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The Debate Over "Openness" in Soviet Propaganda and Culture

A Research Paper

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A Research Paper

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The Debate Over "Openness" in Soviet Propaganda and Culture

Summary

Information available as of 1 August 1986 was used in this report.

Since Gorbachev took over, a major campaign has been under way to improve the effectiveness of Soviet propaganda and culture as instruments for indoctrinating and mobilizing the population behind his policies. Gorbachev has pursued this effort—known in the USSR as *glasnost* (openness)—on several fronts:

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

Gorbachev evidently believes that more media candor in discussing domestic problems will help marshal public support for his policy initiatives—such as the campaigns against alcohol, corruption, and crime—and legitimize the discussion of economic reform. Gorbachev also is using publicity of shortcomings within the elite to pressure officials to behave in accordance with new standards he is setting.

More generally, these measures reflect Gorbachev's recognition that Soviet propaganda and culture are not meeting the challenge posed by the influx of Western information and culture in recent years and by the development of a more critical internal audience. 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 radiobroadcasts. Video movie

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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. While this new openness has not led to any relaxation of the harsh treatment of dissidents or lessened the jamming of Western broadcasts, it reflects increased awareness that such repression—to be effective—must be accompanied by an upgrading of official media and culture.

Under Gorbachev, many propaganda and media officials have been replaced and new editors named for key publications. 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 Boris Yel'tsin and, to a lesser extent, "Second Secretary" Yegor Ligachev and propaganda secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev have been outspoken advocates of *glasnost*.

But, there are clear limits to Gorbachev's desire for openness; not surprisingly, no criticism of his leadership has appeared in Soviet media since his accession. In recent weeks, these limits were made glaringly evident by initial domestic coverage of the nuclear power plant catastrophe at Chernobyl'. Because the regime's initial obfuscation produced a public relations debacle, however, Chernobyl' has moved the issue of information policy squarely into the center of leadership attention.

Expanding the limits of the permissible in culture and propaganda harbors major risks for the regime and for Gorbachev personally. Public airing of social problems could stimulate a process of ferment within the intelligentsia and criticism from below that could get out of hand—as happened during Khrushchev's "thaw" in the late 1950s. In fact, Gorbachev's partial relaxation of strictures on cultural life has already encouraged some intellectuals to press for further liberalization. By casting the public spotlight on official abuses, moreover, Gorbachev is 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 the campaign goes too far, it could strengthen the hand of Politburo hardliners, produce a swing back to more repressive policies, and perhaps damage Gorbachev's political position.

Gorbachev could always lead the retreat if the political pressure becomes too great. But cracking down, as was done in the past, would risk killing the esprit he wants to build among the population and might lead to greater popular cynicism about party propaganda and regime credibility than existed before. Cutting off media and cultural outlets for the ideas of the intelligentsia would also disillusion many intellectuals and cause some of them to circulate their works outside official channels. Already some individuals who feel frustrated by the current constraints are floating reform proposals in *samizdat*.

Gorbachev has not yet made clear exactly what the boundaries of permissible expression are; this omission suggests that he finds it politically expedient to maintain tactical flexibility. He is attempting to strike a balance between his dual priorities for Soviet culture and propaganda—artistic creativity and media credibility, on the one hand, and ideological correctness, on the other. These dual goals are, in the final analysis, irreconcilable. Implementing the process of *glasnost* will increasingly tax Gorbachev's political skill. If, in the short run, he continues to resist defining more precise limits as a way of giving himself room to maneuver, the demands and hopes of liberal intellectuals will inevitably escalate. In the long run, he will ultimately have to set firm bounds to prevent a conservative reaction within the leadership.

Contents

The Debate Over "Openness" in Soviet Propaganda and Culture

"Stagnant" Propaganda and "Dull" Culture

Propaganda and culture in the USSR have traditionally been key instruments for regime indoctrination and mobilization of the population, but in recent years their effectiveness has eroded. Strict censorship in the years since the Khrushchev "thaw" [1] 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 crude and unimaginative ideological and cultural standards.[2] Boring and unattractive productions have also turned off an increasingly educated and sophisticated general populace. Articles in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* in late 1985 stated that attendance at films produced by the largest Soviet studios declined by 50 percent 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

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 percent of the respondents thought officially sponsored public lectures were "very good," and only 29 percent thought them "good."

[1] After Stalin's death, Khrushchev relaxed the stultifying official controls on art and literature, which inadvertently encouraged liberals to go beyond limits considered safe by the regime. The Brezhnev leadership repudiated Khrushchev's policy shortly after his ouster.

[2] 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, Yuriy Lyubimov, and the controversial filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, both of whom left in 198[illegible]

The increased popular cynicism about regime propaganda and the decreased attractiveness of Soviet official culture have been exacerbated and to a degree caused by increased access to Western culture and news. The regime's detente policies in the 1970s, along with technological developments in modern mass communications, have given Soviet citizens greater access to information from abroad during Brezhnev's tenure than ever before. In particular, Western radiobroadcasts developed a mass audience in the USSR. These broadcasts have weakened the regime's monopoly over information control, giving millions of Soviet citizens an alternative source of news that enables them to evaluate regime propaganda more critically

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 (see inset on page 2)

The partial opening of Soviet society to Western influences has been a matter of growing concern among Soviet authorities. Since 1980, the regime has heavily jammed Western radios. Nevertheless, much broadcasting continues to get through with varying degrees of audibility, and, monthly, some 30-38 million Soviet citizens tune in to Voice of America (VOA) alone. Radio Liberty (RL) and the Baltic services of Radio Free Europe have from 17-25 million listeners monthly (see inset on page 3).

Video Cassettes in the USSR

According to a [redacted] foreign videos are easily available through the Soviet underground, and US films are the most popular. [redacted] 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. [redacted] 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 visited the West and that the club was crowded at each of the four daily shows.

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

The regime's uncertainty about how to deal with the information revolution is demonstrated in its contradictory policies toward VCRs. The leadership is clearly apprehensive that Western video cassettes could become vehicles of Western ideological penetration. KGB Chief Chebrikov's speech at the party congress expressed concern about black-market trafficking of VCRs. Nonetheless, 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 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 almost 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. According to a [redacted] Soviet seamen are authorized to bring into the USSR one VCR and five blank tapes each year, duty free, which usually immediately enter the black market.

Gorbachev Sets a New Course

Top Kremlin leaders have recognized for some time that greater candor in the media and increased cultural excellence were needed to make these instruments more effective. 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

But Gorbachev has begun a much more systematic and far-reaching implementation of a policy of *glasnost* (openness) and cultural revitalization. He has described Soviet propaganda as "stagnant," and he has publicly decried the "dullness" of many cultural works. He has moved during his first year as General Secretary to loosen ideological strictures on Soviet cultural life and to 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.

Gorbachev has encouraged the media to engage in investigative reporting to expose a wide array of "negative" phenomena in the society and in the elite

Shutting Out Western Voices

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 (RL), which is particularly bothersome to them because of its focus on Soviet internal developments and emigre writings.

Continued high listening rates since 1980 have prompted new measures to block the broadcasts:

- *According [ ] the Soviets have decided to cut back on the production of shortwave radios for the domestic retail market. [ ] reported that production would be limited to only a few, prohibitively expensive models. Shortwave radios no longer are needed to pick up Soviet stations in remote parts of the country. Consequently, Soviet officials conclude that these radios are being used by Soviet citizens solely to listen to illicit Western broadcasts.*
- *[ ] reported in 1985 that the KGB is running an active measures campaign designed to discredit RL. Letters are now being mailed to the Department of State, ostensibly from employees, charging corruption and other irregularities at the station. Soviet journalists are also being used to send complaints about RL to various addresses in Munich, in an effort to turn West German public opinion against allowing RL to broadcast from that country.*
- *A [ ] reported in 1984 that the USSR had complained to Finland about radio and television broadcasts reaching Estonia, and, according to [ ] Soviet [ ], the Soviet Union was planning to build new television jamming stations in coastal areas of the republic.*

itself. Editors from central newspapers have recently been sent to the provinces to instruct local editors to be more assertive and critical in uncovering problems. Accordin[ ] regime's only concern—he reportedly was told by a propaganda official—is that the limits of criticism be recognized.

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 events as the space launch. An especially striking example of the new frankness appeared in *Moscow Komsomol* (18 April 1986), which presented harrowing portraits of young addicts, after years of media denial that a drug problem exists in the USSR

Gorbachev 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 among the people are doubtless orchestrated to some extent, but they reflect the importance he places on building a reputation as an accessible leader willing to speak frankly on the problems facing the USSR. Other 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)—also appeared on live television and radio call-in programs to explain policy and respond to listener criticisms. The press conference, initiated during Andropov's tenure, has now become a familiar propaganda device. [redacted] have told [redacted] that a comprehensive program of modernization of the propaganda machinery will soon be undertaken, with the help of foreign media experts and with top priority being accorded television.

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 de-Stalinization 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 1950s, who were in political disfavor for years are being featured prominently at cultural events. These include Yevgeniy Yevtushenko, Andrey Voznesenskiy, and Bulat Okudzhava. According to [redacted] a new novel by Vladimir Dudintsev, whose novel *Not by Bread Alone* ushered in the Khrushchev "thaw," will be published soon. A number of films, plays, and literary works dealing with sensitive political issues have been released to the public after being held back many years by censorship, and commissions have been set up to review unpublished manuscripts and feature films and documentaries 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, who died in one of Stalin's labor camps (see inset on page 5)

Gorbachev and his wife have patronized the arts, endorsing a number of controversial plays by attending performance [redacted]

"Openness" With a Purpose

Gorbachev has a pragmatic motive in moving toward *glasnost* in propaganda and culture. He probably recognizes that propaganda must be credible to be effective and that Soviet cultural offerings must be interesting if they are to compete with Western culture for the Soviet audience. Gorbachev appears to realize 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 for central authorities to regulate information flow, at least to the extent that they used to.

Gorbachev also seems to think *glasnost* in propaganda and culture will marshal public opinion in support of particular policy initiatives. He probably believes that franker portrayals of social problems in the media and in literary works are necessary to raise public awareness of their gravity and to condition people to accept the need for vigorous remedial measures, such as strengthening law enforcement, curtailing alcohol abuse, and tightening worker discipline. The General Secretary has implicitly linked his new policy on culture and propaganda to his goals of opening up debate on economic reform and accelerating economic production. He has told Soviet media and cultural workers that they play a critical role in bringing about the "radical change" in attitudes necessary for economic progress.[1] 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 substitute for the waning appeal of ideology (see inset on page 6).

[1] Gorbachev's desire to stimulate public concern, rather than to buttress complaisance, contrasts sharply with Brezhnev's approach in his later years. Gorbachev is attempting to establish his 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 vigorous actions to redress societal problems, he had more reason to conceal information about adverse social trends than to publicize them.

Controversial Films, Books, and Plays Released Under Gorbachev

Films

- *"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.*
- *"Roadblock"—Made in 1971 but never before released, depicts the persecution of a returning Soviet partisan who had been forced to join the Nazis.*
- *"Double Trap"—This realistic crime drama shows the corruption of a group of Latvian youths and includes pornography.*

Literature

- *Publication of the two-volume collected works of Boris Pasternak, which do not include* Doctor Zhivago.
- *Reissuance of a collection of stories by the "Village Writers" group popular in the 1950s and 1960s because of the forthright treatment of rural problems and overtones of traditional Russian nationalism in their writings.*
- *Republication and rehabilitation of several important writers of the early 20th century, including Marina Tsvetaeva, Velimir Khlebnikov, and Mikhail Bulgakov.*

Theatre

- *"Silver Anniversary"—This morality play depicts a corrupt party official, a muckraking journalist who is fired for exposing a scandal, and other unsavory functionaries. Attended by Gorbachev, Yel'tsin, Ligachev, and reportedly made mandatory viewing for party congress delegates.*
- *"40, Sholem Aleichem Street"—A frank treatment of Jewish emigration and its tragic impact on a family split over the issue.*
- *"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.*
- *"Speak Out!"—Based on the 1950s' writings of Valentin Ovechkin (a popular writer on the rural scene and a Khrushchev favorite), calls for open discussion of past party wrongdoings. The action takes place in front of a gigantic statue of Stalin.*
- *"Burden of Decision"—Adaptation of an article on the Cuban missile crisis by liberal political commentator Fedor Burlatskii. Appeals for restraint among leaders and depicts their responsibility for peace; portrays Kennedy favorably.*
- *"Brothers and Sisters"—The title taken from Stalin's famous appeal to the people to fight the Nazi invasion, this play raises the specter of Stalin's repressions against the backdrop of popular wartime heroism and suffering.*

Exhibit of Glazunov's Paintings Depicting Russian Nationalism

A striking example of the attempt to tap nationalist sentiment 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—depicted by historical, natural, and religious motifs—is the common theme of the exhibit, which reportedly was held on the orders of Moscow party chief Boris Yel'tsin. Glazunov's huge painting of the prodigal son returning to his Russian heritage was a center of attention. [redacted] *have reported that Raisa Gorbachev is an admirer of Glazunov's work.*

Gorbachev seems to have the political motive of using *glasnost* to bring pressure to bear on elites to behave in accordance with new standards he is setting. Media exposes of corrupt and incompetent officials serve to hold officials more strictly accountable both for discharge of their public duties and for their personal judgment and sobriety. By demonstrating that party elites are not "outside the pale of criticism," Gorbachev is challenging one of the most treasured privileges that have grown up around party membership—that of immunity from public censure (see inset on right).

Finally, Gorbachev apparently hopes that *glasnost* will impress foreign public opinion with the "cultural diversity" and "freedom of expression" he is allowing. He is permitting relatively liberal cultural figures such as Yevtushenko to travel abroad as goodwill ambassadors. A closely related goal may be to lure eminent emigre artists back to the USSR to lend luster 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 Yuriy Lyubimov,

Soviet Media Expose Corrupt Officials

- *According to Moscow Radio, a former rayon first secretary of the Uzbek Republic CPSU and the former director of a cotton ginning plant were sentenced to death for systematically embezzling funds and bribing workers at other enterprises to write out false invoices. (Moscow News Service, 22 July 1986)*

- *A representative of the Soviet Procuracy narrated a television documentary that interviewed now contrite lawbreakers and featured footage of their ill-gotten gains. One woman, former head of a consumer services directorate, accumulated 20 fur coats, 30 fur hats, more than 200 sets of china, and over 200 tons of food. This same woman had the walls of her home covered in silk fabric. (Moscow Television, 27 June 1986)*

- *Illegal actions of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) personnel in one rayon led to a man's death, according to a January 1986 newspaper article. However, instead of taking action to bring these officials to justice, the local MVD tried to defend them. More recent information adds that the chief of the local MVD, in fact, bought every copy of the paper containing the January report to hide the facts from the public. (*Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya, *16 May 1986)*

- *According to* Pravda, *top officials of the Moscow Procurement Administration, to create the appearance of prosperity, have been overreporting receipts. As a result of their criminal negligence,* Pravda *charged, the state lost more than 270,000 rubles. (*Pravda, *26 June 1986)*

Andrey Tarkovsky, sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, and writer Viktor Nekrasov—have been contacted by Soviet officials and by visiting Soviet writers Yevgeniy Yevtushenko and Andrey Voznesenskiy with the message that if they came home they would be well treated. [redacted] have confirmed these approaches.

While encouraging *glasnost* in regime media, Gorbachev has intensified efforts to block news coming into the country from abroad and to stem the flow of unauthorized materials at home through such measures as jamming and cracking down hard on *samizdat*.[1] He has adopted a combined strategy of curtailing access to unofficial information and culture where feasible, attacking and countering foreign information more aggressively, while relaxing rigid controls on cultural life to permit more sophisticated works to appear and releasing more information through regime-sanctioned channels to preempt foreign "voices."

Chernobyl' and *Glasnost:* A Case Study

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.[1] When disaster struck, the regime reacted as it traditionally has in the past, with silence, followed by minimal and misleading bulletins. Once the regime realized it could not prevent the general 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 that the regime was leveling with them and to counter alarmist rumors and Western radiobroadcasts into the USSR. Eventually, the reluctant seepage of information became a flood, coupled with attacks on Western media for their "shameful" attempts to "whip up hysteria," culminating in Gorbachev's report to the nation 15 days after the event.

[redacted]

Whether the regime would in the future react differently in a situation where other countries are not involved is open to question. [redacted] have told [redacted] they think that the media have 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. Even so, the regime's belated, grudging, and initially sparse release of news, by most accounts, harmed Gorbachev's attempts to build domestic credibility. It may have reinforced perennial skepticism of official information among more sophisticated and intellectual elements of the Soviet populace and fed, rather than quelled, rumor and fears among the public at large.

There is evidence of high-level recognition that the initial attempt to conceal information about Chernobyl' was flawed and carried an unacceptable cost of diminished public confidence:

- The new Novosti chief, Valentin Falin, indicated to *Der Spiegel* that Soviet media treatment of the accident was "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."
- 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' " (see inset on page 8).

[redacted]

[1] It is ironic that, prior to the accident, on 27 March 1986, serious problems in the plant's construction were very frankly dealt with in a caustic expose of management inefficiencies and supply snafus that was published in the Kiev paper *Literaturna Ukraina*.

Leadership Debate Over Information Control

The inability to control information about Chernobyl' may have heightened debate within the Politburo over information policy in general. [redacted] *that he had heard* [redacted] *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." Other reporting, however, suggests that, by the time the Politburo met, Gorbachev may have decided to advocate greater openness. The dissident historian Roy Medvedev told* La Repubblica *of Rome that the Politburo, except for 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 secrecy. If Soviet leaders conclude that the lesson of Chernobyl' is that total suppression of information is counterproductive, the incident could give further impetus to the policy of* glasnost.

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 broad restructuring and restaffing of the relevant bureaucracies to be necessary. So far, he has replaced most key Brezhnev holdovers in the media and propaganda bureaucracies with younger and more supportive officials—a process that was highlighted at the party congress. Conservatives, however, remain in several key posts.

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 Yel'tsin and, to a lesser degree, "Second Secretary" Yegor Ligachev and propaganda secretary Aleksandr Yakovlev.

Yel'tsin, 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 CPSU Congress in February, although his flat demand for the abolition of "unjustified benefits" for party leaders at all levels was not picked up by other speakers. Yel'tsin 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 to prevent a "weakening of party influence."

Yel'tsin 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 broached 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. Yel'tsin's pattern of frank discussion of problems apparently goes back some years; when he was oblast first secretary in Sverdlovsk, he reportedly initiated a weekly, live call-in program that carried citizen complaints and his own discussion of problems.

Ligachev appears to be playing a key role in the management of propaganda and culture. 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 programing. Writing in the party journal *Kommunist* the same month, he called for a deep restructuring of the cultural apparatus. According to [redacted] immediately following the congress Ligachev summoned editors of the leading newspapers and journals and lectured them on the need to upgrade their work. He publicly praised Yevtushenko's poem that attacks Stalin's repression

The Theatre's Special Role in Promoting Glasnost

The theatre apparently is playing a leading role in breaking down taboos. A number of controversial plays 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 issues and floating political trial balloons. As a nonprint medium, a theatrical production runs less risk of being held to account for every word, while stage effects and the actors' craft can silently convey controversial concepts. Also, audiences are limited to the number of persons that the theatre can accommodate. Moreover, the Soviet repertory theatre can stage a production faster than an issue of a literary journal can be published. Gorbachev's reported personal fascination with the stage may also be a factor in the choice of medium.

of writers. The Western press has reported that he authorized the staging of the controversial play "Silver Anniversary," which dealt with corruption among party officials. [redacted] Ligachev approved another new play critical of Stalin's repressions ("Dictatorship of Conscience"), received its author in his office, 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 (see inset).

At the same time, there are signs that Ligachev may differ with Gorbachev over how far to carry *glasnost*. [redacted] suggests he may have objected to the recent replacement of the ultraorthodox head of the writers' union and to *Pravda*'s publication of letters to the editor that attacked the privileges of the party elite in an unusually pointed fashion.[6]

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 limiting the impact of foreign ideas on the Soviet population

. . . and Opponents?

Available evidence is not sufficient to allow a clear pinpointing of those at the top level who may be resisting Gorbachev's new cultural and propaganda policy. The holdouts for a more conservative approach may include old-guard Politburo members Andrey Gromyko, Vladimir Shcherbitskiy, and Dinmukhamed Kunayev. Geydar Aliyev was outspoken in his advocacy of tight party control in a tough speech to filmmakers shortly before Gorbachev's accession, although while he was party leader in Azerbaijan (1969-82) he practiced a relatively open leadership style, meeting with workers and answering their questions. The functional responsibilities of KGB Chairman Viktor Chebrikov may make him wary of any loosening of controls over the spread of unorthodox ideas. He stressed the danger of ideological subversion in his speech to the party congress. 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

[6] See section entitled "The Afanas'yev Incident," p. 17. (U)

Key Personnel Shifts in Central Propaganda and Cultural Bureaucracies Under Gorbachev

Propaganda and Media

- *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. According to [redacted] Kosolapov now has returned to an academic position as head of the Marxism-Leninism Department at Moscow State University.*

- *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 Trofim Lysenko, the pseudobiologist who was a favorite of Stalin, in the 1960s and favors greater tolerance for cultural and intellectual activity, as well as "market socialism" in the economy. According to [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 [redacted] predict that Frolov will shake up the board.*

- *Valentin Falin—who was demoted to the position of* Izvestiya *political observer in 1983, according to rumor because of corruption or because of a family disgrace—returned to political favor as the new head of Novosti and a candidate member of the Central Committee.*

- *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 [redacted] he is reportedly close to Yakovlev. Presumably, he possesses the energy and innovative managerial style sought by Gorbachev for the publishing industry.*

- *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 adminis-*

General Secretary's relatively frank information policy on Chernobyl'. The appointment of former Minister of Culture Petr Demichev, who reportedly resisted Gorbachev's initiatives, to first deputy in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (under Chairman Gromyko) removed the last Brezhnev holdover at the top cultural policymaking level.

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 (see inset on pages 10 and 11). Several Gorbachev appointees who were advocates of more open media and cultural policies in the 1960s have now made dramatic comebacks to replace more cautious officials installed under Brezhnev. One of these is the 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 *Komsomol'skaya*

trative reform. Removed from the paper in 1984, Chikin was moved to a less visible position as first deputy chairman of Goskomizdat.

- *New chief editors have been named for nine other central newspapers and journals:*

Boris Vladimirov	Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta
Ivan Panov	Krasnaya Zvezda
Alexey P'yanov	Krokodil
Vitaliy Korotich	Ogonek
Nikolay Klepach	Politicheskoye Samoobrazovaniye
Albert Belyayev	Sovetskaya Kultura
Pavel Lapionov	Sovety Narodnykh Deputatov
Aleksandr Baranov	Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya
Aleksandr Potapov	Trud

- *Aleksandr Aksenov was moved from a diplomatic post in Poland to replace the long-term chief of the State Committee for Television and Radio (Gostelradio).*

- *The chief of the Soviet Copyright Agency (VAAP) has resigned amid rumors of corruption throughout his agency and has been replaced by Nikolay Chetverikov, a former KGB officer and more recently a functionary in the Central Committee apparatus.*

Culture

- *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."*

- *Vladimir Karpov, editor in chief of the prestigious literary journal* Novyy Mir, *has been elected to replace ultraorthodox 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). Karpov reportedly has relinquished the editorship, thus creating another major new appointment opportunity for the Gorbachev regime.*

Pravda in the early 1960s, had been shunted to obscure lower ranking posts since 1965. But following Gorbachev's accession to power, he was brought out of political obscurity and made chief editor of a prominent literary journal.

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.

Gorbachev has also 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 portend a further shakeup at lower levels. There has already been some downward ripple of personnel changes. For example, we have noted a new deputy chief 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.

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

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. According to information from [redacted] many provincial editors, unaccustomed to operating without clear-cut central guidance, are reluctant to use their own initiative and judgment because they fear they will be punished by resentful superiors

Signs of high-level resistance to Gorbachev's housecleaning are particularly evident in the organs that control 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. However, Chakovsky's orthodox views have not prevented the publication in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of some controversial items, including rather frank reports of the recent writers' congress that revealed sharp disputes over the union's leadership and the policy of *glasnost*. According to [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 friends at the top and that his willingness to open *Literaturnaya Gazeta* has bought him some time (see inset).

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.[1] 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 [redacted] In a tumultuous session that lasted until 0300 hours, liberal insurgents nominated 17 colleagues from the floor, insisted on a secret ballot, and added themselves to the group tallying the votes. All 17 were elected as Moscow delegates, at the expense of several top bureaucrats (including the chairman of the State Committee on Cinematography). Within a few days, however, (according to [redacted]) "offices connected to the Central Committee" had managed to engineer the election of all 17 bumped candidates to represent other union districts.

[1] Unions of Soviet writers, painters, composers, and other artists are theoretically autonomous collectives that 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 official goals. 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.

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 party 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 an expansion of freedom of expression. His reply, [redacted] hewed to Gorbachev's formulation, ruled out a squeeze, and emphasized that works that 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 the Union of Writers 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 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.*

Despite the conservatives' rear-guard efforts to stave off defeat, the support of Gorbachev, Yakovlev, and Voronov for change in the union led to a decisive victory for reformers. 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 is a symbol of artistic talent triumphant over bureaucratic rigidity. Gorbachev's personal commitment to a change in the leadership of the union was hinted at during the party congress when he interrupted Kulidzhanov's speech to rebuke him for his repeated and fawning flattery.

At the congress of the USSR Union of Writers 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, Vladimir Karpov, editor in chief of *Novyy Mir*, was elected to replace the orthodox Georgiy Markov, the union first secretary since 1971. [redacted] have reported that, in contrast with traditional party manipulation of such events, the elections did not appear to have been engineered, and Karpov won, beating two strong candidates, only at the end.

Karpov's liberal editorial policy at *Novyy Mir* 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 15-year leadership of the union.

During the congress, the number of reformers on the 64-member Secretariat of the union was significantly increased, and the newly created eight-man Bureau is dominated by writers favoring more openness and change. Joining those who made various proposals for democratizing the union's structure, Yevtushenko called implicitly for a dilution of the power of the union's first secretary. He proposed that a rotating panel of five outstanding writers be created, instead of continuing to give all organizational responsibility to one person. Voznesenskiy 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 so that a number of the city's most innovative and independent writers were excluded. After a reportedly "passionate debate," these writers were invited to attend as "honored guests" with full discussion rights, and several were elected to office.

Contention within the Politburo may have accounted for the apparent lack of regime control of the election process. Gorbachev, addressing leading writers on the eve of their congress, reportedly spoke of the need for restructuring, and he praised the cinematographers for "cleaning their own house." One Soviet [redacted] 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. Markov's appointment to the largely ceremonial chairmanship of the union, vacant for many years, and his membership on its new Bureau suggest a compromise between those leaders who wanted to clean out the union bureaucracy and those who either opposed the change or favored a cautious, slower, and face-saving approach.

Policy Debate

Personnel turnover has been accompanied by heightened debate pitting ideological and stylistic conservatives against the more liberal and/or innovative media and cultural spokesmen. Sensing a fresh breeze at the congress and taking their cues from Gorbachev, the more liberal artists and commentators have begun to test the limits of regime tolerance for diversity and candor in the arts and propaganda. In response, conservatives have stiffened their resistance, which has been particularly strong in regional and local media. Both groups used preparations for the 27th CPSU Congress, which legitimized public discussion of policy options in the draft Party Program and Rules, to air their views.

On Glasnost: *Letters to the Editor*

The newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya *has established itself as a front-runner 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—which queried the level of information on party and trade union decisions and asked for ideas on ways to improve public awareness—yielded a "vast amount" of mail, including some sharp complaints about official secrecy and coverup. These were published on 16 February 1986:*

> 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 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

Key Issues

The debate over Gorbachev's propaganda and cultural policy revolves around several key issues. Some that are staples of public discourse have been given heightened significance and immediacy because of Gorbachev's initiatives. Other aspects of the debate are more novel or specific to this regime. The most important questions are the following.

Does a more open discussion of social problems and official shortcomings serve to buttress regime legitimacy and party authority, or does it weaken the people's confidence in the party? Some articles have gone even further than Gorbachev's public statements in urging an independent watchdog role for the press to ensure public accountability of officials (see inset). Mikhail Nenashev, former editor of *Sovetskaya*

Secret

Rossiya, recently characterized the requirement that journalists get permission from party officials to publish criticisms as a violation of journalistic 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 media criticism. 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 question.

Can public criticism be contained 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 that discussion, even in fictional form, of the purges and other tragedies associated with Stalin or too frank treatment of contemporary social and economic problems will open a Pandora's box. Even the liberal theatre director Igor Gorbachev (no relation), who has urged that society's "sorest points" should be dealt with on the stage, warned the CPSU 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?" An *Izvestiya* editorial (22 March 1986), however, took the position that "prompt and frank information shows confidence in people . . . and their ability to understand events on their own."

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 the regime's ability to control them?[1]

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 [redacted] Voznesenskiy, in a recent article commissioned by *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, called for publication of *Doctor Zhivago*. Editor in Chief Chakovsky reportedly then rejected the article specifically because of this appeal. (Voznesenskiy 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 a member of 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. [redacted] report an increasing pressure from the Soviet literary community to publish the novel. Former union chief Markov, however, had a personal stake in the matter. He was prominent in the 1958 campaign against the novel, and at a press conference before the congress he categorically rejected the possibility of publication. At the congress, 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

What is the proper balance of facts versus ideology in official history? Liberal scholars and commentators have been urging more neutral treatment of past

[1] This issue was discussed both at the 19 June meeting of writers with Gorbachev, Ligachev, Yakovlev, and Voronin, and at the subsequent union congress. [redacted] have told the [redacted] 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 [redacted], 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

Soviet leaders, especially Stalin, as necessary for the regime's credibility and for the education of 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. Conservatives argue, however, that Soviet history's primary function must continue to be the openly political defense of regime legitimacy, which forbids full disclosure of Stalin's abuses of power.

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" because the Soviet public no longer accepts "oversimplified answers to questions and clearly recognizes falsehood resulting from . . . fear of disclosing . . . the source of problems." Conservatives fear that foreign radiobroadcasts will capitalize on any admission of Soviet domestic shortcomings in an effort to turn Soviet citizens against the political system.

Will graphic portrayals of societal problems have a contagious effect, particularly on impressionable young people? The argument often used in support of strict controls over the arts has been that weak members of society imitate explicitly violent and pornographic films by engaging in criminal and deviant behavior. For example, during the party congress, Markov registered "alarm" over the increase in recent years of cheap "entertainment" that panders to "adulterous and consumerist passions."

The Afanas'yev Incident

Controversy over propaganda policy surfaced this spring during the media discussion of proposed changes in the CPSU Program and Rules. *Pravda* published several letters from readers strongly attacking special privileges of party officials and calling for a reinstitution of "periodic" and "thorough" purges of the apparatus. According to [redacted] the article provoked a sharp response in party circles and *Pravda* chief editor Viktor Afanas'yev, a Central Committee member since 1976, was summoned 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 that Afanas'yev would lose his job and his Central Committee membership.

The Afanas'yev incident may have reflected a split within the top leadership over the limits on frank discussion of sensitive issues. [redacted] is not clear about whether Gorbachev and Ligachev initially differed on the wisdom of airing such sharp criticisms of party privilege nor about whether this difference continues, but evidently the matter was still a hot issue among delegates to the party congress three weeks later. At that point Gorbachev reassured the apparat, denying that a purge was necessary, while Ligachev—perhaps reflecting his responsibilities for ideology and party cadres—reproved *Pravda* for unspecified lapses in editorial judgment concerning criticism

Afanas'yev has, in fact, retained both his job and party status. A [redacted] recently [redacted] that the editor's position is secure and that he continues to enjoy good

[redacted]

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 he added that Gorbachev 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. [redacted] has reported that local editors have been instructed not to be discouraged by the controversy over "a recent *Pravda* article," but to be more assertive and critical in their approach to social problems

Yevtushenko Tests the Limits

The most outspoken advocate of cultural liberalization and among the first 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 (a crackpot geneticist whose ideas dominated Soviet biology for decades), criticized his refusal to allow the USSR to enter the computer age, and condemned his repression of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *Master and Margarita* (which had religious themes and parodied Soviet officials).

A few months later Yevtushenko, in his speech to the RSFSR writers' union congress, attacked 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. *Pravda* has published a favorable review of his long-banned autobiographical prose poem "Taboo," which appeared last fall in the prestigious literary journal *Novyy Mir*.

Yevtushenko has apparently gained courage from what he sees as a favorable shift of political forces. He told a [redacted] that he believed the political climate had 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.

Yevtushenko's recent essay, which inaugurates a new column, in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura*, whose chief editor was replaced in January, is even bolder. In this essay, he drops the cloak 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 proposed "radical economic reforms" is impossible without intellectual honesty and independent thinking. 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. Countering 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 "hopelessly obsolete dinosaurs" did not disappear with Stalin, he suggests, but continue to block valuable inventions and artistic works. By choosing Yevtushenko's audacious call for liberalization to inaugurate a new series of articles, *Sovetskaya Kultura*, in effect, invited editors to take it as a standard of frankness for future contributions.

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 *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (14 May 1986) makes the discussion explicit. He openly defends Gumilev, charges 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."

Gorbachev and Ligachev 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

Debate Over Organizational Change

The debate over Gorbachev's new propaganda and cultural policy 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.

Serious disagreements have developed over a recently decreed experiment to be conducted in eight republics for two years beginning January 1987 that gives 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* (21 February 1986) 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 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

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 programing 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.

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. 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 expressed his reservations about the impact of the theatrical reorganization experiment to [redacted]

[redacted] He fears that making theatres more self-sufficient financially could endanger smaller houses, like his own, that depend heavily on state subsidies.

Probably this resistance to decentralization, which centers in the Ministry of Culture and the cultural unions, 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. There are now two new societies, for theatre and music, which seem to be directed at popular and amateur groups as well as at more established artists and organizations, but their duties are not yet well defined.

The Politburo has also approved creation of a new kind of public organization—the Soviet Culture Foundation. It appears that the foundation will 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 that will cut across and take precedence over some functions of existing artistic unions: the new organization will provide material and intellectual resources to aid young talent, support improvement and creation of cultural facilities in small towns and new areas, and help to preserve the "national cultural heritage" and restore "artistic masterpieces and architectural landmarks."

The new organizations may serve Gorbachev's purposes in several ways. Their creation follows up on recommendations made at the party congress that new public bodies should be set up, for such groups as women and older citizens, apparently to counter popular alienation by encouraging some voluntarism in civic and cultural activities. Lacking any information on actual membership and operations, we are uncertain whether the new Culture Foundation will in fact fulfill these intentions. It does nonetheless provide a political mechanism for bypassing the conservative leadership of the cultural unions and for diverting resources to weaken the stranglehold of mediocrity emanating from the Ministry of Culture, which was sharply criticized at the congress.

Prospects

Having started the process of *glasnost*, Gorbachev faces certain difficulties in controlling it. Continuing and expanding the process would entail major dangers, but attempting to halt or reverse it would also have significant political disadvantages. (C NF)

Expanding the limits of permissible criticism and creativity runs the risk of stirring up popular grievances and demands and encouraging the expectations of intellectuals beyond the regime's capacity to satisfy them. It may:

- Undermine popular respect for the system rather than have the intended effect of enhancing public support, 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.

- Create a treadmill effect for Gorbachev where each step to satisfy intellectual hopes would whet appetites for more. The relaxation of controls is already leading some intellectuals to press for further liberalization—the poet Andrey Voznesenskiy has recently called for the complete elimination of censorship, and [redacted] report that some speakers at the writers' union congress challenged the need for the official censorship agency, Glavlit.

- Lead non-Russian intellectuals in some republics to press for more leeway in cultural expressions of *their* national identity, at least partly in response to the publication of Russian nationalist literature. Thus, conflict between Russians and non-Russians would be heightened. [redacted] reported ugly exchanges between some Russians and Georgian, Central Asian, and Jewish writers at the writers' congress. These sources also said that a spontaneous alliance developed between Russian liberals and the non-Russians.

Such developments might increase elite pressure on Gorbachev to reverse course. Conservative officials are probably apprehensive that too much *glasnost* threatens the stability of the system as a whole; many of them also fear that Gorbachev's policy threatens their own privileged positions within that system. By subjecting elites to increased media criticism of their performance and by "populist" moves to bypass bureaucrats in the media and cultural apparatus and create cultural institutions "from below," he may be raising the specter of popular "voluntarism" and heightening fears of a purge (see inset). If Gorbachev does not heed elite concerns about carrying *glasnost* too far, at some point opposition to him and his policies could coalesce within the Politburo itself.

If Gorbachev decides to abandon *glasnost* and clamp down, he will create other serious problems for the regime and for himself:

- Destroying the esprit Gorbachev wants to build among the people, which might lead to greater popular cynicism about party propaganda and his own credibility than existed previously.

- Disillusioning many intellectuals and causing some of them to circulate their works outside official channels. Already some persons who feel frustrated by constraints that remain on what can be published are floating reform proposals in *samizdat*. In July, Soviet sources passed to Western newsmen a document purporting to be the manifesto of a "Movement for Socialist Renewal" and calling for sweeping changes to establish political pluralism and full-blown civil liberties. A leadership decision to close off discussion of reform in official forums would fuel *samizdat*.

Criticism and the Elite's Fear of a Purge

Gorbachev's invitation to Soviet citizens to criticize officials for abuses has already increased the number of anonymous denunciatory letters, and it recalls 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 these efforts to reassure elites that they will be protected from informers bearing grudges have probably not fully allayed their concerns.*

Gorbachev has not yet made the boundaries of permissible expression clear, which suggests that he finds it useful or politically expedient to maintain tactical flexibility. He has been vigorous in crushing unauthorized publications and has not permitted publication of some of the extreme calls for liberalization made by those attending the writers' union congress. In a *Pravda* interview (8 February 1986), he made an unprecedented public defense of censorship. But he justified its role in narrow terms—to prevent publication of state and military secrets, war propaganda, and pornography—and he reportedly refused to accede to a request for a clearer line at his meeting with writers before the congress.

Gorbachev is evidently attempting to balance his dual priorities for Soviet culture and propaganda—artistic creativity and media credibility, on the one hand, and ideological correctness, on the other. Presumably, he believes he can continue this balancing act. This view was articulated by Vadim Zagladin, first deputy chief of the International Department, in an interview published in the Prague *Tribuna* (26 February 1986). Asked if the fragile 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.

Nevertheless, the dual goals of artistic creativity and political reliability are in the final analysis irreconcilable. Managing the process of *glasnost* will increasingly tax Gorbachev's political skill. If in the short run he continues to resist defining more precise limits as a way of giving himself room to maneuver, the demands and hopes of liberal intellectuals will inevitably escalate. In the long run, he will ultimately have to set firm bounds to prevent a conservative reaction within the leadership.