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Soviet Hegemony of Form: Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More

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Until the mid-1980s, it never even occurred to anyone that in our country anything could change. Neither to children nor to adults. There was a complete impression that everything was forever (songwriter Andrei Makarevich).[1]

LATE SOCIALISM

This paper was prompted by a personal question that has puzzled many former Soviet people, myself included, since the late 1980s: How to make sense of the sudden evaporation of the colossal and seemingly monolithic Soviet system and way of life, in which we grew up and lived? What was it about the Soviet system that made its "collapse" appear completely unimaginable and surprisingly fast not only to most Western Sovietologists but also to most Soviet people? The experience of the unexpectedness and abruptness of the collapse is reflected in diverse materials I have collected in Russia in the past ten years. This question is not about the "causes" for the collapse but about its "conditions of possibility": what conditions made the collapse *possible* while keeping that possibility *invisible*? To begin addressing this question, we must analyze how the particular "culture" of Soviet socialism invisibly created the conditions for the collapse and at the same time rendered it unexpected. The period when these conditions emerged, the approximately thirty years preceding the beginning of *perestroika* (the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s), I shall call Soviet "Late Socialism."

Late Socialism as a period in the history of Soviet state socialism was distinct from all previous and later periods in its "discursive regime" (Foucault 1972; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:44–78)—in particular, the relationship of the subject to the hegemonic discourse of communist ideology and the mean-

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[1] Interview on the program *Vzglyad,* Ostankino television, 24 June 1994. See also Makarevich (2002:14).

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ing inscribed in ideological performance and representation. This period 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. It rather implied a more complex and shifting relationship to Soviet ideological form, a form that claimed and was once seen to represent these ideals and values, but during Late Socialism decoupled from them. It was through that decoupling that the conditions of possibility for the collapse of socialism, as a social system but not as a set of values, invisibly emerged.

This copying of textual forms from one context to the next[2] was unique in three respects: First, ideological forms were not just copied but perfectly replicated, which made them "frozen" and context-independent. Second, this replication was accompanied by a transformation of the meanings for which ideological forms stood in different contexts. Third, this process took place not only at the level of ideological texts, but also in other discourses of ideology: visual (posters, films, monuments, architecture), ritualistic (meetings, reports, celebrations) and in centralized "formal structures" of everyday practice (De Certeau 1988:xv).[3] To account for such broad process in which the form of representation is replicated but its meaning is changed, this paper proposes a concept of "heteronymous shift."[4] The Greek term "heteronym"—a word of the same spelling (written representation) but different and unrelated meaning than another word[5]—is used to emphasize that the meanings, for

[2] Copying of textual forms between contexts is known in linguistic anthropology as "transduction" (G. Urban 1996: 30).

[3] In the 1960s, the following changes took place in public representation: *Ideological rituals:* the Party united various public rituals under one centrally orchestrated "system of rituals" (Lane 1981:3, 46), making their structure more formulaic and analogous (Glebkin 1998:130, 137). *Visual propaganda:* images of Lenin in monuments and pictures became more formulaic and analogous, with fewer available poses, details, textures, and colors (author's interview with artists at Leningrad Workshop of Visual and Decorative Arts, *KZhOI*). *Documentary newsreels:* regular Newsreels (*Kinokhronika*) about current events in each region of the country became more formulaic, and spontaneous and unusual events were edited out and often the same footage was used repeatedly to represent different events (author's interview with film director Yurii Zanin, St. Petersburg Documentary Film Studios). The increasing replication of the "'formal structures' of everyday practice" was the subject of the famous Soviet comedy of the late 1970s, *Ironiia sud'by* (The irony of fate).

[4] In postcolonial theory, transformation of ideological signs is theorized as "metonymic slippage" (Bhabha 1984; 1994), "hybridization of codes" (Hanks 2000), covert ridicule (Mbembe 1992:5; 2001:104), etcetera. In these theorizations, however, it is the form (signifier) of ideological signs that is changed, while in the Soviet context the form remains intact and the change occurs at the level of meaning.

[5] In English heteronyms are numerous. For example, *bass* (string instrument; the fish), *lead* (to guide; metal), *minute* (sixty minutes; tiny), and *tear* (to rip; teardrop).

which replicated ideological forms stood, came to involve an element of *unpredictability.*[6]

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. These assumptions used to be manifested in persistent references to Homo Sovieticus. In the late 1980s, Francoise Thom argued that in the Soviet Union linguistic "symbols cease[d] to work properly," making it "a world without meaning, without events and without humanity" (1989:156). More recently, Frank Ellis went further: "When reason, common sense, and decency are assaulted often enough, then personality is crippled, and human intelligence disintegrates or is warped. The barrier between truth and lies is effectively destroyed . . . Schooled in such a climate, fearful and deprived of any intellectual initiative, Homo Sovieticus could never be more than a mouthpiece for the Party's ideas and slogans, not so much a human being then, as a receptacle to be emptied and filled as Party policy dictated" (1998:208).

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.[7] For instance, it is claimed that ordinary Soviet people used to "hide things, such as tape-recorders, of obviously Western provenance, since they were associated with resistance to the regime" (Humphrey 1995:57), and that Soviet language was a "political diglossia" between official Party language and private people's language (Zaslavsky and Fabris 1982; Inic 1984; Wierzbicka 1990; Kupina 1995; Epstein 1991; 1995; Jowitt 1992). Thus, for John Young, Soviet citizens are "non-conforming" dissidents, who "counter the deceptions of government by setting forth 'the facts' in contrast to official falsehood" in "conversations with frustrated friends behind closed doors, in sign language devised by family members who suspect the secret police have bugged their apartment, in a manuscript or on a tape recording passed around from person to person . . . (1991:226).

[6] An illustration of heteronymous shift is the slippage between the form and meaning of an important concept of Soviet ideology—the industrial "plan." To various actors involved in Soviet industry it was crucial that the plan was successfully fulfilled at the level of form (in numbers, figures, statistics, reports, etc.) but not necessarily at the level of its "literal" meaning (e.g., a satisfaction of some social need). Moreover, in the "economy of shortage" (Kornai 1980 and Verdery 1996) the fulfillment of the plan's form was often predicated on the non-fulfillment of its literal meaning. See Lampland (1995) on the "fetish of plan."

[7] For a discussion of the assumptions behind modern binaries in general, see Mitchell 1990, and in the socialist context, Yurchak 2002a.

The binary model is also reproduced in theories of split subjectivity (Kharkhordin 1999) and "social schizophrenia." In a recent account, the Soviet subject is defined as a dichotomy between "official" and "hidden intimate" selves, which is sustained through the practice of "dissimulation," and where the "hidden intimate" self is only "available to the gaze of the closest friends or family members but sometimes kept secret even from them" and can "be spotted" only when the subjects "suddenly let their strict self-control go and break their utmost secrecy" (ibid. 1999:357, 277). 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]), and more recent theories of colonial and postcolonial subjectivity that emphasize hidden resistance to dominant norms, such as James Scott's (1990) model of social interaction that proceeds in two distinct "transcripts," "official" and "hidden," and Lisa Wedeen's account of the authoritative rule in President Asad's Syria, where the art of acting "as if" allows individuals "to keep their actual thought private" and sustain a "gap . . . between performance and belief" (1999:82).[8]

An epistemological problem in these binary models is that by distinguishing between bounded split psyches, or "real" and "dissimulated" voices, they imply that meaning in discourse is a "psychological state" that is "fully defined in the speaker's mind *before* the act of speaking" (Duranti 1993:25).[9] Even though these models describe a subject that is "split," they, ironically, reproduce the Western-centered understanding of a normal person as a bounded, sovereign individual (M. Strathern 1988:57) with a "unitary speaking ego" (Hanks 2000: 182), whose authentic voice can be hidden or revealed.[10] These models interpret concrete discursive events in terms of "truth conditions": for example, the act of shouting a slogan of support during state-orchestrated rituals is understood as a "constative act" (Austin 1999 [1962]; Searle 1969) that conveys the "literal" meaning of the person's support for the state. That act is therefore evaluated for its "truth conditions"—as either *true* ("real" support) or *false* ("dissimulation" of support).[11]

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

[8] See Gal's (1996) brilliant critique of Scott's model; see also Humphrey 1994. Oushakine (2001) proposes an alternative model of "mimetic resistance," in which the dominant and subordinate belong to the same, not different, discursive fields.

[9] Duranti critiques Searle's 1983 theory of meaning. See also Hill and Mannheim 1992.

[10] For anthropological critique of "fragmented subjectivity," see Strauss 1997.

[11] See also Mbembe (1992:5; 2001:104).

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 . . . " (2001:212).[12]

Russian sociologists Uvarova and Rogov (1998) argue that the emphasis in the analyses of Soviet culture on a dichotomy between the official and unofficial originates in the "dissident ideology" of the 1970s, which held that "nothing good could appear in an [official] Soviet journal in principle; and a real text could only be published in *samizdat* [unofficial publication] or *tamizdat* [foreign publication]." In former socialist countries this binary view is closely implicated in personal politics today: since the late 1980s it has been important for members of the intelligentsia to deny that during socialism there was any "mixing [of] the language of power with their own language" and to portray the latter as "a free space to be extended through struggle" (Seriot 1992:205–6).

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. Thus, Kligman and Gal provided a brilliant critique of some binary models of socialism: "rather than any clear-cut 'us' versus 'them' or 'private' versus 'public,' there was a ubiquitous self-embedding or interweaving of these categories" (2000:51).[13] Yet, they argue that such "interweaving" meant that "everyone was to some extent complicit in the system of patronage, lying, theft, hedging, and duplicity through which the system operated," and often even "intimates, family members and friends informed on each other" (ibid.:51). The emphasis on such ideas as duplicity, pointing as it does to a moral quandary as central to the system and people relations, implicitly reproduces an underlying assumption: socialism involved a complex web of immoralities that are calibrated as such against a moral system, perhaps Western democracy.

What may get lost in these accounts is a crucial and paradoxical fact that great numbers of people living in socialism genuinely supported its fundamental values and ideals,[14] although their everyday practices may appear "duplicitous" because they indeed routinely transgressed many norms and rules represented in that system's official ideology.

The particular knowledge about Soviet socialism that privileges its divided,

[12] Mahmood draws on Judith Butler's (1993) Foucauldian point that "the possibility of resistance to norms [is located] within the structure of power itself rather than in the consciousness of an autonomous individual," but critiques Butler's association of agency with resistance (2001: 212). This critique also problematizes Nancy Ries' suggestion that "resistant" "genres of suffering" in Soviet women's discourse during *perestroika* "unintentionally valorized or empowered the very structures they subverted" (Ries 1997:40, and chs. 3 and 4). On critique of "resistance" during earlier stages of Soviet history see Hellbeck 2000.

[13] For important critiques of the binary of public and private see Lampland (1995:273–75, 304), and Humphrey (1994:25).

[14] Perhaps this was more so in the Soviet Union than in Eastern Europe.

oppressive or immoral nature and de-emphasizes the values, ideals, and "normal" life that it represented to millions of people, is produced in the language and categories of "Western" knowledge. In *Provincializing Europe,* Dispesh Chakrabarty argues that in "the academic discourse of history . . . 'Europe' remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call 'Indian,' 'Chinese,' 'Kenyan,' and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become variations on a master narrative that could be called 'the history of Europe.' In this sense, 'Indian' history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history" (2000:27). Chakrabarty's (post)colonial critique should be brought to the analyses of (post)socialism to provincialize, more specifically, "Western" Europe[15]—for example, to expose the language of binaries, in which knowledge about socialism is articulated, as Western "master" language that assumes certain categories and uses particular terminologies to communicate them.[16]

To avoid positing binary divisions we may instead question how Soviet people in fact interpreted the lived ideology and reality of socialism. For this, we would need to replace the conception of knowledge implied in the binary models as objective, static, bounded, and divided into spheres, with a conception of knowledge that is always-already partial, situated, and actively produced (Haraway 1989:190–91; Fabian 2001:24).[17] This conception of knowledge should be compatible with the view of discourse as situated activity (Gal 1994; Duranti 1993; Lampland 1995:360)[18] and of the speaking/writing self as Bakhtin's "voice" that is never isolated or split but always *dialogized.* That is, speaking implies inhabiting multiple voices that are not "self-enclosed or deaf to one another," but rather "hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other, and are reflected in one another . . . " (Bakhtin 1984:75).[19]

This dynamic conception of knowledge accounts not only for "semantic" (literal) meanings for which ideological discourse supposedly stands, but also for "pragmatic" meanings that emerge in discourse as situated activity. For instance, the question, "do you support the resolution?" asked during a Soviet Komsomol meeting invariably led to a unanimous raising of hands in an affirmative gesture. However, to participants this was usually an act of recognition of how one must behave in a given ritualistic context in order to reproduce one's

[15] See Donald Moore's (2002) brilliant critique of Chakrabarty. See also Lampland's discussion of socialist history (1995:336).

[16] See also Brennan (2001:62).

[17] Laurie Essig, similarly critiquing the Western concept of a bounded sovereign subject, argues that in post-Soviet Russia, unlike the United States, the "strict boundary" between homosexuality and heterosexuality "exists to divide not persons but practices" (Essig 1999: 292–93; see also Tuller 1996).

[18] For an analysis of performative aspects of Russian discourse, see Yurchak 2000, 2002b, 2003.

[19] See also Bakhtin (1994:304–5; 1990:137); Gardiner (1992:73); Hirschkop (1997:59–60); Holquist (1990: 175).

status as social actor rather than as an act conveying "literal" meaning. In this sense, the raised hand was a response to the question, "are you the kind of social actor who understands and acts according to the rules of the current ritual, with its connection to the larger system of power relations and previous contexts of this type?" To analyze this act only for its truth conditions—as "real" support or "dissimulation" of support (as do Kharkhordin 1999 and Wedeen 1999)—is to miss the point.

This paper uses this dynamic conception of knowledge to analyze what Soviet ideology meant to Soviet people during Late Socialism. It focuses on the people who were born, came of age, and started their adult lives during that period—the *last Soviet generation.*[20] The materials used for this analysis are divided into two groups, contemporaneous and retrospective. The former include accounts produced *during* Late Socialism (official speeches, ideological reports, personal diaries, letters, written notes, family films, photographs from people's private collections,[21] and official Soviet publications); the latter include accounts about late socialism produced *after perestroika* began in 1985 (interviews and conversations that I conducted and analyses and memoirs that have been published since the change began).[22]

SHIFTING LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

Stalin's Uncanny Paradigm Shift

As in France (e.g., Guilhaumou 1989; de Certeau 1975; Frey 1925), the first post-revolutionary years in Russia were marked by extremely dynamic experiments with language. Many new words borrowed from other languages or invented anew were so unusual that they were "appropriated with great difficulty by the people not accustomed to foreign phonetics" (Selishchev 1928: 166).[23] Initially, this revolutionary language was not merely orchestrated by the emerging Soviet state, but was also developed with great enthusiasm by diverse artistic and political groups over whom the state had limited control.[24] The un-

[20] The analysis of changing cultural dynamics among generations, "cohort analysis," has occupied a prominent position in anthropology. By focusing on the temporal dimension, this approach fits well with current anthropological views of culture as dynamic, contested, and non-homogenous (Rofel 1999:22).

[21] The materials come from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kaliningrad, Sovetsk, Novosibirsk, and Yakutsk.

[22] Analyzing ideological meanings in discourse, I draw on two traditions: U.S. linguistic anthropology (Hanks 2000; 1996; Woolard 1998; Duranti 1997a; 1997b; 1993; Gal 1994; Hill and Irvine 1987; 1993) and British critical discourse analysis (Fowler et al. 1979; Fairclough 1989; 1992).

[23] On the poor public comprehension of the Bolshevik language see Gorham (2000:138–39), and Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade (1999:15–18).

[24] Velimir Khlebnikov and other Futurist poets worked on a new neologism-based language, *zaum',* seeing it as a "powerful source of new meanings for both literature and life" (Grigor'ev 1986:243; see also Rudy 1997:xii; Clark 1995:40; Jameson 1972; and Lemon and Reis 1965.

familiar words and sounds of this language were meant to serve as a "tool" for revolutionizing consciousness. While the "modernist experimentation" and "verbal chaos of the early 1920s" may have suited the spirit of revolution, they "offered little hope in the way of state building" (Gorham 2000:140, 142). In the late 1920s and early 1930s, political language came under increasingly strict and unified Party control and "the features of a Soviet-Russian language of state began to emerge from the confused language culture of the day" (ibid.).[25] Within linguistics and philology the Formalist and other modernist theories of language were replaced by the New Theory of Language, developed by the Soviet ethnographer, linguist, and archeologist Nikolai Marr, who argued, in a Marxist evolutionist tradition, that language is part of the superstructure and its transformations follow changes in the social base (Marr 1977:31).[26]

However, while linguistics as scientific theory in the 1930s and 1940s was dominated by Marr's teaching about the nature of language as superstructure, linguistics as Party practice treated political language as a *tool of production,* and therefore as part of the base. This latter model of language, shared by the Party leadership, implied that there existed an outsider position to language from which one could verify how adequately it represented reality and how it should be adjusted accordingly (Seriot 1985).[27] A 1941 practical reference book with a circulation of twenty-five thousand instructed: "Language is a tool of development and struggle. . . . With the help of that tool the Party arms the toilers with its great ideas that inspire one to struggle for the cause of Communism. . . . Language, as any tool, needs to be perfected, polished, and carefully protected from whatever kind of contamination and slightest spoil" (Kondakov 1941: 14), so that it may be used "to inoculate (*privit'*) the readers with concrete slogans and phrases" (ibid.:123). The Party saw its role as producing and widely circulating a public metadiscourse (Silverstein 1993) that provided critical commentary on ideological language and evaluated concrete ideological texts and formulations. During the editing of the first volume of *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny* (The history of the civil war), the Chief Editorial Board headed by Stalin himself introduced nearly 700 corrections in the text, that were discussed publicly (Kondakov 1941:122).

Linguistic formulations were evaluated by Party experts, among whom Stalin was the chief expert. In 1930, the writer Maxim Gorky suggested in a private letter to Stalin that the leader's writing represented "a model of proper writing" and requested a piece for Gorky's journal, *Literaturnaia ucheba* (Literary

[25] For a similar discussion see also Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade (1999:18) and Rossianov (1993: 451).

[26] For a discussion of Marr's views see also Gorham (2000:140, 142), Slezkine (1996:842), Clark (1995:201–223), Gray 1993.

[27] I use the term "model of language" instead of a useful term "language ideology" (Silverstein 1979; Woolard 1998) to avoid confusing the latter with my concepts of "Soviet ideology" and "ideological discourse."

training) (Gorham 2000:149). In 1935, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, Mikhail Kalinin, publicly announced: "If you asked me who knows the Russian language better than anyone else, I would answer—Stalin. We must learn from him the economy, lucidity, and crystal purity of language."[28] Stalin performed the role that Erving Goffman would call the "principal" of discourse—someone who stands outside of discourse, publicly evaluates it, and suggests how to improve it (1981:144).[29]

It was in this capacity that, in 1950, Stalin initiated a paradigm shift in the science of language that, ironically, destroyed the position of "principal." Stalin publicly attacked theoretical schools in Soviet linguistics on the pages of Pravda for "vulgar Marxism."[30] He critiqued Marr's view of language as part of the superstructure that still dominated Soviet linguistics, calling it "idealist" for its treatment of language as a reflection of thought, as if thought could exist outside of language. Stalin also attacked the view of language as a tool of production, i.e. as part of the *base,* the view that was still dominant in the ideological work of the Party organs. Stalin argued that language is completely outside of the whole dialectic of base and superstructure. After his original article in *Pravda* (1950), Stalin further clarified his position in several responses to *Pravda* readers: "I insist that thought can appear only on the basis of language material, that for people who know a language there can be no naked thought that is disconnected from language material."[31] [At the same time] "there is a profound difference between language and tools of production. . . . tools of production create material goods, while language creates nothing or 'creates' just words. . . . if language could create material goods then chatterers would be the richest people in the world."[32]

Two implications followed from Stalin's intervention into linguistic science: since language was not part of the superstructure, language could not automatically undergo the revolutionary leaps promised by Marr; and, since language was not a tool of production, its political manipulation was not the way to produce Communist consciousness.[33] Instead, Communist language, argued Stalin, had to be understood and managed according to "objective scientific laws."[34] Following this critique, the newly established journal *Voprosy iazykoz-*

[28] Quoted in "Beregite i izuchaite velikii russkii iazyk" (Safeguard and learn the great Russian language), Komsomol'skaia Pravda, 2 July 1946, p. 1. See also Blinov (1948:15).

[29] The "principal" takes responsibility for a text (e.g. the U.S. president), "animator" reads the text (e.g. a spokesperson), and "author" creates the text (e.g. a speechwriter) (Goffman 1981:144). Stalin was also the "principal" of various scientific discourses (see Rossianov 1993).

[30] See also materials in Stalin 1950 and 1954.

[31] "Tovarishcham D. Belkinu i S. Fureru" [Response to Comrades D. Belkin and S. Furer], *Pravda,* 2 Aug. 1950.

[32] "K nekotorym voprosam iazykoznaniia. Otvet tovarishchu E. Krasheninnikovoi" [On some issues in linguistics. Response to Comrade E. Krasheninnikova], *Pravda,* 4 July 1950.

[33] This critique freed not only linguistics but "much Soviet scholarship from an excessive economic determinism" (Clark 1995:221).

[34] A similar shift from "vulgar Marxism" to "objective scientific laws" occurred in Soviet sci-

naniia (Issues of linguistics) appealed in 1952 for a thorough "renovation and reconstruction" of Soviet linguistics: "Soviet linguists have not yet closely approached some crucial problems in the study of language, have not yet begun its concrete and profound Marxist investigation. These issues concern research on the connection between language and thought . . . the connection between the development of thought and the perfection of the grammatical order of language . . . [and] the influence of the base and ideological superstructures (political, philosophical, aesthetic, and others) on the development of the vocabulary."[35]

This appeal marks the beginning of the gradual transformation of the model according to which Soviet ideology was evaluated for scientific accuracy—from a model based on the subjective opinion of a "principal" who publicly evaluated formulations, toward one based on "objective scientific laws" anonymously stated and never publicly contested or discussed. This was a major shift of the Soviet "discursive regime"—one that marks the mid-1950s as the beginning of the epoch of Late Socialism.

The Post-Stalinist Semantic Model

With this shift all discussions about correct and incorrect language disappeared from the public eye. In the 1960s, the production of Party texts became almost completely hidden within the Central Committee (CC). Now "specialists in ideological linguistics," Soviet linguist Kliamkin later wrote, "discuss[ed] their professional problems behind closed doors" (quoted in Han-Pira 1991:21). The only publicly visible position remained what Goffman would call the "animators" of ideological discourse—Party and Komsomol Secretaries of different levels who publicly enunciated this discourse without engaging in its evaluation. A similar shift toward "objective laws" happened in other, non-linguistic forms of ideological representation (see fn. 3).

The discursive regime shifted to a "semantic model" of language, in which the meaning of texts is seen as fixed inside them, transparent, and independent of context. Elizabeth Mertz argues that in the institutional contexts where the semantic model of language is dominant (e.g., in secondary education in the United States) the concept of "literacy" is understood not as one's ability to *interpret* texts, but rather as a technical skill of finding within texts their "literal meaning," the skill that can be measured "in context-independent, quantifiable fashion" (Mertz 1996:232). Similarly, in the context of Soviet discourse, ideological literacy increasingly became seen as a technical skill of reproducing pre-

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ence. After 1948, science "was considered to depend not on class interests, but on some 'objective' laws of nature" (Rossianov 1993:451–52). When in a 1948 speech Lyssenko argued, echoing Marr, for the class nature of all science, Stalin, who read the draft, remarked on the margins: "Ha-ha-ha!!! And what about mathematics? And what about Darwinism?" (Rossianov 1993:443).

[35] "Zadachi sovetskogo iazykoznaniia v svete trudov I. V. Stalina" [The tasks of the Soviet linguistics in light of I. V. Stalin's works], *Voprosy iazykoznaniia* no. 1, 1952, p. 4.

fabricated "blocks" of discourse, with predetermined and context-independent "literal meanings" attached to them. Ideological discourse was no longer publicly evaluated; in the absence of an ultimate authority on the canon, the Party leaders could only look to others' texts to calibrate their own, which led to a progressively form-centered normalization of language. Any text could potentially be seen as a deviation, which made CC secretaries and speech writers compulsively compare the form of their texts with that of everyone else's.

According to Fyodor Burlatskii, a speech-writer in Krushchev's, and later Brezhnev's Central Committees, "the main problem for the new leaders, such as Andropov, Ponamaryov and other Central Committee Secretaries, became to avoid committing a political mistake by saying or writing something that could be considered inappropriate and was likely to raise an objection and irritation [among others in the leadership]" (author's interview). Everyone in the leadership, including the General Secretary, now felt continual nervousness about their discourse. Burlatskii remembers: "When Khrushchev made a speech he always read it from the written text. Only occasionally he would say: "And now allow me to diverge from the text" (*a teper' pozvol'te mne otoiti ot teksta*). He would start speaking in the working class language that he learned during the Party discussions of the early 1930s. . . . However, he well realized that this was a divergence from the norm and tried not to overuse it. . . . As for Brezhnev, he never diverged. He was afraid to step outside the limits of the accepted norm, to not repeat the precise Party language" (author's interview).

A joke from the 1960s illustrates this progressive discomfort. The General Secretary Brezhnev, surrounded by the members of the CC, is shown around a Soviet art exhibition. After the tour, the CC members cautiously gather around Brezhnev to hear what he thinks. Brezhnev waits for a minute, then declares: "Very interesting. But let us hear what they think at the top."

A result of this shift in the language model of the leadership was that throughout the 1960s, official Party speeches and documents became subjected to increasingly meticulous and publicly invisible editing with the goal of producing texts without "a single step sideways from the norm (*nikakogo otstupleniia ot normy*)" (Burlatskii, author's interview). Most texts at the CC were now written and edited collectively. One of the most stringent editors was Mikhail Suslov, the Secretary on Ideology. In the cliché "Marxism-Leninism and proletariat internationalism" Suslov insisted on replacing the conjunction "and" with a dash, because, he figured, "Marxism-Leninism already is proletariat internationalism" and "opposing one to the other" by the use of "and" could create unnecessary confusion (Burlatskii 1988: 188). The phrase with the dash became fixed and repeated from text to text. Similar types of editing occurred in all key publications of the CC.

The editors at the journal *Kommunist* "replaced unusual words with the usual ones, squeezed out any literariness (*literaturshchina*), and combined several sentences into one paragraph-long sentence by adding commas and obliter-

ating verbs" (Burlatskii, author's interview). A CC Secretary, Yurii Andropov, made his consultants re-write speeches endlessly, and at the final stage of editing, "would himself sit at the head of the table with all the consultants, six or four of us, around him. He liked to have many consultants together. We would edit the final version. He would read a phrase aloud and say: 'Something here is wrong. We need to find a different formulation.' Someone would suggest a word. He would write it down. Then another person would suggest another word. Then another person. We rewrote the speech collectively. Then the text was returned to the typist. Then Andropov read it to us again, then again. We kept changing formulations until they sounded right" (Burlatskii, author's interview).

The process of collective writing and cross-imitation canceled 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" (Burlatskii, author's interview). In many cases the form of blocks became more meaningful than any meaning they were designed to convey.[36]

The Late-Socialist Pragmatic Model

The emerging dominance of block-writing indicated a shift from a semantic to a pragmatic model (Mertz 1996) of language. Since literary meaning was seen as embedded in linguistic form (semantic model of language), eventually it became of secondary importance, with the form taking precedence (pragmatic model). Innumerable and widely circulated brochures for local propagandists continued to stress the importance of precise ideological language in the construction of Communism, but instead of comparing correct and incorrect phraseology (essentially arguments about literal meaning), they specified exact forms and instructed all to replicate them word for word. A "Reference Book for the Secretary of a Primary Party Organization" critiqued those lecturers who still allowed themselves to speculate on ideological issues in their own terms, an act which invariably led them to slip into "superficial pseudo-scientific language."[37] The only structural elements of discourse in which experimentation

[36] This transformation is an example of Greg Urban's theory on the relationship of power regarding "entextualization" and "replication" in discourse: "The more discourse is overtly coded as nonpersonal, that is, not as something generated by the originator but as transmitted by him or her, and the less it is linked to a present context and circumstances, the more likely will the copier be to replicate it; hence, the more shareable it is" (1996:40).

[37] *Spravochnik sekretaria pervichnoi partiinoi organizatsii,* quoted in *Kommunist* no. 9, 1979, pp. 8–17.

was encouraged were some technical aspects of delivery—volume of voice, eye-contact, gesticulation, and "a little bit of humor" (Leont'ev 1975).

As a result, most Soviet people learned to worry less about the literal meanings that ideological language was supposed to communicate. This new "pragmatic model" of language is comparable to how language is viewed in Anglo-American legal practice (Mertz 1996:234). Unlike the semantic model in which texts are believed to convey context-independent literal meanings (see above), in the pragmatic model the meaning of texts is neither literal nor final—it profoundly depends on the context and on the reader-interpretation. For example, U.S. law schools train students to read legal texts for specific "technical terms" that serve as pragmatic markers linking texts to concrete contexts (a given legal case, relevant previous cases, etc.).[38] By learning to identify these markers, students learn the skill of "recontextualizing" meaning: in each new legal case new meanings may be "fixed" and "new interpretations may be forged," which allows "attorney adversaries in practice [to] argue vastly different interpretations" of the same texts (Mertz 1996:234–35).

The spread of this "pragmatic model" of ideological language to everyday contexts is illustrated by one of my interviewees. While attending the Komsomol meetings in the 1970s, he paid very little attention to the speeches, and instead read a book. However, when the vote on a resolution was announced by the question, "who is in favor?," "a certain sensor would click in the head . . . and you raised your hand automatically" (Yurchak 1997:172). Frequently it was more relevant to engage with the ideological meetings at the level of pragmatic markers, simply reproducing one's identity as someone who competently monitors and recognizes the pragmatic flow of the proceedings. However, occasionally, the same interviewee remembers, it was also important to pay closer attention to the discussions, reading the meaning of events and phrases for their "literal" meaning. In most meetings people took a combination of these two stances, being involved in a relationship of heteronymous shift with the unfolding discourse of the meeting: although they meticulously reproduced the visible *form* of the ideological signs (by making speeches and voting in favor) they actively reinterpreted the *meanings* for which that form stood.

It is as important not to confuse this type of activity with dissimulation, as it is to recognize U.S. attorneys' ability to argue vastly incongruous interpretations of the same text as not imposture (Mertz 1996). The attorneys take opposing stances to the same case not to dissimulate seeking justice or take advantage of the system, but because American legal ideology is based on a "pragmatic model" of justice, where the interpretations of prosecution and defense are treated not as "literal" meanings but as techniques allowing the jury to arrive at the best approximation of justice.

[38] These markers are a particular case of Gumperz' "contextualization cues"—any "feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions" (1987 [1982]:131).

THE ART OF IDEOLOGICAL WRITING

Generative Principles of Block-Writing

Soviet media provided endless instances of ideological discourse, one daily example being the front-page leading article, *peredovitsa,* of the CC newspaper *Pravda.*[39] These discussed some aspect of the Soviet experience, were collectively written by professional CC writers and were never signed. By analyzing examples from a leading article I will demonstrate some of the fixed principles according to which any number of proper linguistic blocks were generated; these principles may be called "generative principles" of ideological discourse. The following examples are taken from a 1977 leading article, "The Ideological Conviction of the Soviet Person" (*Ideinost' sovetskogo cheloveka,* Pravda, July 1, 1977).[40] For considerations of space, I will limit this analysis to two generative principles of block-writing: the principle of complex modification and that of complex nominalization.[41] The first sentence in the Pravda text reads: "The *high level* of social consciousness of the toilers of our country, their *richest collective* experience and political reason, manifest themselves *with an exceptional completeness* in the days of the all-people discussion of the draft of the Constitution of the USSR (*Vysokii uroven'* obshchestvennogo soznania trudiashchikhsia nashei strany, ikh *bogateishii kollektivnyi opyt* i politicheskii razum *s iskliuchitel'noi polnotoi* proiavliaiutsia v dni vsenarodnogo obsuzhdeniia proekta konstitutsii SSSR)." I have italicized phrases that are nouns with complex modifiers that function as "building blocks" of ideological discourse. This does not necessarily mean that such phrases were replicated word for word from one text to the next; but that most instances of ideological discourse contained phrases based on complex modifiers that were constructed according to two generative principles: the use of multiple modifiers and the use of modifiers of degree (e.g., comparative and superlative degree). In the first phrase, "the *high level* of consciousness of the toilers," the double-modifier "high level" conveys not only the claim that the Soviet toilers' consciousness exists (to be high it must exist), but also that it can be measured comparatively, by different "levels."[42] The latter claim masks the former one, thereby making it harder to question directly and rendering it more natural. Similarly, in the phrase, "their richest collective experience," the complex modifier "richest collective" suggests not only that there is a shared entity of "toilers' experience" (to be rich it must exist), but also that it can be measured comparatively, by degree (rich,

[39] With a circulation of eleven million (Roxburgh 1987:55), *Pravda* was the newspaper readily accessible to the widest Soviet audience.

[40] Due to lack of space, this analysis will be limited only to several generative principles. A more detailed discussion will be included in my forthcoming manuscript.

[41] For a discussion of modifiers in Soviet ideological discourse, see also Humphrey (1989:159).

[42] Similarly, in the phrase "deep-sea fishing" the fact that the sea is deep is presupposed (treated as a known and incontestable fact), while in the phrase "the sea is deep" it is treated as contestable new information.

richer, the richest).[43] The latter claim again masks the former one, making it harder to challenge. The complex modifier, "exceptional completeness" performs a similar function. These complex modifiers allow one to convey ideological claims while minimizing the exposure of one's voice to critical scrutiny. The use of such complex modifiers increased as pressure on CC writers to produce texts with minimum potential deviations and ambiguities intensified (see above).

Another principle for composing blocks was based on the use of nominal phrases—nominalizations. Patrick Seriot showed that nominal structures in Soviet ideological discourse were used with much greater frequency than in other genres of Russian discourse (1986:34). With the shift during the 1960s and 1970s toward the hyper-normalized model of discourse, the use of nominal structures increased and new long nominal chains were created. This increased the circularity of ideological discourse. In the excerpt from the same 1977 leading article; the italicized phrase (which in English translation is broken into two parts) is a block of multiple nominals[44]: "*The spiritual image of the fighter and creator, of the citizen of the developed socialist society* reveals-itself to the world *in all its greatness and beauty* both in the chiseled lines of the outstanding document of the contemporary times, and in the living existence, in the everyday reality of the communist construction (I v chekannykh strokakh vydaiushchegosia dokumenta sovremennosti, i v zhivoi deistvitel'nosti, v povsednevnykh budniakh kommunisticheskogo stroitel'stva raskryvaetsia pered mirom *vo vsem velichii i krasote dukhovnyi obraz bortsa i sozidatelia, grazhdanina razvitogo sotsialisticheskogo obshchestva*)."

The proliferation of such constructions was again an effect of the writers' attempts to minimize potential deviations and ambiguities of their texts: nominals allow one to render ideological claims implicit, masking them behind other ideas, and therefore rendering them less subject to scrutiny or multiple interpretations. This nominal chain can be deconstructed into several corresponding verbal phrases, each containing one idea (Seriot 1986): "the citizen of the developed socialist society *is* a fighter and creator," "the fighter and creator *possesses* a spiritual image," "the spiritual image *is* great and beautiful," etcetera. Converting these verbal phrases into one nominal phrase converts *claims* into *presuppositions,* presenting ideas as pre-established facts. The use of multiple nominals in one long chain masks some claims (expressed in earlier parts of the chain) behind other claims (expressed in later parts). For example, the idea that the citizen of the developed socialist society *is* a fighter and creator is veiled behind two other ideas mentioned in the verbal phrases above.

Of course, like most genres of political discourses, the Bolshevik discourse employed many nominals from its inception. However, the 1970s discourse was

[43] On the use of superlatives in Soviet discourse, see Steinvand (1955:82).

[44] See the *Kommunist* editors' strategy for creating long phrases by eliminating verbs, above.

special: its sentences contained particularly long nominal chains and only one verb, often simply a copula, with the sole purpose of turning these long chains of nominals into a sentence. This style created a notoriously "wooden" sound, giving ideological discourse its popular slang name, "oak language" (*dubovyi iazyk*). In addition, all instances of ideological discourse constantly quoted and sampled previous texts, solidifying form and making "manifest intertextuality" (Fairclough 1992: 104) a central principle of block-writing.

Local Reproduction of Ideological Discourse

To understand what ideological texts meant to Soviet people we need to go beyond discourse and analyze the practices and contexts in which it was produced, disseminated, and interpreted by people locally. Most members of the last Soviet generation, whose practices I discuss in this section, grew up with this model of ideological discourse, encountering it daily in schools, colleges, at work, in the media, in the Komsomol organization, and so on.

Sasha, who was born in the mid-1950s, was a secretary at the local Komsomol *Raikom* (District Committee). To be trained for the job he attended the Higher Party School, where he took such courses as "The Basics of Marxist-Leninist Rhetoric." Students in the course were explicitly taught how to write ideological texts by using prefabricated blocks—lists of key words, quotes, phrases, and grammatical constructions. After graduation, Sasha, as a Secretary on Ideology, prepared texts of documents and speeches and received regular circulars sent from the Central Committee in Moscow. He explains: "they stated what had to be mentioned—which figures, phrases, words, and quotes from Party leaders. . . . These were usually written so well that we could simply insert them into our own texts, even when speaking about some local event."

Sasha was more explicitly trained in the art of block-writing than most people of his generation who occupied lower positions in the Komsomol hierarchy. Andrei (born in 1954), the Komsomol Secretary of a research institute in a city district of Leningrad that Sasha supervised, wrote most of his ideological speeches and texts simply by copying whole passages from old speeches the previous Secretaries had left behind in the Committee archive. Masha (born in 1970), a high school Komsorg (Komsomol organizer) in the city of Kaliningrad, wrote her reports and speeches for the regular Komsomol meetings by copying whole passages from newspapers. She explains: "I took a newspaper and copied sentences from an appropriate editorial. . . . At first, I copied phrases that would be useful in the text and then wrote the text."

However, copying was not the only technique of text production. With experience one figured out some generative principles of block composition. Masha, for example, explains that she learned to use "special" constructions instead of "common" ones: "It was always important to speak of 'depth-level meaning' (*glubinnyi smysl*) as opposed to 'deep meaning' (*glubokii smysl*), and of 'unebbing significance' (*neprekhodiashchee znachenie*) instead of 'great sig-

nificance' (*bol'shoe znachenie*)." In other words, Masha learned to use the complex modifiers of degree discussed in the previous section: the modifier "depth-level" (*glubinnyi*) unlike "deep" (*glubokii*), conveys not simply the concept of depth but its comparative (superlative) degree.[45] Similarly, the modifier "unebbing," unlike "great," conveys not just significance but its *temporal* dimension. In both cases, one claim (that some event has "meaning" or "significance") is masked and thus naturalized behind another idea—that it can be measured by comparative or temporal degrees. According to Masha, if the speech was written for a meeting devoted to "all-people holidays" (*vsenarodnye prazdniki*), she had to describe the importance of the event by composing a particular type of general statement. Such statements include long chains of nominals, similar to those discussed in the previous section. Consider one example (nominal chains are italicized): "*The unebbing significance of the victory of the working class in the Great October Socialist Revolution* (or for a different event: of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War) is impossible to overestimate (*Neprekhodiashchee znachenie pobedy rabochego klassa v Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii* (Sovetskogo naroda v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine) nevozmozhno pereotsenit').

As mentioned earlier, in the new pragmatic model used by people for the production and interpretation of ideological discourse the generative principles and lexical blocks (like the block of ritualistic practice, such as voting in favor during meetings) played the role of pragmatic markers that signaled ideological contexts but usually did not have to be read on the level of literal meaning. Masha, for example, remarks: "I often would be unable to explain in my own words what I wrote. Everyone, sort of, had a general feeling that the text sounded precise (*chetko*) and impressive (*vpechatliaushche*). As a child I was always impressed by these serious and unclear (*ser'eznye i neponiatnye*) phrases." To Masha and her contemporaries the texts sounded "precise" and "impressive" because of their pragmatic architecture—these texts used *precise* generative principles and blocks of ideological discourse and therefore rigorously performed the pragmatic function of marking ideological contexts in everyday life. The weight of meaning in this discourse had shifted from literal meaning to linguistic form, or, to use Jacobson's terms, the "poetic function" of locally produced ideological discourse became more important than its "referential function" (Jacobson 1960).[46]

Rendering Ideology Meaningful

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that such Komsomol members as Sasha, Andrei, and Masha, who often paid more attention to the pragmatic as-

[45] The adjective *glubinnyi* (depth-level) emphasizes a great level of depth, while *glubokii* (deep) refers to depth in general.

[46] The "poetic function" of language emphasizes the aesthetics of the medium into which the message is packed, how it says—not what it says. The "referential function" emphasizes the "message" (meaning) itself (Jacobson 1960).

pects of their texts than to their literal meanings, were simply dissimulators or opportunists who did not care for the ideological values of socialism. Such a view would ignore the important and fascinating fact that many Soviet people, including many members of the last Soviet generation, were able to conduct much of the daily ideological practice in the pragmatic ways described above precisely because they continued to subscribe to a more general understanding of socialism. In this they were much like the above-mentioned U.S. attorneys, whose practice of arguing diametrically opposing positions in concrete legal cases should not be read as pure utilitarianism, but, on the contrary, as an indication of a shared and sincere belief in the importance of the concept of justice. As anthropologists know well, practices that may appear contradictory to outside observers (or in one context) do not have to be so for insiders (or in another context). To understand what concrete practices may tell us about the nature of a given social system we need to analyze the actual contexts where actors engage in them. This is why in this section I will consider how the low-ranking local practitioners of Soviet ideology reproduced the social contexts in which ideological texts circulated.

In the early 1980s, the Secretary Andrei was assigned by the Raikom to organize a "lecture group" in his institute. Ten rank-and-file Komsomol members had to write and deliver political-ideological lectures (*politinformatsiia*) in the course of the year in front of their colleagues. As Andrei expected, most tried to avoid the task. To solve the problem, Andrei explains, "our Committee decided to create a lecture group on paper. . . . We even had five or six people in it. . . . I said to a friend of mine: "you will be the leader." He had to keep a system of reports (*otchetnost'*) about lectures and, if a report was reviewed by the Raikom, to discuss it with a competent look (*s gramotnym vidom*). And also, when possible, once or twice a year, to arrange real lectures, so that there was something to refer to just in case."

Such arrangements were so commonplace that they did not appear surprising either to the Committee or the rank-and-file members. According to Andrei, the Raikom "hardly ever spoke with real people. Preparing credible reports was [Andrei's Committee's] main task." After reviewing the reports of different organizations in the district, the Raikom issued its own report in which Andrei's lecturing group was named "exemplary." As I mentioned, it would be a mistake to conclude from this description that Andrei was simply an opportunist or dissimulator. In fact, he thought of himself as a rather conscientious Komsomol Secretary who believed that in general political lectures were an important form of ideological-education work (*ideino-vospitatel'naia rabota*). At the same time, as a practitioner of that work, he knew that to organize people and orchestrate events was not as easy as devising them on paper.

Like many others of his generation, Andrei came to believe that socialist values were more important than bureaucratic rules and that some ideological tasks could be ignored without detriment, while others had to be performed with all

earnestness. He distinguished between two types of Komsomol practice. The first he called "formality" (*proforma*) and "ideological shell" (*ideologicheskaia shelukha*)—it consisted of the production of pragmatic markers (well-formed reports, textual blocks, etc.) that simply signaled unavoidable ideological contexts. The second type of ideological work Andrei called "work with meaning" (*rabota so smyslom*), and this he found important and enjoyable, and often organized on his own initiative.

Among the examples of that work he lists various professional and cultural initiatives: contests among young employees of the institute for the best professional skills (*konkurs profmasterstva*), the system of apprenticeship (*nastavnichestvo*), the museum devoted to the institute's role during the war, work in agricultural farms and construction brigades, assistance to young families with housing and kindergarten for children, sports competitions, lecture series on history, amateur theatrical performances, concerts of music groups, youth dances, celebrations, hikes in the country, and so on. For organizing these diverse activities, Andrei won several honorary diplomas (*gramota*) "For Komsomol Work," awards of which he was proud and which he kept on the wall in his office, and later at home. For him, these were not meaningless documents received in exchange for meaningless activities, but signs of public recognition of his organizing talents, creativity and genuine concern for the social good.

In practice, the two types of work—"pure formality" and "work with meaning"—were in a mutually constitutive relationship: fulfilling some "formality" was a necessary prerequisite for being able to perform "work with meaning." To put this differently, performing the unavoidable and ritualized "formality" helped to outline the ideological space (what Andrei calls "shell") within which other, "meaningful" forms of ideological work and socialist life could proceed.

The abovementioned school Secretary, Masha, was equally passionate about and proud of the "meaningful" aspects of her Komsomol work: initiating academic support to the students who lagged behind and assistance to the local elderly war veterans. Another student, Igor (born in 1960), who, in the late 1970s was the Komsorg of a school class in the town of Sovetsk (the region of Kaliningrad), strongly disliked the meaningless side of his duties. Remembering that aspect of Komsomol work Igor exclaims: "Oh, how I hated the Komsomol meetings for their endless formality and boredom!" Nonetheless, this antipathy did not preclude him from being morally engaged in other aspects of Komsomol work such as organizing programs for helping the elderly, lectures about political situations in different parts of the world, or debates about literature. Igor even volunteered for the post of school Komsorg several years in a row. While he hated the bureaucratic formality of many rituals, he admired many socialist values for which other Komsomol work stood. Igor explains:

> Joining the Komsomol, at age fifteen, was an important event for me. I wanted to be in the Komsomol because I wanted to be among the young avant-garde who would work to improve life. . . . I felt that if you lived according to the right scheme—school, insti-

tute, work—everything in your life would be fine. . . . Basically, for me the government's policy was correct. It consisted simply of a care for people, of free hospitals, good education. My father was an example of this policy. He was our region's chief doctor and worked hard to improve the medical services for the people. And my mother worked hard as a doctor. We had a fine apartment from the state.

A myriad of similar descriptions makes clear that the relationship of the last Soviet generation with official ideology did not simply involve a resistance to ideology, or its opportunistic use for self-advancement, or a dissimulated repetition of official ideological statements, but also entailed interesting and creative acts of rendering communist ideology meaningful within the broader framework of human values.

Intertextuality

"Meaningful" life was produced within "formulaic" ideological contexts by engaging with a wide variety of discourses and practices that were not strictly "ideological" but that were often explicitly linked with some ideological symbols and meanings. To give an example of these discourses and practices in the case of the last Soviet generation, I will analyze the production of youth culture that drew not only on ideological Soviet values but also on "bourgeois" Western values, even though the latter were routinely condemned in the ideological discourse of the Soviet press as anti-communist (Stites 1993; Frisby 1989; Troitsky 1988; Yurchak 1999; Friedberg 1985). All Secretaries and Komsorgs previously discussed were variously involved in producing "youth culture" activities, and listed these activities as examples of Komsomol work "with meaning." In the analysis below, I will focus on this work in the case of the now familiar Komsomol Secretary Andrei.

When Andrei studied in school in the early 1970s, he, like millions of his contemporaries, became a fan of Anglo-American rock music. He and his school-mates fantasized about having their own band, occasionally jammed at home, and named their impromptu band in English—*The Boys from a Morgue.* At the university, between 1973 and 1976, Andrei met more music fans, and started participating in an active exchange of tapes. Officially, the music of most Western rock bands did not exist in the Soviet universe—one could not purchase the records of *Alice Cooper, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd,* or *Deep Purple* in stores, hear them on the radio or see them in concert. Moreover, this type of music was regularly denounced in official publications as an example of bourgeois culture. Yet in the daily life of Andrei's generation this music was in vibrant existence. Small numbers of Western records were brought into the Soviet Union from abroad by Soviet sailors, copied over and over on reel-to-reel recorders, and in this reduplicated form spread at an exponential rate among members of the younger generation around the country.[47]

[47] That system became known as *magnitizdat* (home recording production) (Troitsky 1988; Yurchak 1999).

From the late 1970s into the early 1980s, as a member of the Komsomol Committee at the university and later at the research institute, Andrei organized youth dances at which he played tape-recorded copies of this "non-existent" Western music through the sound system and delivered short lectures about different Western bands. Andrei also organized concerts of "amateur" Russian bands that emerged in the 1970s and were neither officially registered nor officially forbidden (Troitsky 1988; Cushman 1995; Yurchak 1999). All these events needed the approval of a local Party Secretary, which Andrei usually managed to secure by representing them in his reports as ideologically sound forms of Komsomol youth life (*komsomol'sko-molodezhnaia zhizn'*). Let us consider how this combination of Andrei's practices as Komsomol Secretary and cultural organizer was reflected at the level of his discourse. In 1982, Andrei, a brand-new Komsomol Secretary of the research institute, presented his first speech at the annual Komsomol meeting. The speech started with the words: "One of the central directions in the work of the Komsomol is politico-ideological education of young people. The formation of the Marxist-Leninist world-view, an *uncompromising attitude* (*neprimirimoe otnoshenie*) *to bourgeois ideology and morality,* the education of young people in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism—these are the central tasks facing the ideological leadership of our Komsomol organization."

According to the Soviet media, Western rock music was a prime example of what Andrei referred to as the "bourgeois ideology and morality" that had crept into Soviet life and needed to be fought. An article that appeared in the central Komsomol newspaper *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* in 1981, several months before Andrei's speech, explained this official ideological position: "[Western rock bands] almost completely lack an *uncompromising attitude to the vices of the bourgeois world.* . . . The songs of new trendy stars only lead the listeners away into the world of unrealizable illusions. This is music-drug (*muzyka-narkotik*), music-sleeping-pill (*muzyka-snotvornoe*), music-deceit (*muzyka-obman*). . . . Instead of progress—this is regress. This is a natural fate, a logical conclusion of the "evolution" of rock music, an indivisible part of the Western mass culture—a deformed offspring of an unequal marriage between art and business."[48]

These two ideological texts represent the discursive regime of the early 1980s: the literal meaning of Andrei's speech is an argument for a need to develop an "uncompromising attitude to bourgeois ideology and morality"; the literal meaning of the newspaper article is an argument that Western rock music as a cultural form lacked precisely that "uncompromising attitude to the vices of the bourgeois world" (see italicized parts). It was quite clear, therefore, that on the level of literal meaning Western rock was claimed to be a manifestation of bourgeois culture and morality. However, to understand how the young

[48] Barko, V. "Pered stenoi okazalas' segodnia populiarnaia muzyka na zapade" [Popular music in the West has hit the wall], *Komsomol'skaia Pravda,* 19 Mar. 1981 (emphasis added).

Soviet audiences in fact interpreted such texts we also need to consider the contexts for their production and circulation, and other discourses and practices these people were involved in at that time.

In 1982, the same year that Andrei made his Komsomol speech, a friend lent him an issue of a Western European magazine, *Music Express,* brought by a sailor from abroad. Andrei painstakingly translated a four-page article from the magazine about a heavy metal guitarist, Michael Schenker of the German rock group The Scorpions, and typed it up on the Komsomol Committee typewriter. Later, he referred to facts from the text when he introduced tape-recorded songs of The Scorpions during his Komsomol dances. The translation describes in detail the career of the heavy metal star and his stereotypical heavy-metal problems: "Now Michael's drug addiction became truly 'heavy.' . . . He added tablets and cocaine to alcohol." The translation ends with a cheerful appeal to the fans: "So, what keeps Michael alive? Of course, the same as you and me—'heavy metal!'"

The text that Andrei translated seems to represent Andrei's genuine passion for bourgeois rock music and its decadent culture, and seems to encourage praise from the audience. 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. He stored both texts in the same folder marked "1982" among documents and pictures in his home archive, where I discovered them. Note, that Andrei's Komsomol speech, just like the newspaper article, contained recognizable pragmatic markers that unmistakably linked these texts with the space of ideology, but disconnected them from other contexts of everyday life. These markers allowed Andrei and his audiences to discriminate in interpreting such texts: some aspects in Andrei's critique of bourgeois Western culture (e.g., imperialism, colonialism, cold war politics, thirst for money, etc.) were widely subscribed to at the level of literal meaning, while other aspects of that critique (e.g., that Western rock was an example of Western bourgeois culture to be opposed) were treated as a formulaic enframing.[49]

Just like in the examples discussed earlier, Andrei's young audience could avoid reading newspaper articles critical of Western culture as a whole at the level of "literal" meanings. Indeed, as two prominent Soviet sociologists of youth culture (both ardent Party members and representatives of an older generation) pessimistically concluded in 1982 after a long study throughout the Soviet Union, the new Soviet youth that seemed to be conscientious in various aspects of communist morality was nevertheless rather blind to any connections between "Western music" and "the politics of anti-Communism" (Ikonnikova

[49] See Humphrey (1994) on "evocative transcript," and Brenneis (1986) on "indirection."

and Lisovskii 1982:96–97). At the same time, this complex reading also implied that Soviet youth did not necessarily interpret Western rock music and culture the way it was interpreted by Western audiences in Western contexts. For example, in the article about *The Scorpions* that Andrei translated, the reference to drugs was read as a pragmatic marker of an imaginary and exotic context of Western rock culture that existed for Andrei and his peers on the level of fantasy. However, when in reality marijuana was discovered in the university's dormitory, Andrei, as a conscientious member of the Komsomol Committee, helped to organize a vigorous campaign against drugs.

In the 1970s, for many young people across the Soviet Union, including Andrei, there was nothing contradictory about one's passionate affinity to some values of both anti-bourgeois Communist ideology and anti-communist bourgeois culture. This simultaneity of interests and passions was possible because of the dynamic and "situated" relationship of these young people with ideology. Examples of this dynamic relationship can also be found in private conversations between members of the last Soviet generation during the late socialist period. For a final illustration I will analyze excerpts from private letters written in the late 1970s by a teenager, Nikolai (born in 1959), from the Siberian cities of Yakutsk and Novosibirsk, to his teenage friend in Leningrad. For Nikolai, like Andrei, the ideals and ethics of Communism and of bourgeois Western rock music were equally important and he spoke about them with his best friend with passion and sincerity. Nikolai was well aware of the apparent contradictions between these values, which is why he actively engaged in reinterpreting the meaning of Communist ideology by disagreeing with how aspects of it were interpreted by school officials and the media. Instead of resisting ideology wholesale, he effectively domesticated it, making it meaningful in his life. In high school in Yakutsk, Nikolai occupied the post of the Komsomol Secretary and took that work very seriously. He wrote to his Leningrad friend (13 May 1975, Yakutsk): "I believe in communism, and my belief is unshakable. It is so enormous that there would be enough for several more people. But this is not brainless, not blind faith. I do not like very loud words, but I will say one thing: the building of communism is the task of my life. However, to be able to build it one must know it, and know not only theory, but how to put theory to life. This is why I joint the Komsomol, this is why I cherish everything connected with it."

On 7 October 1977, Nikolai wrote that he had just heard recordings of the British bands Queen and King Crimson, and that the latter band especially "impressed me quite a bit" and "I'd like to find out more about them." He ended the letter with a response to his friend's comment in an earlier letter: "P.S. I share your sorrow over the death of Elvis Presley." On 23 November, Nikolai added that the British bands King Crimson and Yes represented "no longer simple pop music (*estrada*)" but a "much higher, deeper, and more powerful" music "that deserves to be called music that will live in the centuries to come (*v vekakh*)." Nikolai's comments and his choice of bands, especially King Crim-

son, suggest that he was a serious lover of music, one interested not in easy-listening pop, but in rock as a form of art. It is also noteworthy that in the 1970s, tape recordings of such "non-existent" Western bands managed to reach even relatively remote Siberian towns and played an important role in the upbringing of Soviet youth. When Nikolai became a student at Novosibirsk University, in the Fall of 1977, he wrote about the active interest in Western music among his fellow students (14 December, Novosibirsk): "Many of our students have personal collections of stereo recordings of the best rock bands. Although I must say that as far as the Beatles are concerned, I hear them rather rarely. Over here, it is more common to listen to "Deep Purple," "Led Zeppelin," "Pink Floyd," "Yes," "Queen," "Wings," "*King Crimson,*" "*Alice Cooper,*" "*Uriah Heep,*" and less frequently others. The ones that I underlined I like most of all."

Nikolai was well aware of the official Soviet criticism of this bourgeois music and indeed explicitly contested this criticism. Importantly, however, his contestation was not a resistance to Communist ideology—as a serious student of Communism he contested the official criticism from the position of the same Communist values that this criticism purported to uphold. The next two quotes illustrate how Nikolai actively reinterpreted Soviet ideology, rendering it compatible with the Communist ideals as he understood and admired them. When the friend from Leningrad wrote about the conflict his classmates had with their teacher of aesthetics, a representative of the system and an older generation who criticized the young for their interests in the "bourgeois" Western rock, Nikolai responded by explicitly linking Western rock to the officially celebrated achievements of Soviet socialism (e.g., space exploration, nuclear physics) and of "good" non-bourgeois international culture (e.g., classical music). On 21 January 1977, he wrote from Yakutsk:

> . . . tell your teacher of aesthetics that one cannot view the world around from a prehistoric position. . . . Because from a higher ground one can clearly see that rock music and its relatives are worthy successors of classical music, and that "the Beatles" *is an unprecedented phenomenon of our life whose impact on the human mind* is, perhaps, comparable with space flights and nuclear physics. . . . One cannot educate us not knowing how we live, over what we suffer, and what and why we love. Tell her that I love Bach, Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky, Rakhmaninov, Shchedrin. And yet, with no reservation, I can put next to them Paul McCartney. If she does not understand this she is not a teacher of living progressive aesthetics, but a preacher of dogmatic aesthetics, which is just like religious . . . aesthetics (original emphasis).

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.[50] Compar-

[50] This point challenges Orwell's model of "Newspeak": individual speech can be creative and unpredictable even if the form of available public discourse is strictly controlled. Also see Butler on "the space of agency" in controlled discourse (Butler 1997b:129; 1997a:15).

ing 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.

CONCLUSION

This paper started with the question: what was it about the Soviet system that made its "collapse" appear completely unimaginable and surprisingly fast not only to most Western Sovietologists but also to most Soviet people? One answer lies in the nature of Soviet people's understandings of and relations with the official communist ideology in the decades that preceded the collapse. In the late 1950s through the early 1960s, Soviet ideology experienced a transformation toward a new pragmatic model: it was increasingly more important to reproduce precise ideological forms than to adhere to the precise meanings these forms were supposed to convey. Ultimately, the announced Party project for the creation of the New Soviet Person was both successful and unsuccessful. In line with the Party claims, the Soviet people unanimously reproduced the system on the level of form: they participated in mass organizations, voted in favor of ideological resolutions, publicly manifested support at mass rallies and fulfilled official plans in numbers and reports. And yet, contrary to the Party claims, many Soviet people, especially the younger generations, creatively reinterpreted the meanings of the ideological symbols, deideologizing static dogmas and rendering communist values meaningful on their own terms. The act of the reproduction of form with the reinterpretation of meaning, which this paper theorizes as a *heteronymous shift,* cannot be reduced to resistance, opportunism, or dissimulation; indeed, it allowed many Soviet people to continue adhering to Communist ideals and to see themselves as good Soviet citizens. The unanimous and ubiquitous replication of ideological forms, coupled with one's affinity to many communist values, contributed to the appearance of the Soviet reality as monolithic and eternal. At the same time, the constant internal reinterpretation of the ideological meanings, which were the system's very *raison d'être,* contributed to the conditions of possibility for the system's imminent implosion, without necessarily causing this implosion. When the Party leadership, headed by Gorbachev, in the mid-1980s launched the critical public debates of *perestroika,* they only wanted to reform socialism, while still preserving it. Like all others, they did not see the internal "conditions of possibility" for what they were, and therefore did not expect the collapse. However, by introducing this new critical discourse they rendered the logic of heteronymous shift suddenly visible and publicly discussed, which amounted to a new change in the system's discursive regime. *Perestroika* became a final public manifestation of a major transformation that had already taken place inside the system quietly and invisibly.

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