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ATTACHMENT B



The Debate Over "Openness" in Soviet Propaganda and Culture

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Summary

A vital component of Gorbachev's program during his first year in power has been his effort to revitalize Soviet propaganda and culture to increase their effectiveness as instruments for indoctrinating and mobilizing the population behind his policies. The regime shows great sensitivity to the challenge posed to its stability and credibility by the influx of Western information and culture in recent years. Due in part to Brezhnev's detente policies of the 1970s and in part to the revolution in media technology, a mass audience has developed for Western radio broadcasts and video movie cassettes and rock music tapes are widely available on the black market. Greater access to information from abroad and strict censorship inside the USSR have made many Soviet citizens increasingly cynical about official propaganda and increasingly alienated from the stale offerings of Soviet culture. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev recognizes that making propaganda more credible requires the release of more information on a selective basis. Similarly, for Soviet literary and artistic works to attract audiences they must be interesting enough to compete with foreign culture and indigenous underground subcultures. More media candor in discussing domestic problems also serves to marshal public support for Gorbachev's policy initiatives--such as the campaigns against alcohol, corruption, and crime. Finally, Gorbachev is using publicity of shortcomings within the elite to bring pressure to bear on officials to behave in accordance with

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new standards he is setting. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev has pursued this glasnost (openness) effort on several fronts.

- o A number of controversial plays, films, and literary works--which deal with formerly taboo topics and were long held back by censorship--have been released.
- o Soviet media have begun to deal more frankly with problems and shortcomings in Soviet society and economy. Significantly more candid treatments of such subjects as crime, elite corruption, alcoholism, drug abuse, economic inefficiencies, natural disasters, and the war in Afghanistan have appeared.
- o Increased funding is being made available to the arts, decrees have established several new cultural organizations, and an experimental procedure has been set up to allow many theatres and other arts organizations more autonomy over programming and finances.
- o By skillful use of television interviews and well publicized informal visits to work sites, Gorbachev is attempting to project an image of a leader who is accessible to the public. Many other high-level officials have followed his lead.

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There are clear limits to Gorbachev's desire for "openness" as demonstrated by the simple fact that no criticism of his leadership has appeared in Soviet media since his accession. In recent weeks these limits were made glaringly evident by treatment of the nuclear power plant catastrophe at Chernobyl. Because the regime's initial obfuscation produced a public relations debacle, however, Chernobyl has moved the debate over information policy squarely into the center of leadership attention. [REDACTED]

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With the recent addition to the Politburo and Secretariat of several men who appear to share his orientation on propaganda and cultural policy, Gorbachev's approach probably commands majority support within the top leadership. Moscow party boss Yeltsin, and to a lesser extent, second secretary Ligachev and propaganda secretary Yakovlev, have been outspoken advocates of glasnost. Moreover, an ongoing blizzard of new appointments has replaced many propaganda and media officials, and new editors have been named for key publications. [REDACTED]

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There are signs of resistance, however, among some of the Brezhnev holdovers in the Politburo and within the cultural bureaucracy. Many conservatives are apprehensive that moving to open up public discussion of social problems and official shortcomings could backfire. They argue that by exposing the regime's weaknesses glasnost could stimulate a process of ferment within the intelligentsia and criticism from below that could get out of hand. [REDACTED]

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In fact, expanding the limits of the permissible in culture

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and propaganda harbors major risks for the regime and for Gorbachev personally. As happened during the "thaw" under Khrushchev, the partial relaxation of strictures on cultural life has encouraged liberal intellectuals to press for an end to censorship altogether. Failure to curb the liberals could strengthen the hand of Politburo hardliners, produce a swing back to more repressive policies, and perhaps damage Gorbachev's political position. [redacted]

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By casting the public spotlight on official abuses, Gorbachev is also running the risk of creating a backlash within the elite. Soviet officials have traditionally viewed their immunity from public criticism as an inviolable privilege. If Gorbachev presses his campaign for media pillorying of errant officials too far, political opposition to him could coalesce around one or another Politburo leader. [redacted]

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In the final analysis, Gorbachev's effort to make Soviet media more credible conflicts with his desire to maintain ultimate regime control over the flow of information. Gorbachev's twin goals for Soviet culture--higher artistic quality and ideological purity--are likewise irreconcilable. In practice, Gorbachev has thus far managed to balance these contradictory sets of objectives. While opening up the media and culture to more frank treatment of sensitive topics, he has cracked down on dissidents and continued jamming foreign broadcasts. His defense of censorship demonstrates determination that the newly expanded arena for expression not be interpreted as a removal of all limits. Gorbachev can be expected to come

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down hard on liberals who breach the boundaries of the
permissible. [REDACTED]

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If Gorbachev can control the process of glasnost, he may be
able to reinvigorate Soviet culture and to use propaganda more
effectively in support of his other policies. But a delicate
management job lies ahead--a job for which Soviet history has not
prepared the leadership. [REDACTED]

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I. OPENNESS WITH A PURPOSE

Gorbachev has a pragmatic motive in moving toward glasnost (openness) in propaganda and culture. Propaganda and even culture in the USSR are seen by the regime as key instruments for indoctrinating and mobilizing the population, reestablishing regime credibility and revitalizing the system to combat the societal malaise and apathy that Gorbachev has identified as key obstacles to his economic programs. However, in recent years their effectiveness has eroded. Gorbachev reportedly has described Soviet propaganda as "obsolete," and he has publicly decried the "dullness" of many cultural works. He recognizes that in order for propaganda to be effective it must be credible; in order for Soviet culture to attract the Soviet audience it must be interesting enough to compete with Western culture. [REDACTED]

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A. Propaganda and Arts in Service of Domestic Policy

Strict censorship in the years since the Khrushchev "thaw" has made Soviet propaganda increasingly unconvincing and Soviet culture increasingly stale from the point of view of many Soviet citizens. Many intellectuals and artists have been alienated by the crude and unimaginative ideological and cultural standards of

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recent years.^{1/} Boring and unattractive productions have also turned off the general populace, which has become more highly educated and more sophisticated during recent years. Articles in Sovetskaya Rossiya late last year stated that attendance at films produced by the largest Soviet studios has declined by 50% over the past decade, although viewers eagerly pay premium prices to see foreign film festivals. According to an article in a December 1985 issue of Knizhnoye Obozreniye, stockpiles of unwanted books collect in publishing houses while popular young poets find it impossible to get their works printed. [redacted]

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Young people, in particular, appear to find propaganda presentations uninteresting and poorly presented. According to a recent Soviet sociological survey in Leningrad young people prefer public lectures on art to the current mix of political and ideological themes. The study, evidently commissioned to guide the propaganda apparatus and published in a tiny edition of 500 copies, also found that only about 5% of the respondents thought officially sponsored public lectures were "very good" and only 29% "good." [redacted]

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Gorbachev apparently thinks glasnost in propaganda and culture will serve his purpose of marshalling public opinion in support of particular policy initiatives. He probably believes

^{1/} The stagnation of the Soviet cultural scene has impelled a number of the USSR's finest artists to emigrate to the West. These include the innovative director of the avant-garde Taganka Theatre, Yurii Lyubimov, and the controversial filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, both of whom left in 1984. [redacted]

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that franker portrayals of social problems in the media and in literary works are necessary to raise public awareness of the seriousness of these phenomena, and to condition the population to accept the need for vigorous remedial measures--as in the drives to strengthen law enforcement, curtail alcohol abuse, and tighten worker discipline. [REDACTED]

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The decision to release a number of productions with Russian nationalist themes may indicate that Gorbachev is attempting to associate the regime more closely with traditional Russian nationalism as a legitimizing force to substitute for the waning appeal of ideology. A striking case in point is the official backing recently displayed for the controversial painter Ilya Glazunov, whose 700-canvas show was opened in early June by First Deputy Minister of Culture Yevgeniy Zaytsev at Moscow's preeminent exhibit hall adjacent to the Kremlin. Russian nationalism--portrayed by historical, natural and religious motifs--came through as the common theme of the exhibit, which reportedly was held at the personal order of Moscow party chief Boris Yeltsin. As in his 1978 show, Glazunov's huge painting of the Prodigal Son returning to his Russian heritage was a center of attention. US Embassy contacts have reported that Raisa Gorbacheva is an admirer of Glazunov's work. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev's desire to stimulate public concern rather than complaisance contrasts sharply with the approach of the latter Brezhnev years. Gorbachev is attempting to establish his own

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reputation by exposing problems he inherited from his predecessor. Brezhnev, after years in power, had little incentive to allow, much less encourage, literary or media commentary that raised questions about his leadership ability by exposing the true dimensions of the domestic ills that had mounted during his tenure. Moreover, since Brezhnev placed a higher priority on social tranquillity and the avoidance of conflict than on vigorously acting to redress societal problems, he had more reason to conceal information about adverse social trends than to publicize them. [REDACTED]

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Finally, Gorbachev is using the policy of "openness" to bring pressure to bear on elites to behave in accordance with new standards he is setting. Media exposes engineer public support for the discrediting and firing of corrupt and incompetent officials. Publicity of such abuses serves to hold officials more strictly accountable both for discharge of their public duties and for their personal judgment and sobriety. Thus, Gorbachev's propaganda and cultural policy, by demonstrating that party elites are not "outside the pale of criticism," challenges one of the most treasured of the privileges that have grown up around party membership--that of immunity from public censure.

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B. The Challenge of Western Culture and Information

One reason for increased popular cynicism about regime propaganda and the decreased attractiveness of Soviet official culture is that in recent years the regime's monopoly of information flow and control over the population's access to Western culture have weakened. In part because of the regime's detente policies in the 1970s, and in part because of technological developments in modern mass communications, Soviet citizens gained greater access to information from abroad during Brezhnev's tenure than ever before. In particular, Western radio broadcasts have developed a mass audience in the USSR, giving millions of Soviet citizens an alternative source of information that enables them to evaluate regime propaganda more critically. [REDACTED]

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At the same time, Western popular culture, especially music, has increasingly challenged the dominance of official Soviet culture. According to a recent article in a Soviet sociological journal, a 1985 survey of students at a Ukrainian technical institute showed that over 90 percent of male students preferred rock music to all other types. The availability of new technology--video movie cassettes, music tapes, video cassette recorders--is making it more difficult than in the past for the regime to prevent the illegal dissemination of foreign materials. KGB Chief Chebrikov's speech at the party congress

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[redacted] expressed concern about black marketing of VCRs.^{2/} [redacted]

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[redacted] foreign videos are easily available through the Soviet underground and US films are the most popular. He estimated that in the Moscow area alone the number of people involved in the illegal cassette market is in the thousands, and that hundreds more deal with technical aspects of conversion of Soviet television sets to make them compatible with US cassettes. Nor is foreign video traffic confined to the capital cities. Embassy officers recently visited a "bar/videotek" in a Georgian city, where for a 3-ruble cover charge, patrons were treated to 90 minutes of Western entertainment video in English with a voice-over in Russian. They were told that the videotapes came from tourists who had

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^{2/} The regime's uncertainty about how to deal with the "information revolution" is demonstrated in its contradictory policies toward VCRs. Although clearly apprehensive that Western video movie cassettes could become vehicles of Western ideological penetration, the Gorbachev leadership has apparently recognized the futility of attempts to exclude completely the VCR technology and adopted a competitive approach. The government has opened 10 video film rental stores, which offer over 400 Soviet and foreign films, and there are plans to expand the VCR industry (according to state cinema official V. V. Markov). Legal production cannot meet popular demand, however. Rental VCR machines are virtually unavailable and only Soviet machines-- which are cheaper than smuggled foreign ones but inferior--can be purchased legally in state stores. Markov, implying that Soviet films are unsatisfactory, has lamented that there are too few foreign films available. Consequently, the regime itself has apparently in effect sanctioned unofficial importation.

[redacted] Soviet seamen are authorized to bring into the USSR one VCR and 5 blank tapes each year, duty free, which usually immediately enter the black market. [redacted]

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visited the West and that the club was crowded at each of the four daily shows. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Soviet media report widespread black market trafficking for video equipment. Soviet sailors routinely bring VCR tapes and recorders into the country, and Finnish tourists smuggle Western movies into the USSR to sell them for escalated prices. [REDACTED]

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The partial opening up of Soviet society to Western influences has been a matter of growing concern among Soviet authorities. Since 1980 the regime has increased efforts to block information coming in from outside and to stem the circulation of unauthorized materials--through such measures as radio jamming and cracking down harder on samizdat. [REDACTED]

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Shutting Out Western "Voices"

The regime has stepped up its efforts to limit Western influence on Soviet citizens during recent years. Of primary concern to the leadership are radio and television broadcasts from Western Europe and the United States, as well as from Finland.

In 1980, following the invasion of Afghanistan and the onset of the crisis in Poland, the USSR resumed jamming Voice of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation and Deutsche Welle. The stations had not been interfered with during the 1970s. Since 1980, 80 percent of the Russian language broadcasts into the Soviet Union have been jammed. The Soviets have always jammed Radio Liberty, which is particularly bothersome to them because of its focus on Soviet internal developments and emigre writings. Nevertheless, much broadcasting continues to get through with varying degrees of audibility, and some 30-38 million Soviet citizens tune in monthly to VOA alone. RL and the

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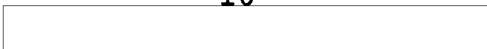


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Baltic services of Radio Free Europe have from 17 to 25 million listeners monthly. Listening rates are highest in Western borderlands of the USSR, where anti-Russian sentiment is strong.



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But Gorbachev appears to recognize that repression alone cannot solve the problem of Soviet society's vulnerability to outside influences. In fact, modernization of the economy will necessitate further technological innovations--such as computerization--that will make it impossible to regulate information flow from above to the extent that was possible in earlier periods. Consequently, he has adopted a combined strategy of curtailing access to unofficial information and culture where feasible, while attempting to upgrade official culture and propaganda. This effort involves relaxing rigid controls on cultural life to permit more sophisticated works to appear. It involves releasing more information through regime-sanctioned channels to preempt foreign "voices" while attacking and countering foreign information more aggressively.

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Gorbachev apparently is attempting to use culture to mount an aggressive campaign against the West's "psychological warfare" which--the regime charges--tries to win over Soviet citizens to

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capitalist values. Cultural figures are often used as goodwill emissaries abroad and spokesmen for official positions. In addition, more controversial or relatively liberal artists, such as Yevgeny Yevtushenko, are presented in the West to impress foreign public opinion with the "cultural diversity" and "freedom of expression" under Gorbachev. A closely related goal of Gorbachev's new policy may be the perceived opportunity it provides the regime to attempt to lure eminent emigre artists back to the USSR, in order to lend lustre to the cultural scene there and improve the credibility of claims of artistic freedom. There have been reports in the Western press lately that prominent artists abroad--such as Lyubimov, Tarkovsky, sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, and writer Viktor Nekrasov--have been contacted by Soviet officials and by visiting Soviet writers Yevtushenko and Voznesensky, with the message that if they came home they would be well treated. [REDACTED]

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II. GORBACHEV SETS A NEW COURSE

Gorbachev's new course for Soviet arts and information comes against the background of many years of stultifying official controls, which reached an apex in the terror of Stalin's purges of artists and intellectuals. After the temporary relaxation of these rigid constraints during Khrushchev's anti-Stalin campaign inadvertently encouraged liberals to go beyond limits considered safe by the regime, the policy was swiftly repudiated when

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Brezhnev took power. Movement toward more candor in propaganda policy began before Gorbachev's accession. Andropov began a process of selectively releasing more information to the population about political activities--for example, he initiated the practice of publishing reports of Politburo meetings--and Chernenko talked about the need to discuss regime shortcomings more frankly. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev, however, has begun a systematic implementation of a policy of glasnost (openness) and cultural revitalization. He has moved during his first year as General Secretary to loosen ideological strictures on Soviet cultural life and open up a limited discussion of domestic problems in official propaganda. The media are carrying more factual accounts of domestic events and providing coverage of some formerly taboo topics. A number of controversial plays and films dealing with sensitive political issues have been released. These steps are consistent with Gorbachev's skillful use of television to cultivate the image of a leader in close touch with ordinary citizens. [REDACTED]

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He has encouraged the media to engage in investigative reporting to expose a wide array of "negative" phenomena in the society and in the elite itself. Editors from central newspapers have recently been sent to the provinces with instructions for local editors to be more assertive and critical in uncovering problems. [REDACTED]

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As a consequence, the Soviet domestic audience now receives much more information than was previously available about such social problems as crime, the black market, alcoholism, drug abuse, and draft dodging. The media are putting the spotlight on cases of malfeasance and incompetence within officialdom and letting out more information about reasons for removals and transfers of officials. They are also providing more discussion of Soviet troop activity in Afghanistan and providing live coverage of such things as the space launch. An especially striking example of the new frankness appeared in the 18 April Moscow Komsomol newspaper, which presented harrowing portraits of young addicts, after years of media denial that a drug problem exists in the USSR. [REDACTED]

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High-level officials previously remote to the public have-- since the appointment in December 1985 of a new chief for the State Committee for Television and Radio (Gostelradio)--appeared on live television and radio call-in programs to explain policy and respond to listener criticisms, and the press conference-- initiated during Andropov's tenure--has now become a familiar propaganda device. Gorbachev himself is putting his relative youth and skill in fielding questions to good political effect by using carefully televised "walk-arounds" during which he converses informally with ordinary citizens. These forays into

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public view are doubtless orchestrated to some extent, but they reflect the importance he places on building a reputation as an accessible leader. [REDACTED]

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The cultural scene in the Soviet Union--particularly the theatre--is now more lively than at any time since Khrushchev's cultural "thaw" during the height of destalinization in the 1950s. The sense of deja vu is heightened by the reissuance of works by leading liberal authors of that period. Several literary figures active during the fifties who were under a cloud for years are being featured prominently at cultural events. These include Yevgeniy Yevtushenko, Andrei Voznesenky, and Bulat Okudzhava. It is reported that a new novel will be published by Vladimir Dudintsev, whose novel Not by Bread Alone ushered in the Khrushchev "thaw." A number of films, plays and literary works have been released to the public after being held back many years by the censorship, and a commission has been set up to review feature films and documentaries which have been rejected by censors over the past 20 years. Commissions have also been formed to honor underground folk singer Vladimir Vysotskiy--whose enormously popular satirical and earthy songs were suppressed by the Brezhnev regime, and to study the verse of Osip Mandelshtam--a famous poet who died in a Stalin labor camp. [REDACTED]

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CONTROVERSIAL CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS UNDER GORBACHEV

Films

- o "Agonia"--released after many years on the shelf, portrays the 1917 Revolution as a spontaneous popular rebellion rather than a triumph of Bolshevik organization. Striking for its tones of Russian nationalism and even monarchism.
- o "Roadblock"--made in 1971 but never before released, depicts the persecution of a returning Soviet partisan who had been forced to join the Nazis.
- o "Double Trap"--a realistic crime drama showing the corruption of a group of Latvian youth, degeneracy and pornography.

Literature

- o Publication of 2-volume collected works of Boris Pasternak, enthusiastically reviewed in Pravda. Collection does not include "Doctor Zhivago."
- o Reissuance of collection of stories by group of "Village Writers" popular in the 1950s and 1960s because of the forthright treatment of rural problems and overtones of traditional Russian nationalism in their writings.
- o Republication and rehabilitation of many important writers of the early 20th century, previously banned--including Marina Tsvetaeva, Velimir Khlebnikov, and Mikhail Bulgakov. Others still remain in oblivion.

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Theatre

- o "Silver Anniversary"--a morality play dealing with a corrupt party official, a muckraking journalist who is fired for exposing a scandal, and other unsavory functionaries. Attended by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, Ligachev, and reportedly made mandatory viewing for party congress delegates.
- o "40, Sholem Aleichem Street"--a frank treatment of Jewish emigration and its tragic impact on a family split over the issue.
- o "Dictatorship of Conscience"--a mock trial of Lenin that exposes various tyrannical figures drawn from fiction and history as having distorted socialist principles by their brutality.
- o "Speak Out!"--based on 1950s writings of Valentin Ovechkin (a popular writer on the rural scene and Khrushchev favorite) it calls for open discussion of past party wrongdoings. The action takes place under the gaze of a statue of Stalin prominently on stage.
- o "Burden of Decision"--adapts an article on the Cuban Missile Crisis by liberal political commentator Fedor Burlatskii, for the stage. An appeal for leaders' restraint and responsibility for peace, with Kennedy favorably portrayed.
- o "Brothers and Sisters"--the title taken from Stalin's famous appeal to fight the Nazi invasion, this play raises the spectre of Stalin's repressions against the backdrop of popular wartime heroism and suffering. 25X1

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Gorbachev and his wife have personally patronized the arts, and have in effect endorsed a number of controversial plays by attending performances. 25X1

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III. CHERNOBYL AND GLASNOST

Both the limits and the purposes of the new information policy have been graphically displayed by the regime's handling of the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster. It is ironic that prior to the accident, on 27 March, serious problems at the plant were very frankly dealt with in a caustic expose of management inefficiencies and supply snafus published in the Kiev paper Literaturna Ukraina. Yet when disaster actually struck, the regime reacted with silence, followed by minimal and misleading bulletins. Once the regime realized it could not prevent the world or its own population from learning about the disaster, however, it shifted tactics. While continuing to suppress many details, the propaganda machinery began to release much information in an effort to persuade the population the regime was levelling with them and to counter alarmist rumors and Western radio broadcasts into the USSR. Eventually, the reluctant seepage of information became a flood, coupled with attacks on Western media for its "shameful" attempts to "whip up hysteria," culminating in Gorbachev's report to the nation 15 days after the event. [REDACTED]

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The regime's belated, grudging and initially sparse release of news harmed Gorbachev's attempts to build up international credibility; and there are signs of some domestic implications as well. It may have reinforced perennial skepticism of official

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information among more sophisticated and intellectual elements of the Soviet populace and fed, rather than quelled, rumor and fears among the public at large. It is probable that the Gorbachev leadership would have followed longstanding precedent to suppress news of this accident entirely had not other countries been affected. Disaffected Soviet intellectuals have told US Embassy sources they think that the media has been relatively open about this disaster, but only because of the need to respond to Western broadcasts into the USSR and to calm the population. [REDACTED]

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The catastrophe may have heightened friction among Politburo members over how much information should be given to the population and on what subjects. The dissident historian Roy Medvedev told La Repubblica of Rome that all of the Politburo except Vorotnikov and Chebrikov opposed Gorbachev when he proposed a policy of forthright information on Chernobyl, and that only Western outcry finally moved the other leaders away from their insistence on containment of the facts. A Western businessman told US Embassy officers that he had heard from an aide to Ukrainian party secretary Shcherbitsky that Shcherbitsky had asked Gorbachev for instructions within an hour of the accident, only to receive a cable an hour and a half later telling him to "say nothing and avoid panic." The aide went on to say that Shcherbitsky is holding the message as insurance against an attempt by Gorbachev to remove him from his post. The new Novosti chief, Valentin Falin, indicated to Der Spiegel that

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[redacted]

Soviet media treatment of the accident was flawed and "done offhand" because of a lack of preparation for such an event. Falin stated that "no country is in a position to keep such matters secret," and that in hindsight he felt it would have been "better to publish on Sunday the information we published Monday." [redacted]

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Several articles in Pravda have acknowledged that delayed and incomplete information on the catastrophe was a mistake that caused "all kinds of rumors" and public anxiety, which have been only partially dealt with by ensuing official statements. A reader's letter published in Izvestiya urged that scientists should be able to discuss ecological issues "honestly, without avoiding Chernobyl." If Soviet leaders conclude the lesson of Chernobyl is that total suppression of information is counter-productive, the incident could give further impetus to the policy of glasnost. [redacted]

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The Soviet leadership's instinct--today as much as in the past--probably is to suppress news of a catastrophe like Chernobyl. But, because of its inability to hush up or even completely control the information flow in this case, the regime may be beginning to recognize the practical wisdom of more sophisticated and active management of information rather than crude denials and repression of facts in such instances. [redacted]

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IV. POLITICAL FORCES AND PERSONNEL CHANGES

A majority of top leaders appear to support Gorbachev's propaganda and cultural policies. Recent changes in the Politburo and Secretariat brought in several men closely associated with Gorbachev's approach. The General Secretary's actions and statements indicate he believes his attempt to revitalize Soviet culture and propaganda also requires broad restructuring and restaffing of the relevant bureaucracies. He has pointedly insisted that those officials who are corrupt, incompetent or unwilling to work in the new, more open and responsive style must be removed. So far, Gorbachev has replaced most key Brezhnev holdovers in the media and propaganda bureaucracies with younger and more supportive officials--a process which was highlighted at the party congress. Conservatives remain in several key posts, however. [REDACTED]

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A. The Leadership Alignment: Supporters of Glasnost...

Within the top leadership, the most active supporters and spokesmen for Gorbachev's new direction in cultural and propaganda policy are Moscow party boss Boris Yeltsin and, to a lesser degree, "Second Secretary" Yegor Ligachev and propaganda secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev. [REDACTED]

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Yeltsin, who has become a candidate member on the Politburo since Gorbachev's accession, is an outspoken proponent of the new glasnost policy. He delivered a stinging attack on party privileges at the 27th Party Congress in February. His flat

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demand for the abolition of "unjustified benefits" for party leaders at all levels was not picked up by other speakers. Yeltsin also appeared to act as point man for Gorbachev by criticizing "stagnation" in the arts and calling for reorganization of the Central Committee Culture Department in order to prevent a "weakening of party influence." [redacted]

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Yeltsin has also been more forthcoming than other leaders in discussing the Chernobyl disaster. In an interview published in West Germany, he divulged more information about the accident than had other regime spokesmen and directly took on the openness issue. Acknowledging that a "certain reserve" "formerly" existed in Soviet information policy, he maintained that "under the new leadership" nothing is being held back. Yeltsin's pattern of frank discussion of problems apparently goes back some years; he reportedly initiated a weekly live call-in program when he was oblast first secretary in Sverdlovsk, which carried citizen complaints and his own discussion of problems. [redacted]

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Ligachev appears to be playing a key role in the propaganda area. Speaking to television and radio officials in November 1985, he stressed that broadcasting must be "wholly and fully political" but nonetheless expressed concern over the low artistic quality of much programming. Writing in the party journal Kommunist the same month, he called for a deep restructuring of the cultural apparatus. [redacted]

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[redacted] immediately following the congress Ligachev summoned

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[redacted]

editors of the leading newspapers and journals and lectured them on the need to upgrade their work. He has publicly praised a poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko attacking Stalin's repression of writers. The Western press has reported that he authorized the staging of a controversial play on corruption among party officials ("Silver Anniversary"). According to US Embassy contacts, Ligachev approved another new play critical of Stalin's repressions ("Dictatorship of Conscience"), gave its author a personal appointment, and allowed him access to party archives for research for a new play about the period following Lenin's death. At an April conference of theatre officials, playwrights and party secretaries at the Central Committee, Ligachev stressed the party's need for "the whole truth"--achievements, contradictions, successes, and failures. He voiced support of the contemporary "fight for the new against the outdated," and urged more rigorous literary criticism with the objective of raising the quality of theatrical productions. [redacted]

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At the same time, there are signs that Ligachev may differ with Gorbachev over how far to carry glasnost. [redacted] he

may have objected to the recent replacement of the ultra-orthodox head of the Writers Union and to Pravda's publication of letters to the editor attacking the privileges of the party elite in unusually pointed fashion.^{4/} [redacted]

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^{4/} See below, pp. 43-44.

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The Theatre's Special Role in Promoting Glasnost

The theatre apparently is playing a leading role in breaking down old taboos. A number of controversial plays on sensitive issues have recently been revived or premiered, and policy issues are being debated through the dialogue of fictional characters on the stage.

The special properties of the theatre may explain its use as a vehicle for the airing of controversial matters and floating political trial balloons. As a non-print medium, a theatrical production runs less risk of being held to account for every word, while stage effects and actors' gestures or facial expressions can silently convey controversial concepts. Also, audiences for drama are limited to the number of persons who can attend the theatre. Moreover, the Soviet repertory theatre can move more quickly to get a production on the boards than can a literary journal. Gorbachev's reported personal fascination with the stage may also be a factor in the choice of medium.

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Yakovlev has been widely reported to be a close adviser to Gorbachev on foreign policy and propaganda. He was elevated to the Secretariat at the Party Congress, and appears to have assumed the responsibilities of Mikhail Zimyanin, who had supervised culture and propaganda since 1976. Yakovlev's appointment as head of the Propaganda Department in July 1985 was one of the first high-level promotions Gorbachev made after becoming General Secretary. Yakovlev reportedly played a key role in the large number of changes in the media made since he took over the department. Like Ligachev, Yakovlev has displayed unusual concern to combat the so-called Western "psychological offensive." Both men probably see glasnost as a means of

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[redacted] limiting the impact of foreign ideas on the Soviet population. [redacted] 25X1

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[redacted]

Vadim Medvedev, also elevated to the Secretariat at the Congress, presumably also backs Gorbachev's cultural and propaganda policies. Although he has taken charge of the Bloc Relations Department, much of his career has been spent in the party ideological apparatus. Medvedev was deputy chief of the Central Committee Propaganda Department from 1970 to 1978, serving as Yakovlev's deputy during part of that period. In 1978 he became rector of the Central Committee's Academy of Social Sciences, until Andropov tapped him to head the Science and Education Department in August 1983. [redacted] 25X1

In addition to these men, there are several leaders who have no specific responsibilities for propaganda or culture, but who --as part of his coalition--would be expected to go along with Gorbachev's policy direction in this area. These include Nikolay Ryzhkov and Lev Zaykov, who were promoted to the Politburo under Gorbachev and evidently support him on most major political and economic issues. Eduard Shevardnadze, whom Gorbachev brought into the Politburo, has promoted improved monitoring of public opinion and greater official responsiveness to it. [redacted] 25X1

...and Opponents

The group at the top level resisting Gorbachev's new cultural and propaganda policy probably includes old guard Politburo members Andrey Gromyko and Dinmukhamed Kunayev. In a tough speech to filmmakers two years ago, Geydar Aliyev was outspoken

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[REDACTED]

in his advocacy of tight party control and ideological orthodoxy. The functional responsibilities of KGB Chairman Viktor Chebrikov may make him wary of any loosening of controls over the spread of unorthodox ideas. However, Chebrikov is probably allied with Gorbachev on most political and economic questions and is reported to have been one of two Politburo members to support the General Secretary's relatively frank information policy on Chernobyl. The appointment of Minister of Culture Petr Demichev as Gromyko's first deputy in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet removed the last Brezhnev holdover at the top cultural policymaking level. Demichev, who reportedly has resisted Gorbachev's initiatives, has given up his ministerial post but retained his position as candidate member of the Politburo. In their congress speeches both Chebrikov and Demichev stressed the danger of ideological subversion. [REDACTED]

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B. The Bureaucracy

Changes in the Party and Government Apparatus

Below the leadership level, there have been a number of important personnel changes in the propaganda and cultural bureaucracies, both at the congress and since then. Several Gorbachev appointees were active in the 1960s and have now made dramatic comebacks to replace more cautious officials installed under Brezhnev. One of these is the liberal poet and journalist Yuriy Voronov, who after the congress was named to replace veteran hardliner Vasiliy Shauro as head of the Central Committee

Cultural Department. Voronov--who had campaigned against rigid orthodoxy while editor of Komsomolskaya Pravda in the early 1960s--had been shunted to lower-ranking posts since 1965. But following Gorbachev's accession to power, he was brought out of

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KEY PERSONNEL SHIFTS IN CENTRAL PROPAGANDA
AND CULTURAL BUREAUCRACIES UNDER GORBACHEV

Propaganda and Media

- o Leading hardliner and vocal opponent of economic reform Richard Kosolapov was not reelected to the Central Committee and lost his post as Chief Editor of Kommunist, which he had held since 1976. [redacted] Kosolapov now has returned to an academic position as head of the Marxism-Leninism Department at Moscow State University. 25X1
- o Outspoken liberal philosopher Ivan Frolov has been made the new Chief Editor of Kommunist and elected to full membership in the Central Committee, promoting him out of the post in the Academy of Sciences to which he was relegated in the mid-1970s after he collided with ideological conservatives. Frolov is reportedly close to Gorbachev's ideology adviser Georgiy Smirnov, Zagladin and Yakovlev. He spoke out forcefully against Lysenko in the 1960s and favors greater tolerance for cultural and intellectual activity, as well as "market socialism" in the economy. [redacted] he was chosen to replace Kosolapov at the last minute at Yakovlev's urging. Although no other changes in Kommunist's editorial board have been announced, Embassy sources predict that Frolov will shake up the board. 25X1
- o Valentin Falin--who was demoted to the position of Izvestiya political observer in 1983, according to rumor for corruption or because of a family disgrace--returned to political favor as the new head of Novosti and candidate member of the Central Committee.
- o Mikhail Nenashev recently left Sovetskaya Rossiya's Chief Editorship to head Goskomizdat. Under Nenashev's leadership Sovetskaya Rossiya became a principal forum for spokesmen for reform initiatives and controversial

cultural and social notions. According to the US Embassy in Moscow, he is reportedly close to Yakovlev. Presumably he will bring the energy and innovative managerial style sought by Gorbachev for the publishing industry.

- o Valentin Chikin has been appointed Editor-in-Chief of Sovetskaya Rossiya. While First Deputy Editor-of this important daily newspaper under Nenashev early in the decade he used historical vignettes from Lenin's life as allegories to press for more youthful and innovative leadership and administrative reform. Removed from the paper in 1984, the liberal Chikin was moved to a less visible position as first deputy chairman of Goskomizdat.
- o New chief editors have been named for ten central newspapers and journals.
- o Aleksandr Aksenov was moved from diplomatic posting in Poland to replace the longterm chief of the State Committee for Television and Radio (Gostelradio).
- o The chief of the Soviet Copyright Agency (VAAP) has resigned amid rumors of corruption throughout his agency and been replaced by a functionary from the Central Committee apparatus.

Culture

- o The innovative film director Elem Klimov--whose controversial films "Agonia" and "Go and See" were only recently issued after years on the shelf--was elected first secretary of the USSR Cinematographers Union. The official report of the congress omitted the customary description of the vote as "unanimous."
- o Vladimir Karpov--Editor-in-Chief of the prestigious literary journal Novyy Mir--has been elected to replace ultra-orthodox Georgiy Markov as first secretary of the Writers Union. Karpov's political rise was demonstrated by his election to candidate membership of the Central Committee at the party congress, the first editor of the journal to be so honored since 1961. Novyy Mir under his leadership has published a number of controversial works, including Yevtushenko's poem "Taboo", despite the opposition of conservative officials to that work (according to the poet himself).

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[redacted]

political obscurity and made chief editor of a prominent literary journal. [redacted]

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With his appointment to the Secretariat, Yakovlev apparently retains his post as chief of the Propaganda Department, and the responsibilities of this department are being expanded. The International Information Department (responsible for framing international propaganda) has been disbanded and control over both foreign and domestic propaganda consolidated under Yakovlev. [redacted]

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Aside from changes in the Central Committee apparatus, Gorbachev has executed a broad purge of editors of leading newspapers. Several central government officials with responsibilities for media and publishing have also been ousted. These changes probably portend a further shake-up at lower levels. There has already been some downward ripple of personnel changes. For example, a new deputy chief has been identified in the Propaganda Department. The head of the RSFSR Goskomizdat was replaced by the first deputy chief editor of Pravda in mid-March, and retirement of the deputy chairman of the USSR Goskomizdat has opened up another post to be filled. [redacted]

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And Unfinished Business

There remains unfinished business in restaffing the cultural and media bureaucracies, however. The months preceding the congress were rife with rumors about forthcoming shakeups in the propaganda and cultural bureaucracies, which were only partially

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borne out in fact. Moreover, Zimyanin remains on the Secretariat-- and Demichev on the Politburo--albeit no longer supervising propaganda and culture. [REDACTED]

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The central press has published many articles decrying the failure of local and regional newspapers to expose the corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency of local officials. [REDACTED]

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Two Press Conferences--Two Policies.

Gorbachev's line of march and the nature of the opposition he faces were uniquely displayed at a pair of unusual press conferences held during the congress.

The first featured Yakovlev. Acting as official interpreter of Gorbachev's policy to Soviet and foreign journalists immediately following Gorbachev's speech, he responded to a request to characterize Gorbachev's comments on culture as either a "squeeze" or expansion of freedom of expression. His reply--as reported by the US Embassy in Moscow--hewed to Gorbachev's formulation, ruled out a squeeze and emphasized that works which considered problems and elucidated the "truth" would be supported.

Another press conference held at the end of the congress, apparently organized by the Central Committee's International Information Department, was in sharp contrast in focus and political orientation. Chaired by the department head Leonid Zamyatin, it featured as panelists a battery of conservative cultural bureaucrats, including Writers Union first secretary Markov and Literaturnaya Gazeta editor Chakovsky. The cultural old guard made a show of unity against Gorbachev's demand for truthful portrayal of Soviet life, warts and all. Without directly criticizing Gorbachev's policies, but professing not to

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understand or twisting the focus of such questions as the possibility of publication of presently banned books, they conveyed their absolute determination to stand for "socialist realist" orthodoxy and strict party control in the narrowest sense. [Redacted]

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Signs of high-level resistance to Gorbachev's housecleaning are particularly evident in the organs controlling culture. A case in point is the situation of the reactionary writer Aleksandr Chakovsky, author of several pro-Stalin works. He has hung onto his post as Editor-in-Chief of the important cultural newspaper Literaturnaya Gazeta and was promoted at the congress from candidate to full Central Committee membership. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Gorbachev is not a fan of Chakovsky and had resisted several proposals that he be promoted. The survival of Chakovsky in the face of removals of other media conservatives suggests that he has a powerful protector. [Redacted]

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Ferment in the Cultural Unions

Divisions are crystallizing within the cultural unions, as the policy of glasnost is apparently providing both justification and opportunity for liberals to attempt to take over these organizations from conservative holdovers.^{6/} A recent meeting of Moscow filmmakers to select delegates to the forthcoming congress of the Union of Cinematographers turned into a revolt against the prepared list of candidates, according to a US Embassy source who was present. In a tumultuous session which lasted until 3 A.M., liberal insurgents nominated 17 colleagues from the floor, insisted on a secret ballot, and inserted themselves into the group tallying the votes. All 17 were elected, at the expense of several top bureaucrats (including the chairman of the State Committee on Cinematography). [REDACTED]

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Official reaction to the cinematographers' revolt was swift. Within a few days [REDACTED] "offices connected to the Central Committee" had managed to engineer the election of all 17 bumped candidates to represent

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^{6/} The organizations which unite Soviet writers, painters, composers, and other artists are theoretically autonomous collectives which represent the professional concerns and public positions of their memberships. But from the early years of the Soviet regime, when the cultural unions were brought to heel by the party, the regime has taken pains to ensure the malleability of their leaders and to bend their agendas to its own needs. Whenever there are signs of loosening in official policy toward culture, however, the more independent members are encouraged to speak out and the cultural unions become arenas for struggle over the permissible limits of expression--as happened under Khrushchev. [REDACTED]

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other union districts. Nonetheless, the Congress replaced First Secretary Kulidzhanov--a noted director who was one of the 17 not elected by the Moscow membership--at a 15 May session attended by Yakovlev and Voronov. The new first secretary, Elem Klimov, who was nominated by Yakovlev, has himself suffered at the hands of the censors and has now become a symbol of artistic talent triumphant over bureaucratic rigidity. [REDACTED]

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This jockeying within the filmmakers union may reflect divisions within the leadership over how far to carry the process of cultural liberalization, as suggested by the involvement of Yakovlev and Voronov in removing Kulidzhanov. Gorbachev's personal commitment to a change in the leadership of the union was hinted at the party congress, when the General Secretary interrupted Kulidzhanov during his speech and rebuked him for his repeated and fawning personal references to Gorbachev. The liberals may have been led to believe that they had backing at higher levels for their revolt. However, their actions may have confirmed the fears of more cautious leaders and triggered the Central Committee reversal of the Moscow election. [REDACTED]

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At the USSR Writers Union Congress in late June, the struggle between conservatives and liberals broke into open and sometimes bitter argument. Following several days of stormy debate, a strong supporter of Gorbachev's cultural policy was elected first secretary of the union. Vladimir Karpov, editor-in-chief of Novyy Mir, has replaced the orthodox Georgiy Markov who headed the union since 1971. Karpov's liberal editorial

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policy at Novyy Mir had tripled the journal's circulation and brought it back to the status it enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s as the premier Soviet literary journal. Markov, on the other hand, consistently advocated rigid ideological controls over literature and strict adherence to the party line during his fifteen-year leadership of the Writers Union. In addition to the removal of Markov, a number of incumbent conservatives were voted off the new board of the Writers Union, which is now dominated by proponents of greater openness in literature. [REDACTED]

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US Embassy sources have reported that--in contrast to traditional party manipulation of such events--the elections did not appear to have been engineered ahead of time, and that Karpov won out for the first secretary position over two other strong candidates only at the very end of the process. Voznesensky openly challenged union leadership control of the selection of delegates to the congress. He accused the chairman of the Moscow union, Feliks Kuznetsov, of falsifying the balloting for delegates in order to exclude a number of the city's most innovative and independent writers. After a reportedly "passionate debate," these persons were invited to attend as "honored guests" with full rights of discussion, and several were elected to office. Yevtushenko even called implicitly for a dilution of the power of the Writers Union first secretary, by proposing that a rotating panel of five outstanding writers be created instead of continuing to place all organizational responsibility on a single person. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Contention within the Politburo may have accounted for the presence of conservatives as well as liberals in the newly elected union leadership and the apparent lack of regime control of the election process. Gorbachev, addressing leading literary figures on the eve of the writers congress, reportedly spoke of the need for restructuring and praised the cinematographers for "cleaning their own house." One Soviet source told the US Embassy that Ligachev, by contrast, had asked Markov to stay on as first secretary of the union. However, the 75-year-old Markov's collapse during his congress speech may well have strengthened the arguments of those pressing for his removal. The fact that Markov was named to the largely ceremonial post of chairman of the union--vacant for many years--and along with several other conservatives was elected to its 8-man bureau suggests a compromise between those leaders who wanted a clean sweep of the Writers Union bureaucracy in order to revitalize Soviet literary life and those who either opposed the change altogether or favored a more cautious, slower-paced and face-saving approach to its problems. [REDACTED]

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V. POLICY DEBATE

Greater turnover in personnel has been accompanied by heightened debate pitting ideological and stylistic conservatives against the more liberal and/or artistically talented media and cultural spokesmen. Scenting a fresh breeze from the new regime and taking their cues from Gorbachev's

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[redacted]

signals, the more liberal artists and commentators began to test the limits of regime tolerance for diversity and candor in the arts and propaganda. In response, conservatives stiffened their resistance, which has been particularly strong in regional and local media. Both groups made use of preparations for the 27th Party Congress--which legitimized public discussion of policy options in the draft Party Program and Rules--to air their views. [redacted]

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A. Key Issues

The debate over Gorbachev's propaganda and cultural policy revolves around several key issues. A number of these points of disagreement, although familiar staples of Soviet public discourse over the years, have been raised to heightened significance and immediacy by virtue of Gorbachev's initiatives. Other aspects of the debate are more novel or specific to this regime. [redacted]

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Does a more open discussion of social problems and official shortcomings serve to shore up regime legitimacy and party authority, or does it weaken public confidence in the party? Some articles in the media have gone even further than Gorbachev's public statements in urging an independent watchdog role for the press to ensure public accountability of officials. Mikhail Nenashev--former editor of Sovetskaya Rossiya--recently characterized the requirement that

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journalists get permission from party officials to publish criticisms as a violation of journalist ethics. And a February Kommunist article proposed that the CPSU Program require every communist and "leaders of all ranks" to respond publicly and promptly to criticism in the media. Other officials have warned that such public airing of dirty linen would harm the regime's reputation. Presumably the leadership's hesitancy and reluctance to reveal facts about the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster revolved mainly around this dilemma. [REDACTED]

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Soviet Readers Speak Out on Glasnost

(letters to editors of Sovetskaya Rossiya,
published 16 February 1986)

The newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya has established itself as a frontrunner in raising controversial issues and views, including some critical self-analysis of standards for publishable literature and the problem of "boring" and uninformative treatment of the news by Soviet media. A readers' questionnaire circulated by the newspaper early in 1986--querying their level of information on party and trade union decisions and asking their ideas on ways to improve public awareness--yielded a "vast amount" of mail and some very sharp complaints about official secrecy and cover-up.

"At a Party report-and-election meeting, I decided to devote my speech to the subject of public openness and to what its absence can bring. As long as I reminded people of the negative examples that had already been cited in the report, everything went smoothly. But as soon as I began to talk about the fact that keeping quiet about certain instances of stealing is conducive to mass and group stealing, I was interrupted by a representative of the Lenin Borough Party Committee who was present at the meeting. He

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not only interrupted me, he made me stop talking altogether."
[I. Ovsyannikov, member of the CPSU since 1942, Smolensk.]

* * *

"I would like to suggest that the decisions adopted at Party meetings be displayed for all to see on a special stand near the board where orders and announcements are posted."
[V. Glavatskikh, carpenter, Norilsk.]

* * *

"When an executive is removed from his post, precise and clear information should be carried in the local press: Why was this action taken? The objective would be to deter conjectures and idle conversation, to prevent rumors and gossip...You see, in our district three chairmen of the district Soviet executive committee, two vice-chairmen and a secretary of the district Party committee have 'disappeared' in a short time. I don't want to believe the idle talk. In this case, public openness can only be beneficial. But our district newspaper remains silent."
[V. Dorotov, physician, Leninsky settlement, Tula Province.]

* * *

"Unfortunately, it is true that we know much more news about any faraway African country than about what's happening under our own noses. People standing in lines in the stores will be buzzing, and a trolleybusful of people will listen to the story of an 'eyewitness' about events that, frankly, are unbelievable...Rumors spread discord, keep people from working, and put us in a bad humor. How important the truth is in such instances!" [N. Ivanova.]

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Can public criticism be held within regime-designated limits, or will some intellectuals and artists be encouraged by a policy of glasnost to act as if there no longer are any bounds to expression of ideas? Much of the resistance coming from conservative leaders and old guard cultural establishment figures is apparently motivated by fears of

[REDACTED]

opening a Pandora's box by discussion--even in fictional form--of the purges and other tragedies associated with Stalin or too frank treatment of contemporary social and economic problems. Even the liberal theatre director Igor Gorbachev (no relation)--who has urged that society's "sores points" should be dealt with on the stage--warned the party congress that although "we have no right to turn a blind eye to shortcomings...is it worth going into hysterics when you notice a scab on a healthy body?" On the other hand, the first secretary of the Moscow Writers Organization, Feliks Kuznetsov, told a Radio Moscow interviewer on 27 February that the Soviet press ought to print "the most varied points of view," let opponents of controversial writers "try to prove their point," and let time decide which one is correct. And a recent editorial in Izvestiya (22 March) took the position that "prompt and frank information shows confidence in people...and [their] ability to understand events on their own." [REDACTED]

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How far can the public revival of formerly disgraced, banned or neglected artists be allowed to proceed without stimulating the expectations of liberal intellectuals beyond

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the regime's ability to control them?^{7/} Recent controversy over Boris Pasternak's banned novel Doctor Zhivago illustrates the difficulty of containing intellectual hopes once the process of rehabilitating formerly proscribed literary works has begun. According to US Embassy literary sources, Voznesensky, in a recent article written on commission from Literaturnaya Gazeta, called for publication of Doctor Zhivago. Editor-in-Chief Chakovsky reportedly rejected the article specifically because of the request. (Voznesensky subsequently consented to its publication by Sovetskaya Rossiya without the Pasternak reference.) Pasternak's son and literary executor, in response to an emotional question from the audience at a public lecture he gave recently, stated that the Writers Union had vetoed his proposal to include the novel in the recent two-volume edition of his father's work. US Embassy contacts report an increasing pressure from the Soviet literary community to publish the novel. The former Writers Union chief Markov, however, had a personal stake in the matter. He was

^{7/} This issue was joined both at the 19 June meeting of writers with Gorbachev, Ligachev, Yakovlev and Voronin, and at the subsequent Writers Union Congress. Soviet sources have told the US Embassy that at the meeting a liberal playwright faced off against a conservative writer who had asked for a clearer line on culture and a reaffirmation of Stalin-era decrees such as the one that anathematized the satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko and poet Anna Akhmatova. According to the sources, the political leaders present did not intervene in the argument--thus lending fuel to the liberals' cause. At the congress, many speakers demanded withdrawal of the bans on such writers. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

prominent in the 1958 campaign against the novel and at a press conference not too long before the Writers Union congress categorically ruled out publishing it. At the Writers Union congress in June which retired Markov, however, publication of Pasternak's works was a prominent issue, and Yevtushenko's petition, signed by 40 writers, to open a museum at the writer's home reportedly was adopted with no opposing votes. [REDACTED]

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What is the proper balance of facts versus ideology in official history? Liberal scholars and commentators have been pushing for a more neutral treatment of past Soviet leaders, especially Stalin, as necessary to the regime's credibility and to educating younger generations about past shortcomings that must be avoided in the future. Some liberal intellectuals are boldly denouncing Stalin's crimes. In a recent dramatic reading at the Taganka Theatre, for example, the poet Bulat Okudzhava swore not to forgive the "generalissimo" for "the blood you made flow like water, while blissfully twirling your mustache" and for the death of his father--shot "for nothing" in 1937. But conservatives argue that the primary function of history must continue to be the openly political defense of regime legitimacy, which requires suppressing full disclosure of

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Stalin's abuses of power. [redacted]

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Will more open treatment of "negative" as well as positive news play into the hands of foreign enemies and give them ammunition with which to undermine Soviet society?

Gorbachev has argued that glossing over problems "opens up a loophole for hostile propaganda" since the Soviet public no longer accepts "oversimplified answers to questions and clearly recognizes falsehood resulting from...fear of disclosing...the source of problems" whereas conservatives fear that foreign radios will capitalize on any admission of Soviet domestic shortcomings in an effort to turn Soviet citizens against the political system. [redacted]

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Will graphic portrayals of societal problems have a contagious effect, particularly with respect to impressionable young people? A tried-and-true argument for strict controls over the arts has been that weak members of society imitate explicitly violent and pornographic films in criminal and deviant behavior--juvenile delinquency, sexual abnormalities, and violent crime. For example, Writers Union First Secretary Markov registered "alarm" at the party

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congress over the increase in recent years of cheap "entertainment" which panders to "adulterous and consumerist passions." [Redacted]

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B. The "Afanas'yev Affair"

Controversy over propaganda policy also surfaced this spring during the media discussion of proposed changes in the Party Program and Rules. Pravda published several letters from readers strongly attacking special privileges of party officials and calling for a reinstatement of "periodic" and "thorough" purges of the apparatus. According to US Embassy sources, the article provoked a sharp response in party circles and Pravda chief editor Viktor Afanas'yev--a Central Committee member since 1976-- was summoned personally by Ligachev and reprimanded. Two days later the paper printed what amounted to a retraction, by publishing a letter from another reader objecting to invidious generalizations about all party officials. Rumors began to swirl predicting that Afanas'yev would lose his job as well as his Central Committee membership. [Redacted]

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The "Afanas'yev affair" may have reflected a split within the top leadership over the limits to be set on frank discussion of sensitive issues. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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Afanas'yev has in fact retained both his job and party status. A senior Pravda correspondent recently assured a US Embassy officer that the editor's position is secure and that he continues to enjoy good relations with Gorbachev. And a self-confident Afanas'yev was quoted in the Madrid El Pais of 3 April as mentioning that he uses his direct telephone line to Gorbachev when Yakovlev and Ligachev cannot settle a matter for him. He admitted that criticism of party privileges in the controversial article was "expressed in an infelicitous manner" and that Gorbachev also thought it ambiguous, but that the General Secretary had since reiterated--at his meeting with media officials on 14 March--that editors must take more responsibility for making criticism of shortcomings sharper and more thorough.

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[REDACTED]

C. Yevtushenko Tests the Limits.

The most outspoken advocate of cultural liberalization, and one of the first to come forward to test the limits of glasnost, is the controversial poet Yevgeniy Yevtushenko. Yevtushenko-- whose poem published in Pravda in 1962 was one of the most famous public attacks on Stalin in the Khrushchev period--returned to the Stalin issue after a silence of almost 25 years in a new poem published in Pravda on 9 September 1985. The poem indirectly maligned Stalin by mocking his favorite Trofim Lysenko, criticized Stalin's refusal to allow the USSR to enter the computer age, and condemned his repression of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel Master and Margarita--with its religious themes and parodies of Soviet officials. [REDACTED]

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A few months later Yevtushenko's speech to the RSFSR Writers Union congress railed against censorship and cultural mediocrity, insisting that writers "do not have the right to be silent" about collectivization and the purges under Stalin. Yevtushenko argued that there are pragmatic as well as aesthetic reasons for looking the truth in the face: "A nation that allows itself to analyze its own mistakes and tragedies bravely knocks the ideological weapon out of its enemies' hands." Although the published version of this speech was heavily edited (as were the other speeches to the congress), his general message was clear and reportedly generated broad sympathy from many fellow writers. Since December Yevtushenko has been accorded broad attention by the Soviet media and has made a trip to the United States.

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[redacted]

Pravda has published a favorable review of his long-banned autobiographical prose poem, which appeared last fall in the prestigious literary journal Novy Mir. [redacted]

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Yevtushenko has apparently gained courage from what he sees as a favorable shift of political forces. He told a US Embassy officer in early April that he believed the political climate has become even more receptive to "bold ideas" since the party congress. His writings and interviews have grown increasingly sharp and policy-oriented over the past several months. His latest poem, "Backwardness," hits at the "criminal" shortages afflicting the Soviet consumer. [redacted]

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A recent essay inaugurating a new column in the newspaper Sovetskaya Kultura, whose chief editor was replaced in January, is even bolder. In this essay Yevtushenko casts off the protective cover of poetry and fiction to argue forthrightly that resolution of today's problems requires a frank confrontation of historical taboos, and that the achievement of economic reforms is impossible without intellectual honesty. Praising the "fresh wind of publicity" and other "encouraging signs of the new time," but evidently unsatisfied with progress to date, he presses for the "precious right of unpunishable personal opinion" and an end to censorship. Counterposing Stalin's repressions of scientists and artists with Lenin's supposed "administrative tolerance and respect" even for opinions he did not share, Yevtushenko derides the "threats" of conservatives that "publicity could turn into anarchy" and their fears of "losing face." The "incompetent" and

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"hopelessly obsolete dinosaurs" did not disappear with Stalin, he suggests, but continue to block valuable inventions and artistic works. By choosing this audacious call for liberalization to kick off a new series of articles, Sovetskaya Kultura in effect invited editors to take it as a standard of frankness for future contributions. [redacted]

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Yevtushenko has now come out on behalf of rehabilitation of the romantic poet Nikolai Gumilev, who was accused of counterrevolutionary activity and shot without a trial in 1921. During the past year unattributed quotations from his religious and patriotic poems have appeared in the Soviet press, but Yevtushenko's article in the 14 May Literaturnaya Gazeta makes the discussion explicit. He openly defends Gumilev--charging that there was "no proof at all" of his "crime"--and argues obliquely for publication of his works by contending that he is part of today's heritage and that "heritage is a serious word." [redacted]

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Gorbachev may be using Yevtushenko as a stalking horse to promote glasnost. The fact that his recent works have been acclaimed in press reviews and published in prominent journals suggests that he has high-level backing, and the regime undoubtedly sees a propaganda advantage in having him travel abroad to publicize the "fresh wind" in Soviet cultural life. At the same time, he appears to be pressing at the outer limits of the glasnost policy and at some point Gorbachev may find it politically expedient or necessary to rein him in. [redacted]

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D. Debate Over Organizational Change.

The debate over Gorbachev's new propoganda and cultural policy perforce has engendered spirited discussion of the organizational changes needed to carry it out. Disagreement between Gorbachev's supporters and the conservative old guard has focused on the interrelated issues of financial self-management of cultural institutions and decentralization of controls over them. Liberals are pressing for greater autonomy for cultural institutions than Gorbachev has granted thus far, while conservatives appear to be resisting Gorbachev's policy of loosening administrative regulation. [REDACTED]

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Serious disagreements have developed over a recent decree which set up an experiment--to be conducted in 8 republics for 2 years beginning January 1987--giving theatres, circuses, and concert organizations more direct control over their repertoire, staffing and finances. The exact provisions of the regime decree are ambiguous, which affords the opportunity of debating what should be done in the guise of discussing what has actually been mandated. Capping a series of articles in the cultural media on lack of audiences and shallow productions in Soviet theatre, a lengthy article by Oleg Yefremov in Pravda on 21 February called art the people's "common memory" and argued for both financial and artistic reorganization of Soviet theatre to allow for better quality and more courageous productions. By placing financial and artistic authority directly in the hands of the theatre director rather than higher bureaucrats, he said, the theatres

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would no longer be rewarded for "gray, pedestrian art" and would be returned to "at least the taste of risk." Yefremov noted that the proposal for autonomy was causing "disputes" in various quarters. [redacted]

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Similar sentiments were expressed at the party congress by theatre director Igor Gorbachev, who called for greater independence from central planners and an end to the practice of funding culture out of the "leftovers" from other budget items. And the head of the film workers union complained that centralized programming so burdens movie houses with a steady diet of unappealing films that theatre managers are forced periodically to show trashy box-office hits and "vulgar foreign rubbish" in a desperate effort to recoup their financial losses. [redacted]

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The main source of opposition to liberalizing Soviet theatre organization appears to be the Ministry of Culture--which would lose its direct control over stage repertory and staffing. There is some evidence that ministry officials are maneuvering to subvert its effectiveness and divide supporters. In addition, Gorbachev's moves to loosen some stifling central controls may unintentionally work against provincial elites of small cultural institutions and set their managers against proposed organizational changes. For example, the director of Kazan's youth theatre shared his reservations about the impact of the theatrical reorganization experiment with US Embassy officers in early March. He fears that making theatres more self-sufficient

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financially could endanger smaller houses, like his own, that depend heavily on state subsidies. [redacted]

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It was probably this resistance to decentralization, which centers in the Ministry of Culture and the cultural unions, that impelled Gorbachev to create several new organizations to circumvent the cultural bureaucracies, at least for the short term, until their leaderships can be replaced with his own supporters. Recent moves in this direction suggest that a pattern may be emerging. There are now two new societies--for theatre and music--which seem to be directed at popular and amateur groups as well as more established artists and organizations, but their duties are as yet not well defined.

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The Politburo has also approved creation of a new kind of public organization--a Soviet Culture Foundation. The foundation will apparently channel public funds to give "material and moral support" to both professional and amateur arts, in accordance with an already drafted (but unpublished) charter to be discussed nationwide in the near future. The few specific examples TASS gave of its activities suggest a broad mandate which will cut across and take precedence over some functions of existing arts unions: the new organization will provide material and intellectual resources to aid young talent, back improvement and creation of cultural facilities in small towns and new areas, help in preservation of the "national cultural heritage" and restoration of "artistic masterpieces and architectural landmarks." [redacted]

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The new organizations may serve Gorbachev's purposes in several ways. Their creation follows up on recommendations made at the congress that new public bodies should be created, for such groups as women and older citizens, in the mode of Gorbachev's stress on developing "socialist democracy" (public participation). The Culture Foundation, in particular, appears designed to counter popular alienation by encouraging some voluntarism in cultural activities. Absent any information on actual membership and operations, it is as yet unclear whether the new foundation will in fact fulfill these intentions. What is clear, however, is the political thrust of this move, which will bypass the conservative leadership of the cultural unions and divert resources to weaken the stranglehold of mediocrity emanating from the Ministry of Culture, which was sharply criticized at the congress. [REDACTED]

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VI. PROSPECTS

Gorbachev has achieved significant success in setting in motion a new cultural and information policy and in restaffing the bureaucracies responsible for implementing it. He has undertaken several reorganizing initiatives to shake up stultified artistic institutions, and the cultural scene has become much livelier. The General Secretary's political style of relative accessibility has become de rigeur for ambitious Soviet officials. However, there is still conservative resistance to

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his policy from within these bureaucracies; cultural policy in particular remains contentious. Moreover, Gorbachev's policy of expanding the limits of permissible criticism and creativity itself entails serious potential hazards. [REDACTED]

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The encouragement of more open discussion of problems could undermine popular respect for the party and system, rather than have the intended effect of enhancing public support. The fears of the old guard in the cultural establishment are indeed not unfounded. If not carefully managed, relaxing strictures could produce a progressive unraveling of the party's authority and lead to runaway criticism--especially in view of the party's traditional insistence on its own infallibility and the Soviet public's lack of understanding of the concept of responsible criticism or "loyal opposition" to the government. Many Soviet citizens themselves are probably unnerved or bewildered by the new frankness in the media--not necessarily because they oppose Gorbachev's solutions to problems but simply because they are not used to open discussion of options. An Izvestiya article in February quoted one Soviet citizen who--although innocent of any wrongdoing himself--opposed open criticism because many people would take it the wrong way, and also out of fear of future reprisals against critics should the policy change. [REDACTED]

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There is also a real risk that Gorbachev is alienating midlevel and lower elites by subjecting them to increased criticism of their performance. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev's initiatives toward reorganization of the propaganda and cultural bureaucracies have undoubtedly heightened career anxieties and could prompt opposition to his policies. His "populist" effort to bypass recalcitrant bureaucrats in cultural and media institutions by creating new cultural institutions "from below"--which could be extended to other areas of public life--may raise the specter of popular voluntarism traditionally feared by Soviet elites. [REDACTED]

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In pressing for greater accountability of officials to the public, Gorbachev runs the risk of heightening elite fears of a purge. Gorbachev's invitation to Soviet citizens to criticize officials for abuses has already increased the number of anonymous denunciatory letters reminiscent of the Stalin era. Many lower-level officials probably are apprehensive about the possibility of vindictive abuse by political rivals and personal enemies, in the name of accountability. Recently the press, legal scholars and law-enforcement authorities have begun to speak out against such poison-pen letters, labeling them as against the spirit of Gorbachev's glasnost. In mid-April the USSR Supreme Court instructed lower courts to crack down on their authors: slanderous unsigned letters will now be regarded as grounds for criminal investigations. The court also recommended that the results of most trials be reported in the media. But

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these efforts to reassure elites that they will be protected from informers bearing grudges have probably not fully allayed the concerns of many officials. [redacted]

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The main risk is the danger that the regime may not be able to contain cultural life and freedom of expression within the new boundaries. As happened during the "thaw" initiated by Khrushchev, the partial relaxation of cultural strictures has encouraged some artists to press for further liberalization, either because they honestly misread the signals from above or because they are intentionally misinterpreting them in order to push for greater intellectual freedom. For example, the poet Andrey Voznesensky has recently gone beyond Yevtushenko's argument at the Russian Republic Writers Congress that censorship should be loosened, to say that it should be eliminated entirely. In an interview published in Sovetskaya Rossiya on 23 February, Voznesensky is quoted as saying, "people are now mature enough to see and read anything" in literature. According to US Embassy sources, some speakers at the Writers Union Congress questioned whether the official censorship agency, Glavlit, is no longer necessary. [redacted]

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Gorbachev and his supporters clearly think that they can avoid the fate that befell Khrushchev's move toward partial liberalization in the cultural arena. This view was articulated by Vadim Zagladin, first deputy chief of the International Department, in an interview published in the Prague Tribuna on 26

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February. Asked if the frail boundary line "between criticism and violent attack" might now have been breached and an "unstoppable avalanche" unleashed in the USSR, Zagladin insisted that the "absolute majority" of people are mature enough for the recent frank discussion of past mistakes and that the "substantial part" of public criticism is accompanied by constructive proposals. [REDACTED]

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But demands for an end to censorship could well become a flashpoint triggering conservative pressure on the regime. In an interview published in Pravda on 8 February, Gorbachev made an unprecedented public defense of censorship, asserting that censorship does exist in the USSR but justifying its role as the prevention of publication of state and military secrets, war propaganda, and pornography. But many conservatives undoubtedly believe that Gorbachev's own encouragement of glasnost is responsible for prompting liberal intellectuals to challenge this key instrument of regime control. Failure to curb liberal "excesses" such as those of Voznesensky could strengthen the hand of Politburo hardliners and produce a swing back to repressive policies. [REDACTED]

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Thus, the policy has proved very difficult to implement. The Chernobyl disaster has cast a shadow on regime credibility and has demonstrated that, as Novosti chief Falin lamented to Der Spiegel, "openness cannot be achieved overnight." Gorbachev apparently miscalculated the Afanas'yev affair by underestimating

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the intensity of the hostile reaction from hardline party officials to Pravda's publication of letters they felt impugned the entire party bureaucracy instead of a corrupt few. Yevtushenko and other liberals continue to elaborate dangerously on Gorbachev's message, and the question hangs in the air if and when they will be reined in--and at what cost to the momentum of Gorbachev's glasnost policy. The risks of missent, missed or misunderstood signals from the leadership to the media and cultural elites, are real. Gorbachev faces not only sullen footdragging of the old guard but also fast-rising expectations from the liberals--whose impatience could trigger a conservative backlash. [REDACTED]

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In theory, Gorbachev's dual priorities for Soviet propaganda and culture--high quality and believability without sacrifice of ideological correctness--are irreconcilable. In practice, Gorbachev has thus far managed to strike a balance between the needs for creativity and reliability. While Gorbachev has been active in opening up Soviet cultural expression and information to a broader discussion, this has been done not to undermine the existing system but to make it more effective, and he has been equally vigorous in acting to restore the regime's monopoly of information by shutting out foreign broadcasting and crushing unauthorized domestic publications. He can be expected to crack down hard if liberals exploit his policy of glasnost with purely "negative" criticism or challenge party dominance, thus killing

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the esprit he wants to build among the population and the intellectual community. [REDACTED]

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If Gorbachev can control the process of glasnost, he may be able to reinvigorate Soviet culture and to use propaganda more effectively in support of his other policies. But a delicate management job lies ahead--a job for which Soviet history has not prepared the leadership. [REDACTED]

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