaning of the questions on the law-governed or accidental character of October: whether the Soviet model *should* be maintained as natural and objective or abandoned as accidental and artificial? Under multiple imputations of responsibility for the past choices, the balance between necessity and freedom of the open-ended world was shifting. In 1989 and later on the forceful defence of choice as the essence of historical becoming ceded to the teleological trust in the necessary path, which provides for wholesomeness, unless agency accidentally makes or wickedly imposes wrong choices<sup>148</sup>. These implicit arguments show that during perestroika to be convincing and not merely to be personally convinced, one had to demonstrate that his political agenda oriented polity in *the sense of history*. The true meaning of the right kind of historical choice revealed itself as the return to the wholesome path of historical necessity. Political values served to judge and condemn, but they were disconnected from the theoretical elaboration of the agenda and had not enough appeal to call against the sense of the historically necessary path. The freedom of choice and open-ended struggle appeared mostly when publicists had to *assign responsibility* for the wrong or immoral choices of other groups<sup>149</sup>. What was transposed from the historiosophy to the formulation of the affirmative *political programs* was the idea that human agency should choose the path of historical necessity. Crossroads looked unsafe. What place did this vision leave for human agency, for public debates and for meaningful public politics!? We know that 1989-1991 gave place to flourishing public debates on the crucial political issues. But those passionate debates drew on *earlier* historiosophical assumptions on scientifically proven social engineering and natural creativity of masses (1986-1987),

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<sup>147</sup> Compare with the articulation of this logic by two leading economists, cited above: “Figuratively speaking, the road that has been travelled by socialism can be depicted as a straight line, as a zigzag, and as a blind alley. The strategy for overcoming the crisis is therefore also different [depending on the kind of the road]: the extension, the ‘improvement’ of elements of positive experience accumulated in preceding phases; recognition of results of movement and rejection of methods of attaining them in the new forms of development; ‘backsliding’ and the search for a new road from the old historic ‘fork’”. Cited in Zweynert, *Op. cit.*, p.98; English trans.: A.A. Radev & A.A. Auzan (1990) ‘Socialism: Possible Variants’, *Problems of Economics*, 1, p. 71

<sup>148</sup> In this sense looking for the original error, or original sin had not only a moral connotation (who’s guilty), but promised to indicate the moment when the necessarily right path of history was lost.

<sup>149</sup> Mystical philosopher G. Pomerants reflecting on the paradoxes of necessity and freedom, and on the central notion of “alternative” ironically dismissed this tendency: «Иные очень просто решают эту задачу. До февраля - совершенная свобода воли. Милюков, Керенский и другие действовали совершенно свободно и ответственно. Следовательно, виноваты. А с 27 февраля 1917 года заработала машина необходимости и покатила прямо к ликвидации кулачества как класса... Выгода такой концепции очевидна. Нет никаких “объективных причин”, никаких непреодолимых препятствий на пути исторического сдвига. Весь детерминизм - для “них”, а для “нас” - полная свобода рук. Может быть, это не слишком хорошее или даже плохое объяснение мира, но зато какое руководство к действию... Не правильнее ли в любую эпоху видеть и детерминизм и индетерминизм: и свободу личности и инерцию исторических тел?» Г. С. Померанц, «История в сослагательном наклонении. Альтернатива», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №11, с.58

or on the society's or leaders' ability to choose between the right and wrong paths (1988). The growing anarchy of public politics, the recently revealed bloodshed and dictatorship in the past, and the prosperity on the West favoured a change in the perception of the optimal balance between agency and necessity.

### Floating in the sense of history: conservative turn of perestroika

The third field of problems discussed in the new historical language was formed by the implicit and persistent questioning of the possibility for **human agency to act and fulfil its goals in History** which for the historiosophical mind equalled to questioning the possibility of meaningful public debates and politics. We will try to outline the major turn in late perestroika's thinking towards the vision of the natural-historical or organic evolution as the new political theory openly rejecting violence in all forms and holistic ideologies, and involuntarily negating the spirit of public politics as well as plans of wide-scale reforms.

The most striking feature of this growing sensibility to the opposition between the natural-historical-evolution and the violent-dogmatic-experimental-revolution – was its simultaneous emergence in the three major ideological trends of perestroika around 1989. The particular expression and idioms of this core opposition and the arguments used depended on the ideological premises of each trend. Despite the initial differences of vocabulary and values, the core idea and most importantly the political maxima implied by this new historiosophical norm converged. It is challenging to trace the intellectual origin of this norm elevating the *natural* against the *deliberate*. The underlying historiosophical move can be independently found, although not traced back to, in the writings of Herder, Burke, Marx, Lenin, Althusser or Solzhenitsyn, for some as the core idea and for some as the conjectural sideline. The diversity of the references should not obscure the common trait – the emphasis on the organic, natural, gradual or incremental social moves and changes as the condition for a genuinely good social order. The very diversity of these authors also reveals that a great number of contradictory claims and principles could in different contexts coexist with or underpin this common trust in the organic evolution. “Providence and hangman” secured the natural course of history for de Maistre, revolutionary theory, class struggle and consciousness – for Marx, and disciplined corps of revolutionaries – for Lenin, and thus they palliated the natural “weakness” of the natural-historical evolution. Among the Russian and Soviet thinkers directly preceding perestroika the priority most probably belonged to Alexander Solzhenitsyn who sketched the anti-revolutionary stance of the late perestroika already in his text written in 1974:

I have to confess that from [my analysis of] Russian history I became an adversary of any kind of revolutions and armed shake-ups. This holds true for the future [revolutions]... Through my studies I came to the conclusion that mass bloody revolutions are always perilous for the nations to which they occur. And in our society, I am far from being alone in this conviction.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> «Предложив диалог на основании реализма, должен и я сознаться, что из русской истории стал я противником всяких вообще революций и вооружённых потрясений, значит, и в будущем тоже: и тех, которых вы жаждете (не у нас), и тех, которых вы опасаетесь (у нас). Изучением я убедился, что массовые кровавые революции всегда губительны для народов, среди которых они происходят. И среди нашего нынешнего общества я совсем не одинок в этом убеждении». А. Солженицын, «Письмо вождям Советского Союза», 1974.

Another of Solzhenitsyn's article exposed the new historiosophical and moral norm – organic evolution – universally accepted during the last years of perestroika. Applying this norm to Russian history as he could see it from 1973, Solzhenitsyn prudently advanced few questions about the future transformations of the Soviet regime, in a courteous polemic with A. Sakharov and his "Reflections on Progress...":

And if Russia centuries-long was living in the authoritarian systems and after only 8 months of the democratic system in 1917 had experienced such a crush, then, probably, I am not stating, I am just asking – probably, then we should accept that the evolutionary development of our country from one authoritarian form to another will be more natural, smooth and painless [than a direct transition from autocracy to democracy welcomed by A. Sakharov].<sup>151</sup>

The rejection of any revolutions on the basis of historical experience offered to Solzhenitsyn a new superior criterion, which he used to evaluate political options as more or less desirable. Development should be "more natural, smooth and painless". That was the criterion to evaluate the anticipated democratic transition of the USSR (threatened with new crash and violence as in February 1917) and to incline towards the authoritarian one. In 1989-91, the democratic solution seemed much more attractive and certain by default for most perestroika publicists and writers – in this sense Solzhenitsyn's question was hardly heard. While the praise of natural, smooth and painless "evolutionary development" found much stronger support and became the common norm for Soviet humanists, Russian nationalists and Western liberals. There is no evidence that Solzhenitsyn had a *direct* influence on the majority – probably, he was first to draw the conclusion from the straight analysis of the experience of terror, which was reproduced by others, once the imperative of non-violence or morality were accepted as superior norms and historical facts acknowledged. Second, a partial similarity between Solzhenitsyn's position and that of the late perestroika mainstream resulted from Solzhenitsyn's doubts on the viability of the democratic transition from the Soviet system, which contemporaries could witness and which possible failure Solzhenitsyn could partly anticipate. Yet, Solzhenitsyn and most influential publicists of perestroika (except few of them) drew different conclusions from a similar analysis. They all praised organic evolution, condemned bloody revolutions, judged democratic traditions in Russia as weak, but Solzhenitsyn questioned the reliability of the future Russian "democratic system" while the majority saw it as attractive and viable. We will come back to this divergence making plain the diverging assumptions.

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<sup>151</sup> "И если Россия веками привычно жила в авторитарных системах, а в демократической за 8 месяцев 1917 года потерпела такое крушение, то, может быть, — я не утверждаю это, лишь спрашиваю, — может быть, следует признать, что эволюционное развитие нашей страны от одной авторитарной формы к другой будет для неё естественней, плавнее, безболезненней?" А. Солженицын, «На возврате дыхания и сознания», (По поводу трактата А. Д. Сахарова «Размышления о прогрессе, мирном сосуществовании и интеллектуальной свободе»)/Добавление 1973 года, часть 4.

### *Late Soviet humanists on the end of agency*

The immediate inspiration of a large number of perestroika authors expressing their trust in the “natural-historical” course, proceed not from Solzhenitsyn’s essays, but from another intellectual strain – Marx’s classic writings and Lenin’s dying articles. Renowned ideologues of humanist socialism such as G. Lishichkin, A. Butenko, O. Bogomolov, N. Simonya, M. Kelle, T. Kadochnikova or K. Momdzhan criticised revolutionary violence or even pointed at the fundamental errors of Bolsheviks with the help of Marx’s and Lenin’s insights using one particular idiom. The German composite word natural-historical originated in Marx’s writings (while Solzhenitsyn did not use this term) where it arguably played a significant role:

Thus, contemporary history fully confirm the central idea of Marx on the natural-historical course of social development, which excludes the possibility of arbitrary modification of the socio-economic setup, be they inspired by the most benevolent intentions... precisely the XX century showed us the historical limits of voluntarism.<sup>152</sup>

If this “central idea” of Marx contradicted another central idea of Marx exemplified by the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach – famously stating that [Communist] philosophers should not only explain but change the world – this contradiction revealed the original *tension* rather than incoherence or weakness, until and unless the adepts saw it as a logical contradiction, a theoretical challenge, or as a fatal flaw. The leading Soviet ideologue and moderate revisionist in 1970s, A. Butenko during the last years of perestroika deconstructed the official self-description of the USSR’s formation as socialist and spoke about the descent from “the central natural-historical line of progress” to “barrack socialism”<sup>153</sup>. For Butenko this potential fall was “foreseen and critically analysed” by Marx, who therefore can bear no *guilt* for the deviation<sup>154</sup>. The objective historical background for this dangerous sliding towards barrack socialism was the weak socio-economic development, e.g. the backwardness of Russia, and the immaturity of “personality” as the main anthropological type. Another major root conditioning the potential fall from the major natural-historical course looked more intriguingly. Butenko tried to reconstruct Marxist thinking by harmonizing the freedom of agency and natural-historical necessity. He

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<sup>152</sup> «Так, современная история вполне подтверждает центральную идею Маркса о естественноисторическом ходе общественного развития, исключающем возможность произвольных изменений социально-экономического строя, будь они продиктованы самыми благими намерениями... именно XX век показал нам исторические пределы voluntarизма»

<sup>153</sup> See the definition of the “barrack socialism” given by Butenko fifteen years later: ««общественное устройство, которое из-за формального упразднения частной собственности и связанной с ней эксплуатации, в силу псевдоколлективистских форм организации производства и общественной жизни претендует на наименование социалистического, однако ... реально выступает как административно организованное общественное устройство, несущее с собой новые формы эксплуатации и гнета, принижающее всюду личность человека, низводящее его роль до роли выдрессированной рабочей силы, до «винтика» огромной бюрократической машины». Бутенко А.П. *О скрытых формах изменения социальной природы власти*, М., Парад, 2004, с.146

<sup>154</sup> «Возможность возникновения такого общественного устройства - вне общей линии естественноисторического прогресса - была предсказана и критически проанализирована К. Марксом, которого сегодня некоторые теоретики, стремящиеся отвести вину за "советскую казарменность" от И. Сталина и подчинившейся ему большевистской партии, пытаются сделать ответственным за советский казарменный социализм». А. П. Бутенко, Т. Г. Кадочникова, «Становление социалистического общества и казарменный социализм», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №6, с.50

introduced the idea of a sort of a sound barrier in history, although the word is not used by Butenko, on the path between the realm of necessity (including XX century) and the realm of freedom (undefined future). The attempt to force this threshold without proper conditions by deliberately spurring the spontaneous natural-historical evolution ahead of time, leads not to the realm of freedom, but to a sideline of an unprecedented tyranny:

Marx conditioned the transition to socialism with the transition from the secondary to the tertiary formation, from class society to post-class society, from the period of the mostly spontaneous evolution to the period of the chiefly conscious and deliberate development. With this new feature is linked the possibility of an accelerated social progress... but also the danger of the fall out from the natural-historical line of the onward movement and the loss of its indispensable mechanisms as this became evident in the XX century.<sup>155</sup>

Natural-historical evolution would ensure the transition from the realm of unconscious development to the realm of conscious liberty; by opposite, an attempt of a conscious and deliberate development before the passage of the threshold would produce tyranny and would regress to the earlier stage. Defending the rightfulness of Marx's prognosis, this view did not spare the established Soviet system and, as most of the revisionist historiosophies, instead offered the perspective on the gradual *convergence* or *continuity* between capitalism and socialism. How could one return back to the natural-historical and spontaneous line of development after the failed attempt to force the passage to the realm of conscious liberty? In June 1990, Butenko and Kadochnikova could just advance that "new, socialist setup is not coming to an end, but only starts now its movement, while its final contours are fading beyond our horizon"<sup>156</sup>. In other words, the Soviet Union was not even at the beginning of the socialist stage, which remained an attractive but distant horizon. Considerably later, Butenko concluded that "market socialism was the real path of exit out of the dead-end of the premature abolition of the market to the path of natural-historical movement towards socialism"<sup>157</sup>. Thus, for Butenko natural-historical was the only remedy and the voluntarism in history was the main poison. But there was also one young *voluntarist* heterodox Marxist-Leninist ideologue. Sergei Chernyshev, philosopher, social entrepreneur and, after perestroika, consultant in business strategy, developed probably the most original version of this socialist humanistic vision of perestroika's agenda taking on the Marx's aspiration to go beyond historical necessity and alienation of men:

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<sup>155</sup> "Маркс связывал переход к социализму с переходом от вторичной к третичной формации, от классового к постклассовому обществу, от полосы преимущественно стихийной эволюции к полосе в основном и главном сознательного развития. С этой новой чертой связана не только возможность ускорения общественного прогресса... но и опасность схода с естественнoисторической линии поступательного развития, утраты его некоторых необходимых механизмов, как это стало очевидным в XX в." А. П. Бутенко, Т. Г. Кадочникова, «Становление социалистического общества и казарменный социализм», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №6, с.47

<sup>156</sup> «...новый социалистический строй вовсе не заканчивается, а только начинает свое движение, завершающие контуры которого теряются за горизонтом», *Ibid.*, 51

«Рыночный социализм - это реальный путь выхода бывших стран "реального социализма" из тупика, обусловленного преждевременным упразднением рынка, и возвращения их на путь естественнoисторического продвижения к социализму». А. Бутенко, *Социально-политический журнал*, 1997, № 5. С. 192.

Marx's dream to break through across the realm of conscious necessity into the realm of humanism is a most precious gift we received from the West. Attempts to get rid of it are groundless and irresponsible. But the dream and the plan should be put back into the whole context of World, Western and Russian culture; the realm of freedom should be reunited with the eschatological realm of Russian religious philosophy, Marx's category of alienation should go together with Berdayev's "objectivation"... The clash between freedom and justice runs through the whole of history. It takes root, develops and aggravates throughout the prehistoric realm of natural necessity and polarizes within national cultures. Within the upcoming realm of conscious necessity this conflict breaks humanity down into two parts, tearing man's psyche into two incompatible ideals. And only under humanism it becomes a source to develop each individual and society, constantly broken and restored again on a higher level through the unity of free and equal individuals...

From now on the only engine for development will be a conscious subject (personality) who does not only carry one of the two public ideals, but is really putting into life the theory of the abolition of private property. This subject emerging from the tortures of "perestroika" and his intellectual potential are the real questions of life and death for socialism. The time is running out. To become a subject of one's own development first of all means to realize oneself, to answer Lenin's question "Who are "we"... So we are taking the crucial step, we are crossing the border past the landmark. We have no time to look back or to stop for thinking the situation over. What is there ahead the landmark? Is it the time getting out of joint or a managed evolution? Is it the judgment by history or people creating their own destiny? Is it alienation or renaissance?<sup>158</sup>

Perestroika would offer a chance for a passage to the fully managed and conscious evolution – as opposed to a revolution putting things “out of joint” - ending the alienation and conciliating justice and freedom. However, Sergei Chernyshev was far from certainty on the perspective of this eschatological and scientific breakthrough, or takeoff of history from the natural evolution to “the realm of conscious necessity” and then to the realm of humanism<sup>159</sup>. Facing the current context of perestroika, Chernyshev concluded that the expected revolution was developing in the “intellectual desert” and that: “we claim to possess the only true theory of social development, but in reality we have to grope for the way, as the blind, we crawl on through wasteful trial and fatal error. Why?” Thus, this atypically passionate quest for a conscious agency able to absolve the chains of historical necessity ends up with a series of desperate questions. Humanist providence promised the conscious liberation as the end of perestroika, but a sober review of the available men’s capabilities honestly witnessed the “blind crawling”, or the unconscious necessity. As his later business career and later texts show, Chernyshev failed in his attempt to abolish private property, but not in his quest for a politically meaningful action;

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<sup>158</sup> See: С. Чернышев, «Новые веки», *Знамя*, 1990, №1. We mostly follow here the author’s own translation in English available at [http://www.ckp.ru/biblio/c/chernyshev/vekhi/vekhi\\_eng.htm](http://www.ckp.ru/biblio/c/chernyshev/vekhi/vekhi_eng.htm).

<sup>159</sup> In his earlier draft texts Chernyshev attributed to Marx the tripartite division of the world history in which Communism is not the final but central phase of “conscious necessity” preceding and preparing the phase of ultimate liberty or “humanism”:

"Царство естественной необходимости" = "Предыстория"

"Царство осознанной необходимости" = "Эпоха коммунизма"

"Царство свободы" = "Эпоха гуманизма"

<http://www.ckp.ru/biblio/p/platonov/ac/aftercomm1.htm#1-1>

his individual attempt of this last humanist Marxist in the Soviet Union to master the sense of history and become its subject remained unique.

Prominent economist G. Lisichkin defended perestroika's economic reforms referring to Lenin's late bet on the "natural-historical maturation of socialism from within capitalism" rather than on the "great revolutionary leap"<sup>160</sup>. N. Simonya, a renowned publicist, focused on the opposition between "our concrete experience" of socialist revolution in a backward agrarian country – precipitate revolution elevated by Stalin in the rank of the new norm, and a universal course of history which was correctly revealed in the "Marxist thesis on the natural-historical emergence of socialism from capitalism"<sup>161</sup>. Simonya pointed out that Stalin declared the USSR a Socialist country, when he imposed the identification of the "legal socialisation of property" with the "real economic socialization" of means of production, which did not take place, thus replacing the relations of production, e.g. objective laws of history by the voluntary declarations, here by formal laws. Echoing Butenko's interpretation, philosopher J. Kelle on the round-table "Whither Marxism?" summed up that history taught us prudence in ideological constructions: "we have burnt ourselves – that is our historical experience – by trying to subjugate history to a certain ideology. This resulted in violence against history"<sup>162</sup>. According to Kelle, this erroneous attitude resulted from the oblivion of the late Lenin's reckon on the "natural-historical process" as the path to socialism<sup>163</sup>. Thus, among the Soviet humanists the belief that history would naturally evolve towards a new kind of socialism different from both, Soviet bureaucratic socialism and Western capitalism, still was a common place in 1990.

Soviet path became a *particular* pathway instead of being the *universal* path, now understood as a **natural-historical evolution**. As noted above, in this optic the particular Soviet experience felt out of the categorisations to the extent that an editorial of *Kommunist* on the eve of the XXVIII party Congress could doubt whether a Marxist path had any place in the world-historical chronotop. If socialism could only naturally-historically emerge from within mature capitalism, where should the USSR go from its current unnatural (if not nonexistent) historical stance: back to the nineteenth century capitalism, to NEP or to a new kind of socialist market, which actually did not exist before? This historiosophical logic did not imply specific policy choices but one: agency had to let history evolve rather than guide it. Inner dilemmas and tensions of the new historiosophical outlook and its questionable ability to offer a reliable political agenda are as significant, as the consistent *normative*

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<sup>160</sup> See: Лисичкин, «Большой Подлог», *Коммунист*, 1990, №5, с.46

<sup>161</sup> "Сталин же возвел наш конкретный опыт во всеобщий эталон и таким образом отказался от марксистского тезиса о естественноисторическом возникновении социализма из капитализма». «Чтобы достичь цели Сталин ввел в определение производственных отношений в качестве главного их компонента юридические отношения собственности и тем "подчинил" их субъективной воле» «Ленин пересматривает не общеисторические взгляды на социализм, а свой взгляд на возможность перехода к социализму в условиях отсталой крестьянской России». «Со времен Сталина наши общественные науки грешили отождествлением юридического обобществления средств производства с их реальным экономическим обобществлением...» Н. Симония, «Сталинизм против социализма», *Вопросы Философии*, 1989, №7, с.30, 34, 35

<sup>162</sup> «Мы - таков наш исторический опыт - обожглись на том, что попытались подчинить историю определенной идеологии (это вылилось в насилие над историей)». В. Ж. Келле, «Умер ли марксизм? Круглый стол», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №10, с.34

<sup>163</sup> «естественноисторический процесс», *Ibid.*, с.35, с.36



use of the concept of the natural-historical development by leading Soviet Marxists, who attempted an open-minded revision. This acceptance of the natural-historical logic in 1989-1991 contradicted and challenged the recently regained symbolic freedom of human agency, backed by the ontological status of choice and alternatives in history. Since 1989, the rise of the new imperative of necessity understood as a gradual natural-historical or organic evolution, and the fall of the logic of the *deliberate* agency went in parallel – using the same idioms of path, choice and alternative, smoothly shifting from free agency's will to necessity. Surprisingly, the two logics were rarely entering into an open contradiction: the natural-historical evolution was rarely opposed to the agency's ability to choose paths.

But there was at least one exception. Aron Gurevitch, a distinguished historian of culture and mentalities was mostly concerned with the methodology of medieval studies rather than with the changing political agenda of perestroika. By the end of 1990 he marked his distance with the revised neo-Marxist approach based on the universal historical formations emerging anew under the name of “natural-historical”:

Within such an understanding of history [as a “natural-historical development”] there remains little space for human liberty, for the choice of this or that path of development, for questioning around possible alternatives. It is significant in this respect, that the historico-anthropological insights of the early Marx's writings were abandoned by himself and his followers.<sup>164</sup>

Gurevitch meant that “natural-historical” in fact contended the concealed idea of a universally necessary path for the world. As we noted, the criticism against Marx, Lenin or Stalin's Marxism-Leninism as leaving no space for open-ended choice and alternatives was missing or abridging the central ambiguity – and probably the engine – of this ideological line, throughout its changes combining political voluntarism and the assumption on the cognizable and inevitable historical laws. The one-sided, asymmetric interpretation of history as the field of law-like regularities deprived of struggle, alternatives, open-ended conflicts and moments of decisions characterised not “Marxism-Leninism” in general, but only its late Brezhnev phase. Thus, Alexander Yakovlev more accurately criticised “us” rather than classics, for writing history in terms of “iron legions of formations deprived of creativity and constant process of choice”.<sup>165</sup> What Gurevitch justly saw as a methodological insensibility towards “anthropological dimension” within Soviet Marxism served to dispense with historical responsibility, to consolidate the past achievements or else, to encourage hesitant adepts. But for Marx, Stalin or Lenin as political *leaders* and *ideologues*, the political struggle between actors, be it in the past or present, was never reduced to historical necessity – their lust for mastering history

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<sup>164</sup> | Маркс о формациях как об "естественноисторическом процессе" | "В рамках подобного понимания истории мало места остается человеческой свободе, для выбора того или иного пути развития, для постановки вопроса об его альтернативности. Случайно ли то, что историко-антропологические интенции ранних трудов Маркса в дальнейшем не были продолжены ни им самим, ни его последователями?" А. Я. Гуревич, «Теория формаций и реальность истории», *Вопросы Философии*, 1990, №11, с.43

<sup>165</sup> «Мы выдумали мертвую схему движения железных легионов формаций, которые якобы подвластны лишь неким объективным закономерностям. Тем самым, мы нашу историю, нашу память по существу кастрировали. История, понятная как творчество, человека, непрерывный процесс выбора и созидания, т.е. подлинная история исчезла», А. Яковлев, «Историческая память обновляющегося общества. Круглый стол», *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.12

and obtaining a political leverage was an essential ingredient of both their successes and failures, of both, their theoretical and political action. If Gurevitch most probably missed this original twist of Marxist thinking animated by the will of breaking the chains of necessity, he actually brought to light a rapid revolution in the minds of some of his contemporaries, which relied on Marxist-Leninist sources. Natural-historical evolution became the new name of the blind although wise necessity, which disabled the human agency not by commanding to be its violent servant, but just by asking to be patient.

Let us illustrate this point by a long quote from academician O. Bogomolov, head of the *Institute of the economy of the world socialist system* and People's Congress deputy, whose broadly socialist convictions we can more plausibly trust as he kept them long after the time when he wrote this passage:

We should definitively overcome the illusion that socialism can not emerge from within capitalism, that it demands a break in the established institutions and should be constructed from scratch. These views are incompatible with the understanding of social development as a natural-historical process, they feed voluntarism and ignore facts, which actually give ground to reckon that developed capitalism evolves towards a practical realisation of many socialist principles... This of course, does not imply the rejection of the classical heritage of Marxist-Leninist thought, from its ideals and values, and from its method of analysing economic facts and processes. Not all Marxist positions and forecasts proved correct in the long run, but the whole cluster of humanistic ideas of Marxism organically fits the renewed conception of modern socialism and its economy.<sup>166</sup>

If Oleg Bogomolov was indeed sincere, then like his humanist peers, he did not use this historiosophical interpretation as hypocritical “coverage” of capitalism, as some of the Russian nationalist would imply, but he meant it. Socialists hoped that history will lead to socialism naturally-historically. This new characteristic of historical process was applied to the future of socialism as in case of Bogomolov, and to the past as did V. Startsev, who “on the basis of the only possible scientific conclusion” criticised those who advocated viable alternatives to the October revolution: “the Bolshevik victory in October 1917 was not an accident or else an artificial break in the natural course of events”<sup>167</sup>. As we saw earlier that, a bad historical period was typically criticised as an “artificial break in the natural course of events” and this meant it resulted from agency’s voluntarism.

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<sup>166</sup> «С другой стороны, пора окончательно преодолеть иллюзию, что социализм не может зародиться в недрах капитализма, а требует слома созданных им институтов, должен конструироваться полностью заново. Такие взгляды несовместимы с пониманием общественного развития как естественно-исторического процесса, питают политический voluntarism и игнорируют факты. Последние дают основания считать, что развитой капитализм эволюционирует в сторону практической реализации многих социалистических принципов ... это не означает, разумеется, отказа от классического наследия марксистско-ленинской мысли, от сформулированных ею идеалов и ценностей, а также от метода исследования экономических фактов и процессов. Не все марксистские положения и предвосхищения выдержали проверку временем, но весь комплекс гуманистических идей марксизма органически вплетается в обновленную концепцию современного социализма, его экономики. Идеи свободы, демократии, социальной справедливости и человеческой солидарности как важнейшие человеческие ценности устареть не могут». О. Богомолов, «Меняющийся облик социализма», *Коммунист*, 1989, №11, с.34-35

<sup>167</sup> «В этих условиях историк-профессионал просто обязан дать обществу исторический материал для размышлений по вопросу об альтернативах. Выше мы рассмотрели в строгом соответствии с фактами один из возможных вариантов событий в октябре 1917 года... Идеи противники большевиков могут сколько угодно произносить гневные филиппики против них, но никуда не деться от единственно научно обоснованного вывода: победа

A parallel to this reading of the Marxist-Leninist heritage can be found in Althusser's *Lénine et la philosophie*, and *Marx et Lénine devant Hegel*. The emphasis on the concept of "historical process without a subject" drew on the reconstruction of the original interpretation of Hegel who would inspire both Marx and Lenin. Recalling that in Hegel's historiosophy the Owl of Minerva comes *after*, Althusser pretends to complete the political philosophy of action that Lenin practiced. This new political philosophy could be resumed as this: masses and not leaders are making history in the process of class-struggle. The role of philosophy or consciousness in this historical process without a subject is not to guide, but to understand what is already happened on the subconscious level of the mass movements – history without agency.<sup>168</sup> Like some of the perestroika's publicists, Luis Althusser downplayed or ignored Lenin's assumed voluntarism, its original characteristic defining the Bolshevism and Marxism-Leninism as opposed to social-democratic reformism. By contrast, one of the most influential Marxist theoreticians mobilizing the agency side was Georg Lukacs who in his *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* focused almost exclusively on the logic of emergence of the class consciousness and on the dialectics overcoming the dichotomy "voluntarism and fatalism", as well as that of "practice and theory"<sup>169</sup>. This means that the tension between agency and necessity was well familiar to the heterodox and living Marxist tradition; but the historiosophical solution and assumptions of perestroika were shaped by its own local logic. Thus, most humanistic socialists either advanced the idea of the natural-historical evolution from capitalism to socialism (opposing it to untimely and bloody October revolution), or else occasionally defended the October revolution as a "necessary and natural course of events".

#### *Russian nationalists on the end of agency*

Like late Soviet socialists or adepts of the theory of convergence, Russian nationalists too were almost unanimous in their praise of the organic evolution as opposed to revolutionary violence against history. The nationalists' specific emphasis lay on the identification of violence against history with Western, international or Jewish ideologies imposing their straightjacket on the organic national body of Russia. Authors from *Nash Sovremennik* did not use the expression natural-historical – they spoke about *organic*, *natural* or *national path* as opposed to the "cabinet theories", "speculative schemes", "social experimentations" and supposedly "unique path of progress". The two most significant authors of the Russian nationalist trend, Shafarevitch and Solzhenitsyn knew each other, and Solzhenitsyn cited Shafarevitch in his publicistic articles in 1970s – unlike most dissidents, they saw the liberal Western path as yet another impasse (albeit Solzhenitsyn stressed Western ability to renew itself). Shafarevitch, as his more illustrious peer, published in both *Noviy Mir* and *Nash Sovremennik* accessing to a much wider audience, than most nationalist authors:

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большевиков в октябре 1917 года не была случайностью или искусственным нарушением естественного хода событий» Виталий Старцев, «Альтернатива. Фантазии и реальность», *Коммунист*, 1990, №15, с.41

<sup>168</sup> Луи Альтюссер, *Ленин и философия*, М. Ad Marginem, 2005.

<sup>169</sup> Георг Лукач, *История и классовое сознание*, М., Левая Карта, 2003.

We accustomed ourselves to a certain sequence of problem solving, proper to science and technique: idea, model or experimentation – and, finally, its realisation. On this rationalist path they create plants and atomic bombs alike... but life creates itself on other kind of paths, and history is a form of life. Organic changes are not invented, they grow from life; our role is mainly to uncover their meaning and to secure their rootage.<sup>170</sup>

Denouncing the kinship of Left terrorism and contemporary liberalism Shafarevitch manifested more accusatory pathos and less moderation than Solzhenitsyn (“For liberals terrorism was just an extreme pole of what they wanted but were afraid to accomplish”<sup>171</sup>). The dissident mathematician concluded that the *core immoral belief* of the ideology of liberal and socialist progress, which was accountable for massive violence, was “hypnotic conviction in the fact that this ideology discovered the only possible path of progress”.<sup>172</sup> As in case of Volobuev’s attack against the historical necessity of violence under Stalin, the deconstruction of the historiography of the *single and universal path* served to demonstrate that the presumed universality was both a moral and factual error – a choice. This time, both, humanist socialists and liberals were blamed and were made co-responsible with Stalin. But the only-correct-path was going to return again in the contraband form as the reliance on organic evolution. Russian nationalists, as many publicists of other strains, were oscillating between the rebuff of the teleology of the path and its hidden reassertion.

Igor Shafarevitch amply used the agency-centred idioms of path, choice and alternative, of which he showed his critical awareness, to convey his own political message – a form of Russian ecological neo-conservatism deeply tainted with an Anti-Semitic sociological theory. Shafarevitch spoke the dominant language while stretching it according to his own purpose and criticising its limitations. Mirroring Klyamkin’s already subversive title<sup>173</sup> “Which road leads to the temple?”, Shafarevitch entitled his own article (published two years later, in 1989), by subverting the metaphor yet one more time: “Two roads to one precipice”.<sup>174</sup> His main argument identified the liberal and communist ideologies as the manifestations of the same techno-centrist civilization based on the Francis Bacon’s utopia of total

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<sup>170</sup> «Мы привыкли в науке и технике к такому ходу решения задачи: идея - детальный план - модель или эксперимент - и, наконец, воплощение в жизнь. На этом рационалистическом пути создаются и заводы и атомные бомбы... но жизнь творится какими-то иными путями, а история - форма жизни.. Органические же изменения... не придумываются, а вырастают из жизни, и роль человеческой деятельности здесь главным образом в том, чтобы их узнать, угадать их значение и способствовать их укоренению». Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с.164

<sup>171</sup> «Для либералов терроризм был лишь крайностью - тем, что они хотели бы, но боялись делать». Ibid., с.161

<sup>172</sup> «... это связано с важной чертой идеологии прогресса: гипнотической убежденностью в том, что она открывает единственный путь прогресса», Ibid., с.161

<sup>173</sup> As we discussed in the chapter on the evolution of the political language around 1988, Klyamkin explored the rising metaphor of the “choice of the road” in the title and in the body of his article to argue that as a matter of fact, there was no real choice between Stalinist system and a better kind of humane socialism. This successful subversion produced debates and a long echo. See the next footnote.

<sup>174</sup> Cf.: А. Бутенко, «Сколько дорог ведет к храму?», *Горизонт*, 1988, №11.; А. Кузьмин, «К какому храму ищем мы дорогу?», *Наш современник*, 1988, №3; Попов, Н. Шмелев, «На развилке дорог» в Х. Кобо (изд.), *Осмыслить культ Сталина*, Прогресс, 1989, с. 286

rational organization and leading to violence against both Man and Nature<sup>175</sup>. The choice between these two roads is, of course, doomed to fail. For this Russian nationalist, the positive ideological program should escape not only the pitfalls of the Soviet system, but also that of the “late Western capitalism” and its own utopianism. The common perestroika horizon of the “civilized world” as the perspective in which to discuss perestroika’s politics and its current problems here appears as the horizon of a global world crisis: political, societal, spiritual and ecological crisis of the *world technocivilization as a whole*. Despite the uncommon ideological stance, the language is familiar as well as the frame it placed over the discussion on the available institutional options – the peculiarity of Shafarevitch’s thinking is his attempt to overcome the limitation of the language he uses:

We hardly have the necessary grounds to predict how humanity will overcome the current crisis... one of the wrong schemes being the opposition of the command system to the western path as of the only two possible outcomes [*vikhod*], from which one should make a choice.<sup>176</sup>

By opening the questions too wide in time and space (here, the century-long crisis of the technocivilization as a whole instead of the concrete problems faced by Soviet society today), and by limiting the scope of solutions to few holistic historiosophical “paths” historiosophical language framed political theory. Shafarevitch ignored the first *abstraction* bias and openly criticised the second bias of the forced choice only between *two* alternatives. Then, before resuming his brief positive program he pointed at the current “destruction of the siding tracks or reserve paths, which the humanity could use in case of the crisis of [Western technocratic] civilization” as opposed to the period of the crisis of the Antique Mediterranean civilization, when “humanity possessed the whole range of possible paths of development”. Today, Russia, China or India did not retain sufficient diversity in original social lifestyles and setups to secure the humanity in case of the crisis of the technological civilization and among which humanity “could find an alternative variant of development”.<sup>177</sup> Thus, the three related idioms play the main role in both criticising the others’ views and promoting one’s own – when Shafarevitch warned Russia (not USSR) from choosing the wrong path this time again, as once a historical path is taken it would be very difficult to “stop its inertia” and impossible to return back.

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<sup>175</sup> «Как и сталинская командная система, западная технологическая цивилизация избрала техноцентрическую идеологию в противоположность космоцентрической. Это всего лишь другой путь осуществления уже знакомой нам утопии об “организации” природы и общества по принципу “мегамашины” с максимальным исключением человеческого и вообще живого начала». «Единственный возможный выход - перейти от развития, основанного на постоянном росте, к стабильному стилю существования. В частности, бэконовский принцип “покорения природы” должен быть заменен противоположным - “покорения техники”. Социальным аспектом начальной фазы этого периода является и наша командная система, и утопическая линия развития позднего капитализма...». Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с. 158, с.165

<sup>176</sup> «Вряд ли у нас есть основания предугадать, как человечество выйдет из этого кризиса” но одной из ложных схем “представляется мне противопоставление командной системы западному пути как двух диаметрально противоположных выходов, из которых только и возможен выбор». Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с.165

<sup>177</sup> «Уничтожение возможных запасных вариантов, которыми человечество могло бы воспользоваться в случае кризиса цивилизации. В период кризиса античной средиземноморской цивилизации человечество обладало целым спектром возможных путей развития. Еще сравнительно недавно можно было надеяться, что Россия, Китай, Япония, Индия, страны Латинской Америки сохранили достаточное разнообразие укладов, чтобы в случае кризиса технологической цивилизации человечество могло среди них найти альтернативный вариант развития. Сейчас для таких надежд гораздо меньше оснований». Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с.158

Hence, “we” can only take the vanished Russian peasant setup as an example of “an organically grown setup of life”, but not as the guide for action<sup>178</sup>. This author developed probably the most sophisticated and influential intellectual agenda for Russian nationalists yet offering not practical perspective.

In *Nash Sovremennik*, Viktor Yarin developed the opposition “organic evolution” – “speculative constructions”, which after demagogically promising better social setup, inevitably turned into violent vampires sucking the healthy organism<sup>179</sup>. The fatality of this transformation was considered as a “proven historical fact”. How could one oppose and correct this grave logic? Yarin clearly described the correct path allowing the gradual transformation of the party system into a Russian national self-rule:

This is the path of organic evolution, the path of convergence [*sblizhenie*] of the traditional [Communist] party system of power with the networks of people’s representation, which are currently created anew.<sup>180</sup>

Should we speak more concretely, we should realise our reforms not on the path of directive guidance, not on the basis of abstract schemes – in the course of reforms, one should give a voice of life to all people.<sup>181</sup>

Feminine voices were particularly sound and consistent in their defence of the Russian organic path in both, liberal centre *Noviy Mir* and Russian nationalist *Nash Sovremennik*. We refer in particular to the theoretical contributions of Alla Latynina [*Noviy Mir*], Ksenya Myalo [*Noviy Mir, Nash Sovremennik*] Tatiana Napolova and Tatjana Glushkova [*Nash Sovremennik*] published in 1989-91. The later two writers discussed the optimal policy to draw on the basis of this new evolutionary philosophy; their concern was to oppose the pending market liberalisation as yet a new radical violence against history:

We face the major task of finding our own path, alien to any predetermined schemes... Thanks God, we have historical memory, although [they] tried to erase it, we have historical experience rich of “experimentations”. Radicals have played such a dark role, that people will not follow them again.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Compare with another explicit passage with an emphasis on the historical choice between different paths, the country was facing, when Shafarevitch argues in favour of the return to the Russian peasant civilization: «Рассмотренный нами вопрос, относящийся, казалось бы к прошлому, становится вновь актуальным сейчас, когда наша страна стоит перед выбором, от которого, возможно зависит все ее будущее. Мы видим сколько сил уходит на преодоление инерции командной системы. А если ошибемся в выборе и страна разгонится по новому пути - откуда взять силы, чтобы опять остановится... Для нас же самой близкой и понятной является та крестьянская цивилизация, среди которой так недавно протекала жизнь наших предков. Вернуться назад к ней нельзя - в истории вообще возврат невозможен. Но она может стать для нас наиболее ценной моделью органически выросшего жизненного уклада. Отсюда понятна притягательность и успех "деревенской" литературы - она указывает путь в будущее" Игорь Шафаревич, «Две дороги к одному обрыву», *Новый Мир*, 1989, №7, с. 165

<sup>179</sup> «Превращение в вурдалака, пожирающего народ, - роковая судьба умозрительных политических построений, прикрывающихся разноцветными рекламными щитами с демагогическими обещаниями наилучшего социального устройства. Для меня это - доказанный исторический факт». В. А. Ярин и др., «Россия живет хуже, чем работает», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №2, с.6

<sup>180</sup> «Это - путь органической эволюции, путь сближения традиционной партийной структуры власти со структурами народного представительства, которые тоже сейчас создаются заново», *Ibid.*, с.7

<sup>181</sup> «А если говорить конкретнее, то надо, чтобы реформы осуществлялись не директивным путем, не на основе абстрактных схем - надо в их течении дать больший голос жизни, всем людям». *Ibid.*, с.11

Tatjana Glushkova argued against liberal radicals along similar lines. At least in principle, she faced a bold – e.g., widely unpopular and hardly conceivable for other authors – conclusion that the established Soviet system could be defended in the name of the evolutionary political philosophy, as well as any other social order. Glushkova suspected the pathos of “history making” in those who denounced the old experimentations as unacceptable, and when doing so, she prudently qualified Soviet model as “an old and in many respect self-developing historical experimentation”; but her draft remained sketchy – Glushkova did not specify what exactly she was ready to take on board from the late Soviet setup:

The attempt to wilfully cancel the old and in many respects self-developing “historical experimentation” looks pretty much as a new experimentation. It originates from the same theory of the artificiality of society; it is animated by the same pathos of “history-making”. More “noble” history making – as opposed to a “less noble” one. But is this new pathos more responsible?<sup>183</sup>

There was another publicist, who tried to expose a more consistent conservative stance as applied to the current Soviet politics. Alexander Prokhanov vigorously promoted an alliance between Red and White Russias as the “ideology of survival”. Drafting the ideology of such an alliance in *Nash Sovremennik*, the former reporter from military hot spots which later acquired the reputation of the “singer of the Empire”, Prokhanov deployed a double headed opposition to the “liberal avant-garde”: “Russian Communist Party [recently split from CPSU] and [Russian] national patriotic movement need each other. The ideology of national survival should become the main ideology of the Russian Communist Party”<sup>184</sup>. Prokhanov was in this moment the only one who proposed a deliberate fusion of Russian nationalist and Communist values – mostly the cult of fathers, patriotism and anti-Semitism, as opposed to pro-western liberalisms or social-democracy. If *Nash Sovremennik* offered its pages to both trends, it had a clear preference for Russian nationalism, and apart Prokhanov, there was no other author bringing both under one name. It was never clear which institutions and political principles these authors really wanted to inherit from the USSR apart of patriotism.

If the conservatism of the Russian nationalists from *Nash Sovremennik* as well as Solzhenitsyn’s battle against Communism assumed a break in continuity between prosperous and spiritual pre-

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<sup>182</sup> «Перед нами стоит задача искать свой путь, чуждый каким бы то ни было заранее заданным схемам... У нас слава богу, есть историческая память, как ни старались ее уничтожить, есть богатая "экспериментами" истории. И радикалы играли в ней столь мрачную роль, что народ не может пойти у них на поводу" Татьяна Наполова, «Преемственность зла», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №4, с.188

<sup>183</sup> «Попытка своенравно отменить старый, во многом уже саморазвивающийся "исторический эксперимент" слишком смахивает на экспериментирование новое. Она исходит из той же теории рукотворности общества, одушевлена все тем же пафосом "делания" истории. "Более благородного" делания - в сравнении с "менее благородным", но - более ли ответственного?» Татьяна Глушкова «О "русскости", о счастье, о свободе», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №7, с.181

<sup>184</sup> «Российская компартия и национальное патриотическое движение нуждаются в друг друге. Идеологией РКП должна стать идеология национального выживания». Александр Проханов, «Идеология выживания», *Наш Современник*, 1990, №9, с.8.

revolutionary Russia and the criminal Soviet Union<sup>185</sup> (in this sense, it presented a typical “return to the sources” with its revolutionary rhetoric of restoration rather than conservation and continuity), the conservatism of the Soviet Communists would have to embrace the established system. As we noted earlier, there was a conservative opposition to Gorbachev reforms, but there was no sound Communist ideologues, which would expose the up-to-date conservative ideology to consolidate this opposition. Prokhanov sketched a sort of conservative ideology shifting from the continuity with the whole Soviet Union to the continuity with the *Soviet Russia*. In the perestroika context, this “conservatism” equally contributed to the dismantling of the Soviet Union by definitively breaking the organizational unity of CPSU<sup>186</sup>; but it set the ideological basis for the future nostalgia mixing Russian nationalism and Soviet patriotism in the post-Soviet Russia. Simultaneously, Prokhanov was among the firsts to use the word “conservative” to frame and to name the new trend, which we have described as the normative supremacy of the natural-historical development:

The future of our society, surpassing the contemporary drama, lies not in the revolutionary convulsions, but in the slowed evolutionary development. Conservator in the mouth of the “liberal avant-garde” – is an ugly, swear word, but the contemporary prosperous world is ruled by conservatives... The concept of conservatism should penetrate into our consciousness deformed by the revolutions, and take there a well deserved place among our approaches and values.<sup>187</sup>

If the curious union between the above mentioned conservatives ruling the prosperous world and the impoverished post-Soviet masses nostalgic for the fading social equality, took its organizational form at the congress of “national-patriotic associations” in February 1991. This blend of bitter Russian nationalism and Soviet patriotism could not but precipitate the exit of non-Russian republics. This ideological alliance between Communist patriots and Russian nationalists consolidated in 1990s on the basis of KPRF. We can also note that the intellectual originality of Prokhanov’s and Yarin’s “evolutionary conservatism” can be seen when we compare their passages with Solzhenitsyn’s major contribution to perestroika “Rebuilding Russia” [September, 1990] and with the general discussion of Solzhenitsyn’s earlier works by Alla Latynina “Solzhenitsyn and us” written and published approximately at the same time. There, Latynina credited the Nobel Prize laureate as the spiritual instigator of the rejection of the revolutionary legacy in favour of liberty and national renaissance:

Considering the civil war as a national catastrophe, Solzhenitsyn resolutely revised the version of Russian history established during the Soviet period, according to which Russia was a tyranny, prison of

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<sup>185</sup> Compare with the text of Solzhenitsyn published the same month: « Вот чему пора, а не состраивать теперь для позорной преемственности новую РКП, принимать всю кровь и грязь на русское имя и волочиться против хода истории. Такое публичное признание партией своей вины, преступности и беспомощности стало бы хоть первым разрежением нашей густо-гнетущей моральной атмосферы». А. Солженицын, «Как нам обустроить Россию?», Специальный выпуск. *Комсомольская правда*, 18.09.1990.

<sup>186</sup> Prokhanov, who later expressed his deep concern for the break up of the Soviet Empire, in fact took an anti-Union stance and lucidly considered Soviet Union as already non-existent: «Когда-то мы жили в Российской империи. Когда-то мы жили в Советском Союзе. Неизвестно, где мы живем сейчас. Но мы будем жить в России», Ibid, с.7

<sup>187</sup> «Будущее общества, пережившего сегодняшнюю драму, не в революционных конвульсиях, а в эволюционном замедленном развитии. Консерватор в устах “либерального авангарда” - слово скверное, бранное, но сегодняшний процветающий мир управляется консерваторами... Категория консервативности должна пройти через наше изуродованное революциями сознание, занять достойное место среди установок и ценностей». Ibid., с.8



nations, which could be historically escaped only through revolution. An adept of evolution and reforms, Solzhenitsyn stresses that a slow and steady evolutionary path was more desirable for the country, and that revolutionary impatience, terror, finally led the country to a more terrible regime than monarchy.<sup>188</sup>

Significantly, the lessons drawn from the past experience remained focused on the past – to decide which path was more desirable and beneficial for Russia. When transferred to the present day, the preference for incremental reforms diminished, almost disappeared. In “Rebuilding Russia”, Solzhenitsyn exposed his bitter distrust in the governmental capacity to reform: “reforms... only ruin their causes and discredit the promises of the rulers”<sup>189</sup>. Alla Latynina too praised the end of the “social experimentation” in favour of the regime insuring individual and economic liberties rather than in favour of the gradual and evolutionary transition. In fact, her polemical charge was directed against naïve socialist humanists trying to preserve the best ideals if not institutions from the Soviet heritage. Thus, the spreading evolutionary ideology posed a question, which strangely was not debated in this light: should not we include the seventy years of experimentation in an organic continuity with our pre-revolutionary heritage and our immediate future? Solzhenitsyn, Latynina and most advocates of the organic development in 1917 or 1929 did not carefully apply the same principle to 1990. The historical lessons they did consistently apply was the imperative of non-violence (tightly connected with but distinct from the reliance on the natural-historical evolution), thus applying only two thirds of the lesson. This selectivity in the policy formulation deserves more attention, which we will pay at the end of this section, also addressing the question about the widespread acceptance and reckon on democracy, despite the lack of historical antecedents firmly noted by Solzhenitsyn.

### *Liberals on the end of agency*

Alla Latynina referred to the authority of Solzhenitsyn and she can be ranged among liberal publicists advancing the ideas of the natural-historical evolution. A number of other influential liberal authors adhered to the new trend in 1989-1991 and speaking from the first person, they discovered similar conclusions with Soviet humanists and Russian nationalists, but ignored the factual consensus or presented this point as plain evidence. Alexander Tsytko recapitulated the argument in favour of the natural evolution with the help of seemingly commonsensical if not tautological formula: “Our lessons that proves that the impossible is impossible, that natural ultimately takes over the unnatural and artificial, undoubtedly acquire the world-historical significance”<sup>190</sup>. We can note here the aspiration that

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<sup>188</sup> “Считая гражданскую войну национальной катастрофой, Солженицын решительно пересматривает установившуюся в советское время версию российской истории, согласно которой Россия была деспотией, тюрьмой народов и единственным желанным историческим выходом оказывалась революция. Стронник эволюции и реформ, Солженицын настаивает на том, что медленный, упорный эволюционный путь желательнее для страны и что революционное нетерпение, террор в конечном счете привели к режиму более страшному, чем монархия”. Алла Латынина, «Солженицын и мы», *Новый мир*, 1990, №1, с.252

<sup>189</sup> «За все реформы мы беремся как похуже - так и тут. Только губят дело и отбивают у людей последнюю веру в обещания власти». А. Солженицын, «Как нам обустроить Россию?», Специальный выпуск. *Комсомольская правда*, 18.09.1990

<sup>190</sup> «Уроки наши, доказывающие, что невозможное невозможно, что естественное в конечном счете одерживает победу над неестественным, выморочным, несомненно имеют всемирно-историческое значение. Быть может,

Soviet experience gave world-historical lessons even if they are that simple as “impossible is impossible” or if they negatively confirm what positively was learned by the whole world: perestroika’s liberals, nationalists and socialists felt and debated with awareness that they were taking part in the world-historical process. Thus, perestroika reproduced the density of the Marxist concept linking universality [world-historical] and necessity of progress [law-governed] under *natural-historical*, adding to it the strict ethics of non-violence.

Significantly for a better understanding of the natural-historical turn, the shifts from official Marxist-Leninist historical necessity towards the agency-centred perspective, and back to the presumed natural course of life as a new and positive name for necessity – could be sometimes seen within the same paragraph of one article, which we somehow schematically comment here below to illustrate the three intellectual stages:

We still repeat the Marxist formula: being [necessity] determines consciousness [agency]. But the XX century refuted this speculative hypothesis. Not the being determines the consciousness, but, the consciousness, idea, theory [agency] determines the being [necessity]... XX century was the age of violence of ideas [agency] against life [necessity], violence of abstraction [agency] over human nature [necessity], and as a matter of fact, this is the crucial issue to understand and not the fact that Stalin ruled our society for thirty years.<sup>191</sup>

We can note that “Marxism-Leninism” was criticised here for both, its insensibility to the role of human agency in history, and its overconfidence and voluntarism. Literary critic Igor Zlatousky in this short summary exemplified the rapid transition which took place approximately in 1989. This was the shift from the criticism of the impersonal and triumphant “Marxist-Leninist” necessity through the affirmation of agency’s ability to choose better or worse historical paths, to the criticism of the rediscovered agency’s ability to change the course of history at his will. The voluntarism of the agency succeeds only at a high price and ultimately, the argument goes, history [*nature, being, human nature, evolution*] should take back what have been paid by blood and hardships. Zlatousky did not feel the need to correct his criticism against the Marxist formula (being determines consciousness) although he seemingly ended up with the same conclusion (life should overcome abstractions, ideals should follow the natural course of life) because the language he was using maintained ambiguity on what was *being* and what – *consciousness* in his opposition *Abstractions Vs Life*. This, probably, would not be too much violence against this way of thinking to say that “life” or else “nature” stood here for both, necessity and agency. Actually, the necessity fused and subsumed the agency in the stream of the natural-historical, organic evolution.

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именно в них подспудно заключен подлинный смысл событий, которым мы положили начало в октябре 1917 года... /значит мы сможем/ вернуться назад в историю, нам есть на что надеяться» А. Ципко, «Хороши ли наши принципы», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №4, с.204

<sup>191</sup> «Мы все еще повторяем формулу Маркса: бытие определяет сознание. Но опыт XX века опроверг это умозаключение. Не бытие определяет сознание, а сознание, идея, теория определяли бытие... XX век сделался эпохой насилия идеи над жизнью, абстракции над человеком, и если говорить всерьез, дело в этом, а не только в том, что нами тридцать лет правил Сталин», И. Золотоусский, «Крушение абстракций», *Новый Мир*, 1989, № 1, с.235

We would like to take on the analysis of the liberal versions of the organic historiography by reviewing another article published in *Noviy Mir* and written by Alexey Kiva, a historian, notable liberal publicist and later political adviser. Kiva started his article by inscribing Soviet history in the context of the “united world civilization” and by ascribing to the USSR a modest place of its “backward and weak part (once the missiles are deduced)”<sup>192</sup>. Implicitly referring to Marx, Alexey Kiva used the term “natural-historical” to designate the universal historical necessity of capitalism, identified with a superior level of civilization:

In principle, in the course of natural-historical development each society should pass through the sophisticated institution of private property, “sacred and inviolable”. This slogan of the bourgeois revolutions represented the greatest achievement of the political thought, the indicator of the high level of development of world civilization.<sup>193</sup>

Introducing efficient market economy and stable democracy as the *natural-historical* perspective for the Soviet Union, Kiva also exposed his strong preference for the evolutionary methods. Kiva attempted a more systematic exploration of the current political situation and its options through this “evolutionary glances” and at the same time, assuming the general agreement formed in 1987-1989 that the established Administrative system should be *broken*. **Indeed, the two approaches contradicted each other: the Soviet system should be radically broken, but history proved that only evolutionary methods were beneficial.** Kiva gave a nuanced and precise answer satisfying both requirements: “What is a revolution? A liquidation of old privileges? A new distribution of property? Revolution – is first of all the removal of the obstacles lying on the path of the social progress. And the smoother, more clam and more “evolutionary” it [revolution] happens the better off the society is”<sup>194</sup>. The best option was an evolutionary revolution. What did evolutionary revolution mean here? The evolutionary revolution did not mean the political preference for “incremental reforms”, which initially were considered by Solzhenitsyn as the best alternative to the Bolshevik revolution, but which were discredited by the five years of perestroika reforms. The break up of the old system should be complete and immediate: in this sense, indeed, no organic matter of the Soviet system should be spared or secured – the Soviet *ancient regime* was taken as a set of *institutional obstacles*. Prokhanov’s or Yarin’s conservatism defending (in fact very partly) the Soviet organic heritage at this moment looked like loony intellectuals and did not specify what kind of social practices and institutions were of value. The evolutionary revolution meant peaceful removal of all the old limitations and then, the quest of the naturally appearing solutions rather than the application of the pre-established schemes and ideological abstractions. Democracy and (socially responsible) market

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<sup>192</sup> “Поскольку реальный социализм - это не какой-то особый социум, сам себе устанавливающий законы развития, как многие думали раньше, а часть единой мировой цивилизации, причем меньшая, более отсталая и слабая часть (ракеты не в счет)...”, А. Кива, «Кризис Жанра», *Новый Мир*, 1990, №3, с.208

<sup>193</sup> «В ходе естественно-исторического развития всякое общество в принципе должно пройти через развитый институт частной собственности, “священной и неприкосновенной”. Этот лозунг буржуазных революций явился величайшим завоеванием политической мысли, показателем высокого уровня развития мировой цивилизации» А. Кива, «Кризис Жанра», с. 209

<sup>194</sup> «Что такое революция? Ликвидация привилегий? Новый передел? Революция - это прежде всего устранение препятствий на пути общественного прогресса. И чем плавнее, спокойнее, “эволюционнее” она протекает, тем больше выигрывает общество», *Ibid.*, с.216

were seen by liberal and most socialist authors not as yet another ideological scheme, but as a result of a natural selection of the best regimes by world history. And still espousing the same logic of argumentation, those who opposed the capitalist greed argued that liberals were the new Bolsheviks wilfully imposing alien values and practices and thus, diverting from the wholesome Russian path – however loosely defined and unspecific the latter path looked at that moment. In sum, the underlying assumption of the wholesomeness of natural-historical path was quasi universal, the example of the civilized West was not unanimously accepted and often contested, but it was by far the most specific and the most convincing frame of this future “natural-historical state”.

Economic debates on the ways of reformation of the Soviet system made ample use of the underlying argument on the natural and organic character of money-commodity relations opposing them one more time to administrative violence. In the article of Nikolai Shmelev “The force or the rouble” we can find this typical line of economic arguments, taken in the broader historiosophical perspective.<sup>195</sup> The distinguished Soviet economist called his readers to abandon the quest for a new economic model, “unprecedented, unnatural and artificial, and therefore doomed to fail from its conception” (Shmelev aimed here at further inventions of such “chimeras” as self-government of employees, accountability of state enterprises which clearly proved to be inefficient forms of half-market socialism under perestroika; and this was taken as the sign of their incompatibility in principle<sup>196</sup>) and instead to rip the natural fruit of thousands years of history from Ancient Egypt to the most advanced modern economies – the market<sup>197</sup>. For Zavel’sky this logic of the natural-historical character of the market justified even the “shadow economics”; Zavel’sky concludes his essay in the solid collection “Glasnost, democracy, socialism” by calling to see in the black market not the problem, but an indication of the natural solution to the problems met by over-ambitious planning:

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<sup>195</sup> The arguments opposing bureaucratic arbitrary to the natural laws of economics was common to a number of influential liberal economists and economists-publicists such as V. Selyunin, B. Pinsker, V. Popov, S. Shatalin, N. Petrakov and others. Б. Пинскер, «Бюрократическая химера», *Знамя*, 1989, №11. В. Селюнин, «Плановая анархия или баланс интересов», *Знамя*, 1989, №11. Н. Шмелев, В. Попов, *На переломе: экономическая перестройка в СССР*, М., АПН, 1989, 398 с., in particular the section: «Бюрократия и рынок».

<sup>196</sup> We would like to note that at such level of historiosophical generalization the argument on the impossibility to mix “market and socialism” is factually wrong and inconsistent. It is also wrong to assert that in principle the market efficiency necessarily decreases if egalitarian salaries and tax-rates are imposed; what seems to be doomed is centralized planning and what seem to be the core of the economically productive setup is property rights protection and competition – independently of the exact cultural and institutional framework backing this setup. Notoriously, the Scandinavian countries successfully combine many strikingly socialist features and extreme egalitarianism with one of the highest labour productivity in the world economy. Yet, this is not to argue that this combination can be and should be rapidly achieved elsewhere through a series of reforms.

<sup>197</sup> In this article Shmelev made a considerate review of the necessary measures of transition to the open market economy, integrated in the world financial and trade markets. Published in 1989, the text did not refer to *market* but to *rouble* as the symbol of the money-commodity relations. Shmelev limited his proposals to the liberalization of the wholesale prices and specifically argued against the retail price liberalization. See: «Так что, может быть, хотя бы сегодня, когда страна подошла в экономике к самому краю катастрофы, мы наконец, поймем, что наша задача сейчас не придумывать что-то небывалое, вымученное, искусственное и потому обреченное на гибель уже при рождении своем, а овладеть тем, что сама жизнь придумала за тысячу лет развития человечества начиная от Древнего Египта и кончая теми странами и народами, кто сегодня впереди нас... Либо сила – либо рубль, иного выбора в экономика нет и не было от века». Николай Шмелев, «Либо сила, либо рубль», *Знамя*, 1989, №1, с.129

Let us understand, that our “shadow economics” – is not something alien and opposing us as a new sort of enemy, which causes all our troubles, but an organic phenomenon naturally shaped by our history and our society.

Let us realise that in essence – “shadow economics” are the concentrated achievements of the all-people’s efforts to find an exit from the dead-end in which we have fallen; it gives us a benchmark to find the right path for time, when we will be ready to leave the dead-end.<sup>198</sup>

Thus, for various liberal authors the market indicated the natural tendency of both, world history and the instinctive attempts to exit the dead-end of centralized economic planning. Even the black market was absolved as the expression of the natural tendencies of the society blocked by the Soviet system.

The central aspect characterising the natural-historical turn, which the discussed above article of Kiva makes perfectly manifest, is probably the most striking and unique aspect of perestroika’s political theory. The reliance on natural-historical evolution finds its allegorical reformulation of the optimal agency’s role:

The attempts recently undertaken by our leadership, to elaborate the optimal variant of breaking away from the country’s economic deadlock, can be metaphorically compared with the horseman, which loses his way in the snowstorm. An experienced, smart horseman will let drop the reins, and the horse will find the path on its own. Unwise rider will spur his little horse again and again... he will freeze and will ride his horse to death.<sup>199</sup>

According to this capacious metaphor, the major historical choice of perestroika, at least in the economic field, should be made not by a conscious deliberation about the optimal path at a cross-road, but by wisely letting the horse of history choosing its own course, as the way is lost and the blizzard raging around.

Incremental reforms and radical revolutions alike would be misleading in this sense. Soviet society had to abandon the wrong path altogether, and rejecting all forms of organized violence let the natural course of events beat the correct path. This formula inspired by the idea on the supremacy of the natural-historical evolution and by the rejection of the pathos of history-making, reflected the generalized attitude towards the current policy-making in 1990-1991. Thus, one of the leading authors of *Nash Sovremennik* who opposed the liberal market economy voiced the same “recipe” as the liberal Kiva, although aspiring to a different outcome – the reliance on history’s providential rightfulness allowed such a convergence:

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<sup>198</sup> М. Завельский, «Теневая экономика: враг или друг..?», in С. Протащик (сост.), *Через тернии, Перестройка: гласность, демократия, социализм*, М. Прогресс, 1990, с.261

<sup>199</sup> «Предпринимаемые в последнее время нашим руководством попытки выработать оптимальный вариант выхода страны из экономического тупика можно образно сопоставить с повелением всадника, сбившегося с пути в сильную пургу. Опытный, умный всадник отпустит вожжи, лошадь сама найдет путь. Неумный же будет шпорить и шпорить свою лошадку ... и сам замерзнет и ее загонит». Ibid., с.211

What should our society choose today? I will not give any recipes. The most reputed specialists do not have them. Perhaps, that is better this way. History shows that global plans of restructuring bring poverty and ruins. What is fruitful is organic development; growth on the well cultivated soil. And such a development can be only incremental. This is not the function of publicists and economists to set the goals for the whole society, or to indicate the new ideals. We just have to remind them. The people itself had secured its shrines throughout the centuries of history, our task being merely to attract the attention to this guiding star... And then let the society decide on its own, which form of property is more fruitful.<sup>200</sup>

Completing the selective panel of the main ideological orientations to a degree represented by the three magazines *Noviy Mir*, *Nash Sovremennik* and *Kommunist* we can refer to the last of the three, conditionally representing the views of Soviet socialist humanists. In his articulate analysis of the contemporary socio-political situation in the USSR, A. Galkin added a sociological layer to the theoretical and historiosophical arguments on behalf of the need of non-directed historical evolution, as also did L. Kuksa in a more obscure way, but using the typical language opposing natural-historical process to conscious activity<sup>201</sup>. Alexander Galkin, the pro-rector of INION, the main Soviet research institute for social science, considered three possible perestroika's outcomes differently configuring the roles of necessity and agency: 1. "self-regulating automatism of the historical action", 2. "mobilization scenario" and 3. "a reasonable combination of self-regulating development with minimally necessary stabilizing efforts which aim at maintaining the social order and legal atmosphere"<sup>202</sup>. We can note that scenario №3 which seemed to Galkin to be the most desirable solution differed from the "self-regulating automatism" only by the *minimal* efforts to maintain the legal order. The mobilization scenario is excluded on the ground of the sociological analysis linking the public perceptions of history and political behaviour: "Particularities of the perception of historical experience by public opinion largely define the frames of the possible political solutions of the problems accumulated to this moment...A large part of the society is penetrated by a deep distrust to all forms of mobilization, which is called to stimulate the development and it does not accept even the minimal efforts, which could be

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<sup>200</sup> «Так что же выбрать обществу сегодня? Не стану давать рецепты. Их нет и у наших признанных специалистов. Может, это и к лучшему. История показывает - глобальные планы переустройства оборачиваются нищетой и разрухой. Плодотворно органическое развитие. Рост на уже освоенной почве. А такое развитие может быть только постепенным. Не дело публицистов и экономистов ставить задачи перед обществом, открывать ему новые идеалы. Мы призваны напоминать о них. Народ сам вынес свои святыни из веков истории, наша задача - привлечь внимание к ним, побудить людей, захваченных текучкой буден, поднять голову и увидеть путеводную звезду... А уж какую форму собственности сочтет плодотворным общество - решать ему. Всему народу, а не специалистам, столкнувшимся за нашей спиной с кооператорами. Для меня главный вопрос во всем и всегда: будет ли начинание на пользу России?» А. Казинцев, «Четыре процента и наш народ. Что становится актуальным», *Наш Современник*, 1989, №6, с.172

<sup>201</sup> «Глубокая, развернутая характеристика современных социалистических преобразований в свете наших высших целей, доказательный анализ противоречивости естественно-исторического процесса и сознательной деятельности людей, ведущих при должном уровне овладения объективными законами к осуществлению наших идеалов, во многом будет способствовать их возвращению в массовое сознание, оказывать влияние на социально-волевой фактор массовых действий» учесть и неучитываемое: "оценить растущее участие масс во всех сферах социального управления, так сказать, "фактор самоуправления", вносящий существенные поправки даже в самые тщательно отработанные управленческие решения" Л. Кукса, «Общественное сознание: сложные взаимосвязи с практикой», *Кommunist*, 1989, №10, с.52

<sup>202</sup> «...разумное сочетание саморегулируемого развития с минимально необходимыми стабилизирующими усилиями, которые имеют целью поддержание общественного порядка, правовой атмосферы...». А. Галкин, «Общественный прогресс и мобилизационная модель развития», *Кommunist*, 1990, №18, с.33

suspected in leading to such a mobilization”<sup>203</sup>. According to this diagnosis, even if one would try a *deliberate* mobilization, this policy would fail independently of the ideological content and purpose of mobilization, due to the deep public distrust of such collective actions. Summing up the arguments of liberals, humanist socialists, and Russian nationalists in 1989-1991, natural-historical evolution excluding most deliberate actions and maintaining the minimal social order was the wise, productive, morally just and the only possible course. The Soviet conservatives lacking the theoretical perspective also expressed in their letters the *resignation* in the face of the ongoing privatization, which they saw as a restoration of wild capitalism, unacceptable but *irreversible*. In the self-defeating words of a former regional party secretary, I. Konotop, it was “too late to discuss”:

I agree that the ongoing processes in our society are irreversible and this is too late to discuss these issues, but nevertheless I ask you: does not the example, say of the recent Polish “experience”, indicate you where our country is going to? Democracy and glasnost in their contemporary form, unfortunately, regenerated Zionists, nationalists, Bukharinists, Trotskyites, thieves, neo-fascists and other evil spirits. Cosmopolites, using the media especially TV and press, have entangled the working masses in the tight web of pessimism, distrust of the party, led to oblivion the original patriotism of the Soviet people. While Zakharov and Karyakin, I am ashamed to write, the people’s deputies of USSR, with their Jesuit intentions, already raised their hand against the holy of holies, - Vladimir Ilyich Lenin... Unforgettably early we are burying the plan system, without perfecting it, but relying on “non-capitalist self-regulating economy”, too early we bury the leading role of the party relying on the mythical good will and self-rule without the due discipline and strict order.<sup>204</sup>

Finally, one of the rising political leaders of perestroika, Nikolai Travkin can be ideologically situated somewhere in between socialists and radical democrats while he was once a factory worker; in an interview to *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Travkin summed up the established wisdom of the moment addressing the hot issues of October revolution, Marxism, Bolshevik’s guilt and praising the natural social development:

In my opinion, [October 1917] was a time of a turn into a blind alley, and the Bolsheviks did not lead but drove the Russian people into this blind alley. They considered that they were wiser than everyone else, that the Marxian model of society was the only correct one and could be easily achieved. But life proved more complicated and the model was defective.

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<sup>203</sup> «Особенности восприятия исторического опыта общественным сознанием во многом определяют рамки возможного политического решения проблем, накопившихся к настоящему времени... В то же время значительная часть общества проникнута глубоким недоверием к любым формам мобилизационной модели, призванной стимулировать развитие, и не приемлет даже минимальные усилия, которые можно было бы заподозрить в намерении следовать такой модели». А. Галкин, «Общественный прогресс и мобилизационная модель развития», *Коммунист*, 1990, №18, с.33

<sup>204</sup> We refer to the appeal of the former Moscow’s region’s first secretary, I. Konotop quoted and analysed in the previous chapter: «Демократизация и гласность воскресили нечисть...», *Вестник архива Президента Российской Федерации*, 1993, №3, с.157-158; quoted in Russian in: Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны, 1985-2005*, АСТ-Астрель, М. 2007, с.141-142

If the Bolsheviks can be excused for leading the people away from the path of natural economic and social development – after all, they could genuinely be in error – it is difficult to excuse the elimination of the Church... But reason tells us not to encourage hysteria and political intolerance.<sup>205</sup>

The strange convergence in the policy orientation, accepted by competing and conflicting ideological strains may be accounted on the basis of the prior analysis. We can now recapitulate the two historiographical components of this major intellectual turn conditionally called *natural-historical*: scepticism about the purposeful human agency and trust in the wholesomeness of historical stream. The first component reflected the profound disillusion in the drive of history-making, immorality, claim on historiographical knowledge, and practical results of Marxism-Leninism, the second and a more implicit component was the remnant of Marxist teleological and chiliastic tendency, the idea of progress in its liberal-democratic form and arguably carried on the Russian historiographical tradition. This second component, the trust in the wholesome and ultimately favourable nature of history, can be seen particularly well in the search of the moment of the *original error*, which would mark the outfall from the lost and natural path of history. We can see this logic clearly unfolding in the formulations of the questions for a sociological poll organized by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and the Academy of Social Sciences (we follow the translation of the questions in English made by Mathew Wyman):

...52 per cent described October Revolution as a 'natural stage in the country's development', compared to 22 per cent who felt that it was 'an inescapable accident' and 23 per cent a historical mistake. The same survey, asking about the attempt to put socialism into practice, found 5 per cent taking a determinist line, that at the time of the October revolution there were no alternative paths of historical development, compared with 11 per cent who chose the option that the chosen path was correct, but there could have been more favourable variants, and the choice by 59 per cent that the idea of socialism was correct but impossible to put into practice. Only 24 per cent felt that the path chosen at that time was incorrect. The proportions of people who had written off the whole Soviet period were pretty much the same as in the VTsIOM poll discussed above, where 28 per cent disagreed that Bolshevik seizure of power was historically inevitable...<sup>206</sup>

Another poll published in 1991 was asking people to evaluate key historical events proposing only two options: "This was necessary" or "This was not necessary".<sup>207</sup> In the poll reported by Wyman people whose opinion was asked in general were less critical of the Soviet history than intellectuals who formulated the questions; and the former tried escaping the logic identifying necessary with good, and bad with accidental. Defying common sense, the formulations of the question used in the polls and

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<sup>205</sup> Н. Травкин, *Литературная газета*, 7 Ноября, 1990, cited and translated in R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, MacMillan, 1997, p.28

<sup>206</sup> Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p.62

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63



especially their sociological commentary made explicit a very strong assumption: *the natural and necessary historical course was beneficial, while historical choice (now identified with accident) could in fact be only misleading* – necessary events were to be approved, and accidental or arbitrary to be condemned. The commentator identifies as the same group 28 per cent saying that Bolsheviks victory was *not* “historically inevitable” and 24 per cent saying that “the chosen path was incorrect”. Unlike publicists, the majority manifestly was not ready to embrace this intellectual logic. The majority was ready to choose the most uncomfortable option that “the idea of socialism was good but impossible to put in practice”. We could interpret this formulation as the people’s general agreement with both the original ideals of socialisms and with their practical failure: it was worth trying but it failed. The intellectual frame adopted by the majority of intellectuals during perestroika implied that history was ultimately wholesome and it should be obeyed, while the majority of the polls accepted a more tragic outlook on history.

The quest for the critical cross-road revealed that intellectuals assumed that if things were going wrong now, society had to return to an earlier stage, where things were on track as they normally should, and if, as superficially liberal authors concluded, the whole Russian history gave no refuge, world-historical perspective insured that natural-historical evolution was at hand. To let this beneficial flaw society had to remove the obstacles retaining the initiative and alienating men and abandon the hopes on the peculiar Russian or Soviet paths. Solzhenitsyn was probably the most influential author who originated this new turn: history was wholesome not by revolutions or great missions, but as an organic national growth. In 1989-1991 these national overtones were downplayed and the Marxian vocabulary of natural-historical with a Westernizing reference to the world civilization took precedence; although both coexisted. There was no agreement about the specific features of this historically lost but natural setup.

The conviction that the original wholesome path had been actually lost “by accident” (i.e. by bad will which intellectually could not be deduced from and morally should not be reduced to the objective necessity) was omnipresent – accepting that the “natural” historical path could be torn and crooked was not easy both intellectually and morally. Therefore, the quest for the original lapse was universal independently of the moment identified as the necessarily wrong turning point, or the cross-road of deviation. R. W. Davies precisely captured this general theoretical assumption still manifest in 1992 explicitly marking the then dominant expressions in comas:

In 1992 euphoria, the whole Soviet past is rejected by those, who just advocated NEP, and the discussion is to know when exactly in 1917 Russia left “the road which all the civilized countries had to follow”.<sup>208</sup>

Taken together, the providential and optimistic teleology of the path and the disillusion in the agency’s ability of history-making created a particular blend of organic, conservative and evolutionary

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<sup>208</sup> R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Yeltsin era*, St Martin’s Press, London and NY, 1997, p.264

historiosophy negating the deliberate reforms and revolutions standing on the path of natural-historical life. This ability of history-making of the free agency was firmly identified with agency's inborn fallibility. World-historical context with its global ecological threats and the advanced civilized West indicated to liberals that the natural-historical path was a liberal free-market democracy, to Socialist humanists that it was a kind of social-democratic globalization and to Russian nationalists that this path was conservative and organic preservation of Russian traditions against Western corruption. By 1991, the Soviet path seemed so atypical, artificial and disastrous in the global world-historical context that the natural pace of history could start anew only when this path would have been completely but peacefully abandoned. There was a wise and pragmatic aspect of this pessimist outlook on the agency's ability to make history palliated by the optimistic reliance on the natural-historical process: Soviet intelligentsia and politicians adequately evaluated their virtual inability to understand the contemporary society and to set up new legal institutions. Thus, most actors refrained from angry political actions justified by ideology and supported by arms or other violent means. We can actually see this stance in a more favourable light as that of political and historical *prudence* acquired by the reflection on the massive descent into the hell of Gulag and on the turbulence of perestroika. Indeed, politically motivated violence, ideological passions, projects of the radical transformation, blames, and controversies were downplayed by this almost sober account, which however was not meant as an assessment of the current options in 1991, but as a universally valid historiosophical truth on history and politics. Rather than openly facing the transition to the market as the collective task and discuss its best options, Soviet public evacuated this crucial issue because it was aware of its own inability to discuss what they (refuse to) see. Public speech seemed powerless substitute of deeds, but history seemed wholesome and this was the last resort of the political philosophy. Public debate and human agency constituted by such debates had no assigned political role, henceforth, assumed by the innate intuition of the horses of History finding its way in the blizzard.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> In December 1991 a number of independent-minded intellectuals clearly realized that these horses driving the Russian Ptitisa-troika were actually the most active and often the most corrupted members of *Nomenklatura* preserving their hierarchy (!) and privatizing state's assets; however, these intellectuals saw little chances to influence this process and were tempted to rely on the natural wholesomeness of history. We discuss this issue in the last section of the Seventh chapter. See: «Конец века. После победы. Круглый стол политиков и политологов», *Век XX и Мир*, 1991, №12. Алла Латынина, Юлия Латынина, «Время разбирать баррикады. Предварительные итоги XX века», *Новый Мир*, 1992, №1



**CHAPTER VII**  
**Founding a new republic without violence**  
**[1990 and beyond]**

In the last chapter we would like to focus on the dramatic two years of 1990-1991 and selectively look at the early post-Soviet period – contrasting the political evolution of the Gorbachev era with the dominant theoretical arguments of this period and new status of the political speech suddenly loosing its public significance. The metaphor of the major historical choice freely and reasonably made by the public was backing the optimistic expectations from the emerging intellectual debates in 1987-1989. The metaphor of the rider loosing its reins and letting the horse instinctively choose the path in the snowstorm reflected the loss of confidence in the political speech and public reasoning. Harsh but harmless public lamentations and the new genre of the expert political knowledge purposefully concealed from the public (known as *polittekhologii* in the 1990s) were two sides of the same transformation accomplished around 1990.

We approach 1990 and the following years as the time of the simultaneous dissolution of the established social order and foundation of the new states.<sup>1</sup> We would like to point out at the difficulty to found a new republic on free public deliberation and non-violence – two factors and two policies causing the collapse of the old order. What could be identified as anti-Machiavellian moment in the transformation of political speech of perestroika, i.e. the profound mistrust of human agency and reliance on wholesomeness of historical *Fortuna*, seems to be a paradoxical intellectual background for the revolutionary creation of the new states. The closing point of the theoretical debates of perestroika was the denial of agency's positive role in history and politics. Simultaneously, most brilliant intellectuals bitterly observed the incapacity of public speech and rational reasoning to change public things for better. This sceptical civic *epoché* on the effective political speech expressed both, a wide historiosophical consensus and a realistic (although self-enforcing) assessment of social reality. The central historiosophical arguments against the human agency and the new status of the suddenly powerless political speech in 1990-1991 *reflected* on the experience of perestroika and Soviet history. It could also partly explain events, decisions and non-decisions in the next two decades. The new "era" starting in 1990 and somehow artificially limited by the present time can be described as the transition from an ideologically plural democracy to a non ideological authoritarianism re-appropriating the monopoly of public speech in mass-media.

Can we see perestroika as a revolution without an agency? Perestroika was prominently initiated as a revolution from above and its initiator relied on the spontaneous revolution from bellow understood as "creativity of the masses". Mobilizing and liberating the human factor Gorbachev imagined to profoundly reforming the existing state changing its legal and institutional foundations for the better. In this sense, Gorbachev dared what Machiavelli saw as the highest human accomplishment – after the

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<sup>1</sup> The vital challenge of building new social institutions and order was overlooked and even denied in the last years of perestroika by the Russian reformers and by the vast majority of the Soviet intellectuals relying on the natural-historical bed. Liberal philosopher A. A. Kara-Murza was among the first to point at this fundamental problematique in terms of the opposition civilization Vs barbarianism rather than, say democrats Vs communists. See: A. A. Кара-Мурза, *Между «Империей» и «Ступой»*, Полис, М., 1996.

inception of a new religion – “to found a new republic”.<sup>2</sup> Once the invisible to Gorbachev hand of the Soviet rules of public speech was taken away by glasnost and the republican parliaments became independent sources of legislative power, Gorbachev was not alone in this risky enterprise of state-building. A few thousands active men were playing with and against him when the General Secretary was deconstructing the old party apparatus and its powers. A far greater number of people, mostly belonging to the party-state or intellectual elites, started breaking or subverting established economic and societal norms, enjoying new liberties, pursuing their interests and even creating their *own* new republics. The old hierarchy and party-state executive apparatuses were challenged both by Gorbachev and new players and were finally destroyed. In 1990-1991, quite a few influential volunteers played on the side of the USSR in this open rivalry. On the whole, under glasnost the Soviet regime and state were rejected by their most virtuous and most corrupted stakeholders. The gradual marginalization of the public speech translated the relative failure of the former and the success of the latter.

The exploration of new forms of political, economic, social and cultural life created a small, although highly influential and heterogeneous *stratum* of new actors acting on the margins of laws and exploring the freedom for better and for worse. The majority of ordinary people experienced the economic hardships and were hardly coping with the multiple ruptures in the symbolic and social practices. Widespread but unprompted privatization, grey distribution and the legalization of private cooperatives and banks in 1988 rapidly transformed the late Soviet corruption into the dominant economic mode of commerce at odds with the state economy and, potentially, more compatible with the free market. The stabilization of the new social order, i.e. the elaboration of the corresponding ideological, customary and institutional constraints, took decades in most post-Soviet republics. We argue that the role of the Putsch as the cause of the collapse of the USSR is overstated. The formal banning of the CPSU and the dissolution of the USSR in August- December 1991 had a major symbolic meaning of a rupture, especially for the outside world. In terms of the internal institutional, political and intellectual changes it was one of the many thresholds within the two decades long process of dissolution and creation of the new republics on the ruins of the Soviet *ancient regime*. In the first section we analyse the logic of the economic stalemate and its connection with the privatization process – well ahead before Gaidar’s reforms. In the second section, we follow the process of the competitive democratic forums setting new legal basis for political independence of the republican and regional entities and for economic privatization.

Throughout the chapter, we pay close attention to the practical application of the principle of non-violence. In the third section, we look at the August putsch and its interpretations. The ideological and

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<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev wanted to profoundly reform the Soviet Union in order to give a new socialist and humanist model for the whole world. Arguably, one of Gorbachev’s models, V. Lenin managed to do both things at the same time, although Machiavelli was the partisan of the separation of the two. “Intra tutti gli uomini laudati sono i laudatissimi quelli che sono stati capi e ordinatori delle religioni. Appresso, dipoi, quelli che hanno fondato o repubbliche o regni” Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, Capitolo 10. For the examination of the intellectual influence of Machiavelli on the Russian political thought and Bolsheviks in particular see: E. A. Rees, *Political Thought from Machiavelli to Stalin. Revolutionary Machiavellism*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 334 p.

practical *rejection* of political violence was the specific historical feature of the last years of perestroika – this is surprising for a period when institutions, borders, values, customs, interests, and ideas were in an open clash. Responding to his challengers, Gorbachev in his efforts to save at least the Soviet state and its Soviet socialist orientation was bound by his public commitment to non-violence and personal taste for convincing others by his charisma and vision. The *Nobel peace prize* received by Gorbachev in October 1990 was an additional but certainly minor factor in this respect. More surprisingly, most Politburo members who formed the GKChP were unenthusiastic about the use of violence too. The properly ideological differences between them and the initiator of perestroika were rather subtle, and not well articulated. If Gorbachev was very reluctantly moving beyond his humanist Soviet *worldview* in order to address the new problems generated by its optimistic application, the members of the Security Council – who favoured perestroika policies but not their results – had no replies to the challenges of the moment. They did not defend an alternative program responding to the high social costs of both, transition and non-transition to capitalism, to the moral crisis of the Communist ideology and the CPSU, and to the republican nationalisms, Russian and non-Russian ones.

In the 1990s, the post-Soviet Russia reproduced the similar pattern of ethno-national and legal decomposition coupled with the loosely regulated privatization with no commonly accepted and acceptable frame of social reality but mutual distrust. Yeltsin and later Putin could palliate to the persistent lack of the state authority and weakness of public politics by the arbitrary and pointed *violence* against their opponents. Their surroundings and many intellectuals were actively looking for the new ideological ground; the return to the control over public speech replied to the persisting difficulty of establishing a lasting political order based on free deliberation and competitive elections. The fear to recognize, accept and discuss the reality of decomposition, corruption and privatization in economics, politics and societal relations, as well as the fear of civil war or social collapse manifest in August 1991, October 1993, spring 1996, and during the first election of Putin, appears as the obstacle for the renewal of the political language adequate to people's practical experience and authoritative public debates. Lamentations of the unsatisfied and manipulations of the public opinion by the authorities reflect one thing. How one can publicly discuss with his fellows the reality which *manifestly* can not be changed and can not be morally accepted?

## Spontaneous sub-rosa privatization: full stocks and empty shelves

In 1990-1991, the head of the Soviet Union and the ordinary Soviet people felt that the time was out of joint: for the vast majority these two years were marked by the empty shelves, growing irritation and the widespread sense of anarchy and miscommunication analysed in the fifth chapter. Unexpected results of perestroika revealed several structural problems of the USSR such as the crisis of the moral authority of the CPSU, rising nationalism, spontaneous privatization, food shortages, and social unrest – they accumulated and often reinforced each other and the resulting sense of disorder was reflected and amplified by the free press. This constellation imposed an unfriendly agenda to the socialist reformers who by then put into practice most of the recipes they considered as realistic and good: more discipline, less drinking, private cooperatives, self-accounting, more glasnost, and more democratic forums. The new round of Gorbachev's reform initiatives was an improvised attempt to rapidly react to the results of the first failures and avoid the conservative backlash while trying to adjust his worldview to this unfriendly reality. Both, worldview and reality proved stubborn. Giving a retrospective account of their reforms, Gorbachev and Yakovlev often claimed that peaceful dismantling of the old Soviet system was their objective; at the same time, even in 1991 the majority of the Soviet people in Russia, Belorussia, and Asian republics as well as Gorbachev wanted to preserve the USSR as a political entity and to rapidly create a new mixture of more efficient market, state ownership and social guarantees.<sup>3</sup>

As it is widely noted, the early hopes of a rapid economic improvement rapidly turned into an even deeper disappointment common to the ordinary people, the elites and intelligentsia. This perception can be contrasted to the enthusiasm of a small *new stratum* of entrepreneurs, political activists and artists and more latent activism of the Soviet *nomenklatura* engaged in the privatization. An outstanding journalist and analyst Andrei Fadin gave a rough estimation of the composition of the new stratum in December 1991: 70% belonged to the Soviet *nomenklatura* properly speaking and 30% were the new cadres self-recruited from other educated and wealthy groups<sup>4</sup>. The difference in the perceptions of this period between the majority and the tiny but crucial minority is striking; to reconstruct the full panorama we have to keep in mind both sides – the vast majority of disoriented people and a small number of men and women actively exploring freedom without rules for the benefits or detriment of others. Once the consensually welcomed reforms proved counter-productive

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<sup>3</sup> We refer to the account of the popular attitudes towards the market and their contradictions in Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, pp. 174-213

<sup>4</sup> «Один из центральных вопросов нынешней ситуации - что представляет из себя посткоммунистический правящий класс. Трудность анализа состоит в том, что в подавляющем большинстве по "должностному происхождению", социально-профессиональному составу новые политические элиты и в центре, и в республиках, процентов на 70 - это вчерашняя номенклатура КПСС, ВЛКСМ, и профсоюзов. Новые же люди власти - это в большинстве так называемые "социально благополучные", upper middle class реального социализма. Все они представляли по статусу, доходам, модели потребления верхние 20% населения.

Причины этого феномена очевидны: как и в иных действительно посттоталитарных обществах, наше общество не смогло сформировать никакой контрэлиты. Не исключено, впрочем, что это - наиболее удачный, мягкий, бескровный вариант перемен в стране. Но социальная преемственность власти обозначает и пределы перемен, поскольку политическая субкультура, к которой носители новой власти принадлежат, в значительной степени сформировалась в недрах старой номенклатуры госсocialизма». «Конец века. После победы. Круглый стол политиков и политологов», *Век XX и Мир*, №12, 1991, стр.40



and the Soviet past suddenly started to look like a bloody nightmare, the political course of the central leadership was lost. The new stratum took numerous initiatives contributing to the rapid destabilization of the unprotected and already corrupted social order. The central leadership was losing public support in large part because of the shortages caused by his policies joined with the activism of the stratum, but (publicly and often academically) attributed to the shortcomings of the planned economy as such. By 1985 the Soviet planned economy was in stagnation for a decade without any political incidents, but its partial liberalization along with a rapid democratization of the political system destroyed its economic logic. At the same time, in general the old hierarchies and networks survived; schematizing, one can see this process as the privatization of the power positions within the hierarchy:

In substance, both, the new and old representatives of the nomenklatura have no other basis for their power positions except the existing structure of the state-property. In any case, as usual, the position of the new men close to power will be defined by their position into the power hierarchy, rather than by their position within the structure of property.<sup>5</sup>

This early diagnosis accounts well for 1991 and 2009 and most probably for the dominant logic of the whole period in between these two dates.

#### *Soviet revolution of managers: spontaneous privatization and its consequences*

The uncontrolled and creeping, or as this process was aptly called by Johnson, Kroll and later analysed by Solnik, *spontaneous privatisation* via the control of the finances of the state enterprises by their managers and the beginning of the official “denationalization” in 1988 and onwards split the ruling elites’ perception of the economic processes<sup>6</sup>. In an article published in January 1990, G. Grossman deemed this process “sub-rosa” stressing that privatization was initiated in continuity with the old underground Soviet economic practices such as (necessarily) illegal small private enterprises, common criminal activity or corruption. Grossman then asked the question whether this uneasy combination might not be ultimately beneficial for a smoother pace of Gorbachev’s reforms.<sup>7</sup> Instead of

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<sup>5</sup> We refer again on the evidence discussed by the authoritative participants of the round-table of the *Vek XX I Mir* who independently noted that not only people, but also their hierarchies were often reproduced during the privatization process. «Конец века. После победы. Круглый стол политиков и политологов», *Век XX и Мир*, №12, 1991

<sup>6</sup> Simon Johnson and Heidi Kroll, "Managerial Strategies for Spontaneous Privatization", in *Soviet Economy*, no. 2 (1991), pp. 281-316. Compare with the account by Solnik: "In theory, these moves implied that the budget constraint faced by managers would become harder, but that they would also have more options available (for example, sale of some proportion of their output at liberalized prices) to respond to these new incentives. In practice, however, the cooperatives and small enterprises established by firm managers enabled them to remobilize many assets of state enterprises into organizational units less clearly owned by state ministries. These micro-level realignments came to be known as "spontaneous privatization," since a frequent pattern was the de facto expropriation by managers and ministerial bureaucrats of many assets belonging to state enterprises. In many cases, these spontaneously privatized concerns collaborated with state bureaucrats eager to "privatize" the functions of the ministries themselves. In the brief period from 1989 to 1991 many managerial responsibilities previously discharged by the industrial planning hierarchy were internalized by enterprises themselves or shared with horizontally or vertically integrated kontserny". Solnick, Steven Lee, *Stealing the state: control and collapse in Soviet institutions*, Harvard University Press, Russian Research Center studies, 1999, p.224

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Grossman, "Sub-Rosa Privatization and Marketization in the USSR", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 507, Jan., 1990, pp. 44-52

more actively and flexibly managing the Soviet firms on behalf of the state or common good, state managers used the liberties granted by the new reform for a number of privatization strategies of the assets under their control ranging from extremely high wages to appropriation of the legal rights of ownership. This is to say the economic reforms granting autonomy for state enterprises were profoundly subverted by the majority of managers trying to “privatize” what they were managing, while reformers saw there the reactionary resistance of the apparatus to the progressive reforms. Reforms ultimately missed any vision of how exactly private and public interests should be adjusted, although they had no doubts that their harmonious combination went *in the sense* of historical development and corresponded to their basic political expectations. The abstract perspective of a historiosophical convergence between state socialism and market did not provide realistic clues of how to make both compatible in terms of practical motivations of people and existing regulating institutions, but this historiosophy gave hope and perspective for rather naïve economic reforms elaborated by the best and boldest Soviet economists.

In 1990-1991 the groups of privatizers became self-aware, to use the Marxian language. As result of this awareness, the Soviet bureaucratic establishment lost its “ideological” and organizational unity already questioned by reforms, clashes of values and nationalism. The new heterogeneous stratum of privatizers could not be accurately defined in terms of the social classification current in USSR (workers, peasants, intelligentsia and *nomenklatura*) – it recruited the most active, energetic, but often most cynical and corrupted men. The majority arguably belonged to the old *nomenklatura*, but not exclusively and certainly only a fraction of *nomenklatura* joined this process. Thus, the liberal humanist socialists decided to democratize the Soviet rule and allow greater place for private interests in the economy in order to enhance economic growth and, in particular, stimulate the development of the consumer services and consumer goods production. In response, the widespread moral corruption and cynicism of the ruling elite of the pre-perestroika period gave place to the country-wide economic corruption and sub-rosa privatization of the state’s assets:

Confronting this situation [sever shortages, poor services, centralized decision making and affluent money supply] is a cynical population starved even for material necessities, educated above its economic reach, and with a modern existence beyond its grasp. Confronting the population is an inert and heavily corrupted apparatus of rule and enforcement.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth noting that this lively picture was drawn by an astute American scholar two years before Gaidar’s reforms were announced and during these two crucial years the privatization process went only growing. Republican and regional party leaders, the heads of the Soviets, ministerial executives, management of the state-enterprises, Komsomol leaders, black market agents, scientists and intellectuals, stage directors, professional criminals, managers of state distribution channels, and KGB officers engaged in the privatization of the state property, and incidentally paralysed the Soviet economy.

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<sup>8</sup> Gregory Grossman, “Sub-Rosa Privatization and Marketization in the USSR”, p. 47

The privatization factor acquired political significance only in the last phase of perestroika and could not be identified as the *purpose* of the perestroika's policies in general – unless it is cautiously treated as its subconscious purpose<sup>9</sup>. Gorbachev, Ligachev or Yakovlev were opposed to the privatization policies of Gaidar's and later governments. The earlier privatisation trend was mostly ignored or discounted by the top reformers as “mafia” and “obstruction to the reforms” in the public debates or during Politburo sessions devoted to policy making. Thus, Prime-minister N. Ryzhkov, opposing the rapid liberalization, spoke at Politburo about the smuggling of the state resources by the private cooperatives and pointed at the rising politician and the patron of the future Russian president, A. Sobchak, as one of the lobbyists of the black market economy. In response, moderate Slyunkov, Ivashko, and reform-minded Medvedev opposed the repressive conclusions from this analysis as “administrative-controlling approach”. Other Politburo members including KGB head Kruchkov and Ligachev argued on the necessity to control the too critical TV and reorient reforms for the benefits of the poorest and largest strata of the population; this implicitly criticising the emerging economic inequality. Gorbachev and Yakovlev simply *ignored* the spontaneous privatization factor in their discussions of policy making, albeit Gorbachev was well familiar with its logic in terms of “mafia” and “theft”<sup>10</sup>. By contrast, as we noted above, rare neo Stalinists such as Nina Andreeva, had anticipated the privatization in March 1988 later accusing Gorbachev and other reformers in the secret plan to privatise the state property and to restore the capitalism with the help of propaganda inherited from Trotsky.<sup>11</sup> Alexander Prokhanov, the pioneer of the Great Power nationalism favourably cited in the article of Nina Andreeva also very early noted the privatization as the central economic process and in 1991 attributed it to an American secret plan deploying “organizational weapons”.<sup>12</sup> These

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<sup>9</sup> There is reliable evidence only concerning A. Yakovlev, who presumably saw the market economy and the “economy of the owners” as one of the main goals from the beginning of perestroika albeit articulated in Marxian terms of overcoming *alienation* from the productive activity; Yakovlev's referential experience in Canada and his beliefs made him highly critical about the privatization process and wild capitalism of 1990s. He did not benefit from the actual process of privatisation and bitterly condemned the Yeltsin's type of privatization; on the other hand, Gorbachev, Medvedev, Ligachev, Ryzhkov, Boldin or Shakhnazarov looked for a better socialist economy or for a better combination of the two. They by no means represented the “group interested in privatization”. Compare with the argument on the opportunistic “capitalist choice” of the part of the Soviet nomenklatura in D. Kots, F. Weir, *Revolution from above: the Demise of the Soviet System*, N.Y., Routledge, 1997

<sup>10</sup> We refer to a telling albeit unique passage from his meeting with the representatives of the working class: «Видим, что производство растёт, а прилавки пустеют. Куда девается? Мафия «работает» на дефиците. И ОБХСС от нее кормится. А прав для проверки нет. Не выработаны. Нужен рабочий контроль. Возьмите рабочие столовые. Там порядок. Правда гарнир – в основном макароны... Но хоть не воруют». *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.443

<sup>11</sup> The reference to Trotsky is, so to speak, triply misplaced – not only the reformers were miles away from this passionate revolutionary leader and his ideological stances, but Trotsky had famously predicted the transformation of the Soviet bureaucracy into the class of owners; finally, this reference made the whole claim grotesque and irretrievable for most intellectuals. The pattern implied that the normal reaction associated with the public recognition of the privatization was nostalgia for Stalinist terror.

<sup>12</sup> «Может быть, вам покажутся навязчивыми и странными мои вопросы. Быть может, они свидетельствуют о мифологическом способе мышления нашей гуманитарной малоинформированной среды. Но есть взгляд на перестройку как на спланированную, многослойную акцию извне, направленную на сокрушение СССР, выведение его из истории. Есть понятие “организационное оружие”. Это система экономического, идеологического, психологического, быть может, даже парапсихологического воздействия одного социума на другой, одной, более высокоразвитой, системы на другую; управления одного государства другим в интересах последнего. Полагаю, что нынешняя катастрофа есть следствие удара, нанесенного этим организационным оружием по нашим структурам, формам сознания, целым общественным слоям и отдельно взятым лидерам. Этот удар продолжительностью в несколько лет разрушил страну, загнал ее в тупик, ориентировал на ложные цели,

grotesquely formulated claims about the covered privatization turned to be factually most accurate; but they seriously overstated the planned character of transition. The authors of *Novyi Mir* and especially the authors of *XX Vek I Mir* realised the scope and the nature of this covered privatization by the end of perestroika in 1991.<sup>13</sup> The degree of unconsciousness of the privatization is worth to be better studied with the emphasis on the timing: the legalization of the “individual economic activity” in 1986 and “Law on cooperatives” in 1988 certainly were not designed by Gorbachev to foster privatization (at least, we have no indication in favour of this hypothesis in his prolific speeches and writings, both private and public), but the legalization of joint-stock ventures and firms with limited liability in June 1990 could already be lobbied on purpose.<sup>14</sup>

Spontaneous privatization and shortage of the basic goods generalized during in 1989-1991 made the population unhappy and frustrated, if not angry, while the economy’s output remained steady and dropped only in 1991. The downfall of oil prices forced the reduction of imports of consumer goods and food and rapidly increased the state budget deficit to the verge of its technical bankruptcy; but this effect was felt during the last years of perestroika and should not be taken as preceding or forcing perestroika policies<sup>15</sup>. The transfer between non-cash and cash roubles, previously strictly controlled, became an easy means for the management to take hold of the state financial assets putting additional pressure on consumer prices and inflation (and as we later analyse, it also split the Soviet nomenklatura)<sup>16</sup> – the Komsomol’s “centres of youth’s techno-scientific creativity” first obtained the right of such transfers and gradually grew into banks and big private corporations such as Yukos, Most and Alfa<sup>17</sup>. The creation of the *Contserny* with an undefined legal status transformed the entire ministries into *de facto* independent economic organizations gave birth to such future giants as Gazprom. That the privatization process was difficult to understand for the members of the Politburo and of the Counsel of Ministers is brilliantly illustrated by a curious discussion around the proposal of Victor Chernomyrdin to create semi-private Gazprom on the basis of the ministry of gas, the ministry he then headed. This is to say that Ryzhkov too misunderstood the scope and the nature of the privatization when he criticised the lobbyists of the “black market”. In 1989, N. Ryzhkov could not understand what he saw as a voluntary down-shifting from Chernomyrdin’s ministerial position to the uncertainty of a vaguely defined position of the head of *kontsern*, and a more reform-minded A. Biryukova would reply in order to resolve the issue:

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поверг в долговременный хаос. Что вы на это скажете? “Оргоружие” - это миф или реальность?». See: «Беседуют начальник Первого главного управления КГБ СССР Леонид Владимирович Шебаршин и главный редактор газеты “День” Александр Проханов», *День*, август 1991 г., No 16.

<sup>13</sup> See: «Конец века. После победы. Круглый стол политиков и политологов», *Век XX и Мир*, №12, 1991

<sup>14</sup> См. «Поправки к закону об исчезающей кооперации вступают в действие», *Коммерсант-Власть*, 24.09.1990

<sup>15</sup> In February 1991, the new General Secretary’s Deputy Ivashko received the report from two officials of CC CPSU in charge of IR and economy, stating that «По оценке Внешэкономбанка СССР страна находится на пороге банкротства со всеми вытекающими экономическими и политическими последствиями». Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, с.246-247

<sup>16</sup> See the complaints of Ryzhkov about the inflationary pressure of this shadow transfer in January 1990. Mutalibov more clearly denounced the transfer of the noncash into cash via cooperatives in October of the same year. *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.556, с.616

<sup>17</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.120-121

I got nothing out of this proposal. But after all, why is it not worth trying? We know Chernomyrdin very well... If things go wrong we smash his head and take it all back<sup>18</sup>.

Yegor Gaidar notes the particularly loose conditions allowing the creation of the private banks since 1989, without any regulating agencies: “[banks] turning into instruments of the monetary privatization and the extraction of the enterprises’ financial assets from the state control”<sup>19</sup>. There were 43 private banks in 1989, 224 – in 1990, and 1357 in 1991 with the right to borrow money from the Central bank and state companies in the context of high inflation and in the absence of any legal or economic responsibility for the non-returns of the money borrowed<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, Gaidar shows that N. Ryzhkov as prime-minister (and as the critic of the smuggling of the state resources whom we cited above), was among the protagonists of the formation of the new banks in 1988 referring to the lack of the financial infrastructure in the Soviet Union<sup>21</sup>. Pikhovia reports that in 1990 CC CPSU was overcrowded by the requests to “actionize” or more bluntly to privatize the print shops, car service centres, hotels, and residences belonging to the republican and local Party cells<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, under Putin’s rule, Chernomyrdin indeed has retreated from the Gazprom’s main stakeholder’s position and returned back to serve the state, as it was expected by the experienced Politburo member A. Biruykova – but “taking everything back” proved no more possible. We would like to cite a unique account of this process reporting the Chernomyrdin’s own version of these debates: «Черномырдин рассказывает, что приходил к Рыжкову со своей идеей газового концерна несколько раз. Рисовал схемы, объяснял, говорил, говорил, говорил до позднего вечера. В конце одного из таких разговоров Рыжков спросил:

— То есть я понял, что ты министром не хочешь быть? — он все еще верил, что нет лучше занятия, чем быть в Советском Союзе министром.

— Нет, не хочу, — отвечал Черномырдин.

— И не будешь членом правительства? — недоумевал Рыжков. — И понимаешь, что лишаешься всего? Дачи, привилегий?

— Да, понимаю...

— Ну вот, если я тебя отпущу сейчас, ты завтра возьмешь себе двадцать заместителей!

— Почему? Не надо мне двадцать. Два зама — и хватит.

Черномырдин уехал от Рыжкова за полночь, оставив председателя Совета министров в полной уверенности, что министр газовой промышленности сошел с ума. Черномырдин ехал в министерство, где его ждали два зама, посвященных в замысел: Рем Вяхирев и Вячеслав Шерemet. Уже в машине раздался звонок: “Завтра вопрос о преобразовании Министерства газовой промышленности в госконцерн будет обсуждаться на президиуме Совета министров”... Речь Черномырдина в Совмине выслушали молча. Реакция остальных членов правительства была недоуменной. И вдруг слово взяла Александра Бирюкова, зампред Совмина, курировавшая легкую промышленность.

— Я выслушала все, что сейчас докладывал министр, — так вспоминает сейчас ее слова Черномырдин, — и я ничего не поняла из того, что он говорил. Но хочу сказать: а почему бы нам не попробовать? Чего мы боимся? Мы его хорошо знаем. К нему никогда никаких претензий не было. Если у него не получится — мы ему голову оторвем и вернем все на свои места». М. Зыгарь, В. Панюшкин, «Инстинкт сохранения», *Власть*, 2008, №3 (756)

<sup>19</sup> Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, М. Роспэн, 2007, с.277

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., с.278

<sup>21</sup> Gaidar’s own *public* accounts of the economic situation during perestroika on the pages of *Kommunist* did not address this issue, well elaborated in his later accounts of perestroika. This confirms again that the only perspective from which actors could perceive the ongoing privatization as the major challenge to the state authority and ability to reform – was the perspective of those who opposed the need of reforms leading to the “market economy”. There were only few exceptions in the Gaidar’s loose circle that we will cite later in this chapter. See: Ibid., с.279

<sup>22</sup> Most of them were accepted. A typical request from 6<sup>th</sup> April 1991 is cited by R. Pikhovia. The Leningrad local party’s committee asked the administration of the CC CPSU to allocate 50 million roubles from the Insurance fund of CPSU to the commercial bank “Russia” (still existing today) for two years at 6% interest rate. As Pikhovia ironically notes, that the slogan “Proletarians of all lands, unite!” harbouring the request should probably backup this demand to CC CPSU at a time when the commercial rates were two to three times higher. Pikhovia reports that CC CPSU was overcrowded by this kind of requests as well as the requests to “actionize” [atsionirovat], or bluntly privatize the print shops, car service centres, hotels, and residences belonging to the local Party cells.; Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть*, с.248

Meanwhile, the debates on the transition to the market (transition in fact well under way for five to four years) and the negotiations between the Union and republics delayed the formation of the legal and institutional frame for this privatization of the financial and real estate assets of the Soviet state and the CPSU. This rapid privatization process was hidden neither from the wider population nor from the ruling elites, but its scope was difficult to assess as it still is now, and overall the public debates did not really address this issue.

### *Distribution crisis and the delayed pro-market consensus*

The enumeration of the alarming figures on the perestroika's economy by scholars and in the memoirs confirms the image of an imminent economic collapse<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, in most cities the ration cards on sugar, meat or butter introduced to palliate to this situation could only be used after long hours of queuing<sup>24</sup>. In 1989, there was only 11% in the standard basket of 1000 goods available in shops without queuing or ration cards<sup>25</sup>. According to a later poll, 50% of respondents "saw nothing" (!) which could be bought in the regular shops without ration card in 1991<sup>26</sup>. In certain regions, even ration cards were cancelled as they could not be backed by the allocated goods<sup>27</sup>. The situation indeed was compounded (but certainly not caused) by the bad conjuncture of falling oil prices and 15% fall in oil production in 1988-1991. This drop reduced the food import due to the lack of the oil's hard currency and also put USSR on the verge of an international credit default<sup>28</sup>.

However, the registered economic decline in 1988-1991 was mild and it by no means could cause such devastating political and economic consequences as the collapse of a state recently seen as the second world superpower. We argue that the main economic problems were caused by the disruption in the *distribution* channels and the irresponsible monetary policies within and outside the country. Glasnost amplified the perception of the crisis and channelled the rising discontentment against Gorbachev, reformers, Russians, and apparatchiks; however, in the theoretical debates CPSU and its ideology were designated as the main wrongdoer. Otherwise, until 1991, most figures of production

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<sup>23</sup> Certain conclusions seem too expedite in regard to the figures. For example, Marshal Goldman argued that USSR was running a considerable budget deficit since 1985, while the state reduced the amount of consumer goods and food imported for the hard currency (decreasing since the gradual fall of the world oil prices) and the accumulated surplus money found no sufficient offer of goods. But M. Goldman uses the table showing that USSR imported for virtually the same amount of money in 1983 and in 1988, which does not imply any dramatic changes he implies. V. Medvedev reports 13% increase in wage in 1989 and only 2,3% of growth in productivity for the same period – again this is a bad sign, but not yet the crisis. Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, p. 134. Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева, Взгляд изнутри*, М., «Былина», 1994, с.103.

<sup>24</sup> Vadim Medvedev authoritatively points at 1988 as the last relatively stable year in the economy; since 1989 he notes the "dislocation of the consumer market". Вадим Медведев, *В команде Горбачева, Взгляд изнутри*, М., «Былина», 1994, с.87, 103-105

<sup>25</sup> Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, с.248

<sup>26</sup> See: И. Стародубровская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Вагриус, 2004 (2ое изд.), с.190

<sup>27</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.183

<sup>28</sup> Gaidar points at an average of 20 USD for barrel in 1985-1991 compared to an average of 40 USD in the previous decade. See, Егор Гайдар, *Долгое время, Россия в мире*, М., «Дело», 2005, с.342-346

were positive, neutral or bad, but far from catastrophic; what made them dramatic was the mild privatisation of the state distribution system<sup>29</sup>.

Early in 1989, in reaction to the shortages, Gorbachev decided to drastically reduce investments in heavy industry and military spending in favour of consumer goods production<sup>30</sup>. However, the results from this decision would be tangible only a few years later; economic reforms faced the threshold – wholesale and retail price liberalization. The state regulated prices made most of the previous economic reforms counter-productive giving more autonomy to the management of the state enterprises without the market responsibility: management got the full control over their enterprises and could create straw-man cooperatives to withdraw financial assets<sup>31</sup>. Maxim Meyer (historian, and later one of the cofounders of the most influential political think-tank FEP efficiently serving Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev), made a comparative analysis of the causes of the severe famine in 1921-1923 and the current food shortages threatening famine in 1991. In February 1991, Meyer clearly formulated that “[t]he main cause of the food shortages in 1990 is the latent economic strike and a *de facto* introduction of the market relations and prices”<sup>32</sup>.

The increase of the monetary mass was another ingredient of the grey market pressure on the Soviet distribution channels. The Soviet financial bureaucracy, having some experience in monetary macro regulation, had no say in the democratic and populist process favoured by the People’s Deputies Congresses<sup>33</sup>. As the state-regulated prices were not liberalized, official prices grew slowly, and the inflation flourished in the emerging private and black market sectors<sup>34</sup>; starting from 1989 and until the end of 1991 most grocery stores stood virtually empty. Thus, the increased demand on consumption goods led to inflation and accelerated the *de facto* privatization of the distribution channels by their management, as the gap between the state retail prices and the price people were ready to pay was increasing in a vicious circle with the emptying shelves; most goods and food were sold on the black market by the employees of the Soviet retail shops and wholesale organizations or by the trading cooperatives; according to the official estimates of the Ministry of Interior, 30% of goods from the state distribution were sold on the black market in 1990 – totally empty shelves signalled an even higher

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<sup>29</sup> One can distinguish two forms of this privatization: the basic subversion of the goods in stocks and the privatisation with the creation of the first commodity and currency stock-exchanges on the basis of the State Agency of Supply (*Gossnab*). See: А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, с.121

<sup>30</sup> See: *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС... По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991)*, М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.448-449. Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, М. Роспэн, 2007, с.245-246

<sup>31</sup> N. Ryzhkov pointed out at the “symbiosis” [*srastanie*] of cooperatives and state enterprises in January 1990. In parallel to this symbiosis limiting the offer, both, the Congresses of Peoples and state enterprises were given the right to raise wages and social spending and they rapidly abused of this right creating significantly more consumer demand in the context of the economic stagnation. The freshly printed salaries and pensions increased demand and consumption. *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.555, с.616. Also see: Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи*, с. 276

<sup>32</sup> «Основной причиной продовольственных нехваток 1990 года является латентная забастовка в народном хозяйстве и введение «дефакто» рыночных отношений и рыночных цен». Максим Мейер, «1921-1991: 70-летие начала великого голода», *Век XX и Мир*, 1991, №2, стр.42

<sup>33</sup> Researchers refer to insistent alarming reports and letters by B. Gostev, Yu. Maslyukov, L. Voronin.

<sup>34</sup> Cf: Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, Norton & Company, NY and London, 1992 (second edition), p.136-137. Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, М. Роспэн, 2007, с. 240, с.250.

percentage<sup>35</sup>. Analysing the economic background of the Soviet politics in this period, E. A. Rees accounted for the same logic however without naming the thing by its name: “With the depreciation of the rouble, individuals, enterprises and farms preferred to hold value in commodities rather than in money, resulting in building up inventories and the development of barter exchange”<sup>36</sup>.

The *distribution* crisis started already in 1988, when the Soviet economy was growing. The self-inflicted shortage was particularly striking, as the output in agricultural sector had actually grown in these last three years<sup>37</sup>. In the theoretical debates among the economists the growing shortage was mostly attributed to the inefficiency of the planned economy (although Maxim Meyer cited above ironically noted that to come to his conclusion one should not be a professional economist or historian)<sup>38</sup>; in fact it was directly caused by the combination of state regulated prices, inflation *and* grey privatization of distribution triggered by the legalization of cooperatives. Thus, inflation caused by the democratically elected deputies and managers of state enterprises increasing the wedges, massive spontaneous privatisation, and corruption of the supervising agencies such as MVD or OBHSS led to an uncontrolled food distribution crisis. The leadership’s indecisiveness about the price liberalization and the structural defaults of the planned economy set the favourable background of the economic stalemate, when official distribution stopped working.

Starodubrovskaya and Mau have convincingly shown the pragmatic character of the Gaidar’s price liberalisation early in 1992 as the main available solution to the threat of famine in that historical context, except the discredited resort to force<sup>39</sup>. Unlike Mau, A. Barsenkov was very critical of Gaidar’s reforms but he came to the similar factual conclusion: “[reformers] ‘affection’ towards liberalism was based on the state’s incapacity to intervene into the management of the economy. And as there was already nothing else to rely on but the market this essentially inevitable [bezalternativnoe] decision was presented as a result of a deliberate choice made on the basis of the scientific theory”.<sup>40</sup> This pragmatic character of the liberalization of trade does not dismiss the role of the ideological pro-free market component needed to formulate and justify these measures in the eyes of both rulers and population, massively reluctant to contemplate this transformation in 1989. The theoretical and ideological conviction in the viability of the free market was certainly needed to take these highly risky, unpopular and “inevitable” measures.

As the distribution crisis deepened and shortages became widespread, actors and observers looked for possible solutions for the major supply crisis transforming into a genuine economic crisis and leading to collapse or barter economics. In October of that year, several leading economists including Bunich, Petrakov, Shatalin, Popov and Shmelev cautiously recommended at Politburo meetings the introduction of private property for means of production, “denationalization” [privatization], “some form

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<sup>35</sup> В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, М., Жизнь и Мысль, 2005, с.156

<sup>36</sup> E.A. Rees, “Economic policy”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, p.62

<sup>37</sup> See on this point: E.A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, p.65

<sup>38</sup> Максим Мейер, «1921-1991: 70-летие начала великого голода», *Век XX и Мир*, 1991, №2, стр.37

<sup>39</sup> И. Стародубровская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Вагриус, 2004 (2ое изд.) с.199

<sup>40</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.277



of price liberalization” and advocated the term “market economy”<sup>41</sup>. Vadim Medvedev anew unsuccessfully advocated “radical reform of the price system” as the means to solve the consumer shortages. Gorbachev concluded that “discussions were useful and gave food for serious thoughts and conclusions”<sup>42</sup>. To put it shortly, the challenge of economic liberalization was understood but not faced, and no solution seemed acceptable for the most influential stakeholders who tried to delay the pains of the hard choice<sup>43</sup>. On 3 October 1989, Gorbachev reported his decision to liberalize prices within two years – in 1991; in November, 1989 most PB members including Yakovlev, Medvedev and even Kruchkov and Ligachev agreed on the necessity to liberalize prices, leaving the crucial questions of the timing and the actual meaning of the reform wide open. Gorbachev concluded: “If we will act according to Selyunin: as if the market could solve all problems on its own, - this is the [feeling of] doom. Yes, we need the market. But if we will introduce it “at once”, the people will descend on the streets and will sweep away the government”<sup>44</sup>. There are good reasons to believe Gorbachev was right on this point, despite critics’ rightfulness in pointing to his failure to make this choice<sup>45</sup>. As Gaidar’s and Yeltsin’s sharp decline in popularity after the realization of the basic price reform in the early 1990s showed this was an inevitable price. The delay of the price liberalization was caused by the combination of the two factors: first, the ideological and theoretical weakness of the Soviet central government and second, the fear of the social costs of the price liberalization.

*The inevitable is unacceptable: social costs of the price liberalization discussed*

The dominant language highlighting major historical choices and generic paths had left little place for the public examination of the specific measures of transition to the market. As noted in the sixth chapter, “capitalism” was poorly known by the public, many of its aspects were seen as immoral; in parallel, its material and iconic wealth exercised great attraction. Some sort of socially responsible market economy was considered as assessable and beneficial by the mainstream in 1988-1989, and Sweden featured as the pledge of this accessibility. The formulation of the operational meaning of what the market reform meant took time. Western economists visited the Soviet Union to give their first advice about the optimal market transition only in 1989<sup>46</sup>. Simultaneously, responding to the USSR’s growing difficulties to meet the credit payments, the Western governments and financial institutions conditioned the granting of the new credits by a clear Soviet plan of transition towards the market<sup>47</sup>. In 1990-1991 things were changing fast. A. Chernyaev, one of the closest of Gorbachev’s

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<sup>41</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.518-521

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., с.521

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., с.523; с.526-527

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., с.527

<sup>45</sup> Earlier price liberalization could have less economic and social costs than the actually forced price liberalization in 1992; however, Gorbachev in his quality of General Secretary would certainly be the main object of people’s anger and severe ideological opposition which was theoretically smashed by the evidence of the crisis in 1989-1991 and pro-market propaganda campaign in 1991.

<sup>46</sup> Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, p.210-211

<sup>47</sup> E. Gaidar cites a report of deputy minister of foreign trade A. I. Kachanov to the deputy president of the Counsel of Ministries, L.A. Voronin detailing these conditions. A phone conversation of Gorbachev and Bush in July 1991 after a G7

aides and specialist in the international relations, indicated that the Soviet leader spent August and September 1990 in informing his Western partners about the decided transition to the market and insistently asking for big credits<sup>48</sup>. In January 1990, the Puritan Ligachev spoke about “radical price reform”; Slyunkov suggested the most realistic midway by strengthening the discipline, tying down the monetary mass, and trading imported goods via cooperatives at market prices<sup>49</sup>; Medvedev again indicated 1991 as the date of the retail price liberalisation<sup>50</sup>.

The “cult of money”, unemployment, social inequality were all the negative benchmarks for the reformers and the majority of the Soviet intelligentsia in 1989. In 1991 the polls reported around 60% of the population approving the “transition towards market” (23% for rapid transition and 41% for a gradual one)<sup>51</sup>. At the same time, the large majority of the population rejected price liberalisation and unemployment<sup>52</sup>. Not only ordinary citizens, but most intellectuals as well as the country’s leadership understood the market economy in relatively vague terms of efficient work due to self-interest and as the foundation of the civilised and rich countries’ wealth; but they kept the state socialist welfare values of the 1970s, such as full employment, social security and price stability. Reformers did not face their poor understanding of the market economy’s basics and the unsolvable values’ conflict: social protection, human development and persuasion were counter-productive and unattainable value-means for organizing a passage to a market economy. Inequality and fall in living standards were to be assumed as necessary. Marshal Goldman reports his exchange with L. Abalkin on the perspective of combining the market and socialism:

Taking a lead from Deng Xiaping, Abalkin replied, “We don’t care what colour the cat is as long as it catches mice”. But he added an important condition, one whose absence has bothered socialist idealists: “And by the way this cat should not steal sausage, nor attack children”<sup>53</sup>.

Despite Abalkin position of vice-premier of the Union’s government, the cat was already stealing sausages for quite a while and there were little things that his government could do to prevent or

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summit went along the same pattern: credits in exchange of the market reforms and Gorbachev, on evidence, accepted and understood the logic. Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, с.268. В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., с.695

<sup>48</sup> «Иностранным деятелям, с кем М.С. встречался перед отпуском (Бушу, Колю, Андреотти, Делору), сразу по возвращению в Москву (Дюма, Магиду)... всем говорил: «Входим в рынок»... И одновременно почти перед каждым таким собеседником, перед всеми Горбачев ставил вопрос о кредитной поддержке». А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с.366-367

<sup>49</sup> In nucleus, we believe, this was potentially the most viable option attempting to bring together the liberal prices of the market and the Soviet state socialism in economy. Stalin’s regime extensively used this institutionalised two-level trade in the after war period; however, its implementation, would again demand the strict administrative and police control over the state distribution channels preventing the “subversion” of goods.

<sup>50</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., с.558-559

<sup>51</sup> Л. Седов, «Перемены в стране в отношении перемен», *Экономические и социальные перемены*, 1995, №1, с.24 cited in И. Стародубровская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Вагриус, 2004 (2ое изд.), с.192

<sup>52</sup> See: Егор Гайдар, *Гибель империи, Уроки для современной России*, с.273. Compare with the restitution of the contradictory views on the market and their evolution by M. Wyman. Wyman departs from dismissing the supposedly consensual support of the market liberalization in 1991, comparing it to the voluntarist Thatcherism. However, what seems surprising is 60% support of the market reform and the relative unawareness of what is could practically mean. Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, pp. 174-213.

<sup>53</sup> Marshall I. Goldman, *What went wrong with perestroika*, p.210

punish it, as the state capability to efficiently supervise or punish the trespassers was rather low already by the early 1980s and in a steady decline during the democratisation of the political life. In December 1989, at the second Congress of People's Deputies, Ryzhkov announced a plan of transition towards the socialist market economy widely judged as "conservative" by the press<sup>54</sup>; simultaneously in the Politburo discussions Ryzhkov confessed he did not know what exactly "socialist market" could mean and what measures were appropriate<sup>55</sup>: the reformers' team understood that they could not rely on the "command economy" any more, but the full-scale price liberalization and the real market were still unclear and unacceptable because of their own Soviet welfare values, popular egalitarian beliefs and the rising people's anger – the most heavy political factor. Hence, the rises of prices compensated by the rise of wedges to the poorest seemed the only politically acceptable solution to the government of Ryzhkov who made his misunderstanding of the markets clear by announcing the increase of retail prices, and thus causing an additional "wave of panic buying" to the profit of the black market.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, actors were probing and defining the new rules opened by glasnost, parliamentary forms of political struggle and privatization. Spontaneous privatization taking a number of legal and illegal forms transformed many of the top CPSU's and Komsomol's officials at the central and republican levels, KGB and army officers, intellectuals, industry executives and vice-ministers into economic actors whose main interests was short-term maximization of income and the non-intervention of the state. Although they had no defined political position, new *kommersanty*<sup>57</sup> greatly benefited from and decisively contributed to the growing disorder in a number of ways: erosion of the party-state allegiances within the *nomenklatura*, corruption of the police, supervising and military agencies and the KGB. The major distribution crisis caused by privatization and corruption could only be solved by two equally unpopular measures: forced expropriation of food by military or rapid liberalization of the trade. A detailed account of the positions displayed in the inner party debate in 1989-1990 distinguished four basic standpoints: 1) a Soviet plan economy without serious changes, 2) a Socialist market without shocks of the transition, 3) a free enterprise economy without social constraints, and 4) Workers self-management.<sup>58</sup> The military option was not seriously discussed by the Communists, in part, because the creeping privatization was not recognized and in part, because it was ideologically unacceptable for the public.

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<sup>54</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, с.151

<sup>55</sup> See Ryzhkov's replica on 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 1989: «По первому вопросу повестки: как будем оздоравливать экономику? Когда начнем реформу цен? Социалистический рынок: что это такое? Оптовая торговля. Как ее осуществлять? Год назад нас критиковали за оставление госзаказа, за госприемку. Теперь наоборот все [предприятия] требуют 100% госзаказа». В *Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.525

<sup>56</sup> E.A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, p.67

<sup>57</sup> We refer in particular to the foundation of the first Soviet business weekly *Kommersant* in December 1989. The new business weekly reflected and consolidated a new attitude of the emerging stratum: only facts and analysis matter; ideological sophistications are only interesting to the extent they affect business – facts and analysis. The newspaper after one year of existence issued 500 000 copies and rapidly became the main intellectual catalyst of the emergent public image, worldview and life-style of the business stratum. This radically new public image blurred if not masked the continuity of the old and new establishment: the massive privatization operated by the top and mid-level officials in the state-party, and by the Soviet industrial managers.

<sup>58</sup> E.A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, p.61

Even if decided by an authoritative politician *ex machine*, the expropriation policies would be difficult to apply due to poor ideological basis. Even if technically manageable by the army and police, the return to the “war communism” would look ideologically unacceptable for intelligentsia and wider reading public debating the tragic errors of communist rule and stating the imperative of non-violence. In sum, this virtually ignored solution was difficult to apply, had no ideological support and offered no better or more attractive perspective for the Soviet elites than the covert sliding to the market. The regular calls “for order and discipline” of moderates and conservatives in the ambient context did not mean much more than the calls for voluntary consensus made by Gorbachev; after 1989 rampant privatisation and corruption could hardly be stopped in the mid-term, as no *ideological platform* with a credible set of measures opposing this trend emerged even in an embryonic form. The other possibility could be a significant increase of consumer prices without liberalization; this half-measure was regularly dismissed as unpopular and fatal for the leadership under glasnost<sup>59</sup>. Thus, the rapid liberalization of prices was the only possible solution, apart from the Y. Prokofiev’s proposal to take “extraordinary measures” to ensure food provision to the population<sup>60</sup>. E. A. Rees qualifies Prokofiev as “a reformer”, but the proposal to use “extraordinary police measures for improving the food supply to the population” and his memoirs contradict this qualification; in fact, as most of his peers, Prokofiev supported the reforms but was revolted by their consequences and was ready to retract, probably in a more radical way than most others.<sup>61</sup> This radical proposal was approved by Gorbachev at the Politburo session in November 1990 – along with the price liberalization, but having no noticeable follow-up.<sup>62</sup>

#### *Programs of transition to the market and growing republican independence*

The growing split within the Soviet state-party establishment around the privatization was hidden by the interplay between the privatization of property and the formation of the republican statehoods – they were mutually empowering and directed against the centre’s policies. We could call it **double privatization**, economic as much as political. When new political actors, such as republican heads of CPSU, a number of People’s Deputies, or republican Congresses – started consolidating their new democratic power basis, they defied the centre and criticised it for indecisiveness or radicalism. In 1990 the economic policy of Gorbachev was still defined by Ryzhkov who believed that regulated price increases with the compensation to the least protected could soften the transition to the market. As shown by Rees, the republican leaders of the Communist party, such as Polozkov, Gurenko, and Sokolov (respectively the first secretaries of Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia) opposed privatization, argued against the rapid liberalization and urged to consider the social costs; however, they were not proposing any alternative solution but calls for tighter discipline and more justice.<sup>63</sup> Yeltsin, who abandoned the battle for the new Russian Communist Party and took control of the Soviet Supreme,

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<sup>59</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., По записям Анатолия Черняева, Вадима Медведева, Георгия Шахназарова (1985-1991), М., Альпина Бизнес Бук, 2006, с.446, с.527

<sup>60</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны, р.242

<sup>61</sup> E. A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, р.74; Юрий Прокофьев, До и после запрета КПСС, Алгоритм, М., 2005

<sup>62</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, *Op. cit.*, р.242

<sup>63</sup> E. A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, р.72-74

called for the program combining the best of the possible worlds: radical liberalization, full social protection and respect of Russia's national interests within the renewed Union. Arguably Yeltsin had no clear idea about the discussed economic policies and instinctively played out the available cards – he claimed at the sessions of the Russian Soviet Supreme that the main cause of the persisting economic difficulties was the “economic groundlessness of the Russian sovereignty”.<sup>64</sup> His unrealistic program contributed to his popularity in the eyes of liberal and nationalist intelligentsia and ordinary people.<sup>65</sup> In 1991, the urgency of the price liberalization and simultaneously its social costs appeared even more alarming.

If the price liberalization scheduled on 1991 was hesitantly but widely accepted by all Politburo members from the end of 1989, the specific details of this transition remained purposefully undefined. The next nine months were marked by the overt political competition between the Union and the rising Republican centres adopting new laws, creating new political institutions challenging the balance of power on the legal grounds; Gorbachev and his advisors could oppose to these arms the idea of the strong presidency and of the new voluntary Union which we discuss in the next section. The *economic* issues came back into focus for the central leadership only in October 1990, when the fate of the market reform was already intertwined with the escalating political rift between the Union and Republics: the questions of redistribution of the property, taxes and power made the debates on the modality of this complex and risky transition to the market more hectic – and driven by the deliberate attempts to escape the future responsibility. The preparation, postponing and the ultimate non-application of the two competing reform programs prepared by Abalkin-Petrakov (proposing a gradual and partial transition to the market with strong state property) and a more radical and complete program of transition by Shatalin-Yavlinsky, also known as “500 days”, reflected these tensions<sup>66</sup>. Both programs advanced the set of reforms preserving the all-Union economic space, although the new Russian leadership tried to highjack the “500 days” as their own proposal shifting the focus from the all-union to the republican level. This caused the drop out of Yavlinsky who was declared his commitment to the all-union reform.

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<sup>64</sup> *Советская Россия*, 1990, 13 Октября, cited in Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*. стр. 227

<sup>65</sup> E. A. Rees, *Op. cit.*, p. 73; also see the acute analysis by Tatjana Vorozhekina made in 1991: “Ельцин начинал свою политическую карьеру отнюдь не как представитель либерально-демократического лагеря. Он был лидером очень широкого, нерасчлененного движения в пользу справедливости разного рода. Прежде всего - социальной справедливости, понимаемой и как уравнивательная, и как демократически-рыночная. И это течение традиционно было идеологизировано различного рода социалистическими мифами, социализмом как идеей. После первого визита Ельцина в Соединенные Штаты, когда он резко сделал поворот на 180 градусов, объявил себя либералом и распростился с коммунизмом, это движение потеряло харизматического выразителя. Начался процесс завоевания и захвата лозунгов этого “движения за справедливость” старой партноменклатурой под государственными, социалистическими и т.д. лозунгами. Однако, став главой либерально-демократического течения на выборах народных депутатов РСФСР, Ельцин в глазах очень многих эту ипостась все же сохранял. Сейчас, получив, наконец, реальную власть, он неизбежно начнет разрываться. Я не верю, чтобы столь искушенный в политике человек думал, что можно и рынок насадить, и социальную справедливость утвердить (если же он действительно верит в это, - его счастье).” «Конец века. После победы. Круглый стол политиков и политологов», *Век XX и Мир*, №12, 1991, стр.47

<sup>66</sup> See a very well-informed and balanced account of this competition by Pikhoya. Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*. стр. 198-214. Also see the insider's account: А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым*, с.366-378

The growing independence of the republics and the delayed transition to the market also enforced each other, because the non-resolution of the problem of the food supply was certainly the main cause of people's *anger* against the central government independently of people's views on politics and economy. This was the sign of the perestroika's most *fundamental* failure. The two questions about republican sovereignty and transition to the market were superposed and they were hiding each other in the game of mutual accusations – in orthodox blindness, selfishness or disregard of the ordinary people. When Gorbachev's centre took more cautious about the need to combine the gradual transition to the market and social protection, the republican leaders adopted more radical stances either in favour of a more radical reform or in favour of more social protection during the reform. Boris Yeltsin simultaneously radicalised both claims. Russian Federation voted for the "500 days" program and Yeltsin solemnly declared that the application of the program should not lead to the decrease in living standards; but this time it was rejected by the Union's Soviet Supreme influenced by the government of Ryzhkov backing the much more moderate proposal of Abalkin also living more power to the central government.<sup>67</sup> Radicalizing this intrigue in December 1990, Russia officially declared its economic sovereignty, i.e. quasi independence from the USSR in matters of budget and fiscal policies, leaving the presidency of the Union without the largest portion of its revenue – Kazakhstan's First Secretary and already president, Nursultan Nazarbaev seemingly loyal to the Centre, backed Yeltsin's decision and suggested that Gorbachev should "ask for an exceptional favour" to keep on financing the USSR in the first quarter of 1991.<sup>68</sup> The dissolution or the con-federalization of the USSR took substantial legal shapes one year before Belovezhsky treaty. The declaration of republican sovereignty by the Russian Soviet Supreme provided the necessary legal coverage.

The crucial arguments were around the pace of transition to the market *versus* social protection and around the resulting distribution of power between republics and the Union. Lacking effective institutional power, the centre and the rising republics competed in granting the regional and economic elites more advantages in exchange for their declared political loyalty. The legislative "*privatization*" of the Union's assets by the Republics expanded to the core: law-making, credit release, taxes, oil&gas export incomes, large enterprises of the union's subordination. It reflected the passage from the stalemate to the perceived vacuum of the institutionalized executive power of the Union's centre. The privatization of the political resources went in connection and in parallel with that of economic assets. We can see the whole process as the decomposition of authority and uncontrolled privatization as well as the victory of the new republics against the centre. Center's hesitations in the passage to the market with its inevitable drawbacks had little impact after 1989. Unlike popular Yeltsin and other republic leaders, Gorbachev had no political capital to "spend" in 1989-1991 to push the rapid price

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<sup>67</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны.* стр. 199

<sup>68</sup> We can refer to the accurate and penetrating journalistic commentary of Maxim Sokolov published in *Kommersant*: "В декабре самая большая республика Союза прибегла в своем споре с Союзом к последнему доводу: фактически прекратила финансирование центра. Сильно девальвировав при этом несомненные тактические успехи Горбачева (постановления о референдумах. утверждение Янаева). Существенно при этом, что Россия - в отличие от Литвы - бунтует не одна. Президент Казахстана Назарбаев не поддержал предложенную Горбачевым резолюцию, отменяющую российский бюджет. И предложил всего лишь просить "Россию" в порядке исключения продлить финансирование Союза на I квартал, с уважением просить, как хотите просить". М. Соколов, «IV Съезд Народных Депутатов СССР: Союз остался нерушимым. И». *Коммерсант-Власть*, 24.12.1990.

reform, although he probably had it in 1988. In 1988 Gorbachev was not convinced in the need of such a dramatic change and even the most “progressive” economists such as G. Popov or N. Shmelev fervently argued *against* the rapid price liberalization – doing it too early could constitute a favourable platform for the efficient conservative reaction. Late Soviet society produced very few economists and no politicians ready to assume both the benefits and the costs of the transitions to the market until the looming threat of famine in large cities in the end of 1991 made this decision most likely if not inevitable. The republican authorities asserting their democratic popularity accused the Centre of ignorance of the people’s social needs and claimed that economic problems could be easily solved with greater or full republican sovereignty.

## Competition of forums: democratic nationalisms Vs renewed Union

Rapid economic deterioration of living standards was rivalled only by the crisis of moral authority of the Communist party and radical nationalisms made public and amplified by glasnost. As noted, the revelations about the criminal Soviet past and the debate about political responsibility for these crimes were highly harmful both for the credibility of the state socialism and for the moral authority of the Communist party leadership who publicly assumed the responsibility for the past. The intellectual heritage of the late Soviet “*amphibiousness*” described by Archie Brown and the dominant historiographical language provided no more inspiring guidance in 1990 and 1991. Worse, the program elaborated by the amphibious intellectuals was *grosso modo* realized. Henceforth, politicians could rely only on their personal intuition and improvisation like the Kiva’s horse in a snowstorm.

Loosing popularity and control of the Communist party apparatus, which he first has attacked for incompetence and resistance to reforms, Gorbachev replied by the increased pace of institutional innovations. The scheme was common and Gorbachev mastered it extremely well: he reinvested the old or created new political forums each democratically granting him more executive power. This gave the sense of control and political initiative. But his real power in the country was limited to the loyal top military and security officials from one side and to his command of the new representative bodies of the USSR having little political significance. The democratic forums electing Gorbachev to the newly created high offices and giving him titles had little impact at the local levels, as the centralizing function was previously ensured not by the laws and state apparatus, but by the party-state network and by the hierarchical rules regulating public speech.

The failure of democratization is one of the most important stories of perestroika – rarely told.<sup>69</sup> Most observers agree that Gorbachev destroyed the old institutions without creating the new ones. In fact, he was constantly creating institutions and eagerly tried but failed to assert their political authority; in other words he tried to create new democratic institutions, but they did not work as later did not work the new democratic institutions in Russia, Georgia or Moldavia. First, democratization favoured Modern nationalisms as it often did elsewhere, and second, it favoured critical denunciation rather than strengthening of the authority. In the post-Soviet Russia this second difficulty proved quite lasting despite the renunciation from the Communist ideology and dissolution of the USSR. We should remind that when undoing the party-state institutional frame Gorbachev made his bet on the democratization of the Soviets and new Parliamentary powers where the CPSU and at least personally Gorbachev could preserve the strategic leadership. New forums, such as the four Congresses of the People’s Deputies, created agitation, but produced no effective authority, instead creating counter-powers to

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<sup>69</sup> See as an exception the interpretation of perestroika by the disillusioned but not cynical left-wing activist recovering the rise and fall of the grass-root democratic movements. Alexander Shubin amazingly managed to avoid bitterness and skepticism. We would like to address the issue of competitive public politics in general, although these two aspects of democratic rule are closely related and mutually enforcing. Александр Шубин, *Преданная демократия, СССР и неформалы*, 1986-1989, Европа, М., 2006



the old institutions. Republican and regional copies of the central democratic forums appeared; the new republican Congresses reflected and amplified ethnic nationalisms making claims for sovereignty more serious and persistent. As we argue in the conclusion of this chapter, the new democratic nationalisms could not stabilize the new competitive political regimes, but they contributed to the erosion of the authority of the USSR's centre. Copying Gorbachev institutional innovations, all fifteen republics legally forming the Soviet Union and a number of smaller autonomous republics formed their own Parliaments, gradually took control over republican budgets, and created new executive apparatus with Presidents directly elected by the people and thus doubly dangerous for Gorbachev elected by the Congress. The Centre could oppose neither declarations nor the acts leading to independence and precedents in different republics were mutually enforcing.

The last strategic reform launched by the General Secretary was the legal and institutional preparation for the new federal Union between fifteen republics and the Centre – the independent republics would delegate to the Soviet Presidency significant parts of their sovereignty, like the United States of America did. The pressure of economic interdependency and popular adhesion to the unity of the USSR as an entity seemed very serious reasons for Gorbachev and for most of his republican rivals too. Furthermore, the creation of the republican Parliaments made the position of the RSFSR, previously having no formal attributes of political autonomy – there was no Russian Communist party and First Secretary – crucial for the future of the new Union. Competing with Yeltsin for the control over the new democratic organs of the Russian Federation Gorbachev used his last and most risky ammunitions: he pushed the elaboration of the plans of market transition, initiated the legalization of the Russian sovereignty, and used the threats of military crackdown and conservative reaction hoping to take initiative and thus hoped to re-create the Union on the “voluntary basis”. If we correctly reconstruct Gorbachev's plan, his new voluntary union would be more instable than the democratic Russia was.

#### *The new voluntary Union's treaty and the rebirth of the RSFSR*

The continuous institutional innovations of Gorbachev can be noted as an exceptional capability, as compared to other Politburo members, and it probably drew on his legal training. The historiosophical reliance on democracy, people's natural propensity to peacefully and voluntarily live together within the borders of the USSR, and not least his great personal capability to control the large audiences maintained Gorbachev's hope to keep the initiative and recapture the executive power without violence (he allowed himself to use the threat of violence, but with each new attempt this arm proved less efficient). Most of his innovations mobilized the democratic mechanisms by revitalizing or creating new representative forums. We can briefly recall the crucial steps of this series of Gorbachev innovations between 1988 and 1991 in reply to the crisis of state and party authority:

- The XIX party Conference [June, 1988] renewing the forgotten democratic forum of the Party in order to announce and validate the Congress of People's Deputies.
- The Congresses of Peoples' Deputies and reformation of its Supreme Soviet by enforcing the position of the elected Chairman occupied by Gorbachev [March 1989 – September 1991].
- The joint revocation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Article of Constitution and introduction of the Presidency of the Soviet Union [since 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1990]
- The creation of the Presidential Council [replaced by the Security Council in March 1991].
- The Referendum on the preservation of the renewed Soviet Union [17<sup>th</sup> March, 1991].
- The Novo-Ogarevo process of re-negotiation of the renewed Union's treaty between the Soviet republics and the Union's presidency [from 23d April, 1991- 19<sup>th</sup> August, 1991]
- The creation of the State Council [Gossovnet] of the USSR headed by the president and uniting the heads of the Union's republics [from 5<sup>th</sup> September until 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> December, 1991]

There was a clear dynamic of enlarging the political scale of the forums in response to the initiatives of the new republic centres: starting from the inner-party democratization at the XIX party Conference, passing by Soviets and People's Deputies and then appealing to the whole population on the referendum; still Gorbachev did not dare to run for direct national elections. This list also shows the increasing rhythm of Gorbachev's "fabrication" of new institutions in 1990-1991. There was no time to their consolidation: within two years the administrative centre of power migrated from the party's Secretariat to the Secretariat of the Supreme Soviet and then to the Presidential apparatus, which in Gorbachev's own words turned to be the "Head-Quarter without an army"<sup>70</sup>. In 1990-1991 there was direct institutional and personal competition between the various old and new administrations, while the heads of the different administrations interchanged: Lukyanov and Boldin in the party's Central Committee, Gorbachev and Lukyanov in the Supreme Soviet, Ryzhkov and Pavlov in the Government. The staff of the party's central apparatus was dramatically cut as well as the budgets for the daily functioning including the fantastic limitation on the inter-city phone calls<sup>71</sup>. Abandoning the CPSU's apparatus, the General Secretary thought to prepare new democratic basis for his power. Gorbachev skilfully managed to persuade the audiences of most political forums he chaired – within their confines he was always elected when he wanted to and his proposals were accepted by the majority in most cases; but each new victory showed that the power was evaporating or partly shifting to competitive assemblies in the national republics including Russian Federation. Nationalists could more efficiently capture democratic institutions and Gorbachev secured no political and legal monopoly for the creation of new alternative and competing forums. In the open democratic competition with his rivals

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<sup>70</sup> «Представьте себе военачальника, окруженного штабом, маршалами и генералами, но не имеющего в своем распоряжении армейских частей. В таком положении может оказаться высшая государственная власть, если она лишена возможности опереться на сеть властных управленческих органов на местах. В какой-то мере в таком положении мы оказались после Третьего съезда. У нас был президент, был штаб (Совет Федерации и Президентский совет), но не было опоры внизу. Вроде бы никто прямо не оспаривал прерогатив верховной центральной власти, однако импульсы, от нее исходившие, не получали энергичной встречной поддержки. Приняв правильное решение о введении института президентства, мы, по сути дела, остановились на этой начальной стадии, не продумали вопросы до конца». Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 1, М., «Новости», 1995, «Глава. Политическая реформа: Огрехи новой структуры»

<sup>71</sup> В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с.371-372, 422

mobilizing nationalist and populist rhetoric Gorbachev was losing; but he managed rather well the assemblies he personally chaired.

Most authoritative Russian specialists of perestroika such as Barsenkov, Pikhov and Shubin showed the paradoxically leading role of the “Russian factor” in the dismantling of the Soviet Union.<sup>72</sup> This assessment was not a matter of pride or apology of the Russia’s role, but a rather critical account. By contrast, the retrospective accounts of the downfall of the USSR in the contemporary Russia tend to ignore the heteroclitic alliance backing the process of the Russian “sovereignization” and point at the radical democrats and western agents. The available evidence shows the complexity of motivations behind this process. First of all, Gorbachev accelerated this process hoping to guide it. Democratization of the Soviet Supremes made the emergence of Russia’s Parliament independent voice a matter of time and Gorbachev launched two risky pre-emptive offensives: the creation of the Russian Communist Party and the sovereignization of the ethno-national autonomies within the Russian Federation. In fact, he rightly saw that Russia’s position was the crucial stake in the possible creation of a lighter and voluntary Union or Soviet Commonwealth. Boris Yeltsin making multiple alliances and keeping constant contact with Gorbachev won this crucial battle by becoming Russian Soviet Supreme’ chairman and then President with popular mandate – he materialized his victory after the failed Putsch dissipated the threat of the military option covertly kept by Gorbachev under the negotiation table. Simultaneously, this unlikely and quarrelsome tandem managed to absorb almost all the political spectrum: Gorbachev, who retained the command over the most radical Communist orthodoxes, like the Stalinist veteran of many foreign military campaigns general Varennikov, was peacefully negotiating with Yeltsin who could be supported by the most radical democrats and dissidents like Novodvorskaya. What helped both of them was the lack of vigour and vision of other protagonists who were dissatisfied and angry but had no subjective certainty about what could be efficiently realized and supported by the public as a credible policy.

In the traditional Soviet frame Russian republic unlike its fourteen peer republics had no republican Communist party, First Secretary or Academy of science. In the process of democratization of the USSR Russia emerged as the major stakeholder and the major rival-partner of the central institutions immediately appearing weak without its stronghold. The Russian emergence was encouraged personally by Gorbachev, by moderate Politburo members such as Slyunkov, by the Great power Soviet patriots such as Prokhanov, by the anti-Soviet Russian nationalists such as Solzhenitsyn or Rasputin, future leaders of KPRF such as Zugarov and by the radical democrats such as Novodvorskaya. This is to say that in 1990-1991 Russian statehood acquired widespread support. The absence of the Russian autonomous institutions of power was increasingly considered as an injustice and as the cause of the present crisis. Most supporters of the greater Russian autonomy wanted to keep the USSR, but they did nothing to make the two things compatible. There were also many people who voiced their doubts about the danger of this process and the Central Committee’s apparatus

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<sup>72</sup> See: А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002. Р. Г. Пихов, *Советский Союз: История власти, 1945-1991*, Новосибирск, Сибирский Хронограф. А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки, упущенный шанс СССР*, «Вече», М., 2005

orchestrated by Anatoly Lukyanov was covertly but consistently opposing it before it was also split by the creation of the Russian Communist party. Finally, we will try to show that the Putschists who challenged the republican sovereignties and claimed to defend the centralized Soviet state had no illusions about their own lack of a political program to back their enterprise in the aftermath of the curfew.

The process took less than three years. In 1989 Gorbachev created the “Russian Bureau of CC CPSU” formally responding to the calls of a few Russian nationalist intellectuals and having his second thought about the future democratic basis of the USSR without the direct support of the CPSU. Echoing the notoriously bitter Rasputin’s formula pronounced in 1989, V. Medvedev noted that at that moment the idea of the possible independence of Russia was “perceived as absurd”<sup>73</sup>. The first session of the “Russian Bureau of CC CPSU” chaired by Gorbachev proclaimed the idea of the Russian economic independence; the first programmatic documents on the economic Russian sovereignty was prepared by General Secretary’s close associate, V. Vorotnikov willing to moderate the seemingly inevitable process<sup>74</sup>. Even the most conservative Communists betted on the Russian emancipation contributing to the organizational split: the Russian Communist Party held its founding conference in June 1990 and elected I. Polozkov as his First Secretary. On 12 July 1990, Yeltsin announced his exit from the CPSU. Once Yeltsin was elected as the first Russian president by the direct popular vote in June 1991, he acquired the supreme legal and symbolic power in the biggest and geographically central republic of the Union. In July 1991, Yeltsin issued his direct ukaz on the “departization” of the army, KGB and police on the Russian territory – by doing this he was taking last legal means from the hands of Gorbachev and his closest surrounding in the Security Council (former Presidential Council purposefully renamed and reorganized in December 1990). After the ukaz on the departization Gorbachev and the Security Council members realized that they had no other legal leverages of power in Russia but the army.

We can draw the list of the Russian institutional initiatives in response to the innovations of Gorbachev with approximately one year delay; Yeltsin captured but by no means initiated this process of democratic sovereignization – he spent his first months as the Chairman of the new Russian parliament in negotiating with Gorbachev the optimal distribution of power in the reformed Union during the transition towards the market. The representatives of the centre Gorbachev, Vorotnikov and the former head of the Russian government A. Vlasov tried to control the Russian independence, by

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<sup>73</sup> At the first Congress of People’s Deputies, Russian writer Valentin Rasputin bitterly asked what then seemed a rhetoric question: “What If Russia decided to exit from the USSR” responding to the calls of the deputies from the Baltic republics who made their course on session clear from the outset of the Congress. «Здесь, на съезде, хорошо заметна активность прибалтийских депутатов, парламентским путем добивающихся внесения в Конституцию поправок, которые позволили бы им распрощаться с этой страной. Не мне давать в таких случаях советы. Вы, разумеется, согласно закону и совести распорядитесь сами своей судьбой. Но по русской привычке бросаться на помощь, я размышляю: а может быть, России выйти из состава Союза, если во всех своих бедах вы обвиняете ее, и если ее слаборазвитость и неуклюжесть отягощают ваши прогрессивные устремления? Может, так лучше? Это, кстати, помогло бы и нам решить многие проблемы, как настоящие, так и будущие». Quoted in Александр Шубин, *Преданная демократия, СССР и неформалы, 1986-1989*, Европа, М., 2006 стр.296. See: В. Медведев, *В Команде Горбачева...*, с.136

<sup>74</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, 18

“taking over the initiative”; they initiated many key decisions leading to Russian independence, but proposed Vlasov as the Chairman of the first Russian Congress of People’s Deputies:

- The XI session of the Soviet Supreme of the RSFSR adopts the law stipulating the creation of the Congress of the People’s Deputies of the RSFSR [October, 1989]
- 6% of the 1st Russian Congress deputies had CPSU’s cards, including Yeltsin [March, 1990]
- The Bureau of the CC decided the creation of the Communist Party of the RSFRS [May, 1990]
- Gorbachev, Vorotnikov and Vlasov called for the economic sovereignty of Russia (!) at the first Congress of the People’s Deputies of the RSFSR; Yeltsin was elected its Chairman [May, 1990]
- “The Declaration of the State Sovereignty of the Russian Federation” [12<sup>th</sup> June, 1990]
- RSFSR adopted a series of laws reducing by six times its part in the USSR’s budget and legalizing private property on land, capital and factories [December 1990-January, 1991]
- RSFSR adopted a series of laws on the “departization” of the police on its territory [April, 1991]
- The post of the President of the Russian Federation was created by the III Russian Congress of the People’s Deputies; Yeltsin won the election nearing 60% of support [May-June, 1991]

Loosing popular and intelligentsia’s support under the pressure of economic crisis and ideological critique of the CPSU, Gorbachev put all his bets on pushing the simultaneous transition to the market economy on the scale of the Union (as opposed to the problematical rupture of inter-republican ties in case of economic secession) and on the attempt to seize control of the new democratically elected organs of the Russian Federation – its newly created Communist party entity, its new Parliament and its ethno-national autonomous republics. Between the two crucial moments when his personal rival Boris Yeltsin was elected first as the Chairman of the Congress by a tiny margin 29 May, 1990 and then triumphally as the President of Russia 12 June, 1991, Gorbachev did not surrender. He did his best to negotiate the package including the plan of transition to the market with the new Union’s treaty signed by Russia and eight other Soviet republics. The independence of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Armenia, Moldavia and Georgia was backed by the firm nationalism of their elites and peoples.

As in other major revolutions, their immediate cause was the *lack* of power and popular support suddenly revealed and amplified by democratic forums and freedom of press rather than the strength of new political actors. Following Pikhov, we can add that the Russian factor appeared mostly as a confused reply or a reaction of both Gorbachev and Yeltsin to the growing vacuum of executive power caused by democratisation, economic problems and the anti-Moscow and anti-Russian mobilization in the Soviet republics. The covert privatization and open democratic sovereignization through constituent assemblies went much deeper than it is usually thought. The privatization of property and declarations of new sovereign political entities went hand in hand.<sup>75</sup> Over time, the ethno-national

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<sup>75</sup> See as a typical example the preamble and the 5<sup>th</sup> article of the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Sakha-Yakut republic voted in September 1990:  
«Верховный Совет Якутской Автономной Советской Социалистической Республики,

legitimacy proved higher than narrowly ethnic, regional and local-scale allegiances; but the return of the national state took almost a decade for the Russian central power. In August 1990, *Pravda* reported the following news: "...[there is information that] the municipal Soviet of the Krasnopresnesky's district of Moscow officially declared its exclusive property right over the land, soil, but also airspace above its territory".<sup>76</sup>

#### *Anarchy and Commonwealth: could Gorbachev become a Soviet Queen?*

There is no doubt the unsigned new Union's treaty had very little in common with the USSR. This was a loosely defined and complex entity superposing three state levels where the Centre could control only the army, the central bank, and the foreign policy.<sup>77</sup> The procedure of the signature was scrupulously conceived as that of an international treaty.<sup>78</sup> The existence of such a Union would depend on the sophisticated practice of the **voluntary multi-parties contractual obligations** – the social and political practice fundamentally lacking in the USSR. Moreover, as far as we know, there were no precedents of multi-national empires or authoritarian states keeping their unity after the democratization. The persistent difficulty to imagine that the USSR could naturally and rapidly dissolve was blurring if not hiding the gradual dissolution of the Soviet state and its core institutions marginalized by the new powerful relations – democratic forums as sources of new legality and legitimacy, nationalisms as the dominant sources of new legitimacy, and privatization as a source of new interests of the republican elites.

New political actors consolidated their power basis via the creation of democratic forums. Local and regional Soviets, the republican Congresses, presidential posts, and using their legal powers claimed the economic and political sovereignty from the Union's centre. Economic shortages pushed republican and regional authorities to take all sorts of economic and legal measures to respond to this systemic crisis and protect the poorest; privatization pushed the new nomenklatura to protect their new properties or to prepare the ground for the local privatization. The end of censorship and the

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- отмечая, что статус автономной республики ограничивает ее суверенные права, не соответствует основополагающим принципам правового государства, стал тормозом социально-экономического развития республики,

- считая республику равноправным субъектом РСФСР и Союза ССР... провозглашает государственный суверенитет Якутии и преобразует ее в Якутскую-Саха Советскую Социалистическую Республику».

«Земля, ее недра, воды, леса, растительный и животный мир, другие природные ресурсы, воздушное пространство и континентальный шельф на территории республики являются ее исключительной собственностью. Собственность на средства производства и результаты труда определяются и регулируются на основе Федеративного и Союзного договоров и законодательства Якутской-Саха ССР. Все предприятия, организации и учреждения, расположенные на территории республики, за исключением оговариваемых в договорах с РСФСР и Союзом ССР, находятся в ведении Якутской-Саха ССР. Предприятия, расположенные на территории Якутской-Саха ССР, вносят плату за природные и трудовые ресурсы, производят валютные отчисления, уплачивают налоги в бюджет.

<sup>76</sup> "...стало известно об объявлении Краснопресненским райсоветом Москвы объектами своей исключительной собственности не только земли и недра, но даже и воздушного пространства, простирающегося над его территориями". *Правда*, 17 августа 1990 г.

<sup>77</sup> А. С. Черняев и др. (изд.), *Союз можно было сохранить, Документы и факты о политике М. С. Горбачева по реформированию и сохранению многонационального государства*, 2 изд., АСТ, М., 2007, стр. 268-283

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, стр. 265-268

republican media helped the rapid consolidation and galvanization of the national and ethno-nationalist agendas. In parallel, grass-root activists of thousands of *neformalnie obedinenia* and the rising strikes of coal miners challenged the established local authorities translating the ideological crisis into the ambient civil disobedience<sup>79</sup>. Among these new actors of public politics the key roles belonged to the republican elites. Already the first Congress of People's Deputies consolidated the People's Fronts in the republics who successfully passed their candidates with up to 75% for *Saudis* in Lithuanian elections<sup>80</sup>, as well as it allowed the creation of the Inter-Regional group of Deputies (MGD) on the all-Union's level bringing together an active minority from the intellectual party establishment, who soon would constitute the "democratic opposition" and later – Yeltsin's main intellectual and organisational basis<sup>81</sup>. The respective Congresses of the Baltic countries very early in 1988 announced their independence and made it real in a consistent series of legal, economic and symbolic steps. Coal miners' protests captured by the liberal publicists and economists (ignorant of the Thatcher's recipes in similar cases) added to the chorus of angry voices.<sup>82</sup> Returning from his trip to Vorkuta where he met with the strikers' committees, the famous liberal economist and publicist Vasily Selyunin in an interview declared that the "working class existed" and could be easily disoriented. Then he respectfully referred to Abalkin's intellectual honesty, but restated that the only available option was the rapid privatization of state property – now opposed by the selfish apparatus and hesitant Gorbachev torn between Communist ideals and reality. Sulyunin concluded with a warning advising MGD's deputies from the point of view of a well-disposed and well-informed observer:

The government lost the control over the events; I am afraid that power will fall down into the dirt. Who will pick it up, what kind of dictator, what kind of gang, we do not know. There is a need to intercept this falling power before it fell down.<sup>83</sup>

Democratic opposition consolidated in Moscow around the Deputies of the MGD posed another challenge to the political order. The mass manifestations organized by the democratic opposition on 25 February 1990 – an often omitted benchmark in the academic literature – had a major impact on Gorbachev position and especially on the position of the future GKChP members. Most Politburo members including the General Secretary were scared and disturbed by the scale of the preparations for these manifestations and by the direct comparison with the recent velvet downfall of the Eastern European regimes, as the minutes of the Politburo discussions attest<sup>84</sup>. They expected millions of manifestants across the country – brought together under the overt anti-Party and anti-Gorbachev slogans. Uncertain rumours circulated in Moscow about upcoming violent clashes, military

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<sup>79</sup> See: А. В. Шубин, *Парадоксы перестройки, упущенный шанс СССР*, «Вече», М., 2005, с. 209-219., с.353-371. David Satter, *Age of Delirium. The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2001, p. 141-162

<sup>80</sup> See: Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *La gloire des nations, ou la fin de l'Empire Sovietique*, Fayard, 1990, 108-124, 203-227

<sup>81</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, 1985-2005, АСТ-Астрель, М. 2007, с.143

<sup>82</sup> В. Селюнин, «Надо перехватывать власть раньше, чем она свалится», *Панорама*, 1990, №2.

<sup>83</sup> "Вот я в Воркуте к рабочему движению присматривался с чисто прикладной целью, Правительство потеряло контроль над событиями; как бы так не получилось, что власть упадет на улицу, в грязь. Кто ее там поднимет, какой диктатор, какая банда, мы не знаем. Надо перехватывать эту власть раньше, чем она может свалиться. Должны перехватить другие структуры, не эта власть, не эта партия."

<sup>84</sup> В *Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.264-274

interventions and social unrest<sup>85</sup>. According to different estimates there were between 70 000 and 500 000 people on the streets of Moscow demanding the departure of the Ryzhkov's Government, personally Gorbachev, as well as anti-Communist and anti-Union slogans<sup>86</sup>. To control the situation in the capital, Moscow's authorities brought into the city up to 20 000 policemen and 1000 KGB and MVD officers dressed in civilian clothes; in large enterprises the groups of self-defence of 100 people each were prepared<sup>87</sup>. The worries of most PB members increased their distrust of the Minister of Interior (MVD), V. Bakatin more or less openly accused of secret collaboration with the organizers of the manifestations; Gorbachev cited the opposition leaders who thought MVD was the "weakest link"<sup>88</sup>. The manifestation of the rising popular discontent and of the force of the democratic opposition, which took the radical anti-Gorbachev twist, forced him to seek more support within the CPSU and the army. This February manifestations can explain Gorbachev's several "conservative turns" in 1990 and 1991. They mostly consisted in flirting with the idea of curfew and threatening but half-heartedly using the military force in parallel to the negotiation of the new Union's treaty with republican leaders at the back of his peers in Politburo. Legal basis of the central authority was undermined by the new laws of the republican and regional assemblies

The optimistic assessment of Gorbachev's personal popularity in spring 1990 (46% of popular support based on the polls) by Brown and Cohen underplays the factual split within the ruling elites and the emergence of the new actors pushing for maximum of autonomy: nationalist fronts in Republics and radical democratic opposition in Russia were determined to seize political power in the situation of economic shortages and local protests – a radically new factor for assessing the level of popular support<sup>89</sup>. The manifestation in February 1990 was conceived by its organizers, G. Popov and S. Stankevich and perceived by Gorbachev as a threat of civil disobedience organized by perestroika's eager supporters of yesterday who sought to take up the power "thrown in the dirt" (in Gorbachev's words echoing Selyunin's phrase). For Gorbachev the cooperation with "these people" became

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<sup>85</sup> See an interesting first hand account of the several meetings in Politburo and Moscow's party committee by V. Ryabov adding significant information to the transcripts made by V. Medvedev, A. Chernyaev and G. Shakhazarov. В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, М., Жизнь и Мысль, 2005, 142-151. We also

<sup>86</sup> В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., с.569, с.572

<sup>87</sup> В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, с.143

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., с.146-147, В Политбюро ЦК КПСС..., с.573-575

<sup>89</sup> Chernyaev's dairy, as well as the memoirs of Boldin, attests the feeling of gloom within the narrow circle of the reformers and the anticipation of the eminent downfall in spring 1990. Gorbachev in his memoirs recalls this period referring to the conservative's threat to counter-attack using the rising discontent, also mentioning his anger against the radical democrats. Chernyaev seems to suggest that Gorbachev actually could and should cooperate with the leaders of the democratic opposition as he did few months before engaging Stankevich and Ryzhov in the joint work around the new conception of the presidency. His own text shows that the initiative of confrontation actually belonged to the opposition which felt strong enough to act on its own and (wrongly, he adds) doubted in Gorbachev's commitment for further reforms; Chernyaev also reports that his "good personal acquaintance" historian Y. Afanassiev, one of the faces of the oppositions, suddenly ceased any contacts with him out of fear to be associated with "Gorbachev's surrounding" in early 1990. А. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с.336-337. «С весны 1990 года, после первых свободных выборов в парламенты республик, когда партия почувствовала, что она отторгается на обочину развивавшихся в обществе и государстве процессов, усилилось недовольство реформаторами, деятельностью ЦК КПСС, ставилась под сомнение перестройка. А тут еще нарастали трудности в экономике, появились перебои со снабжением. Когда Рыжков объявил о предстоящем повышении цен, консервативная верхушка партии решила, что наступил подходящий момент для реванша». See: Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 1, М., «Новости», 1995, «XXVII Съезд Партии». В. И. Болдин, *Крушение пьедестала*, М. Республика, 1995, с.359.



unacceptable<sup>90</sup>. The opposition felt the growing potential to redirect popular discontent with “chaos” and endemic shortages against the CPSU rather than against the reforms as such. In other words, they already understood and played according to the rules of a competitive political system based on elections when a major crisis leads to a turnover and the current leadership assumes the responsibility for the crisis. The major issue was therefore to frame the public opinion about the allocation responsibility. As examined in the previous chapter, the public focus on the Soviet history resulted in the generalized *theoretical* conclusion about the foremost historical responsibility of the CPSU in the crimes of the past and in the contemporary crisis, also perceived as the direct consequence of the fatal choice in the past: Communists took the entirely wrong path in 1917.

The subsequent revocation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Article by the Congress was the result of this political pressure of the radical democrats descending in the streets<sup>91</sup>. In order to keep the initiative Gorbachev simultaneously brokered the introduction of the Presidency. The successful introduction of the USSR’s Presidency – giving the legal basis for Gorbachev’s non-party rule in the USSR – led to the immediate mirroring of this novelty by the fifteen Soviet Socialist Republics initiated by N. Nazarbaev. Whereby the process of secession of the Republics was deepened and the disintegration of the Soviet Union acquired the concrete legal forms<sup>92</sup>. The first Russian Congress of People’s Deputies proclaimed Russian sovereignty in June 1990; after a difficult struggle Yeltsin won the elections of the President of the Supreme Soviet by four votes and against other candidates openly supported by Gorbachev<sup>93</sup>. In December 1990, after the IV Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR, Boris Yeltsin (then Chairman of the Russian Congress of People’s Deputies) declared that Russia will not allocate the budget to the Soviet Union. Union’s Congress had no real levers to counter this decision, and did not count as a political actor in the eyes of the influential commentators and political actors:

But, independently of the outcome of the war of budgets, the fate of the Congress is sad. In case of the military solution, and in case of a compromise between the Centre and Russia, and in case of the continuation of the “war of ukazy”, and in case of a serious economic reform, real political powers will play – the USSR’s Congress is not one of them. December 27, Nursultan Nazarbaev made this idea plainly clear to the Congress: “This kind of things can not be decided at this kind of Congress”.<sup>94</sup>

This dramatic mass manifestation was also the only moment of perestroika, when suddenly sparked the idea of the “**round-tables**” proposed by the Minister of Interior connected to both sides of the

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<sup>90</sup> «Все это, повторяю, очень серьезно... Власть, кричат они, валяется в пыли. Ее надо только поднять. С верхушкой этой публики нам нечего делать. Мы уже пытались включить некоторых оппозиционеров в общую работу, но они сами себя объявили ниспровергателями президентства». [our emphasis – T.A.] Реплика М. С. Горбачева, 2 Марта, 1990, *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.573

<sup>91</sup> Gorbachev thus describes the liberal opposition’s first decisive onslaught on the 6<sup>th</sup> article of Constitution in spring 1990: «Обладая к тому времени полностью или частично рядом печатных изданий, используя возможности своих приверженцев на радио и телевидении, радикалы добились того, что это требование стало рассматриваться широким общественным мнением как главное условие развития по пути перестройки». Михаил Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, глава «Эта пресловутая бая статья».

<sup>92</sup> Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, с.169

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 185

<sup>94</sup> See: М. Соколов, «IV Съезд Народных Депутатов СССР: Союз остался нерушимым. И». *Коммерсант-Власть*, 24.12.1990.

confrontation. This mutual recognition could set symbolical limits and mutual guarantees for the competing actors. But Gorbachev and Medvedev, who in their memoirs obliterate these passages, vehemently rejected the proposal: “civil action – is an open protest against the political authority” Medvedev allegedly replied<sup>95</sup> ; Gorbachev claimed “there is nobody with whom to sit around a table, they represent nobody” as far as he saw the opposition’s capture of the discontent as a populist and irresponsible move, not as a serious claim for political power; but it was just such a claim<sup>96</sup>. Facing this political challenge of the organized street protests personally directed against him Gorbachev felt *betrayed*: he still saw the democratic process in terms of a “common cause” on the scale of the country and not just on the scale of his political allies<sup>97</sup>. He did not accept the implications of the logic of competitive politics and implicitly operated and expected that others would behave within the Soviet rules of unity and hierarchy – behaving otherwise was an infringement of the rules. Free criticism was accepted and encouraged, but it could not lead to an organizational split or as a means to redistribute the hierarchy of power. This was beyond Gorbachev’s calculations and even forced him to reconsider the use of the brutal force still under his command. More precisely, Gorbachev as well as his Politburo fellows counted to effectively use the *threat* of the military crackdown.

We would like to emphasize that the republican and regional parliaments discovered the legal and legitimate way to claim their full sovereignty and most republics did so<sup>98</sup>; accordingly, the new Soviet Union could be only voluntary or bloody. Democracy, nationalisms and privatization were the factors undermining the real will of the republican establishments for the Union. The strongest argument in favour of the new Union, accepted by most Russian politicians including Yeltsin and most political advisers, was that RSFSR would not survive if the USSR was dissolved because of the major conflicts with its own national autonomies (already sovereign). This presumption proved realistic. The strongest argument for all other republics was that the economic collapse resulting from the dissolution of the USSR would destroy them all.<sup>99</sup> The possible alternative to the voluntary treaty was the forced recapturing of all or certain parts of the Soviet Union’s territory and the abandonment of the democratic forums favouring ethnic-national independence<sup>100</sup>. At best, Gorbachev could hope to peacefully create an institution similar to the British Commonwealth, but it would be very hard to imagine a corresponding political status. More fundamentally, unlike the British Queen the Soviet

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<sup>95</sup> В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, М., Жизнь и Мысль, 2005, с.146

<sup>96</sup> А. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым*, с.335-336

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> This logic was manifest in the debates during the preparatory sessions for the Treaty. Thus, Karimov and Kravchuk easily objected Lukyanov who referred to the will of the USSR’ Soviet Supreme by a simple discounting remark: “If every body will speak about the will of *his* Soviet Supreme...” [our emphasis, T.A.]. А. С. Черняев и др. (изд.), *Союз можно было сохранить, Документы и факты о политике М. С. Горбачева по реформированию и сохранению многонационального государства*, 2 изд., АСТ, М., 2007, стр.245

<sup>99</sup> For these two types of arguments see the numerous transcripts: Ibid., раздел IV, «Ново-Огаревский процесс».

<sup>100</sup> Freedom of choice and non-violence were considered as superior political norms by the majority of politicians, intellectuals and population. As shows the data analysed by M. Wyman, more than 60% Russians regretted the dissolution of the USSR in its aftermath. But at same time the popular majority agreed that the republics should be allowed to leave the Union if this was the choice of that republic’s people; the use of military force in Lithuania was largely opposed. The opinions in the non-Russian republics were presumably more unambiguously nationalist – as there was not sense of lost empire mixed with the feeling of the national renaissance. Matthew Wyman, *Public opinion in Postcommunist Russia*, Macmillan, 1997, p.156, 158, 161, 167.

president wanted to keep the supreme political power in the USSR, this time obtained by the *voluntary* subjugation of peoples and politicians. Arguably, the military option still remained the main covert argument in favour of the new Union, although Gorbachev was not ready to assume it in public and probably in his own head. But the credibility of this virtual threat was diminishing every day of its non implementation.

### *Political vision and gunpowder*

Democratic forums did not help rebuilding the legitimacy of the central power as it was expected by reformers. When Gorbachev covertly threatened to use the military in September 1990<sup>101</sup>, the military option against the extralegal “war of laws” looked very risky – the mere threat of violence was not sufficient because of both, glasnost and new legitimacy basis of the republican leaders. By then the most powerful mass media based in Moscow, Leningrad and Vilnius alike were overwhelmingly negative about the possible deployment of violence to solve any political issues, i.e. even the legally justified violence of the state would be widely perceived as illegitimate.

The case of Lithuania proved to be another symbolic threshold shaping the peaceful character of the collapse of the Union. The republic ceased any payments to the Centre, withdrew from the Union's main political institutions, and its Parliament declared full independence of the republic. The “war of laws” crossed the line of the Soviet legality; but the democratic nationalism and recent historical revelations about the Molotov-Ribbentrop secret protocols signed fifty years ago made the Soviet laws contestable in the Lithuanian territory. Economic blockade and sever rhetoric decided by the Politburo did not bring the national will for independence down. Gorbachev declared an ultimatum to the rebellious republic and ordered the army, MVD and KGB to “re-establish the order”<sup>102</sup>. The deployment of the army in the downtown and the unprompted assault on the Lithuanian TV tower in February 1991 succeeded in military terms, but it failed politically in Vilnius and in Moscow.

When fifteen civilians were killed, the manifestations of protest rose in Moscow and barricades – in Vilnius, despite the favourable central TV coverage of the operation denouncing Lithuanian “provocations”. Simultaneously, a group of 270 Communist Deputies headed by Svetlana Goryacheva challenged Yeltsin's chairmanship in the Soviet Supreme calling for an extraordinary impeachment session and for the annulment of the referendum on the introduction of the Russian Presidency. Dramatizing and capturing this momentum Yeltsin threatened to withdraw his signature from the Union's treaty and openly defended Lithuanians in their rights in a 40 minutes TV speech. In parallel,

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<sup>101</sup> See: Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, стр. 214-217. А. Лебедь, *За Державу обидно...*, М., 1995, стр.343-350

<sup>102</sup> R. Pikhoya implies that Gorbachev personally ordered the assault, while Gorbachev in his memoirs and public declarations always denied his personal implication. In substance, Gorbachev backed up the military intervention with no clear mandate. Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, с.249-250. М. С. Горбачев, *Жизнь и реформы*, книга 2, с.507

Leningrad's official TV channel broadcasted the military attacks against civilians<sup>103</sup>. This was enough to stop the violence. Probably the most significant aspect of the Vilnius crackdown was that it showed that legally justified military interventions were seen as illegitimate by the key actors as soon as it was publicly denounced; Anatoly Chernyaev, a sincere intellectual who supported Gorbachev during and after perestroika reports in his memoirs the letter of resignation he had written to his chief after he learned about the attack on the TV tower:

The only justification... is that Landsbergis and Co breached the Constitution of the USSR. But you are the first to know that there are "all sorts of" legality." And if legality has to be imposed by tanks and armoured cars, than we know its price. This is not the legality of the rule of law, which as you yourself implied can only be the result of the democratic process and of the creativity of the masses.<sup>104</sup>

In this letter we can clearly see how the seemingly abstract humanistic historiosophy and socialist and democratic rhetoric operated in practice. The conclusion was that the state had no right to exercise violence against people's wills and the rule of law was understood here in terms of a direct democratic plebiscite<sup>105</sup>. This is to say the rule of law was a mystery for its convinced supporters sharing the liberal and humanist assumptions of the late Soviet ideology. In the following days, Chernyaev, future Russian prime-minister E. Primakov and press-secretary V. Ignatenko were pushing Gorbachev to publicly condemn the assault – which he finally did when the public already played out all its anger; in his speech Gorbachev stated the formula of non-violence: "Any attempts to appeal to the army in the political struggle are unacceptable". It is particularly interesting that the President of the USSR was aware that his pacific pledge was exceptional if compared to his American or European counterparts; in his exchange with Jack Matlock, the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, he mentioned that Bush would "calm down" the similar uproar in one of the American states within 24 hours, while "I am striving to look for dialogue and consent".<sup>106</sup>

The Vilnius episode in part prefigured the outcome of the August putsch and set the personal rift between Gorbachev and the heads of the main security ministries – Kruchkov, Yazov and Pugo<sup>107</sup>. Army officers saw one more time that politicians would not back them if things turn badly. The former aide, V. Boldin reported that the KGB chief Kruchkov and defence minister Yazov were the two men "whom Gorbachev was saying he fully trusted" in 1990.<sup>108</sup> After Vilnius, the mutual trust of Gorbachev with military was eroded and the use of the army showed its political limits – the limits which Gorbachev did not want to break, although by then he had no serious political leverages other than the threat or the use of the military power. This Machiavellian account implies that the military force could be efficiently used only when mass media were widely backing it or when there was a sound, i.e.

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<sup>103</sup> See: Hedrick Smith, *Desunion Sovietique*, Belfond, 1991, pp.559-562

<sup>104</sup> А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с.410

<sup>105</sup> Chernyaev comments that he hesitated whether he had to send this letter and finally decided that this would be a betrayal, as he was disgusted by the generalized public denunciation of Gorbachev after this event, although no evidence of his personal involvement in the decision to use the force was given. А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым*, стр.412

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., стр.414-417

<sup>107</sup> See KGB's last chief, V. Kruchkov's memoirs: В. Крючков, *Личное дело*, М., 1996, книга 2, с.30 cited by Pikhoia.

<sup>108</sup> В.И. Болдин, *Крушение Пьедестала*, Республика, 1995, с.386

widely appealing and verisimilar ideological justification. In 1991, Gorbachev and the centre had none of two factors at hand; similarly, despite his political success and military victory in 1993, Yeltsin's new rule was widely considered as illegitimate. By opposite, Putin's assault against the rebellious Chechnia found popular support, when the media was taken under control and the explosion of the residential houses provided the moral ground for counter-attack.

Communist party and state apparatuses being paralyzed by the defection, corruption and moral authority crisis, the three military agencies concentrated the remnants of Gorbachev's power in 1990-1991. Gorbachev could not be dismissed as a "naked king" as long as the army including the nuclear forces, police and KGB could follow his orders. As David Satter and Gavriil Popov rightly noted, even on 24 August 1991, when Yeltsin signed the decree banning the very existence of the CPSU on the Russian territory Gorbachev could still formally call KGB or army officers to honour their oath and to defend the security of the Soviet Union; but Gorbachev probably did not even consider making this perilous decision and solemnly stated that the CPSU should take "a difficult but just decision on its dissolution"<sup>109</sup>. Popov adds that Gorbachev by this time exhausted his political recipes: he did not know what to do or was personally reluctant to the policies advised by others. He had no new vision as he faced the limits of what he could *personally* back up.

The ideological and especially theoretical beliefs of Gorbachev proved changing, inconsistent and often vague: both during and after perestroika. We can still try to reconstruct the personal ideological taboos of the last General Secretary along with his clear-cut commitment to the supremacy of the representative *democratic assemblies*, *glasnost* and some form of *mixed economy*. This is possible when we distinguish the speeches and policies he vigorously backed from his more uncertain speeches and deeds. With different considerations and constraints in mind Gorbachev had persistently refrained from a number of major reforms or decisions he thought over and discussed with advisors, allies, or opponents, often theoretically accepted, but never decided to back up their implementation with the decisiveness he manifested when applying the three above mentioned principles:

- Price liberalization and private property on the means of production (capitalism)
- Party's organizational split on an ideological basis (unity rule)
- Round-tables with challenging political opponents (unity and hierarchy rule)
- Direct elections of the state or party leader (unity and hierarchy rule)
- Secession of the Soviet Republics from the USSR (Soviet patriotism)
- Bloody military crackdown against civilians (non-violence)

Resuming this perimeter of what Gorbachev could not accept in practice, we can see that it was mostly defined by the humanistic reading of the official Soviet ideology and rules of public speech:

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<sup>109</sup> David Satter, *Age of Delirium. The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2001, p.89. Compare: "Гавриил Попов: я все равно пошел бы в перестройку" [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid\\_4333000/4333877.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/russia/newsid_4333000/4333877.stm)

anti-capitalism, public unity and hierarchy rules, Soviet patriotism, brotherhood of nations, and compatibility of the respect of the top-down hierarchy with democratic elections and non-violence. Like many others in his generation, he was taking at face value the official Soviet ideology and rectified its incoherence or duplicity by rejecting any official justification for political violence. Considering the direct consequences of the violent political system as naturally granted, he rejected its violence as an atavism. For instance, Gorbachev had a hard time accepting the secessionism of the Baltic republics; although he did not publicly back the military action against this “absurd and unacceptable separatism”, he was genuinely and badly surprised that Baltic nations were not willing to remain in a democratic and voluntary Union<sup>110</sup>. There are also several indications that in the second half of 1990 – 1991 Gorbachev hoped if not relied on the support of the “*working class*”, which, as he thought then, had not yet made up its mind<sup>111</sup>. This untimely conviction equally helped him persisting in his search for a large consensus around the “sane and responsible” forces still backing the democratic socialist reform<sup>112</sup>.

Thus, the humanist reformers were morally dissatisfied with the corruption, apathy and un-freedom of the late Soviet political regime, but fully espoused its naively **holistic and humanist vision of politics** ignoring or rejecting Lenin-Stalin’s “realism” and spirit of merciless struggle. In contrast with his strategic vision of reforms, Gorbachev proved realistic, pragmatic and skilful in his tactical moves and initiatives, both when he climbed the party hierarchy and when he was inventing how to promote the radical socialist reforms elaborated by his advisors and allies. Let us emphasize that this was not a lunacy or blindness, as far as he realised and partly assumed the difficulties inherent for his presumptions and values. The available transcripts carry the witness of Gorbachev’s perspicacity, constant learning, hesitations, and the constant analysis of the counter-arguments made by his advisors or publicists. In substance, the last General Secretary discussed with his aides most of the critical arguments later addressed to him by academics or politicians in their memoirs. On the other hand, we can note Gorbachev’s symptomatic misreading and discounting of the major challenges to his power represented by republican nationalisms and Yeltsin’s bet on the direct democratic support – perceived by Gorbachev and most of his supporters in terms of egoistic, self-interested, populist or irresponsible manipulation. This misreading resulted from this holistic “humanist” vision of political leadership in which citizens voluntarily join for the common cause of human autonomy and remain naturally loyal to the leader with no place for institutional opposition and no need for mediation of conflicting interests but free speech building consensus<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> «Он внутренне не мог примириться с уходом Прибалтики. И искренне считал, что, если это произойдет, будет нанесен огромный вред, прежде всего народам этих республик. Отсюда у него было убеждение, что людям заморочили головы экстремисты и сепаратисты». А. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым*, с.339

<sup>111</sup> Реплика Горбачева: «Основная масса – рабочий класс – еще не сказала своего слова. Ясность позиций позволит нам включить эту мощную силу в поток событий». 2 Марта, 1990, *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, 574

<sup>112</sup> Gorbachev regularly returns to this theme of the “undecided working class” and to the need of incorporation of the working class into supreme political organs during the spring 1990. This probably echoes his readings of Lenin’s texts of the post-revolutionary period and his search for the new support basis. *В Политбюро ЦК КПСС...*, с.574, 581, 585, 587, 592, 593.

<sup>113</sup> In this institutional sense, the qualification of Gorbachev’s ideological orientation as close to “social-democratic” strongly defended by Archie Brown can be strongly rectified; although this does not negate Gorbachev’s sympathy to the

The holistic and consensual vision of politics masked the real threats to the reformers leadership posed by the competitive public politics in the context of a self-induced economic crisis, multi-national split and the revelation of the Soviet mass crimes. But this overoptimistic vision of politics also gave to Gorbachev the necessary drive (by masking the limits of democratic reformation of the USSR and its world empire) to maintain the efforts of salvaging the Soviet Union and socialist values without resort to violence. Then, Gorbachev along with Yeltsin willingly and unwillingly blurred the emerging cleavage lines of new political reality promising a holistic synthesis across the political spectrum of the society much longer than one could expect without this inimical tandem.<sup>114</sup> The commitment to persuasion and non-violence limited the scope of Gorbachev's tools or, using perestroika's word, "leverages" to institutional innovation, *ad hoc* alliances, persuasive rhetoric and, finally, to the use of a covert threat of military force. The rare and uncertain armed repressions against protestors and trespassers of the established laws – in a vicious circle of disobedience – turned not only illegitimate, but also counter-productive and the pending threat of state violence gradually disappeared. The future putsch's organizers and Gorbachev discussed the introduction of the curfew on several occasions from the end of 1990 and until the August 1991; however, Gorbachev and in fact the supposedly conservative Putschists were reluctant to the open use of the military. Summing up this perimeter of the reformer's taboos, we can make a reasonably grounded hypothesis that they were defined by his uncritically inherited vision of how politics could and should work.

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European social-democracy – his vision of politics remained deeply Soviet. See: Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>114</sup> For the informed, balanced and persuasive account of the relations between Gorbachev and Yeltsin we draw here again on Pikhoya. Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*. As an example of the Gorbachev's ideological stretch we can cite the witness of Viktor Ryabov, whose accounts are unbiased by a partisan view and made from a position of an observer, about the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gorbachev, whereby he was invited as the member of CC of CPSU. In March 1991, the sweepingly anti-Communist authors took the front pages of the daily and weekly newspapers and TV talk-shows, while Gorbachev negotiated the terms of the transition towards the market economy; but when receiving a small copy of Kremlin as a personal gift, he thanked for the present and suddenly added: "While I am here, the ruby stars of Kremlin will be untouchable. And socialism- too". В. Рябов, *Жизнь в ЦК, или ЦК изнутри*, М., Жизнь и Мысль, 2005, с.179

## The two sides of the August Revolution: open and unspoken

The August Putsch marked the highest point of the political and ideological polarisation of perestroika. The failure of the Putsch is widely and justly seen as the crucial moment in the collapse of the USSR. Shortly after the democratic victory, Solzhenitsyn called it “the Revolution of Transfiguration” [*Preobrazhenskaya revolutsia*] for its miraculously peaceful and liberating character. Although this event precipitated the peaceful destruction of the formal remnants of the party-state, we argue that strategically the total non-lieu of the military coup as well as its full success could hardly stop the gradual dissolution of the USSR, Russia’s own fragmentation and the ongoing privatization. The most active part of the Soviet establishment in Russia and other Soviet republics as well as the diverse networks of *neformaly* would not accept military pressure or violence as means to constraint their new economic and individual liberties in the mid-term; on the other hand, those who were opposing the dissolution of the USSR as the state and as a great world power did not support the Soviet institutional frame and had no alternative political vision, be it conservative or reactionary. In the absence of this conservative vision, the Soviet establishment was actively seeking individual freedoms and wealth granted by the dissolution of the USSR as a state, by the proto market economy and ideologically neutral (“liberal”) political institutions.

Until August 1991 Gorbachev kept political and personal control over KGB, army and police, whose chiefs and staff showed no independent political ambitions and did not oppose his unsuccessful reforms. There were four major attempts to use military force against civilians in order to establish order during perestroika: in Tbilisi (February, 1989), in Vilnius (March, 1991) and two in Moscow (September 1990, August, 1991).<sup>115</sup> The first two attempts were triggered by the local nationalists’ moves towards independence. These military interventions causing tens of deaths among civilians were very hostilely met by the press. Gorbachev publicly denied his implication in both cases, although in the Soviet context there are reasons to believe he should be covertly backing both. Thus, twice before August 1991 the officers on the ground had to assume all the political risk of decisions taken by the civilians who avoided responsibility.<sup>116</sup> The last attempt of a joint intervention of the KGB, police and army was disarmed by Yeltsin’s charisma and courage. But also by the urban crowds of the new active stratum of businessmen and social activists surrounding tanks and friendly talking to heavily armoured soldiers in the streets of Moscow and Leningrad.

Fortunately, Yeltsin’s decisiveness and pacifistic propaganda of civilians succeeded and we do not know how people would react if troops finally opened fire against civilians in Moscow as they did in

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<sup>115</sup> We can also recall the threat of the military intervention used by Gorbachev in September 1990 when the economic program of transition to the market was negotiated along with the future distribution of powers between the Centre and the Republics – first of all with the Russian Federation. General Achalov gave order to several paratrooper brigades located around Moscow to move towards the city. Yeltsin publicly mentioned this order and declared he was not afraid of this pressure. Following the events in Vilnius, there was a similar although less bloody situation in Riga. <sup>115</sup> See: Рудольф Пихоя, *Москва, Кремль, Власть. Две истории одной страны*, стр. 214-217. А. Лебедь, *За Державу обидно...*, М., 1995, стр.343-350

<sup>116</sup> Publicists and officers were aware of this phenomenon called “Tbilissi syndrome”. Also see the next note.



Beijing in 1989 (not without a period of hesitation of the Chinese army and the leadership) or in Moscow in 1993 (also after a period of hesitation of the army and Special Forces). There are reasons to believe that mid-rank officers and soldiers, including Special Forces were reluctant to carry on such orders and typically declared to be “out of politics”.<sup>117</sup> The fear of civil war was haunting Russian people throughout the 1990s. In October 1993 when Russia was visibly sliding into the civil war, Yeltsin’s assault of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation could mobilize only a few elite units under command of Yeltsin’s personal acquaintance Pavel Grachev; political violence remained illegitimate.<sup>118</sup> In 1991 and 1993 alike most people from antagonistic camps were *consistently* acting against the use of military force. Orders and calls to use military forces to attack civilians were systematically and deliberately downplayed within the chain of commands in the army, by the politicians and civilians. Political non-violence was not only a historiosophical argument or a moralising rhetoric, but it firmly guided people’s behaviour in the most extreme circumstances. When law enforcement was absent, when there was huge potential for ethnic, social and ideological conflicts, and economic violence was privatized, political non-violence became an integral value – there was no gap between political philosophy, public words, deeds and inner convictions of most citizens. The Hobbesian war in Russia of the early 1990s did not turn into the civil war partly because of the then prevailing political philosophy of non-violence and in the deliberate absence of mobilizing ideologies justifying violence.

*The last stronghold of the USSR: threats of violence challenged by ideology and civil boldness*

The sequence of events before and during the Putsch is relatively well known. From the end of 1990 Gorbachev several times discussed with the members of the Security Council the possibility to impose a curfew in order to re-establish the vanishing legal order in the USSR. In parallel, he negotiated the new Union’s treaty with the leaders of the republics willing to stay; the failure of the KGB’s *Alfa* unit in the Vilnius operation signalled that the military force was hardly helpful in retaining the republics where the Parliaments and the population were firmly willing to leave the Union. The position of the Russian leadership was the crucial stake. In July one of the first ukaz of Yeltsin as a Russian president banned

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<sup>117</sup> An insightful and surprisingly acute editorial of *Kommersant Vlast* written by Andrey Fadin and published in July 1990 discussed the possibility of the military putsch in the USSR – the term putsch was introduced. The prognostic was negative and among other reasons based on the evaluation of the typical state of mind of the top officers: “we do not have to mess up with politics”: “Тот же генерал-парашютист Подколзин излагал корреспонденту Postfactum свое *credo*: “Лично я буду выступать на стороне закона, мы не должны вмешиваться никуда. Армия есть армия”; also compare: “Сделаться из орудия политики ее субъектом далеко не так просто, как кажется. И далеко не так соблазнительно. Кому достанутся плоды путча - Бог весть, а каштаны из огня таскать придется сразу. И именно военным и чекистам, которые в последнее время и так сыты этим по горло. Разведчикам и аналитикам, всегда считавшим себя “белой костью” в КГБ и презиравшим своих коллег из политического сыска, приходится - вспомним хотя бы откровения генерала Калугина - заниматься этой грязной работой.” In «Будет ли в Советском Союзе военный переворот?», *Коммерсант-Власть*, 27.07.1990

<sup>118</sup> Incidentally, Grachev took part in the intellectual preparation of GKChP military operations on the side of Kruchkov and could draw from it some useful but immoral lessons for the similar occasion. A rumor illustrates the difficulty to mobilize the military. Allegedly, to motivate hesitating troops, pro-Yeltsin’s Special Forces were randomly shooting their own people using snipers located in the Moscow’s downtown. The unidentified snipers’ fire was officially recognized by most participants and by the Investigation Commission of the Duma. See: *Век XX и мир*, Октябрь 1993, Хроники переворота, Февраль 1994, [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Пазрон\\_Верховного\\_Совета\\_РФ\\_\(1993\)#cite\\_note-104](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Пазрон_Верховного_Совета_РФ_(1993)#cite_note-104)

the CPSU's cells in the state structures on the Russian territory. The new Union's treaty had to be solemnly signed 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1991 and the Soviet president decided to take a holiday week after a long marathon of negotiations. Gorbachev's closest men such as Chernyaev and Medvedev backed the idea of the transformation of the USSR, while the members of the Security Council openly opposed the new treaty because it legalized the radical shift in the power balance from the centre they incarnated to the Soviet republics. KGB chief, Vladimir Kruchkov prepared "extraordinary measures" and convinced other members of the Council to join him and push Gorbachev to take their side.

A collective manifest *A Word to the People* was signed by the prominent Russian nationalists, two future GKChP members and also by the future head of the Russian Communist Party (KPRF) G. Zyuganov. The manifest called Russians and citizens of the USSR to unite around the values of "productive work", and to oppose the spirit of greed, moral decadence as well as people's alienation from "labour, property and culture".<sup>119</sup> If the positive program was strikingly missing and remained to be "invented by experts in economy, thinkers and spiritual creators foreseeing the popular ideal" – the defence of the Soviet Union and mother-Russia from the *decomposition* seemed the most acute and tangible point of the manifesto.<sup>120</sup> This was a desperate and poorly prepared expression of the Russian "imperialist nationalism": the positive ethos of serving the unitary state was opposed to the ambient corruption, greed and particularism. The call published by a rather marginal *Sovetskaya Rossia* in June 1991, was the only political gesture preparing public opinion for the military take over. Behind the scene, the KGB personnel and the army were gradually mobilized. Few days before the signature of the treaty, a delegation of the conspirators flew to the Crimea for a meeting with Gorbachev trying to convince him to step down from his plans of reforming the USSR by announcing the curfew. This attempt failed and the conspirators had to materialize their threats on their own risks – with no legal or media coverage. Putschists still hoped that "ordinary people" will back their initiative and dispense it from bloodshed.

19 August 1991, the heads of the army, KGB and police, USSR's vice-president, and prime-minister officially announced that the President of the USSR was ill and the new State Committee called

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<sup>119</sup> «Не пожалеем сил для осуществления таких реформ, которые способны преодолеть невыносимое отчуждение человека от власти труда, собственности, культуры, создать ему достойные условия для жизни и самовыражения. Окажем энергичную поддержку прогрессивным новациям, нацеленным на то, чтобы продвигать наше общество вперед, достигнуть современных высот научно-технического прогресса, раскрепостить умы и энергию людей, чтобы каждый мог жить по труду, совести и справедливости. И мы будем выступать против таких проектов, которые тащат страну назад, во мрак средневековья, туда, где культ денег, силы, жестокости, похоти». Юрий Бондарев, Юрий Блохин, Валентин Варенников, Эдуард Володин, Борис Громов, Геннадий Зюганов, Людмила Зыкина, Вячеслав Клыков, Александр Проханов, Валентин Распутин, Василий Стародубцев, Александр Тизяков, «Слово к Народу», *День*, Июль 1991, №15.

<sup>120</sup> «Наше движение — для тех, кому чужд разрушительный зуд, кто горит желанием созидать, обустроить наш общий дом, чтобы жили в нем дружно, уютно и счастливо каждый народ, большой и малый, каждый человек, и стар, и млад... Пора отряхнуть оцепенение, сообща и всенародно искать выход из нынешнего тупика. Среди россиян есть государственные мужи, готовые повести страну в неунизительное суверенное будущее. Есть знатоки экономики, способные восстановить производство. Есть мыслители, творцы духа, прозревающие общенародный идеал.

Советский Союз — наш дом и оплот, построенный великими усилиями всех народов и наций, спасший нас от позора и рабства в години черных нашествий! Россия — единственная, ненаглядная! — она взывает о помощи». «Слово к Народу», *Op. cit.*

GKChP took in charge all the responsibility. The introduction of the heavily armoured troops in the central streets of Moscow, Leningrad and some of the Soviet republics and *An address of the GKChP* stating that the Soviet fatherland was in danger – had to convince the population and the major political actors that the signature of the new treaty undermining the role of the centre should not take place. Gorbachev was blocked in his holiday residence, but Yeltsin, his surrounding and other political leaders could freely move, act and communicate.<sup>121</sup> The central TV programs were replaced by the news blocks and ballet, but most other independent media could broadcast or publish and their journalists could even ask provocative questions during the press-conference where the trembling hands of the formal №1 of the State Committee, Yanaev sent the strongest psychological signal about the obvious lack of self-confidence and determination. This can be contrasted with Yeltsin's decisiveness in declaring the same day that the organizers of the coup were the criminals breaking the Constitution of the USSR and Russian laws.

The reception of the GKChP in the Russian regions and loyal Soviet republics was lukewarm and this modest reaction discouraged the organizers.<sup>122</sup> People mostly belonging to *the informal networks* of businessmen, artists and political activists spontaneously gathered in the streets of the major cities protesting against the military threat.<sup>123</sup> For Moscow, estimates vary between 4 000 and 300 000 people, but most participants indicate 50-70 000 people around the White House. Gleb Pavlovsky, one of the activists of the resistance to Putsch and later Yeltsin's and Putin's main communication advisor equally noted the major role played by the non-political networks:

Independent research-centres, civic associations, charitable foundations suddenly closed into one reliable web – what Americans call *network* – and this web allowed the circulation of the messages, mutual help, resources needed to stand against the tanks.<sup>124</sup>

People on the streets brought the necessary organizational resource for Yeltsin and symbolized the active popular rejection of the coup. The so called White House occupied by the Russian government became the centre of the organized resistance in Moscow. Yeltsin, his collaborators, government, MGD deputies of the Russian parliament and their supporters gathered inside and around the building surrounded by the tanks and armoured vehicles; barricades were erected to protect against the

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<sup>121</sup> Most probably, Kruchkov ordered to Alfa group to capture Yeltsin, but did give clear legal grounds and therefore did not assume the responsibility. Alfa group simply followed Yeltsin and let him free. However, no other politicians were even allegedly persecuted. See for example: Павел Евдокимов, «Герой Советского Союза», *Спецназ России*, Октябрь, 2007

<sup>122</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, М., Аспект Пресс, 2002, стр.222

<sup>123</sup> This is the most convincing conclusion of an interesting empirical study of the participants' motivations conducted by James Gibson. He argues that the most important factors determining the decision to participate in the street protest were the expectations of the peers, and the experience of street demonstrations – democratic convictions of the respondents scored lower than these two factors. See: James L. Gibson, "Mass Opposition to the Soviet Putsch of August 1991: Collective Action, Rational Choice, and Democratic Values in the Former Soviet Union", in *The American Political Science Review*, Sep., 1997, pp. 671-684

<sup>124</sup> «Независимые исследовательские центры, гражданские ассоциации, благотворительные фонды вдруг сомкнулись в надежную сеть - то, что американцы именуют словом network, - и по этой сети двигались сообщения, помощь, ресурсы, необходимые для противостояния танкам». Г. Павловский, «Три дня», in *Путч. Хроника тревожных дней*, М. Прогресс, 1991

possible assault. Calls against the “usurpators” of the democratically elected authorities multiplied, while the officers multiplied the declarations about their non-intervention and neutrality.

Marshal Yazov later recalled that he agreed to participate in the coup provided the army played the role of the “passive pressing force”.<sup>125</sup> This formula seems to be the key for understanding the logic of the protagonists of the Putsch and the reasons why Yeltsin’s boldness paid off. We can find multiple variations of this formula of “passive pressing force” in the positions of other conspirators and in fact in the way Gorbachev handled the threat of the military intervention. The behaviour of the two Generals commanding the crucial operations of the Soviet army in Moscow during the August Putsch – Lebed and Grachev – and their later careers leave little doubts: they were not loyal to the Putschists and did their best to avoid the bloodshed and keep their hands free in order to join the winning side without engaging into the real military operation against civilians. Both generals, Alexander Lebed, who was to run as Yeltsin’s deputy in the presidential elections in 1996, and Pavel Grachev, his future minister of Defense, had good personal relations with Yeltsin established not long time *before* the Putsch. They constantly informed the new Russian leader and his surrounding about the orders they were receiving from Yazov and Kruchkov. Moreover, Lebed and Grachev publicly and repeatedly defined their mission as *patrolling* the White House and other political residences in Moscow, as if they had a peace-keeping mandate. Military bosses at all levels of the chain of command were guardedly talking to their subordinates asking about their readiness to execute orders and typically received negative feedback.<sup>126</sup> This cautious behaviour of the army commanders was quite consistent with the willingness of the army to escape any political stance in the conflict.

The Putschists delegates started the negotiations with the Russian authorities and Yeltsin keeping the preparations for a possible assault, but not giving any definitive orders in this respect. Their main rival was much more decisive. In the evening of 20<sup>th</sup> of August, Yeltsin issued an *ukaz* against the organizers of the GKChP calling the prosecutors, KGB, police and army officers to arrest the state traitors and guaranteeing “on behalf of the people which elected me” full moral and legal protection. Allegedly, in the night of 20<sup>th</sup> of August, Kruchkov ordered to start the attack, but the officers of the elite KGB unit Alfa group, after a deliberation refused to execute.<sup>127</sup> Vladimir Kruchkov denied that there was an order<sup>128</sup>; Alfa’s commander Viktor Karpukhin later said that in the crucial moment Alfa’s officers *collectively* decided not to participate in this conflict<sup>129</sup>. We can say that what comes out of the many contradictory accounts of these events is that most protagonists were reluctant to make order and execute orders against civilians and that the top officers representing the two conflicting sides

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<sup>125</sup> Cited in A. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, стр. 223

<sup>126</sup> See: Барсенков, *Op. Cit.*, стр.224-226 Р. Пихоя, *Op. Cit.* стр. 318-320

<sup>127</sup> This is the version exposed by many Western sources including Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August\\_coup](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_coup)

<sup>128</sup> «- Но была же идея штурмовать Белый дом?

- [Крючков] Может, где-то она и была, витала в воздухе, но никто вслух ее не озвучивал. Я 20 августа подъезжал на подступы к Белому дому, выходил из машины, разговаривал с людьми, убеждал их в том, что никто не собирается на них нападать.» «Исповедь маленького человека, Бывший шеф КГБ СССР Владимир Крючков в эксклюзивном интервью», *Российская Газета*, 2004, 9 июня. Barsenkov convincingly noted that if there was a clear order, we would have clear evidence about it which could be used during the legal persecution of the Putschists. See: A. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, стр.227

<sup>129</sup> Павел Евдокимов, «Герой Советского Союза», *Спецназ России*, Октябрь, 2007

were in constant radio and telephonic contact. In principle, the situation could be dramatically changed by a small military group, but no politician and very few officers were ready to give orders or execute. After an accidental death of the three young men defending the White house and Alfa's refusal to engage, the Defense minister Yazov ordered to withdraw all the troops from Moscow and this order was duly and eagerly executed. In the following days, the organizers of the coup were arrested under the charges of state treason. Significantly, the Russian prosecutor V. Stepankov first tried to avoid Yeltsin's order to arrest the members of the GKChP and claimed he had no legal grounds to do so before he ceded to Yeltsin's personal pressure.<sup>130</sup> In other words, both Putschists and Yeltsin had to push the armed agencies reluctant to execute.

All the accounts of the Putsch note its surprisingly bad organization and indecisiveness of its members. Some commentators find there reasons to doubt about the possible implication of Gorbachev, on whom the organizers would secretly rely. In fact, Gorbachev several times considered the military option, discussed it at the Security Council, and was informed about the upcoming attempt of the coup by his informal surrounding and by the American embassy; however, he dared neither to back this solution nor to prevent it<sup>131</sup>. One year before the events the influential business weekly *Kommersant* was discussing the chances of the possible military coup to succeed and correctly assessed it as extremely low, pointing out the likelihood of its particularly bad organization and unwillingness of the military to assume political and legal responsibility; the authors of the predictive editorial even used the term "Putsh" and "Putschists" as did other journalists<sup>132</sup>. The immediate technical failure of Kruchkov and his peers masked (by the heavy armour of the tanks) as much as it reflected the double absence of the conservative political vision – we noted in the fifth and sixth chapters – the *absence of ideological and programmatic vision of a Soviet conservative* if not dogmatic Communist strain.<sup>133</sup>

In the most favourable for Putschists case, the situation in the USSR could be similar to the Polish stalemate in 1982; but it would be certainly destabilised by democratic nationalisms, lack of ideology and ongoing privatization. The violence on the much wider scale would be needed to break people's motivations behind these two trends in the context when political violence was seen as morally unacceptable in principle and when no positive vision could make its use potentially justifiable and viable. For sure, without the August coup and counter-coup the formal dissolution of the USSR and its state-party structures could take longer. In September-October 1993, Russia faced a similar conflict; more men could be killed in a similar clash if the Red army was not yet dissolved. But the crucial factor

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<sup>130</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, стр.229

<sup>131</sup> See: А. С. Черняев, *Шесть лет с Горбачевым, По дневниковым записям*, М., «Прогресс», 1993, с.414

<sup>132</sup> «Если в Германии, стране порядка, путч 20 июля 1944 года был воплощением беспорядка, можно только гадать, какой уровень "русской работы" продемонстрируют отечественные заговорщики. Армия и тайная полиция не существуют в безвоздушном пространстве, а являются слепком с советского общества: они точно так же далеки от монолитности, в них точно так же идет "война всех против всех"», «Будет ли в Советском Союзе военный переворот?», *Коммерсант-Власть*, 27.07.1990

<sup>133</sup> The sixteen points of the emergency plan supposed to dissolve or ban all organizations, assemblies, parties or public gathering opposing the central control of the GKChP one the whole territory of the USSR. But the organizers of this new vertical of power had no ideology, no economic vision and no readiness to arrest or to attack the trespassers. See a favorable overview of these measures in А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, стр.216-217

in these constellations was that the conservative group had no *credible* vision of the future; they did not like many things they witnessed, but any risky political action of a group is guided by their perception of what is possible. Historiosophy, however naïve or biased it was, still provided the most confident corridor for political action. The absence of the credible (in their own eyes) historiosophical vision deprived actors of initiative and decisiveness in their actions. One of the most authoritative Russian historians of perestroika, A. Barsenkov argues that in principle Putschists had good chances to win<sup>134</sup>; but this tactical possibility should not obscure the fact the Kruchkov and his peers did not want to take power as they had no program or vision replying to the social trends they opposed.

In 1990-1991 no Communist military, party or state leader tried to play the role of an authoritarian conservative leader despite the widespread expectation or fears of the iron hand. The coup was organized by a group of people none of whom was willing to take the situation in charge. Contrary to the prevailing view, the Putschists were not ready to actively use the military force against civilians in case of escalation of the conflict. They did not prepare a reasonable legal coverage for their coup, and they had no communication strategy except an address to the people and a pathetic press-conference; finally, they did not arrest and instead were trying to negotiate a deal with their two main rivals – Gorbachev and Yeltsin. But what could the members of the Security Council count for, while taking great personal risks? We do not think there is a need of complex conspiracy to account for this mixture of tackling, threats and negotiations between the two sides of the August revolution. The disorganization of the Putschists, their careful avoidance of any written orders to the army, ambiguous declarations, partial toleration of the free press, and the absence of the leader assuming the responsibility for his orders translated the shared assumption of these politicians: **the tangible threat of the wide-scale military intervention could be enough to force the new Russian leadership to step down from the new treaty and thus save the USSR as a state, but not its regime.** The military Hunta reckoned that the overt threats will make the covert negotiations easier. Acting in the shadow of Stalin's terror, Gorbachev and Kruchkov alike were accustomed to use the military threat (reformers also relied on the Soviet rules of the hierarchical public speech), but never had to recourse to it in the first person and Gorbachev even consistently developed the arguments in favour of non-violence and was promoting the glasnost policy and anti-dogmatism.<sup>135</sup>

Some serious researchers present GKChP as favourable to the "socialist choice" – this however seems to be a misleading qualification, following the representations of their political adversaries.<sup>136</sup> The properly *ideological* cleavage crystallized in August 1991 between the coalition manipulated by

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<sup>134</sup> See for example: А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, стр.222-223

<sup>135</sup> Pacifism of Gorbachev and Kruchkov's readiness to rely on bayonets can be at least partly interchangeable. Thus, in 2004 Kruchkov claimed that his main limit was not to shed blood – and the last minister of the Soviet army, E. Shaposhnikov recalled Gorbachev covertly offering him to stage another putsch in November 1991 (!). Е. Шапошников, *Выбор*, М., 1995, стр.41-46. «-[Крючков] Мы не хотели устраивать путч. Выступили исключительно в рамках Конституции. И второе: мы страшно боялись пролить кровь. За два дня до выступления, когда мы в последний раз собрались в Кремле, то сказали: если только появится опасность кровопролития, мы сходим с дороги, как бы далеко уже ни зашли». «Исповедь маленького человека, Бывший шеф КГБ СССР Владимир Крючков в эксклюзивном интервью», *Российская Газета*, 2004, 9 июня.

<sup>136</sup> А. С. Барсенков, *Введение в современную российскую историю*, стр. 231

Kuchkov and the coalition led by Yeltsin could be formulated as follows: limited private property, policed order and great power patriotism within USSR's borders Vs individual freedoms, radical privatization and Russian national renaissance. Regarding the Communist ideology, democracy and the transition to the market the two camps differed in degree, but not in substance: Communist ideology and planned economy were rejected although with different eagerness, while the need of the transition to the socially responsible market and democracy was accepted by both sides. What was certainly lacking was the recognition of this common ground. The discontent with the creeping privatization of the state assets by the Soviet *nomenklatura* was probably the most serious ideological point of discord along with the fate of the Union; but on both issues the most active local, regional and even municipal elites were already favourable for maximum of independence from the Centre.<sup>137</sup>

GKChP members represented the top late Soviet *nomenklatura* personally promoted by Gorbachev. They had shared political interests, sensibilities and idiosyncrasies, but no alternative political program that *seemed* credible and could justify the risks of the armed intervention; the non-loyal Soviet elites were engaged in the privatization of property and power and provided no political support for harsh centralizing measures. Putschists also favoured democratic and economic reforms and were convinced that the Communist regime and planned economy could not be maintained without liberalization, but they were irritated by the privatization, attached to the unity of the country and their own status – without knowing what to do to counter this course of events. Putschists' most immediate concern was the disintegration of the USSR under the guise of the new Union's treaty. Their political assessment of the new treaty's real consequences seems accurate. The recognition of the republican sovereignties by the centre, and the restricted delegation of powers and budget from the republics to the Union's centre made it strategically dependent from the position of the Russian leadership and concretely from the position of Boris Yeltsin just elected with 60% of approval. The passage from the unitary empire to a loosely defined federation of *sovereign* national republics electing their Parliaments and presidents was in fact a crucial threshold in the dissolution of the USSR. The first Russian president felt before his contemporaries that the supreme power could be then obtained only by granting maximum of liberties to his fellow subordinates and not by threats of using the army. But he did not hesitate to actually use the military force rather than threats, when his personal power was in danger just two years later.

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<sup>137</sup> In this section we later analyse the article of two distinguished liberal-minded publicists Alla and Julia Latynina who noted that one of the first orders of Putschists was the ban to simultaneously occupy positions in the state bureaucracy and run private business. If this measure may seem ideologically neutral and rather reasonable, in 1991 Latyninas saw there the crucial ideological stake – Putschists' willingness to recompose the unity of the Soviet establishment on the basis of the party-state hierarchy, while Yeltsin and his team would endorse the naturally emerging unity of interests between bureaucrats and businessmen: «И не случайно среди первоочередных распоряжений хунты был запрет на совмещение государственных должностей и предпринимательской деятельности, - мера, направленная не столько на пресечение коррупции, сколько на разделение интересов предпринимателя и чиновника, сама собой возрождавшая партию как орден меченосцев». Алла Латынина, Юлия Латынина, «Время разбирать баррикады. Предварительные итоги XX века», *Новый Мир*, 1992, №1, стр. 231

*Illegitimate domination, violence and glasnost: a neo-Weberian argument*

The significance of the legal use of violence for the stability of the Soviet regimes was first exposed by Jan Pakulski when perestroika was only taking its shape. This approach provides a historical model with the three stages from “takeover” of monopoly by the regime through “consolidation” and “reproduction” with a gradually decreasing role of violence. The decrease of violence leads to the reconsideration of costs-and-benefits in favour of disobedience and in turn leads to an increased resort to violence, bringing the social order back and making it yet little less legitimate. The Polish deadlock in 1980 perfectly illustrates this explanation in the stage of the *reproduction* combining the cyclical and regressive dynamics. Writing in 1985, Pakulski could not foresee that the newly elected General Secretary of the CPSU was going to modify the crucial parameter in this relatively stable balance by liberalizing the public speech not only in Eastern Europe, but in the Soviet Union and thus providing the highly unlikely “conditions of articulation and dissemination of dissenting opinions... [by] groups and categories that are ‘strategic’ in the sense of having high potential for politically disruptive mobilization. Examples of such groups are skilled workers, members of the state apparatus of coercion and those sections of the intelligentsia (such as prestigious writers, journalists, actors, etc.) who can influence public opinion”<sup>138</sup>. The Gorbachev factor was in this respect crucial – although, as we tried to show, the reformer and his peers heavily and deliberately relied on the threat of violence when other resources were exhausted. Chris Armbruster explored the concept of illegitimate domination *within* the executive party-state apparatus resulting from the systematic inner party terror directed against the administrative staff and leading to the structural stasis as the expression of the illegitimacy of the established order<sup>139</sup>. As our earlier analysis shown, the focus on the leadership-staff relations should be more appropriate for the understanding of the perestroika’s dynamics.

Yet from another perspective, Rasma Karklins offered a structurally compatible and convincing interpretation of the Soviet downfall presumably using a revised totalitarian and political culture approaches<sup>140</sup>. Karklins’ main point is that Freidrich-Brzezinski classic definition of totalitarianism can provide the good explanatory frame for the perestroika’s failure, with an introduction of the dynamical dimension and if adjusted with the political culture approach understood as “politically relevant beliefs of the mass of populace”<sup>141</sup>. In fact, the totalitarian model provides only one useful and unspecific insight to Karklins: “The logic of totalitarianism is one of system coherence. The diffusion of control in one area could not but trigger changes in other areas”<sup>142</sup>. The end of monopoly over the media and ideology under the glasnost policy would trigger the downfall of the system, because of its *systemic* coherence relying on all the six Freidrich’s traits of totalitarianism. However, Karklins’ concrete

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p.51

<sup>139</sup> Armbruster, C. (2005) “Soviet relations of domination: legitimate or illegitimate?”, Working Paper. SSRN <http://ssrn.com/abstract=790508>

<sup>140</sup> Rasma Karklins, “Explaining Regime Change in the Soviet Union”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1994, Vol.46, №1, pp.29-45

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 29

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.,30



account of the breakdown's logic leaves no real place for totalitarian model's assumptions apart of an abstract claim on the system strict *coherence* (assumption once weakened by the disappearance of both, terror and ideological mobilization). The core argument is however interesting and it is resumed as this: "In short, media openness undermined the regime's monopoly on the instruments of force because it delegitimised their use against political challengers and made it less effective..."<sup>143</sup> This argument obviously uses the concept of legitimacy in its heart and it can be applied to any authoritarian regime and has nothing specifically totalitarian. In essence, Karklins seems to reintroduce the logic advanced by Pakulski. The arguments provided by Pakulski, Armbruster and Karklins suggest that illegitimate domination does not imply revolt, when there is no glasnost. The introduction of freedom of speech strategically undermined the capacity of the reformers to contain the republican nationalisms and counter the spontaneous privatization. Like earlier Barington Moor, Jan Pakulsky (wrongly) predicted that Soviet reformers would step back after the first steps of liberalization. We can partly account for this crucial error by analysing the historiosophical vision guiding the Soviet reformers. The approach in terms violence and legitimacy explains very well the velocity of the dismantling of the centralized state once the pending threat of the force disappeared. We tried to demonstrate how these general sociological accounts can be usefully complemented by the focus on the evolution of the worldview of the top Soviet leaders, their advisors and Soviet intellectuals.

#### *The grand total of XX century reconsidered in the light of August 1991*

The events of August 1991 seem to contradict the late perestroika's *Zeitgeist* favourable to the natural-historical evolution and suspicious about the active participation in history-making. If the organic metaphor could account for the events prior to the military coup and its counter-coup, it probably was more difficult to apply to the overt political struggle and the subsequent resolute attack against the remnants of the Communist party-state. How one could inscribe a revolutionary creation of a new state into the logic of the organic evolution? Indeed, there is no doubt that in this period Boris Yeltsin was acting as a virtuous Machiavellian state founder cunningly seizing the opportunities and boldly facing threats. The organisers of the Putsch were manifestly indecisive and disorganized after the announcement of the curfew; but their original decision to engage into the military operation was still free and had major historical consequences. Finally, the reluctance of the army and Special Forces' officers to engage into the military actions against civilians spared Russians from a massive slaughter – even a relatively small number of armed men under the command of a motivated officer willing to attack the White House could make the crucial difference. Therefore, it is particularly interesting to examine how intellectuals and those who participated in these events saw them shortly after the Putsch was over. We can thus probe the conclusions on the dominant historiosophical frame made in the fifth and sixth chapters at a different angle. The question here is how Yeltsin's overwhelming political victory over the non-Communist military Putsch and the political ban of the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

Communist party could be seen in the theoretical perspective? In the perestroika context, this was to say: what was the historiosophical meaning of this revolution?

The flagship among the theoretical reviews of perestroika *Novy Mir* published an article of the two brilliant literary critics and publicists, Alla and Julia Latynina entitled “Time to Undo Barricades” and placed under a rather ambitious heading – “Preliminary results of the XX century”<sup>144</sup>. The real purpose of this really ambitious article written just a few weeks before the formal dissolution of the USSR was a historiosophical interpretation of the end of the Soviet Communism: “the most serious question about the meaning of the seven decades of our history, which is unsolvable for both, our “Left” and “Right””. Among a few other contemporary *theoretical* interpretations of the August 1991 – and there were not so many of them as the very theoretical genre of publicist essays suddenly seemed to be untimely – this essay stands out not only by the reputation of the review and by the intellect or erudition of its authors, but also by two other qualities: first, its aspiration to honestly face political consequences of the dominant assumptions placing them in the European ideological context, and second, its rhetoric and intellectual focus on the persuasion of those who do not share and probably oppose the views of the authors. In other words, we probably have to deal with one of the most coherent and well-informed attempts to advance the *commonly acceptable* ideological benchmarks for the newly emerging Russia, based on the intellectual legacy of perestroika.

In substance, the authors forcefully advanced that political philosophy of *conservatism* was the proper sense of the ongoing revolution, giving a number of definitions of conservatism and conservators: “defender of the non-crisis development of society”, “respect of liberties obtained by the extension of the aristocratic privileges and not by building barricades”, “defence of the organic continuity” and finally, an enigmatic “opposition of culture to egalitarian tendencies”.<sup>145</sup> The explicit reference to Burke’s political philosophy is called to restoring the dignity of the mostly negative reception of the term *conservatism* in the perestroika context, by distinguishing between “liberal conservatism” of Burke and S. L. Frank and “romantic conservatism of De Maistre and Leontyiev”:

We are talking about liberal and, if you will, realistic conservatism, which sees in the non-violence, continuity and incrementalism the main pledge of the spiritual development of the society, and never rejects reforms, which are mature; it does not oppose those organic changes that form History.<sup>146</sup>

According to Latynina, the liberal conservatism overcomes the temptation of the radical utopias promising the mechanical transformation of the mankind in the future as well as the temptation of the fundamentalist restoration promising the return to the golden age in the past. Latynina recalled to the

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<sup>144</sup> Алла Латынина, Юлия Латынина, «Время разбирать баррикады. Предварительные итоги XX века», *Новый Мир*, 1992, №1

<sup>145</sup> Алла Латынина, Юлия Латынина, «Время разбирать баррикады», стр. 220-221, 231-232, 234

<sup>146</sup> «Речь идет о либеральном и, если угодно, реалистическом консерватизме, который видит в ненасильственности, преемственности и постепенности главный залог духовного развития общества и никогда не отказывается от реформ, которые назрели, никогда не противится тем органическим изменениям, которые и рождают историю». *Ibid.*, стр.221

readers that the current use of the term conservative to blame the “communist orthodoxy” is misplaced especially when “all the camps” are drawing on the ideological heritage of the famous anti-Revolutionary collection of essays “Landmarks” published after and against the first Russian revolution of 1905.<sup>147</sup> In fact, they asserted, the conservative mindset is dominant but split into two halves – Russian nationalists praise the continuity with the past, while Westerners and free marketeers praise the organic laws of historical development – “individuality, liberty, property!” The question is posed: how one could unite the two halves and which point in the past could provide the basis for the positive identification? Anew, we encounter the paradox articulated by Alexei Kiva in 1990, before the Putsch, and restated by Alla and Julia Latynina in 1992: “It is an easy thing to defend organic continuity with the past living in an organic society. But what can a conservative stand for, living in the USSR? ... A conservative here is caught into the trap set by the October revolution”.<sup>148</sup>

Drawing on the authority of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Petr Struve, Alla and Julia Latynina firmly objected to K. Myalo’s thoughtful worries about the current rampant criticism of the Soviet past: the Soviet period and even WWII can not offer a positive basis for conservatism because this is to compromise with the evil. Hence, more cautiously asked the authors, the restoration of the Russian tricolor and the blasphemy against the Red flag probably were the two side of the same process – “renewal of our bond with the past”? This general question is left without a definite answer and it led to the harsh criticism of the cyclical conception of the Russian history implying the periodical return to the oppressive (or for Russian patriots - organic) collectivism in politics and economy. Gently mocking those who would deduce Mussolini from Medieval orders and Roman bureaucracy, our authors claim that “for the sake of intellectual provocation” they are ready to claim that the idea of the law-like character of the Bolshevism in Russia has no advantages over the idea of its purely accidental character.<sup>149</sup> In 1991 as in 1985 the denial of the necessary character of the Bolshevik revolution seems problematic and provocative even when the political assessment of the revolution completely changed. Does this mean that the contribution of Gefter, Volobuev and hundreds of other influential publicists rediscovering the political dimension of *historical choice and alternativeness of history* was forgotten? No.

In this article, the iconoclastic Latynina carefully reproduced the main landmarks in the evolution of the intellectual mainstream of perestroika that we analysed in the previous chapters. Namely, they denied fatal necessity and blind accident as too mechanical approaches to history, and instead referred to the contemporary natural science identifying certain “moments of bifurcation, when the behaviour of the complex systems becomes unpredictable: it can turn into chaos or pass to a new, superior level of organization”.<sup>150</sup> With Arkadyi Prigozhin and Karl Popper this standpoint allows understanding the August 1991: “We can understand 19-21 of August, 1991 as such as moment of bifurcation” when

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., стр.222

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., стр.221

<sup>149</sup> «В целях интеллектуальной провокации мы считаем возможным заявить, что идея глубокой закономерности большевизма в России не имеет никаких преимуществ перед идеей чистой его случайности». Ibid., стр.221

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., стр. 222

everything depends not on historical laws or accident, but on the “choice made by a group of people and by the whole society”. The action, its meaning and its result coincided here. Thus, free agency acquires its historical rights. But this optimistic rediscovery of the free choice suddenly (and again quite typically) leads us to another familiar conclusion related to the old question of responsibility and the new question of symbolic continuity with past. Where there is a free will – the argument goes – there is also the possibility of a sin. Russia has committed the sin of totalitarianism and now it should repent as the sinner who understood the depth of its fall. Therefore, there could be no spiritual continuity with the USSR as there is no continuity between the repented sinner with his old “Self” (!?).<sup>151</sup> We can note that asking the same question in 1990 Kiva saw the Soviet heritage as the *institutional* obstacle to the natural-historical evolution to be broken; once it was removed by Yeltsin’s rapid counter-attack against the Putsch the question of the *symbolic* continuity takes precedence and the judgment of the two liberal conservatives following Solzhenitsyn and opposing many patriotic or nationalist authors, is univocally negative: there could be no continuity with the sinful old “Self”.

But the transformations are not over. Three notions are superposed: revolution, restoration and renaissance in order to cope with the danger posed to the liberal conservatism by the temptation of the total rupture with the past. Once again, rupture with the past even with the evil and sinful past seems to be a revolutionary attitude. To resolve this problem, the *renaissance* of the past traditions should be preferred to blind *restoration* [too nationalist and archaic] or radical *revolution* [too liberal and nihilistic]. But the post-Soviet case is not unique in this respect. Trying to imitate the accused French side, Latynina replied to Burke’s criticism: “On what kind of heritage could Frenchmen rely [in 1789]!?” Unlike British, they had no Magna Carta, a corrupted king’s court, broken finances, heavy bureaucracy and irresponsible nobility. But for the liberal conservative this is still not a good ground for the radical overthrow of the established old structures even when they seem so ruinous. Thus, we can follow the plot of these authors who progressively moved from the evaluation of the past and present to the definition of the new agenda for the immediate future in the aftermath of the political victory over the Soviet *ancient regime*. How liberal conservatism can guide post-Soviet women and men in 1992?

The main pragmatic although covert message of the rest of the article concerned the vicissitudes of the nomenklatura privatization – they are considered as the heavy price to pay for the peaceful transition from totalitarian state socialism to free capitalism. The picture is acute and leaves no ambiguities: “The market emerges out of what is at hand. From the black-market dealers, former state managers, from the old party and clans’ networks, from the slightly refurbished state monopolies. As before, the success depends not from the pure relation between offer-demand, but from the patronage of a bureaucrat....”<sup>152</sup> All those who opposed this certainly unpleasant but gradual process from different ideological points of view were blamed by Latynina for the revolutionary impatience. The suspected radicals in question are indeed coming from different backgrounds: Larisa Piasheva urging

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, стр.232

the rapid price liberalization and more egalitarian privatization<sup>153</sup>, Elena Bonner, urging the immediate expropriation of all the assets of the Communist party<sup>154</sup> and finally the two anonymous figures – the ordinary people who tend to claim too much social protection which is incompatible with capitalism<sup>155</sup> and intelligentsia with its propensity to draw the sand castles of constitutional reforms “out of head, and not of out of historical conditions”<sup>156</sup>.

Could the very moment of the extralegal and extraordinary victory over Communism, convincingly characterised by one of the ideologues of the MGD, G. Popov as the real *coup* of the August 1991<sup>157</sup>, be interpreted in the conservative terms? Indeed, the two authors proposed a complementary interpretation of this event to the idea that it was a major historical choice. For Alla and Julia Latynina, Gorbachev’s gradual reformation made possible the success of the rapid and bloodless Yeltsin’s counter-coup, precisely because the reforms prior to the coup and the counter-coup were gradual and incremental. By this time the fruit was ripe and therefore the miracle of the August revolution was the fruit of the conservative wisdom unaware of its name. Thus, the analogy with “system’s point of bifurcation” mechanically inherited by Latynina from the central period of perestroika and its “historical choice” (and now uncomfortable for their new reasoning) leaves place to the image of the gradually cultivated and collected ripe fruits. Once the political and institutional issues were expediently solved by a painless strike, the virtues of the liberal conservatism were anew on the top of the agenda:

Barricades – always were the symbol of the revolt, the desire to *conquer* the freedom. In August 1991 barricades were built... by men who wanted to *defend* their own government.

The subsequent swift Yeltsin’s strikes against the most ossified structures accomplished the process of the cautious reforms, initiated by Gorbachev, and whereby history would return on the organic path of development, burying the idea of the revolutionary perestroika of the world, the idea of destruction.

...

Whether the intelligentsia which in large part prepared the downfall of the ideocracy, will manage to find its place in the society having the possibility of the organic development – or whether it will cultivate the spirit of the protest for the sake of protest?<sup>158</sup>

Another well-informed and sophisticated benchmark text bringing together several distinguished authors can be compared with this liberal conservative apology of the August revolution and

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<sup>153</sup> «Радикалистское сознание будет кипятиться Оно будет напоминать о пропасти, которую не преодолеешь в два прыжка, призвать к скачку и первым разочаруется, когда выяснится, что не так просто допрыгнуть до светлого будущего», *Ibid.*, стр.232

<sup>154</sup> «Но уже с тревогой относится [консерватор] к словам, брошенным на вечере Сахарова прямо в лицо президенту: «Пока партия не отдаст народу все до нитки, будет торжествовать сталинизм», *Ibid.*, стр.229

<sup>155</sup> A curious historical interpretation of the non-emergence of capitalism in the Ancient Athens is used as a metaphor: «Афинские граждане пребывали в законодательно оформленной уверенности, что богатство нужно для того, чтобы его пожертвовать для пользы граждан. Но социальные гарантии для бедняка обернулись социальной уязвимостью богача. Рынок товаров родился, но рынок рабочей силы так и не возник», стр.231-232

<sup>156</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville and the authors of the *Landmarks* are cited emphasising the natural detachment of intelligentsia from the national soil and political practice. *Ibid.*, стр.234

<sup>157</sup> Г. Попов, «Август девяносто первого», *Известия*, 1992, 21 августа

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, стр.236

corruption. The chamber intellectual journal *Vek XX / Mir* printing roughly fifteen times less copies than *Novy Mir* (60 000 and 900 000 copies correspondingly in 1991) published the script of a round-table under a very similar title and subtitle to the article of Latynina: "After the Victory: The Sense of the Changes: The End of the Century"<sup>159</sup>. The participants tried to honestly and freely face the new situation in the country and to situate themselves in December 1991. The round-table was led by a brilliant journalist, historian and political analyst Andrei Fadin and among others it was attended by two young historians, Alexander Shubin and Alexey Miller who later became the authoritative figures in their generation, by several renown publicists who could be qualified as political philosophers – Denis Dragunsky, Dmitry Furman and Tatyana Vorozheikina, and by the future head of the analytical department of the Russian presidency, Simon Kordonsky. At least three of the guests in the late 1970s and early 1980s belonged to the underground groups of "young socialists". Despite different accents and different vocabulary, we can reconstruct the common points this time shared consciously and unambiguously by all the intellectuals who spoke: continuity of elites, covert-quasi-nomenclature-mafia privatization of the state's assets, catastrophic if not apocalyptical dissolution of the political economic and social order, the non-viability of the USSR *and* Russia, regional and sub-regional fragmentation of the country, the inevitability of a more or less firm authoritarian rule(s).

From the outset, the debate was framed by the proposal to look beyond the inevitable and imminent economic catastrophe: what will be in the aftermath? This cold-headed approach allowed to the intellectuals gathered to discuss the new "ruling class" and the "scenarios of the future development" to make two strikingly accurate predictions. Kordonsky, developing the neologism proposed by Dragunsky a few minutes ago, made the following diagnosis characterising the upcoming two decades:

The country will be dislocating into "nasters" [composed as the merger of the Russian words *population* and *territory*], market relations will appear between these nasters. Inside "nasters" the current system with all its power hierarchy will be reproduced. The demands which could not be satisfied within the given zone by its population will be satisfied by the market relations. And the world market will be invading and regulating the cracks between the nasters.<sup>160</sup>

The prognosis of Andrei Fadin wrapping up the discussion outlined two surprisingly realistic scenarios: first, most likely, "this entity under the name of Russia" can not be held together and the territory will be fragmenting into the most basic territorial entities before the new order will re-emerge; second, Russia can survive as a country only under a strong authoritarian regime. According to Fadin, the market would establish itself anyway, but significantly slower in case of the populist anti-market authoritarianism, and faster in case of the fragmentation combining subsistence farming, barter

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<sup>159</sup> «Конец века. После победы. Круглый стол политиков и политологов», *Век XX и Мир*, №12, 1991,

<sup>160</sup> "Страна будет распадаться на такие "настеры", между ними будут устанавливаться рыночные отношения. В рамках же "настера" будет воспроизводиться наша нынешняя система со всей иерархией управления. А потребности, которые не могут быть удовлетворенными в пределах этой зоны ее жителями, будут удовлетворяться за счет рыночных отношений. И, собственно, в эти щели между настерами и будет вторгаться мировой рынок. Он будет их регулировать." Ibid., стр.48

economy and free market.<sup>161</sup> Thus, some of the brightest socialist dissidents who were recently looking for an improved self-managing society and encouraged in their optimistic quests by the elder adepts of the idea of convergence between Soviet socialism and Western capitalism, could accept the fact that the decomposing Soviet country was going to join the Third World rather than the civilized one. The combination of the two scenarios depicted by A. Fadin can be considered as a rather accurate foresight into two decades after 1991.

*On what can be said in public: public speech as moral agency*

This chamber if not private round-table provides us with some insights on the nature of the public speech. Tatiana Vorozheikina agreed on the objective difficulties for democratic rule and warned that the joy of the democratic intelligentsia about the infamously sunken Soviet Parliament, Yeltsin's populism, and common disrespect of the representative assemblies contained the "teeth of the dragon" – "democrats" were already turning into "an authoritarian power" threatening the degeneration into the worse kind of Peronism.<sup>162</sup> The problem of her warning was that people gathered in this specific room had no doubts or illusions about this authoritarian outcome and they assumed it as given. Dmitriy Furman recognized and lively depicted the superficial nature of the current democratization in his words driven by the desire of the regional Party Secretaries to look like respectable gentlemen – with the titles of mayors or deputies of the Parliament "when in the tourist trip to Sweden": "It is evident, that politically the authoritarian structure will be inevitably reproduced". Furman, as Vorozheikina, was not ready to accept this hard reality, he however openly faced; but unlike Vorozheikina he knew that his small audience knew well about these warnings; so for him the stake was more fundamental and theoretical. Finding little encouraging evidence in favour of his imperative of "democratic hope" Furman somewhat hesitantly made obvious the underlying understanding of the nature or function of free public speech:

The objective task of the current stage of development is, in my view, to attempt the creation of a real democratic alternative. This is not a pure utopia [this implies that by this time the democratic alternative was understood in this intellectual circle as a utopia]! At least, I see this opportunity. It is simply impossible to make politics in this country without seeing some glimmering hope.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> "Я попробую резюмировать точки зрения, которые здесь высказаны. Одна точка зрения исходит из того, что в принципе возможно установление в масштабах России сильного авторитарного режима, который сохранит единство территории и системы управления со всеми политическими и культурными последствиями. И вторая исходит из того, что этой общности под названием Россия уже не удержать, что пойдет дробление всех общероссийских систем - территории, инфраструктуры и т.д. - до элементарного экономического локального сообщества. И затем из этих элементов возникнет новый порядок. Таковы два итоговых макросценария. Рынок возникает и по первому, и по второму. Но исторический темп их принципиально различен в сопоставлении с масштабами человеческой жизни. Ibid., стр.49

<sup>162</sup> «Сейчас уже сами демократы начинают превращаться в настоящую авторитарную власть, в нечто похожее на перонизм. Правда, здесь, на мой взгляд, это будет посерьезнее и пострашнее», Ibid., стр.45

<sup>163</sup> «Объективной задачей современного этапа развития является, по-моему, попытка создания реальной демократической альтернативы. Это вовсе не чистая утопия. Я, во всяком случае, вижу эту возможность. Пытаться заниматься политикой в этом обществе, не видя хоть какой-то надежды, просто невозможно», Ibid., стр. 47

Public speech presumes and is meaningful only when there is hope, even glimmering hope, *shared* by the author and the audience. Significantly, two attempts to voluntarily stand for a “democratic alternative” in order to oppose the “objective process” leading to the authoritarian rule and wild privatization encountered firm reproofs. In other words, all the participants of the debate shared the (overall accurate) diagnosis of the objective historical tendencies leading to authoritarianism as well as they shared common broadly liberal-democratic political values, but only two of them tried to challenge “objective necessity” as ideologically unacceptable and both failed in that. Kordonsky replied to Furman that he was speaking about public politics in an already inexistent country breaking into small entities with local fiefdom hierarchies, security services and tax systems; this local consolidation was the only means to save the social life. Fadin reacted to Vorozheikina’s attempt to switch to the public register of the speech by a more straightforward question about the new foundation of public rhetoric among post-Soviet intelligentsia:

I want to formulate a question unpleasant for all of us: to which extend the values of democracy and liberalism are constructive in the situation of a deepest crisis and total dissolution of our society? It is clear that there are historical tasks which could only be carried out by very unpleasant regimes often in direct opposition to these values. This is a curse of humanity and I don’t bring any news in this respect. But we should, I believe, reply to the question: what is the sense of opposing the new authoritarian power?<sup>164</sup>

This sharp awareness of the tiny and then marginal minority of intellectuals arriving at bitter conclusions about the superficial character of the democratization as well as the reliance of mother and daughter Latynia on the liberal-conservative tradition for accepting – although in a more Aesopian language – the corrupted privatization as the price of the peaceful exit from the Soviet system can be contrasted with the then dominant perception as realistic of the two options: Communist authoritarian planning or civilized market democracy. E. A. Rees drew our attention to an elaborated exposition of this typical dichotomy in the article by L. Gordon and A. Nazimova entitled “Perestroika in Historical Perspective: Possible Scenarios” written in 1990.<sup>165</sup> Gordon and Nazimova distinguished four historical options combining two axes: authoritarianism-democracy and plan-market. These authors discounted both, the authoritarian market modernization supported by certain economists and intellectuals and the democratic social planning allegedly favoured by the population. According to Gordon and Nazimova, history would demonstrate the long-term viability of the two pure options: total unfreedom or total freedom. Naturally, the later option looked preferable for the authors. In the commentary in 1990, Rees pointed out at the limits of this scheme evacuating the distinction between social-democracy and

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<sup>164</sup> «Я хочу сформулировать очень неприятный для нас всех вопрос: насколько ценности демократии и либерализма конструктивны в ситуации глубочайшего кризиса и полного распада общества?. Ясно, что существуют некоторые объективные исторические задачи, которые могут быть выполнены только малоприятными с точки зрения этих ценностей, иногда прямо им противоположными режимами. Это проклятие всей человеческой истории, и я здесь ничего нового не скажу. Но в нашем контексте нужно, мне кажется, ответить на следующий вопрос: в чем смысл противостояния новой авторитарной власти?» Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> L. Gordon and A. Nazimova, “Perestroika in Historical Perspective: Possible Scenarios”, *Government and Opposition*, 1990, Vol.25, N.1, pp.3-15. See: E. A. Rees, “Introduction”, in E.A. Rees, (ed.), *The Soviet Communist Party in Disarray*, MacMillan, 1992, pp.1-3.



free market capitalism within the option “freedom” and the crucial issue of the preservation or non-preservation of the USSR.<sup>166</sup> We can add that these authors as most of their peers could not imagine that “history” could bring into life a deeply corrupted and authoritarian state capitalism with some niches for market competition and no legal protection. This unattractive possibility was envisaged as the only viable option by a few perestroika authors, who preferred to speak in a veiled language or remain at the margins of public debate or else turned experts.<sup>167</sup>

Although the assessment of the timing and the clarity of the picture of the upcoming unpleasant transitory period differed, the *underground* work of history was in all these cases understood as *ultimately* favourable for democracy and market. For liberals and social democrats the new republic, democracy and market would naturally come out of this quagmire<sup>168</sup> in the undefined future. Those who would like to mobilize intelligentsia and ordinary people against the new ruling class by *public speech* should temper their impatience or wilfulness, or else accept their misunderstanding of the objective situation. The acceptance of the moral and economic corruption was considered as the necessary price to pay for the natural-historical and therefore wholesome evolution however disgusting was the face of the new historical hegemony peacefully emerging from the old Soviet nomenklatura. This one-sided symbolic pact of the brightest and honest Soviet intellectuals with the most corrupted and active part of the Soviet Nomenklatura was deliberately made betting on the peaceful evolution; more prosaically the feeling that things could not be changes anyway contributed to this pact. We can interpret this sense of powerlessness as a tacit recognition of intellectuals own relative corruption, here, collective inability to stand for one’s values. The most popular historiosophical arguments shaped this very pact outlining social and political ontology where human agency could not positively change history and where natural-historical evolution was both wholesome and necessary.

Summarizing some of the central moments in his own research and drawing on Bailyn’s analysis of the ideological foundations of the American Revolution Pocock suggested that the rhetoric against the corruption was so widespread among the partisans of the American independence “... that it helps explain the creation of republics as the means of meeting it; but it is the essence of “the Machiavellian moment” that the republic is itself exposed to the threat of corruption”.<sup>169</sup> The late Soviet and early post-Soviet thinkers, some of whom started seeing themselves as *liberal conservatives*, implied that a new republic could be found on the basis of the natural-historical evolution necessarily passing through *corruption* towards a more wholesome and free state. Their Western predecessors probably

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<sup>166</sup> E. A. Rees, Op. cit., p.2-3

<sup>167</sup> Igor Klyamkin and Andrannik Migranyan stood apart – they became highly recongized and contested figures by arguing in favour of the inevitably authoritarian transition to the market – as they fully mastered the new historiosophical language shared by the majority of intellectuals.

<sup>168</sup> The last collection of essays published in the series “Perestroika: Glasnost, Democracy, Socialism” which opened by the famous *There is No Alternative* was entitled *Sunking into the Quagmire* [1991]. The second subtitle softened the avowal and was braketed – (Anatomy of the Stagnation). Т. А. Ноткина (сост.), *Погружение в трясину (Анатомия застоя)*, М., Прогресс, 1991.

<sup>169</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton UP, 2003, p.580

would not formulate it in this way – and this gives additional credit to the thesis that what was to become liberal [conservative] tradition and the various forms of the civic republican [revolutionary] tradition in the West distinguished and opposed by Skinner were in a constant dialogue, not always aware of the degree to which each side relied on the other. The late Soviet political thought reflecting on the failures of the self-contained offshoot of the republican strain ended up by rejecting the civic activism and placed all its hopes on the wholesome commerce however corrupted it was. To this date, the natural-historical flow did not reduce corruption and in part reduced the liberties of interpersonal commerce. This may recall us that an effective legal tradition affiliated with the negative liberal definition of freedom stills relies on some degree of civic virtue. Publicly claiming and defending one's right to be protected by law is certainly a form of active if not republican self-standing; the liberal conservatism of Latynina summing up the intellectual heritage of the last phase of perestroika presumed that even this level of activism was not needed for the organic Western-like historical evolution.

New democratic institutions and forums were the dominant forms of the competitive state-building between 1989 and 1993. Gorbachev tried to reform the stagnating Soviet regime and build a new political basis and new economic stimulus to speed up and humanise the USSR. His firm endorsement of glasnost and democratic forums encouraged his many new friends-and-rivals in the fifteen republics and in their autonomous regions, such as Tatarstan, Chechnya or Yakutia within Russia, to consolidating alternative legal and political basis for their power – Parliamentary and direct presidential elections were the most direct legal means for preparing the break up of the Union and republican independence. Yet, this period was not just the victory of democracy over autocracy.

If the civic resistance to the armed putsch in August 1991 marked an important symbolic stage for the decomposition of the political order on the territory of the USSR, the consolidation of the new political regimes took between five to twenty years. After 1990, the question of the most influential Soviet intellectuals was not whether the Soviet political regime and USSR could survive after democratisation, but what would emerge out of the ruins of the Soviet *ancient regime*. The bet on the inevitable voluntary reunification of the new republics within a renewed Union or Commonwealth proved to be a common miscalculation. The USSR did not disappear at once<sup>170</sup>; some of the new

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<sup>170</sup> Estonia first declared its sovereignty already in 1988. In 1990, at least one third of the Soviet republics ceased to obey Moscow's laws and the Centre could do nothing about it, while 40% of the Soviet population considered the split of national Republics from the USSR as likely (VTsIOM poll in January 1990), Estonian, Georgian and Armenian soldiers massively deserted the Soviet army. In 1994, many Russians could still think they were living in the transformed USSR with a little bit tongue-tied new name and roubles were widely accepted in Asian republics. CIS was ambiguously presented to the wide Russian public as a renewed or reincarnated USSR. Intellectuals were also often confused. Ksenia Myalo, one of the most acute publicists of this period, could write in 1994 about the events in Ukraine or Tajikistan as if there took place within the same country. К. Мяло, «Октябрь 1993 - Конец Химеры» in *Век XX и мир. Октябрь 1993, Хроники переворота*, Февраль 1994. «Труповозки в Бендерах, беженцы из Таджикистана, пересекающие Сибирь в

republics are still under construction and a few republics could consolidate their new regimes. However, until very recently the process in the relations between the former Soviet republics went only in one direction – decomposition. Democratic regimes typically could not stabilize themselves. The consolidation of the new national states is not completed. The institutional turmoil in the recently democratized Georgia and Ukraine are the signs of the democratic post-Soviet regimes' instability.

By looking at the major political issues and at a few perestroika texts addressing the real stakes of this period, we can see how the historiosophical mainstream of public debates in the thick journals in 1990-1991 was suddenly dissociated from the ongoing politics. The new social reality taken without its historiosophical frame seemed morally unacceptable but inevitable for the majority of intellectuals. The dominant historiosophical frame gave a commonly shared hope that behind the manifest chaos a better order would *naturally* emerge. The historiosophical language remained the main means of convincing others in a public debate and it arguably influenced the policy-making; this time by preaching non-action and firm rejection of political violence. The more adequate and honest assessment of reality by a few acute intellectuals was losing both its public and its polemical character. It was already becoming an expert knowledge of advisors counselling princes, rather than a public thing discussed by virtuous citizens.

The second half of perestroika and the subsequent decade could be characterised by the *vacuum* of power and by the formation of the new competing but institutionally weak centres of power – the feature shared with most western Revolutions in terms of Huntington's classification of the western and eastern types<sup>171</sup>. Democratisation and free public speech played a destabilizing role not only for the old, but for the new political regimes. Arguably the fragmentation of power continued in Russia after 1991, despite certain political enthusiasm aroused by the Russian national and liberal-democratic renaissance from the ashes of the USSR. The Russian Federation succeeding to the Soviet Union had many features of an unstable association of regional fiefdoms until the end of 1990s. We can point out a number of factors contributing to the void of authority characterising the last years of perestroika: the crisis in the food supply, the wild privatization, the criticism of the Soviet history uprooting the moral authority of the Soviet party-state, republican nationalisms, and the centre's increasing inability to enforce legal order by the legitimate and organized force. The rapid price liberalization in 1992 solved the first issue and the ban of CPSU in part addressed the second. Free

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промерзлых вагонах, а потом, лишённые элементарных прав, живущие в сараях и трансформаторных будках, геноцид в Закавказье, ущемление гражданских прав русских и русскоязычных в Прибалтике - перечислять можно долго, но неужто и сказанного недостаточно, чтобы понять: мы уже в течение нескольких лет живем в ситуации правового обвала. И если в октябре кровавая волна, пронесаясь по окраинам, хлынула в Москву, то давайте уже сегодня, *post mortem*, не будем сводить понятие права лишь к праву издавать газеты и создавать политические организации - сколь бы важным ни было оно само по себе.». For the VTsIOM's poll see: «Пять вопросов стране», *Коммерсант-Власть*, 29.01.1990. The presently continuing and continuously inconclusive talks between Russia and Belorussia about the unification of the state are probably the best illustration that the re-composition across the ethno-national borders drawn by the Communists does not take place in the most favourable circumstances.

<sup>171</sup> See the chapter «Власть и безвластие умеренных» in И. Стародубовская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Варриус, 2004 (2ое изд.), p.139-150. S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New Heaven: Yale UP, 1968, p.266

speech amplified all of these factors, while historiosophical assumptions guiding the reformers and the enlightened public *triggered* most of them.

Privatization, weak law enforcement, barter economics, progressive privatization of violence and the lack of a shared legitimating frame in public communication continued to destroy regular state authority for a decade after 1991; for a decade, freedom of press continued to produce harsh mutual criticism turning into the mutual public blackmailing of loose alliances formed and unformed by businessmen, politicians, criminals and armed services [*siloviki*].<sup>172</sup> In 1995 central government in Moscow lacked significant aspects of the state authority such as legal enforcement or tax collection. In all the former Soviet republics, except Baltic countries, new political regimes could stabilise only when competitive public politics ceded to a variety of Bonapartist or plainly authoritarian regimes. New authoritarian regimes are based on the supervised direct elections, direct presidential control over main TV channels and mass press, and “pointed” illegal repressions against opposition, large business, individual opponents or journals, while certain niches for a freer intellectual and business press are *de facto* maintained. The centralization of the corruption within the major national industries, police, courts and Special Forces is the last significant pillar of these regimes’ relative stabilization. By contrast, competitive public politics and open democratic elections failed to produce new social order and authority (again with the exception of Baltic countries) as it was recently confirmed in Ukraine, Georgia or Moldavia. Finally, political parties did not win mass support articulated in terms of group or class interests – instead the ratings of popularity of a very small number of political leaders provided the main legitimating basis of the emergent political orders; in the absence of strong national leaders, regimes authority and stability is sharply declining.<sup>173</sup>

The academic and political observers mostly faced the logic unravelled by the relative failure public politics of perestroika and in the 1990s in terms of the theoretical dilemma of simultaneity or priority between *political reforms* on one hand, and *socio-economic modernization* on the other.<sup>174</sup> We argue that considering the status, rules, vocabulary and arguments prevailing in the public intellectual debates can bring relevant light on this issue. Emergent public politics tended to destroy social order and political authority, and could not create new order and authority which instead were shaped underneath the public scene and with the recourse to the illegitimate and arbitrary violence. As we tried to show, at least partly, this failure can be accounted for from within the intellectual debates. In

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<sup>172</sup> Eleven days after the inauguration of Putin as the newly elected president in 2000, he attacked the media empire of V. Gusinsky using as pretext legal charges against the owner – and making the decisive step in establishing direct political control over the electronic media in Russia. This return of political propaganda in favour of the central power on the TV and radio in part affected the printed press and Internet; the relative political stability of 2000s and Putin’s high electoral ratings are based on this authoritarian pattern combining “niches” of intellectual liberty and masked propaganda in mass media. For a recent account of the motivations in Gusinsky’s case: «Хроники 1999–2009 гг.: Обязан посадить», *Ведомости*, 23.03.2009.

<sup>173</sup> Already in 1988 a group of intellectuals accurately predicted that political leaders, rather than political parties will become the dominant political actors benefiting from the democratization. See the transcript of the round-table published in *XX Век и Мир*: [http://www.igrunov.ru/cat/vchk-cat-bibl/round\\_tab/vchk-cat-bibl-roundtab-vek\\_ametist\\_88.html](http://www.igrunov.ru/cat/vchk-cat-bibl/round_tab/vchk-cat-bibl-roundtab-vek_ametist_88.html)

<sup>174</sup> See an authoritative discussion of this frame: В. Гельман, «Тупик авторитарной модернизации», *Pro et Contra*, 2009, №5-6

the 2000s, one could also witness how the relative freedom of public speech reserved for business, political and intellectual elites in Russia could coexist with a brutally enforced taboo on competitive public politics. This fragile and yet tangible intellectual and informational freedom available for the Russian elites improves the efficiency of the authoritarian policy-making by giving a more realistic and up-to-date picture of the Russian society and the world. But this regime of compartmented public speech with different degrees of freedom and pointed repressions does not help improving or influencing the policy-making oriented on the *common good* even as it is understood by the elites because fear does not produce public opinion<sup>175</sup>; the taboo on competitive public politics does not allow mobilizing public opinion against the constitutive corruption, judicial arbitrary or any other outward social evil – instead, it *simulates* the indignation via a number of designated free-speakers on the TV or in the press making the actual indignation more “toothless”.

The contemporary Russian regime of public speech is rather successfully learning to navigate *between* destabilizing public politics and blinding suppression of any dissenting ideas or criticism; but it evacuates from the public speech the possibility to rally people around a platform which could challenge the supreme power of the regional, industrial or national stakeholders. Arguably, the new political order in the post-Soviet Russia is based on the Soviet unity over dissent rule, but allowing more intellectual freedom. The unlearned lesson of perestroika is that the successful passage to a stable regime of public politics requires a pre-democratic agreement between key political actors around the common values and rules blessing (or rejecting) some of the core social practices in the name of the common understanding of *reality* and *good life*. Following the long republican tradition, one can suggest that the missing element is civic virtue, although this quality seems to escape the scientific lens. The original intellectual loop of perestroika consisted in the theoretical and deliberate negation of the usefulness and practical feasibility of the virtuous public politics.

After an attempt to justify and guide public politics in terms of *historical choice of the path* perestroika distilled the historiosophy of *non-violence* and *natural-historical evolution* making the painful and chaotic robbery of the late Soviet order by its stakeholders less violent. This historiosophical frame promoting non-action as a virtue also reflected and amplified the growing sense of miscommunication and irrelevance of public speech for politics. Gorbachev’s team refused violence and made bet on the power of words but public speech was not enough to found a new republic, worse, it was mostly destructive. This bed dilemma of either irrelevant or harmful free public speech proved lasting after perestroika; free public speech did not offer in the post-Soviet context the constructive option – “on how to do things with words”.

Twenty years after the culmination of hope on political glasnost at the First Congress of People’s Deputies in 1989, an unnoticed “Polemical Letter” was published by the independent Russian Internet forum [www.polit.ru](http://www.polit.ru) and signed by a certain “I. Larionov”. Comparing the passages from the recent

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<sup>175</sup> Unless people are not afraid of honestly speaking they will follow the logic of the king’s court rather than that of public good. Compare with a similar argument of Thomas More recovered by Q. Skinner in *Liberty before Liberalism*: Квентин Скиннер, *Свобода до либерализма*, СПб, Издательство Европейского Университета в Санкт-Петербурге, стр.78-79

texts of the president D. Medvedev and his deputy chief of staff V. Surkov, the anonymous author implied their ideological merits and stated that real democratic rule can only take place, when the content rather than the author of political texts was taken seriously. We would like to quote this letter showing that the threshold of public politics is what contemporary Russia faces but can not overcome – not because of its intellectual weakness, but in terms of the assumptions, rules and practices underpinning public speech on public matters. Men lacking virtue and aware of this lack are incapable to face the reality of their rivalling coexistence:

At the “Forum 2020”, Surkov optimistically stated that what he was propagating in public during the last few years is gradually accepted by everybody, while it seemed something marginal at the beginning. Hence, we should believe in the “power of words”... This is true. But this is not the whole truth.

There is a major problem – [debates] do not take place within the country. Any discussion successfully ignores the content of the texts but instead immediately, as in the communal apartments’ quarrels, attacking their authors... At best they cultivate the art of political denunciation first acquired decades ago.

What to do with this issue? I am sure – this is the central problem of the “non-violent modernization”. Without the culture of dialogue it is impossible...<sup>176</sup>

The diagnosis about the insignificance of public debates seems correct. We can also note that politically meaningful public debates without consideration of the authorship advocated by the anonymous author is a utopia (of course, a few anonymous articles make public debates richer, but in general authorship crucially matters for a mutually engaging public discussions between actors which matter) and second, that “culture of dialogue” is most probably a secondary result of the civic virtues transforming public utterances into authoritative public politics: stakeholders’ readiness to face reality, capacity and willingness to share this knowledge in public crucially depends from their willingness to pursue in joint actions what one sees as worthy and valuable – most frequently against the adverse and occasionally in the favourable circumstances. This willingness to stand for one’s interests or ideals associating with peers against others *in public* is a civic virtue. Legalistic tradition may provide another pillar for the significance of public utterances, but this one is crucially missing in post-Soviet Russia. When men refuse to climb their part of the ladder, they are certain not to get to the next level and History can hardly do their part of the work unless one can count on History’s providential blessing.

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<sup>176</sup> “Сурков на Форуме 2020 высказался оптимистично в том духе, что то, о чем мы говорим в последние годы постепенно стали говорить все, а поначалу считали это чем-то маргинальным. Поэтому надо «верить в силу слов»... Это правда. Но не вся правда.

Проблема в одном – внутри страны ничего этого не происходит. Любая дискуссия успешно игнорирует содержание текстов сразу, как в коммунальной сваре переходя на личности – все эти .... и т.д. – требующих то отставок, то нового Горбачева – все эти люди существующие для того, казалось бы, чтобы вести дискуссию, текстами реагировать на тексты – вместо этого они, в лучшем случае, оттачивают десятилетиями назад усвоенное мастерство политического доноса.

Что с этим делать? Я уверен, что здесь – ключевая проблема «ненасильственной модернизации». Без культуры диалога она невозможна. Конечно, ситуация когда власть в очередной раз в России оказывается «впереди» – банальных до тошноты, но видимо это гравитационная данность русской истории. И эта ситуация не является драмой. Демократия не состояние, а метод, и он, говоря трезво, неприменим к тем, кому он не нужен.”  
<http://www.polit.ru/dossie/2009/09/26/il.html>



## Conclusion

We would like to confirm the initial hypothesis on the emergence of the specific set of idioms related by the joint usage and common intellectual problems addressed in these terms by a large number of authors in a variety of theoretical texts and genres. The idioms of *historical choice*, *path* and *alternative* originally employed by the semi-dissident Soviet historians who looked to preserve the theoretically sound historical outlook for a more humane Soviet socialism and to loosen the kinship of Stalin and Lenin, during perestroika informed the theoretical debates across the ideological spectrum. These historiosophical idioms marked the evolution of the *intellectual debates* of perestroika along with the widely known and less controversial terms such as *uskorenie*, *glasnost*, and *perestroika* itself. The reaffirmation of human agency as a substantial historical factor was among the chief concerns at the birth and during the sudden spread of the new language. In 1988 Yuri Afanassiev probably better than others made explicit that the affirmation of the alternativeness in history served to represent the situation of the actual political choice of perestroika (to which, he constantly reminded the audience, there was no viable alternative). More generally, the new vocabulary served to a great number of controversial utterances but overall it helped to set the intellectual ground of the emerging competitive public politics. But advancing the idea of free agency as an ontological dimension of history this vocabulary failed to affirm human agency able to *stem* historical adversity when speaking in the present tense.

### *The intellectual presumptions: paradoxes of historical necessity, freedom and responsibility*

In line with the recent works of R. Markwick, we can advance that one should correct the common assessment that the Soviet historians played a minor role in perestroika's public debates, which also was the self-assessment of Soviet historians in this period.<sup>1483</sup> The new language originally born in (although not exclusively spread from) the circle of the professional historians surrounding M. Gefter and by P. Volobuev helped in debating the most acute political and theoretical questions between 1985 and 1991. We distinguished three related but specific themes: the redrawing of the global historiosophical map and the place of the Soviet Union on this map, the distribution of responsibility for the Soviet mass crimes of the XX century and the present decay, and, finally, the role which free human agency can play in politics and history. The historical

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<sup>1483</sup> R. Markwick showed the emergence of the new revisionist historiography around the circle of M. Gefter and implied it had a strong impact on perestroika. We attempt to demonstrate and develop this argument by studying the specific language and its uses. Roger D. Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography, 1956-1974*, Basingstock and New York, Palgrave, 2001, 327 pp. Roger D. Markwick, "Catalyst of Historiography, Marxism and Dissidence: The Sector of Methodology of the Institute of History, Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1964-68", *Europe-Asia Studies*, (Soviet and East European History), 1994, pp. 579- 596.



idioms carried the intention to affirm the autonomy of human agency in order to allocate historical responsibility for the past crimes and oppose or soften the late Soviet idea of the triumphant iron historical necessity once the historical misfortunes of socialism and Russia became acknowledged. The clout of these idiomatic innovations on the emerging political theory, economics and on the perception of the current options suggests that historiography have prefigured and significantly shaped the theoretical framework of the public debates of perestroika.

Late Soviet historians, publicists and political thinkers rediscovered the historiosophy of human agency in order to account for the half-revealed tragedies of the past and to give intellectual perspective to the serious reforms of the USSR. Historians and publicists such as Volobuev, Ambartsumov, Burlatsky, Lisichkin, Butenko, Kozlov, Bordugov and many others incidentally helped by Stephen Cohen, at first presented Bukharin's advocacy of NEP as the symbol of the credible alternative to collectivization and later Stalin's terror. As often noted, the rehabilitation of NEP and Bukharin certainly was intended to support the perspective of the economic reforms of perestroika. But it has two other significant theoretical aspects addressing the question of historical responsibility and the design of the general historiosophical map. In 1988 this was meant to dissociate and "save" the overall objective historical necessity of socialism in the USSR and to isolate crimes as the historical arbitrary of Stalin. The relationship between historical guilt and objective necessity was at the centre of this argumentation: a historically *necessary* course of events could be always justified by its supreme objectivity and, hence, the morally and politically unacceptable actions should be only seen as accidental. In this perspective the objective necessity would back up the human and democratic socialism, hampered by Stalinist deviations.

As it was justly noted by many acute observers of perestroika, a rather vague socialist humanist outlook supported by this revisionist historiosophy proved practically misleading – this strategic vision implied to loosen the traditional constraints on agents of an authoritarian and ideocratic world empire, in return expecting the enthusiastic increase in loyalty, discipline and productivity. A more narrow-minded and moderate wing of reformers in the Politburo initially allied with Gorbachev and later personified by Egor Ligachev (who was erroneously and commonly portrayed as a diehard conservative) had no comparably well articulated intellectual outlook. They favoured most of Gorbachev's policies but were not ready to abandon the repressive instruments as counterparts and worshiped the traditional Soviet cults of Lenin, October revolution and Great Patriotic War. More generally, the rediscovery of human agency in history opened up different ideological perspectives for reforming and improving the current society by choosing the beneficial and solid, but once missed historical path of development by symbolically returning to the crucial historical fork.

This agency-centred language engendered yet another intellectual perspective explored by the liberal Igor Klyamkin convinced in the need to find the Russian pathway to the Western civilization and the socialist humanist Mikhail Gefter who was fascinated by Lenin's fate and the perspectives of the humanist globalization. These otherwise unlike authors stated the tragic essence of history by affirming both, some form of historical necessity *and* moral unacceptability of Stalinism. They saw this simultaneous claim which seemed contradictory for a great number of political and historical publicists – as a moral and intellectual responsibility. Thus, the responsibility for the atrocities of the XX century should be symbolically shared by **all members** of the Soviet community, rather than attributed to particular groups, ideologies or persons as implied by the majority of publicists accusing each other. Stressing the inevitability of the past and opposing the prevailing usage of the new idioms which promised too easy solutions by the return to the past historical forks between the *blind alley* and the Promised Land, Klyamkin called his numerous readers to capture the tiny quantity of freedom available in the present. Similarly, Gefter deplored the abusive and irresponsible projection of one's ideals into the past presented as missed alternatives, but called to face and assume the irreversibility of the past as the condition of the genuine alternativeness of the present, or in other words as the conditions of open-ended politics. The sceptical liberal historiosophy of Klyamkin predicted the authoritarian slide after perestroika and retrospectively it seems to offer a more accurate and realistic outlook on the post-perestroika period than the humanist expectations and global worries of Gefter probably looking too far ahead. What remains precious in both contributions is their ability to face the paradoxes of human agency, responsibility and necessity inherited from the late Soviet intellectual tradition: keeping the momentum of freedom, but escaping the double trap of the imagined historical omnipotence and irresponsibility offered by the simple cross-roads between good and bad. Gefter and Klyamkin's counter-trendy use of this vocabulary did not make them ideological allies and finally did not change the dominant usages, but they added to the richness, honesty and depth of perestroika's intellectual history. Yet, the issue of historical responsibility for mass crimes proved unbearable for the late Soviet mind. As we argued, this is a rather typical reaction to the criminal collective past.

#### *The unsustainable triumph of historical responsibility*

The theme of historical responsibility for the Soviet state crimes was powerfully advanced by Alexander Yakovlev from the very top of the propaganda machine and by a large number of those who were (to some extent) aware of the concealed mass crimes. Yakovlev's outlook was mostly negative, while these grass-root memories and witnesses carried an extreme variety of agendas. From the parents of Bukharin actively supported by the Gorbachev's aids who sought to rehabilitate him as the true inheritor of Lenin to Alexander Solzhenitsyn denouncing the whole

Communist rule as a criminal historical experiment. Yakovlev introduced the theme of historical responsibility presented as the means of moral purification and truthfulness to Pravda. This vocabulary flirted with the vocabulary of the Soviet “puritans” like Ligachev, but its actual usage put in danger the purity of the sacred cults by confronting them with historical facts, deliberate manipulations and critical re-interpretations. Most Soviet intellectuals saw this confrontation as both necessary and healthy for the ideological integrity, which should be based on the high scientific standards and should not fear the open and frank discussion about facts. The multiple controversies around the issue of the recognition and re-allocation of historical responsibility for the past crimes (and ultimately for the present-day crisis) structured the public debates on history and politics – probably more than any other single issue. In March 1988, this issue have split the Politburo and put its moderately reformist majority including the KGB and defence ministers in a provisional opposition to Gorbachev supported only by Yakovlev, Medvedev and Shevardnadze. The unity over dissent principle firmly articulated by Gorbachev helped him to force his former allies to retract from building an ideological platform on the basis of their frankly professed cultic allegiance to the Soviet past. The profession of these sacred cults also implied more confident usage of the repressive mechanisms of the social and political control when carrying reforms on.

Contrary to the clichés, there were virtually no defenders of Stalin or Stalinism in the theoretical debate as far as it could be reconstructed from our corpus. There were no noticeable and articulated theoretical defence of the conservative platform – except the unique and ambiguous Nina Andreeva case (a false Churchill’s praise of Stalin was cited there), perestroika produced no ideological debate between Stalinists and reformers. Major cleavages were set by the discussion about the symbolic guilt(s) of the Russian people and its cultural predispositions, Western ideology, technical progress, Jews, Lenin, Marxism-Leninism and Marx in person. In accordance to our earlier analysis, the symbolic opposition *necessity Vs accident* was typically paralleled with the opposition *wholesomeness Vs guilt*. The tragic configuration of a necessary or open-ended evil in history was hard to accept for the perestroika mind. The standard rhetoric question intended to disqualify a historical event was repeated in many theoretical articles and uncritically asked by sociologists in the polls: whether an event X was necessary (blameless and beneficial) or accidental (condemnable and harmful)? Another typical quest was the identification of the historical moment of the “original lapse”, from which the Soviet or Russian history took the wrong turn, this implying that normally and naturally it should evolve more happily. Besides the extreme varieties of answers found to this question the underlying assumption was that “naturally” national history should not be dramatic, tragic or painful, while the present difficulties and past tragedies are the bundle results of a singular and large-scale wrong choice attributed to the political opponent, wrong ideology, selfish and irresponsible groups, nations or classes. This dominant

intellectual context should be taken into account when analysing the individual positions and the evolution of the debates in general.

### *Wholesome history and the natural-historical turn*

Drawing on the results of the present research and on the original findings of Zweynert studying the evolution of the economic thought we would like to confirm his discovery of the widely prevailing teleological assumption on the naturally wholesome character of historical process.<sup>1484</sup> This astonishingly hopeful belief, especially striking when it is held after a murderous century of wars, terror and revolutions, can be reconstructed in the arguments of the major ideological currents. The deadly collective responsibility for the *suddenly* revealed mass crimes naturally contributed to these mutual accusations. The learned men were trapped by their quest for responsible human agency and the simultaneous revelation of the collective crimes; they found a temporal protection against this responsibility by revealing a non-Modern and post-religious belief in the wholesomeness of history in itself. By the end of perestroika the assumption of the natural goodness of history, which was already present in the quest of the original lapse and in the typical identification of necessity with good and human accident with error – carried by the new historiosophical language – found a better articulated and more forceful expression. There emerged a binary opposition between artificial evil and natural good: ideology, violence and planning stood on one side and the *natural-historical evolution* (Western liberal variant) or *organic development* (Russian nationalist variant) on the other. Around the same time, the imperative of *non-violence* suddenly became a central historical value professed by all the significant strands of public theoretical debates since 1989. No theoretical argument could then convincingly justify violence. The imperative of non-violence and the natural-historical turn were mutually colouring each other; they originated from the reflection on the question of historical responsibility for the Soviet crimes and for the failures of perestroika; this implied that no form of civic activism was better than letting history do. Natural-historical was entrusted as a morally superior and wise agency.

As discussed in the last chapter, in December 1991 some of the brightest Soviet intellectuals such as Alla and Yulia Latynina, Simon Kordonsky or Andrey Fadin professing or sensible to liberal values recognized the ambient economic corruption, the decomposition of the legal order and the upcoming authoritarian rule. The perspective of the sliding towards the Third World was well understood and discussed by some of them. But at the same time, they compellingly condemned the attempts to publicly oppose these tendencies as both unrealistic and potentially

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<sup>1484</sup> Joachim Zweynert, "Economic ideas and institutional change: Evidence from soviet economic debates 1987-1991", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2006, №58 Joachim Zweynert, "Economic ideas and institutional change: Evidence from soviet economic debates 1987-1991", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2006, №58

dangerous. Corruption and unjust privatization of the state assets by the *nomenklatura* were accepted as the price of the peaceful revolution, while the authoritarian power was anticipated and accepted as historically inevitable. One could argue that this “neo-liberal” argumentation was essentially directed by the new ideologues of the rising bourgeoisie against the likely revenge of the impoverished population fuelled by the disoriented intelligentsia. In case of Latynina’s article this anti-egalitarian intention was manifest and it was illustrated by the multiple historical references ranging from Antiquity to present days. But this partisan argument of a liberal-conservative author against a democratic socialist or a social-democrat drew on a much wider ideological foundation affecting the meaning of any public utterance in the genre of political philosophy. A radical Russian nationalist or an angry Soviet patriotic veteran would typically denounce the ongoing revolution caused by wicked intentions but he either accepted its objective inevitability or would hope on the naturally positive denouement once the dirty foam would settle down. Contrary to our initial assumption the usages of the agency-centred historiosophical language proved malleable and able to accommodate to the anti-agency turn without a critical reflection. The metaphor of the rider wisely loosing reins in the snowstorm in order to let his horse find the right way on its own is the best illustration of this transformation. It is also a good indicator of the degree of half-awareness of this transformation by the intellectuals who combined the sense of powerlessness, moral crisis and glimmering hope.

#### *The resignation of virtue and the status of the political speech*

The salient divorce between the professed values and the perceptions of the current historical trend as morally unacceptable characterised the political thinking of the last years of perestroika. The common rhetorical figure in the theoretical essays of this final period of perestroika, originating in and curiously subverting the earlier writings of Solzhenitsyn, was to presume that history is naturally good. For the great dissident this was the basis for the strong moral position against the USSR accused in breaking and violating the course of history. In the new context this allowed to accept the apparent defeat of virtue against the objective necessity by stating that virtuous public speech is of no practical worth and recalling the bloody history of the militant ideologies of the XX century. A number of outstanding intellectuals had made explicit and accepted this factual divorce with joy, bitterness or impartiality depending on their personal constitution. For the majority of less intellectually rigorous authors the presumption of the ultimate goodness of natural-historical process (presuming that historical process over time is *naturally* leading society to one’s professed values and ideals) allowed to save face and cherish intellectual hopes without engaging into the political struggle too obviously lost in advance.

Thus, the discovery of the fall of agency and the rise of the new idioms privileging the *natural-historical* or *organic* evolution shared by the main ideological currents, along with the widely perceived weakness of public speech and the often confessed sense of miscommunication (making ideological debates meaningless) added a new facet to the subject of our research. It exceeds the methodological frame focused on the study of a particular historiosophical language and on the changes in the rules regulating public speech. The factual-descriptive and ideological-normative statements asserting the weakness and harmfulness of the public speech in 1989-1991 pointed at the new problematique giving full meaning to the observed transformation of the political speech. We thus had to address not only the rhetoric success or failure of a given utterance or their series, but the widely claimed (or noticed) failure of the very genre of public political speech. This novel object of study demands an adequate methodological outlook; having no such an elaborated framework we approached the subject by focusing on two aspects: A) the anthropological evidence on the relation between subjectivity and regulated public speech characterising the late Soviet man, which was sketched into the first chapter; and B) the representation of this problematique of the status of public speech in the theoretical essays of perestroika – the analysis of the second-order statements from the main corpus conducted in the last three chapters.

*Two faces of feigning subjectivity: privatization and learned incompetence of the speakers*

The “truthfulness to one’s own ideals” that we can translate in English as “moral integrity” was one of the common intellectual themes of perestroika starting from its early days. The generalized malaise with non-integrity contributed to the early success of perestroika. This subject occupied reformers led by Gorbachev and many renowned publicists throughout perestroika and in their memoirs. The recognition of the deficiency of the Soviet ideology on the eve of perestroika was characteristically understood by the contemporaries as the expression of the moral crisis and duplicity imposed by the strict rules of public speech. The review of the academic research on the late Soviet ideology and some of the anthropological research added a deeper and probably more speculative layer to our inquiry of the relation between the content of the political speech and its status and credibility. The best sociologically informed Sovietology and the up to date sociological and anthropological scholarship of the late Soviet period invites us to reconsider the duplicity, subversion of the rules and feigning as the defining characteristics of the *Homo Sovieticus* on the eve of perestroika. Feigning as a societal norm of public behaviour and the quest of integrity were powerful political factors shaping the changes in the status of the political speech.

More controversially, some of these scholars stressed the fundamental absence of the “real self” covered by hypocrisy or feigning; in this perspective the very subversion and feigning should be seen as the central act of the self-construction of the individual agent. On the other hand, many perestroika authors including Alexander Yakovlev and Egor Ligachev confessed to experience this situation of non-integrity as painful, publicly called for a more integral and wholesome attitude and saw the remedy in the liberation of the public speech and revitalization of the moral principles. Gavriil Popov in his famous article introducing the notion of the *Administrative system* based his diagnosis on its non-viability by showing the incapacity of this system to keep up the moral integrity of its most loyal and efficient cadres. We should not take this Soviet self-criticism for granted. There were and there are many stable societies routinely living hypocrisy or subversion of norms as a norm, but it seems that the intellectual and moral longing for agency through honest public speech – that we called longing for integrity – was among the most powerful cultural triggers of perestroika. However, this longing proved widely insufficient to instigate the sought-for virtue in the behaviour of the powerful economic and political actors who benefited from the loosened socio-political constraints. These new pragmatic players were arguably less sensible to the abstract argumentation and self-reflexivity than those who welcomed perestroika. But this intellectual longing for integrity also proved insufficient to backup the public stands taken by publicists and political thinkers in the name of their professed values in the public debates.

The term of *political participation* actively used by the sociologists and political scientists in the 1970s helps addressing this issue pointing at the non-Modern aspect of the Soviet political culture tangible before perestroika and reappearing in the midst of the free debates and competitive politics.<sup>1485</sup> What we could call the anthropological condition of perestroika’s debates and reforms made the public speech with its aspiration to integrity and scientific truth weak. Public criticism of the Soviet history and present triggered by the quest for integrity was strong enough to unleash the criticism and subversion of the old social order, central leadership and the Soviet state; but it

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<sup>1485</sup> “We study political participation, after all, not only for its presumed impact on decision-making (at whatever level) but also for its presumed impact on the participants themselves and through that on the political system. One of the oldest and most widely accepted propositions in the literature of politics, from Aristotle to modern survey findings, is that political participation, when mediated through appropriate institutions, develops the ‘civic virtues’ which help to sustain the stability of the polity. Active membership in political associations, in particular, fosters in the individual a sense of political efficacy or what Almond and Verba call ‘subjective competence’. In this perspective the relevant question is not whether participation is effective but whether it is believed to be effective. Now the testimony of the interviewees [with Soviet émigrés] leaves no doubt that they did not believe their own participation to be effective. Whatever may be true of other arenas in which political participation is said to take place in the Soviet Union, the combination of compulsion and formalism which characterizes participation in the Komsomol and party arenas clearly provides no scope at all for the development of a sense of efficacy. Indeed, one might well hypothesize that it has the opposite effect, that the induction of the individual into the ‘spectacle’ of Komsomol and party activities impresses upon him the utter futility of his participation and in consequence produces not a sense of efficacy but of inefficacy, not subjective competence but subjective incompetence”, Aryeh L. Unger, “Political Participation in the USSR: YCL and CPSU” *Soviet Studies*, Jan., 1981, p.122

gave little political and ideological guidance for channelling these energies and constructing the intellectual frame of the new order. The initial ignorance of this anthropological condition in the public discussion made the emerging political theory and historiosophy first too optimistic about the prospects of reforms; when this dominant subversive and immoral character was in part recognised, public debates proved too pessimistic about the core ability of the human agency to handle history and society.

Nancy Ries brought the first-hand anthropological evidence attesting that the dominant genre of private talk on public matters during the last years of perestroika was *lamentation* emphasising one's powerlessness in the face of the ambient absurd, corruption or adversity, but implicitly telling one's ability to bypass these difficulties and survive.<sup>1486</sup> We can see the intellectual side of this pattern. After 1989 the growing number of authors from our corpus espoused a kind of *subjective incompetence* when speaking in public; they had a theoretical ground for this stance critically reflecting on the failures of the past and manifesting the belief in history's natural wholesomeness. The strident but unpopular Russian nationalists and almost voiceless Soviet conservatives noted and condemned the massive stealing of the state assets in the theoretical debates. Significantly, they presented the process they disliked as *both* objectively inevitable (making their own resistance to the process worthless) and resulting from the wicked betrayal by the top leadership and Western conspiracy (making the blame against others meaningful). Otherwise, this typical argument implied, the organic evolution would naturally lead Russia to prosperity and moral renaissance. Liberal economists argued that capitalist economic freedom naturally lead to the wholesome social setup, although Egor Gaidar had a more dramatic vision<sup>1487</sup>. The core of the Soviet intellectuals could be situated between the liberal, social-democratic and Russian nationalist sets of values, but all these strains relied on the natural-historical or organic evolution. Hence, the common denominator of reality was not liberal capitalism, but the idea that the natural-historical necessity could bring the normal, i.e. wealthy, harmonious and civilized life, if only men would not wilfully obstruct the organic evolution of history by their political ideas, plans and big projects. We should dare to say that this dominant picture of reality was highly unrealistic in the short term, but it definitely shaped the relatively peaceful outcome of perestroika.

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<sup>1486</sup> See: Нэнси Рис, *Русские разговоры: Культура и речевая повседневность эпохи перестройки*, НЛО, М., 2005

<sup>1487</sup> Gaidar's outstanding and now forgotten book *State and evolution (Государство и эволюция)* written in 1994 stands in the direct opposition to this presumption of the natural-historical evolution of the market society. He argued that its emancipation from the "eternal" cycles of the patrimonial state was a highly risky and unlikely event. Gaidar's personal political position may be however interpreted as a bet on a miraculous escape from these cycles or as a tragic action presuming its likely failure. For instance, in this book Gaidar did not indicate what made his believe that such an escape will be realistically possible in 1990s and claimed that he knew and shared all the arguments why it was not possible. See: Гайдар Е. Т. *Государство и эволюция. Как отделить собственность от государства*, СПб.: Норма, 1997.



Thus, the *theoretical debates* in 1989-1991 were not marked by the sweeping propaganda of the liberal market as it is often implied, but rather by the generalized unwillingness to accept the reality of the rapid capitalist transformation in public, by the time when the privatization was well ahead and the state retail distribution of food was already *de facto* privatized and paralyzed. The missed intellectual and moral accommodation of and to capitalism to the widely shared societal norm and values remains a significant factor in today's Russia along with the perceived weakness or irrelevance of the competitive public speech for power relations. Thus, we can see the illicit privatization by the most active representatives of nomenklatura, intelligentsia and youth and the discourses of the learned incompetence of the passively suffering agency as two sides of the late Soviet subjectivity. Yeltsin's decisiveness in August 1991 shows that individuals and groups could successfully act, defending the illicit privatization and individual freedoms with a revolutionary rhetoric; but it was not enough to give the *theoretical* frame for the new social order.<sup>1488</sup>

We can now briefly address the question on the availability and use of other kinds of idiom in the theoretical debates of perestroika. The rise of the specific historiosophical idioms was not a by-product of the uncompleted glasnost, but it formed the newly emerging political language of public politics. The secondary role of the juridical, religious, civic republican, corporatist or class modes of argumentations, well established in the Western European public debates, makes perestroika a peculiar case. Why public history idioms took over other dialects available in the Soviet society when the society passed from the closed to the open type of communication? The possible reply may be that this was the most widely available intellectual tradition to think politics and society carried by the official Marxism-Leninism. Thus, it was compulsorily taught to *all* the Soviet undergraduate students, although the writings of Marx and Lenin were rarely seriously studied and debated before 1985 and they played a very limited role during perestroika. Second, the pre-revolutionary Russian political tradition heavily relied on various kinds of messianic historiosophies which may suggest that we are dealing with a much longer intellectual history.<sup>1489</sup> Finally, no shared experience of moral and political self-standing was readily available for the public speakers except in the scientific research – reflecting on the historical experience and

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<sup>1488</sup> The widely perceived sense of confusion about the anniversaries of the defeat of the August Putsch leaves little doubt that this event did not become a positive symbolic reference or even a point of structured partisan controversy such October or French revolutions. We tried to show that the then dominant political vocabulary and historiosophical arguments supported individual freedoms and opposed violence, but carried no positive political program. The very rapid economic reforms responded to the most urgent problems generated by perestroika and offered a politico-economic perspective, but they had surprisingly weak ideological backing in the theoretical press.

<sup>1489</sup> We refer in particular to the semiotic interpretation of B. Uspensky of the political historiosophy in the XV-XVI century Russia, the fundamental research on the relationship between historiosophical beliefs and Russian Imperial foreign policy by A. Zorin and to the textbook *Philosophy of History* edited by A. Panarin: А. С. Панарин (ред.), *Философия истории*, Гардарики, 2004; Б. Успенский, *Этюды о русской истории*, Спб., Азбука, 2002. А.Л. Зорин, *Кормя двуглавого орла... Литература и государственная идеология в России в последней трети XVIII — первой трети XIX века*. М.: НЛО 2001. Also see the comprehensive handbook on the Russian historiosophy: Л. Новикова, И. Сиземская, *Русская философия истории: Курс лекций*, М., Магистр, 1997, 327 стр.

present through the invisible historiosophical lenses provided the main theoretical metaphors for political action and framed the role of the political speech. The issue of collective historical responsibility for decades of Bolshevik terror and the practical failures of perestroika undermined the agency in this historiosophical language and revealed its secrete chiliastic assumptions.

### *Three stages of the transformation of the political speech*

We can distinguish three consecutive and provisional stages in the transformation of the political speech as it appears from the selected corpus of the theoretical essays without setting strict chronological boundaries between them. We are addressing the series of public utterances often overlapping with one another but – forming well distinguishable sequence if we look at the rising idioms of and shift in the rules and values between each period. During the first years of perestroika when the public expression was tightly regulated and hierarchy observed, the longing to become a historical and political agency through public speech appeared under the sign of the self-confident *humanistic* and technocratic *social engineering* based on the affirmation of the scientific freedom and high moral standards of the rulers. These were mostly top-down speeches of the leader or voices of their enlightened advisers – specialists in economic and social sciences. At this period, the scientific standard of free criticism was elevated into a new political value promising tangible practical effects for solving social and economic problems.

During the next phase the censorship was limited and the critical stance and ideological innovations were encouraged by the reformers along with the insistent calls for moral purification or even repentance for the mass crimes of the past. The debates remained under the supervision of the now rivalling party leaders, although unequally well equipped in terms of their ideological and intellectual sophistication. The longing for agency and the discussion about the historical responsibility found its purest expression in the idioms of *choice* of the *historical path* between *alternatives*. This characteristic agency-centred historiosophical vocabulary came to prominence around 1988, when Alexander Yakovlev successfully staged the differences between the Politburo members in the appraisal of the Soviet past as the central political cleavage in the Nina Andreeva case. Yakovlev clearly got Gorbachev on his side against the majority – the theme of the historical responsibility for Stalinist crimes triumphed over Soviet sacred cults under the guise of the late Soviet rhetoric and using the Soviet rules of the hierarchical public speech and the principle of unity over dissent was central for Gorbachev when gaining control over the majority of the Politburo. The idiom of historical choice triumphed when it was politically backed up by the principle of unity and perestroika was then notoriously defended as a *choice* having “no

*alternative*". Approximately at the same time, the mid-rank officials began the illicit and then very risky "privatization" by exploiting the modest economic liberalization brokered by the reformers.

In the subsequent years of perestroika the affirmation of the fundamental supremacy of the *natural-historical* or *organic evolution* over the straightjackets of ideological formulae and violence placed any forceful public speech under suspicion. Public political speech in its theoretical and self-reflexive forms declared itself irrelevant but potentially bearing ideological violence against the naturally wholesome history. In parallel, the second-order remarks on the current debates increasingly witnessed on the widely experienced difficulty to communicate, argue and convince. This surprising apprehensive conclusion on the role of political speech became widespread across the ideological spectrum between 1989 and 1991, precisely when the most revolutionary changes took place in the USSR and in its world empire and when the censorship was actually disappearing. We would like to highlight the peculiarity of the last years of perestroika as an *ideologically sceptical revolution*, and to retrace the trajectories of the rise and fall of rhetoric of free agency and also the changes in the conventional rules of public speech.<sup>1490</sup> The relatively peaceful decomposition of the USSR can be interpreted as partly resulting from this full revolution of the political speech from the ritual maintaining *status quo*, through the promise of moral purity and omnipotence to the profound scepticism. In turn, this ultimate civic scepticism was a lesson that stemmed from the sour reflection on the Soviet dramatic experience of terror inspired by ideology and a more immediate reaction on the double failure of perestroika – the sweeping pilfering of the economic assets and the growing sense of miscommunication. This unrecognized intellectual turn of perestroika could be seen as one of the factors of the peaceful decomposition of the USSR, but also of the difficult reconstruction of the social order and authority in the 1990s, along with the steady decline of the competitive public politics.

This schematic picture of one of the aspects of perestroika's mental revolution composed of three parts certainly simplifies its object, but it may serve as a useful guide for the exposition of the questions and some of the provisional findings of the present research. We tried to outline the intellectual itineraries of perestroika and show that this combined political, historiosophical, epistemological and moral itinerary traced by the quest for public human agency was significant, and probably one of the most widely followed by the authors and readers of the theoretical essays on politics, history and society published in the central Soviet press in this period.

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<sup>1490</sup> For some of the authoritative qualifications of these global changes as revolutionary made from different ideological perspectives see: И. Стародубровская, В. Мау, *Великие революции от Кромвеля до Путина*, М., Варриус, 2004 (2ое изд.). Habermas J. "What does Socialism mean today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left", in *New Left Review*, Sept.-Oct., 1990. А. Магун, «Событие революции», *НЛО*, 2003, №64

*New historical lessons and the new traces of the historiosophical language of perestroika*

The politicians and ideologues in 1990s and 2000s stripped the historiosophical language of perestroika from its original meaning and intellectual challenges, but still actively used it as one of the privileged theoretical ways to discuss Russia's politics. We would like to make its uncritical contemporary usage more aware of this specific heritage. Not every single usage of the word *path* or *alternative* is necessarily idiomatic; some of them may well be just neutral metaphors. A sufficiently accurate criterion of their specific perestroika-like usage is the simultaneous occurrence of two or three terms used by the author when addressing the typical *topoi* such as sketching the historiosophical map, attributing responsibility, and constructing the figure of human agency via the political speech. When we were editing the conclusion to the present research, we encountered a present-day echo of these now forgotten debates in the glossy, intellectual and snobbish monthly magazine *Gentlemen's Quarterly Russia* edited by Nikolai Uskov, an atypically trendy historian who was trained in MGU during perestroika. By considering these very recent texts we would like to illustrate first that the contemporary theoretical discourse on politics and history may draw on the intellectual repertoire of the late perestroika although deployed in a different context for a different audience.

Unlike in the thick magazines of perestroika publishing first fiction and then publicistic essays, most of *GQ's* two hundred seventy pages advertise clothes, cars, cigarettes and accessories. In the midst of this festival of the commercial society there are short personal columns written by respected, provocative and independent-minded intellectuals such as Dmitry Bykov, Eduard Limonov and Gregory Revzin who present their monthly thesis in the form of a simple question and a detailed answer. In the last (2009) October issue of *Gentlemen's Quarterly Russia* Dmitry Bykov sweepingly denounces the impersonal *langue de bois* of the acting Russian president Medvedev for missing to face the dramatic historical threats:

It's really hard to believe that [the President] said *nothing personal* during this last half a year! Now, when we are living a genuinely critical moment, not only in terms of the economic situation, when we probably facing the last crossroad of the Russian statehood, in a point of bifurcation, beyond which – there are quite probable decomposition, catastrophe and the irreversible return into archaism, now, from the major *cathedra* of the state we hear such empty words and the country is ruled by such an empty place! Let us briefly overview the challenges – another word from the political *langue de bois*, but the word “problems” is clearly insufficient – which our beloved Patria is now facing: the local elites are uncoordinated, corrupted and ready for the most outrageous secessionism. Public politics are absent or are simulated. TV and most of the press are under censorship and no one trust them... and there is nothing to oppose the all embracing corruption. Words have non meaning, promises have no weight; hypocrisy and rot are increasing

exponentially, and at this time quite different forces are awakening – they are not visible, but let us remember that Bolsheviks were also not really present in the public politics...<sup>1491</sup>

Two pages later, Gregory Revzin makes a prognostic on the future political development of Russia by using Tocqueville's distinction between the countries such as Britain and Holland where the stratum of enlightened people who criticize the rulers on the basis of abstract principles closely collaborates with them, and the countries where the stratum of rulers and critics do not communicate which inevitably leads to revolutions. According to Revzin, contemporary Russia is still on the old French revolutionary trajectory:

When things go well, the views of the radical theoreticians, closed in their circles, are of little interest for the public. But, as soon as some troubles are manifest – such as bad harvest, war, or economic crisis – and the society is looking for possible alternatives. And these alternatives turn to be quite radical. In order to solve the problems of food supply, win the war or overcome the crisis, there is a need to destruct the bloody regime, and then everything will be going to work.

I have a feeling that we already missed this historical crossroad, when one could turn in the sense of moderating some of the ideals in order to compromise with some of the particularities of the Russian reality, and now we are marching on a quite familiar path. If this is the case, the dramatic end is inevitable. Sooner or later, the society will be demanding for new alternatives and they will be displayed in the most radical form. If someone thinks that this is a doubtful perspective, forget it – it is a harsh law of historical development. This is so highly predictable that it may seem boring! ... All these principles of liberalism and democracy which will guide the next radical Russian revolution are presumed to be well known and already realized in the civilized countries, i.e. in the USA. There is little uncertainty here, by contrast, everything is quite clear. On the one hand, it is clear what is desired, and on the other hand it is unattainable, as far as it is difficult to arrange the life on the banks of Volga exactly as on the Mississippi River. Hence, by the way, the cataclysms of the radical reformation of the life on the Volga River will be regularly repeated.<sup>1492</sup>

The specific historiosophical maps drawn by these crossroads and alternative paths are new – they integrate the reflection on the last two decades. More significantly, the last illusions are gone and no wholesome historical evolution is expected – the outlook is either tragic or tragicomic. The question of historical responsibility for the past is no more present; it has seemingly vanished with the time distance after the public revelation. None of the essays is seriously blaming anybody. The accusation is addressed to an “empty place” by Bykov and evacuated by Revzin who refers to the “iron law of history” described by his neo-Tocquevillian scheme. Bykov is undoubtedly worried by the threat of Russia's ultimate decomposition, while Revzin ironically predicts the

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<sup>1491</sup> Д. Быков, «В: Чем блистает президент? О: «Холизм»», *GQ Россия*, 2009, №10, стр.128.

<sup>1492</sup> Григорий Ревзин, «В: Каков прогноз политической погоды? О: Пасмурно, потопы», *GQ Россия*, 2009, №10, стр.130-131.

eternal and meaningless return of new revolts in the name of the superficially “liberal” values, practically unattainable as long as the communication between enlightened critics and the rulers will remain structurally hampered. Finally, in both essays political speech appears as worthless and authors seem to have no illusions on their own rhetoric clout; intellectuals observe the objective process described in terms of alternatives and choices, but they are making no choices in their own speeches and actually reserve no intellectual place for such a choice. In this sense, as in 1991 the advanced arguments are covertly and conditionally *conservative*. Only the advertising neighbouring these anti-revolutionary and anti-regime essays as well as 100 roubles paid by the reader – seem to contradict the implied worthlessness of public utterances. We wish this research made political speech 5 kopeks more expensive.

The concluding point we want to illustrate with these two examples is to sketch the three ways in which we could try to account for the perceived weakness of the political speech in the post-Soviet Russia based on our research on perestroika. Bykov’s implicit argument in this respect is that corruption of the ruling class makes public utterances empty and dull. This theme corresponds to our reconstruction of the anthropological and sociological research on the subjectivity of the late Soviet man and of the second-order statements of the protagonists on the observed duplicity as well as it brings our attention to the illicit privatization of the 1980s. But Revzin advances another sociological argument on the structure of communication within the elites. He posits two modes characterising the role of the political speech in the societies with split elites, like contemporary Russian or France of the *ancient regime*: relative indifference to political speech in the periods of stability and over confidence in the periods of change. We paid particular attention to the over-confidence of the reformers and the wider public in the liberated political speech in terms of the “objectivity illusion”.

The conservative arguments used by the publicists in the last stage of perestroika in favour of the natural-historical course of life and against ideologies may be understood as a proper reflection on the past Soviet dramas. This criticism may ignore the sociological gap between the enlightened critics and the rulers characterising the phase of stagnation. But contrary to the Revzin’s scheme, the sudden sense of irrelevance of the political speech gained the intellectual public *beforehand* the new period of stability at the highest point of the political revolution and thus should have its own logic. We identified several aspects of this deliberate self-resignation of the political speech and its defenders: the pending symbolic responsibility for the past ideological crimes, the imperative of non-violence, the obvious failure of the perestroika’s recently acclaimed policies, the sense of miscommunication, the new epistemology of radical individualism, the subversive and “corrupted” subjectivity of the late Soviet men. The previously latent

historiosophical conviction in the wholesomeness of the natural-historical evolution gave the only positive ground in the midst of this public and collective self-doubt.

The transformations of the political speech during perestroika show that contrary to the received wisdom nations actively learn meaningful lessons from history. Thus, by reflecting on history the late Soviet intellectuals came to value freedom of speech, became sceptical of any ideologies and formulated the political imperative of non-violence while counting on the wholesome nature of the historical evolution. The belief in the natural wholesomeness of History seems to have vanished now, as it was contradicted by the last two decades of Russian history and it is probably another historical lesson learned already after perestroika. But as Revzin and Bykov's essay indicate, the civic scepticism concerning the status of political speech remains intellectually grounded. We believe that these necessarily partial lessons of perestroika should be reconsidered and refined rather than easily dismissed as short-sightedness or errors of the elders. Studying the political vocabulary, presumptions and arguments of the men of perestroika should be subject to the same logic. The intellectual and moral resignation of the political speech facing the paradoxes of agency and necessity or plurality of truths, and wisely reflecting on the bitter historical experience, may offer some useful lessons to us – not to our precursors. Political speech may be better served when political thinkers are willing to face reality, to challenge the perceived adversity of history or look at the favourable opportunities. The republican stand encourages men to face what seems at once morally unacceptable and historically irreversible – like the natural decay and corruption for the Early Modern and post-perestroika's men.

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The complete corpus of the primary sources includes around seven hundred articles and essays addressing the broad political, social or economic issues in a historical perspective and selected

via the systematic overview of the the five “thick” reviews and journals between 1985 -1991: *Новый Мир, Коммунист, Наш Современник, Вопросы Философии, Вопросы Истории*. This corpus roughly represents the main ideological and disciplinary strains of the intellectual debates of perestroika.