

**GLASNOST
PERESTROIKA
AND THE
SOVIET MEDIA**

BRIAN MCNAIR



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This one's for Kathy

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Preface

This book was written at a time of unprecedented change in the Soviet Union. When the research began in January 1986 the Gorbachev era was underway, but few then would have predicted the scale and pace of the reforms about to take place. When deadlines beckoned and the work was completed at the end of 1989 the Soviet Union, and the world, had been transformed. The Stalinist road to socialism, followed by the USSR with minor deviations since the late 1920s, had been publicly discredited and disavowed. Soviet society had embarked on a voyage of renewal the final destination of which even now, as this book goes to press, cannot be foreseen. In central and eastern Europe analogous processes were taking place, symbolised most dramatically by the breaking down of the Berlin Wall. On literally the last day of writing, the Brandenburg Gate was opened and President Ceausescu of Rumania fell from power.

Keeping up with the changes has not been easy. As all who work in this field are aware, the Soviet Union currently represents, from the academic point of view, a 'moving target'. That said, this book aims to describe and make sense of the '*perestroika*' as it has affected a key element of the Soviet ideological apparatus: news and journalism.

It will be of value, I hope, not only to those who are interested in Soviet affairs, but to students of mass communication in general. The greater portion of the book is concerned with the changing organisation and content of the Soviet media, but some space is devoted to a comparison of Soviet journalism with that of the west, and of the United Kingdom in particular. The purpose of this comparative approach is to show, on the one hand, the differences between journalism in capitalist and socialist societies, and on the other, to highlight some of the similarities.

The reader will find in this study a rejection of the commonplace thesis that news in the USSR has been and is mere 'propaganda' (as that word is negatively defined in the west), while that of such countries as Britain and the USA is 'objective' and 'independent'. On the contrary, this study is informed throughout by the view that *all* news is ideological. From this perspective, the only thing to be determined is the direction of the 'bias' which prevails in any particular society, and the means by which it is reproduced over time. This study attempts to deal with these questions in the Soviet context.

For financial assistance I am grateful to the University of Ulster and the British Council. The recordings of Soviet television news used in the study were made by technical staff at the University of Glasgow. Still photographs were taken by Gillian Coward and Mac Pollok at the University of Ulster.

I would also like to thank the Soviet journalists and academics who co-operated with the project by granting interviews, and James Curran, who supported it from the beginning.

Earlier drafts of some sections of the book appeared in *Media, Culture, and Society*, vol.11, no.3, 1989.

**Жить в обществе, и быть свободно
из общества, это невозможно**

(To live in society, and be free from society, is impossible)

Lenin

1

Introduction

The Soviets refer to their news media as ‘the means of mass information and propaganda’. The term distinguishes press and broadcasting from those elements of the cultural apparatus which depend on interpersonal communication for the transmission of messages – the oral propaganda network, the education system, and the ‘knowledge’ societies.¹ It also alerts us to the Party’s insistence that the Soviet media should function as engines of ideological production; machinery of social knowledge, to be harnessed and consciously directed to solving the tasks of socialist construction.

The straightforward instrumentalism of this approach contrasts with that prevailing in liberal democracies such as Britain and the United States of America, where the independent, impartial, ‘watchdog’ role of journalism is held to be paramount. In these countries critical theorists have long questioned the independence of the media and debated the extent to which news and journalism should be considered as part of the ‘ideological apparatus of the state’.² In the USSR, as any Soviet journalist will readily concede, ‘we make no bones about it’.³ The Party, speaking in the name of the people, openly proclaims the fact that since 1917 it has used the Soviet news media as a means of social control and engineering, rather than of communicating useful information for its own sake. As one Soviet source puts it, ‘mass media under socialism not only express public opinion, they are the most important means of its formation’ (Korobeinikov, ed., 1986, p.52).

Acting on this belief, the Bolsheviks after 1917 built a media apparatus unequalled in size and complexity anywhere in the world. Moreover, the Party took upon itself the role of supervision and control of this apparatus. By gradually outlawing the great majority of non-Bolshevik media organs the Party effectively monopolised the flow of mass information in Soviet society for nearly seventy years. With the exception of those few who had access to alternative sources—principally foreign radio stations run by western broadcasting and intelligence services, and underground ‘samizdat’ publications⁴—the Soviet citizen was throughout this period almost completely dependent on official media for information.

The practical implications of this dependence were rather bluntly demonstrated to me in April 1986 when, while I was living and studying in Moscow doing the research for this book, the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl exploded, showering radioactive debris over a large part of Europe.

As a resident of Moscow the Soviet news media were my main source of information about events taking place in the USSR and beyond its borders, as well as being the subject of my academic work. Being a westerner I had access to alternative news sources such as the British Embassy library, which contained back issues of British newspapers and periodicals. I had some contact with western journalists in the city, and occasional mail from family and friends at home. Consequently, the quantity and variety of information at my disposal were substantially greater than those available to the average

Soviet citizen. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of my position as a consumer of Soviet media was illustrated by the fact that, like the great majority of people living in the USSR, I first heard the name 'Chernobyl' on the night of Monday, April 28th, nearly three full days after the explosion occurred.

I had returned from visiting friends in the city to the hostel in Moscow University which the foreigners shared with Soviet students. I called into a British neighbour's room before going to bed, to find four or five people gathered together in earnest conversation. 'Have you heard?' one of them asked as I joined the company. 'A Soviet nuclear reactor's on fire', said another. 'It was on the BBC.' Lacking a suitable radio, I hadn't heard the BBC's account. The main Soviet television news programme *Vremya* had apparently reported that something was wrong in a short item on that evening's bulletin, but I had missed that too.

Thus began, for me and for millions of others, a period of ten anxious days (until May 6th, when information began to flow more freely) during which the Soviet government, through the media, kept its own citizens, foreign guests, and the international community as a whole in virtual ignorance about a nuclear catastrophe of unprecedented seriousness. From my viewpoint, in this case, ignorance was most definitely *not* bliss. While western tabloids spoke of thousands dead (figures circulated on the network of rumour and speculation which inevitably filled the vacuum created by the official silence), and the Soviet media announced business as usual, one had little choice but to stock up with plentiful supplies of champagne, get therapeutically drunk, and hope for the best.

The feared meltdown of the reactor core at Chernobyl was averted, mercifully, and the worst did not come to pass (a fact of little comfort to those in Ukraine who absorbed the most radiation). For Soviet journalists, those ten days of enforced silence turned out with hindsight to be the final, desperate gesture of a Party hierarchy whose rigid control of the mass communications system was by early 1986 already breaking down.

Until the 1980s the Party's near-monopoly of mass information was sustained with remarkably little public protest or dissent. Through lack of choice, knowledge, or interest in the few existing alternatives, the Soviet population consumed the official media in their hundreds of millions daily.⁵ By the time of the death of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, however, the Soviet media were experiencing a growing crisis of legitimation as economic necessity, technological innovation, and international political developments combined to undermine the Party's traditional approach to journalism and information policy as a whole. The 'authority' of the Soviet media was declining (*ibid.*, p.193).

Chernobyl accelerated that decline. The domestic dissatisfaction and international outrage provoked by the Soviet media's response to the disaster delivered a fatal blow to 'Brezhnevian' journalism, boosting the process of radical reform and restructuring of information policy which had begun one year earlier with the election of Mikhail Sergeyivich Gorbachev as General Secretary of the CPSU. Those developments, known throughout the world by the terms '*glasnost*' and '*perestroika*', and their impact on the content and organisation of Soviet journalism, are the subject of this book.

Chapter 2 traces the theoretical roots of Soviet journalism in the materialism of Marx and Lenin. Chapter 3 shows how the experience of Stalinism affected the development of the system up to the demise of Brezhnev. Chapters 4 and 5 then assess the effects of the Gorbachov era reforms on the Soviet media, while chapter 6 summarises the measures adopted by Soviet journalists and politicians to facilitate further change and consolidate

those which have already taken place: in particular, the new Press Law. Part II contains a series of case studies, examining key features of the contemporary Soviet media in such categories of coverage as foreign news and images of women.

Two aspects of the Soviet media are not dealt with in any detail in this book. The first is the question of effects. Although the Soviet example is ideally suited to a study of the effects of mass communications on audiences (since the USSR provides conditions which do not exist in any of the advanced capitalist societies: a state-controlled apparatus, targeted on the fulfilment of clearly-stated social goals), work in this area has been severely limited by the dependence of researchers, Soviet and non-Soviet, on sparse and methodologically suspect official statistics, or on anecdotal evidence from *emigrés*. The quantity and quality of official data on media effects and audience attitudes in the USSR have begun to improve as a consequence of official recognition of popular discontent with media output, and a sizeable academic industry has taken shape which is devoted to the measurement of public opinion, but the field remains largely undeveloped. The interested reader may refer to a number of projects designed to gauge the effectiveness of the propaganda apparatus in minute detail, which have been reported in the Soviet literature and are available to western researchers.⁶ The main finding of these studies, most of which pre-date the *glasnost* campaign has, as already noted, been one of increasing dissatisfaction amongst the Soviet population at certain features of the official news media. How Soviet journalism has responded to that dissatisfaction is discussed at length in this book, but no attempt is made to assess the 'effectiveness' of Soviet 'mass information and propaganda' post-1985.

The book also lacks a detailed account of the *samizdat* or underground press which has existed in the USSR since the 1960s. *Samizdat* publications, though routinely attracting widespread publicity and interest in the west, have never posed a serious threat to the Party's control of information flows in Soviet society. Their circulation was largely restricted to small groups of political or religious dissidents in hand-typed editions. While they performed an important information function for these groups the Soviet population as a whole was largely unaware of or uninterested in the existence of *samizdat*. We note, however, that the reforms of the Soviet media discussed below include the removal of many of the restrictions on unofficial publishing which in the past made *samizdat* necessary.⁷ As a result of the Press Law the right to own and publish independently of the Party and state is now legally guaranteed.

A note on the sample

A substantial proportion of this book consists of descriptions and analyses of the content of Soviet press and television news, drawn primarily from two samples of Soviet media. First, the output of *Pravda*—the official newspaper of the CPSU Central Committee and thus the most authoritative media organ in the country—was monitored for the twelve-month period beginning on March 1st, 1987 and ending on February 29th, 1988.

Secondly, the content of eight media organs was monitored over the shorter period of one month in March 1988. The organs selected included *Pravda*, and five other central newspapers: *Trud*, the organ of the central trades union organisation; *Izvestia*, published by the Supreme Soviet; *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, central organ of the Leninist youth

movement, or Komsomol; *Krasnaya Zvezda*, published by the Defence Ministry; and *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, organ of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation. To allow consideration of the regional press the sample included one of the main republican newspapers, *Zarya Vostoka*, the organ of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party.

With the aid of a satellite dish and a reliable video recorder the main Soviet daily television news bulletin, *Programme Vremya*, was recorded throughout March.

Of necessity, this sample contains only a small number of the approximately 8,000 media organs in the USSR, but it is representative of the different types and was carefully selected to include the most popular as measured by viewing and circulation figures. To provide the data base for a comparison of Soviet with western media the sample also incorporated the main British television news bulletins broadcast in March 1988. The British Broadcasting Corporation's *Nine O'Clock News*, shown nightly on BBC1, and Independent Television News' *News at Ten*, broadcast on ITV, were both recorded daily.

The total sample, collected over a period of thirteen months, thus comprised some 600 editions of Soviet newspapers and fifty hours of television news. More than 30,000 news items were logged and categorised.

British and Soviet television news coverage of the Reykjavik and Moscow summits was also recorded, and forms the basis of the discussion of 'protocol news' in chapter 8 below.

At points in the discussion of Soviet foreign news coverage it was necessary, for reasons of time and space, to focus on one country. The United Kingdom has therefore been chosen as a case study in, for example, the examination of structures of access to foreign sources in chapter 5, and in chapter 9, which looks at Soviet images of capitalism. This selection was based on three factors. First, the United Kingdom, as a major actor on the world stage, features prominently in Soviet news. Secondly, its political, economic and social structures can be considered as representative of the advanced capitalist societies. Lastly, but by no means least, it is the country with which the author is most familiar.

A note on referencing

The dates and origins of quotations drawn from the sample periods for the purposes of content analysis are indicated in the body of the text. Other articles are referenced in endnotes, as are secondary translations of Soviet sources. Elsewhere, the accuracy of translations is the sole responsibility of the author.

The figures in brackets accompanying extracts from British television news bulletins (e.g., 1 2100 5.3.88) refer to the channel, time, and date (day. month. year) of the broadcast from which the extract is taken.

Part I
The apparatus

2

Marxism, Leninism and the media

It seems appropriate to begin a book about the Soviet news media by noting that the two men whose names are most commonly associated with the USSR today were themselves journalists. Both Karl Marx, the founder of historical materialism, and Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin), who led the movement which applied Marx's theory to the overthrow of tsarism in Russia, spent a substantial proportion of their adult lives working and writing for newspapers and journals, an activity which helped them not only to expound and propagate their ideas but to pay their bills. From 1852, for a period of ten years, Karl Marx contributed regularly to the *New York Tribune*, at that time the largest circulation newspaper in the world. It is not without irony that this work, for a decidedly bourgeois newspaper, provided Marx with his main source of income while writing his epochal critique of the capitalist mode of production, *Capital*, in London.¹

Lenin's journalistic activities were confined to the Russian socialist press. Like Marx, however, this work provided him with much-needed income and, even when he had become the leader of Soviet Russia in 1921, Lenin's membership card for the Moscow Soviet described his profession as that of 'journalist'.²

It is not, of course, as journalists that Marx and Lenin are chiefly remembered today, but as theorists and practitioners of the revolutionary politics which in 1917 established in Russia the world's first socialist state. This chapter examines how their ideas have influenced the subsequent development of the news media of that state.³

Marx on the media

Marx's contribution to the development of the contemporary Soviet media apparatus was twofold. First, and in collaboration with his colleague Friedrich Engels, he constructed the theory of historical materialism. Elevated to the status of a scientific worldview, historical materialism, and its philosophical corollary dialectical materialism, underpin the functioning of all Soviet institutions, including the mass media.

Secondly, in applying historical materialism to the world in which he lived Marx pioneered the establishment of 'communist' media organs, providing early models for later generations of marxists in Russia and elsewhere to follow.

For those who adhere to its precepts historical materialism is both a method of analysing societies and a means for transforming them. It emerged from the young Marx's radical critique of the dominant philosophical worldview of his time, expressed in its purest and most abstract form in the works of Hegel.

Hegel postulated the existence of a benevolent, neutral state, standing above politics. This state functioned as a supreme arbiter, controlling and regulating the diverse interests of civil society. According to Hegel, competition between classes and other social groups

was mediated by the institutions of law, government, bureaucracy, and media, in such a way as to reconcile the 'particular' with the 'universal' interests of society. The motivating force in the development of human societies was God, the 'Absolute Idea', whose unfolding development was expressed and objectified in the dialectical movement of human history. For Hegel, bourgeois society was the supreme expression of the Absolute Idea, and the 'end' of history.

As a leading member of the radical group of 'Young Hegelians' Marx came to reject Hegel's idealism, a process of intellectual development in which questions of the media were central. Marx's first published articles for the journal *Rheinische Zeitung*—controlled by leading radicals of the time, Franz Mehring and Arnold Ruge—concerned the freedom of the press. In 1841 the Rhenish Parliament debated press freedom and censorship in Prussia. In 1842 Marx wrote a long commentary on the debate, in which he related the various ideas being expressed in Parliament to the classes, or 'estates', represented there. This approach asserted that ideas (in this case, ideas about press freedom) represented the expression of class interests:

we find the specific estate spirit nowhere more clearly, decisively and fully expressed than in the debates on the press. This holds good especially of the opposition to freedom of the press, just as in general it is in opposition to a general freedom that the spirit of a definite sphere in society, the individual interest of a particular estate and its natural one-sidedness of character are expressed most bluntly and recklessly...The debates provide us with a polemic of the princely social estate against freedom of the press, a polemic of the knightly estate, and a polemic of the urban estate, so that it is not the individual, but the social estate that conducts the polemic.

(Marx and Engels, 1975, p.138)

In this early work Marx does not articulate a fully-formed materialism, but he can be seen to be moving towards a view of the world in which social classes, rather than individuals, are perceived as the determining actors in human affairs and discourses.

Marx's next article for *Rheinische Zeitung* further developed this trend in his thought. Among the topics debated by the Rhenish Parliament in 1841 had been the Prussian Law on the gathering of wood. Marx's discussion of the debate, published in 1842, contains the recognition that, by depriving the poor of 'customary' rights to collect dead wood from the forests, and by passing rights of ownership of previously common property, the law had intervened on the side of 'particular interests'. In contrast to Hegel's view that the state and its legal machinery reflect and represent universal interests, Marx asserts that the state is upholding the rights of particular 'estates' or social classes.

This article and the earlier piece on press freedom are viewed by Soviet scholars as 'bourgeois humanist', rather than 'materialist' in their approach to the analysis of social and political phenomena (Kunitsyn, 1971, p.17). They show Marx grappling with the apparent contradiction between the meanings of the dominant concepts of his time, as they were used in abstract philosophy on the one hand, and in their practical application to the administration of society on the other. However, in seeking to make sense of these contradictions, and in the process of writing these articles, Marx was led to the study of

'economic questions' and thence to the development of historical materialism proper. The examples of press censorship and the laws on the theft of wood taught him that 'neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life' (Marx and Engels, 1975, p.425). Subsequently, he came to the view that, contrary to Hegel's philosophy of idealism, the structure and development of human societies were not determined by God (or any other abstract idea originating in the human mind), but by the need to produce and reproduce the conditions of existence of the species. The ideas of 'freedom' and 'democracy' became for him the representations, in *ideal* form, of the material conditions of existence of the dominant class. Marx argued that *all* ideas, including the idea of God, were simply the reflection of material existence, and not, as Hegel had proposed, its motivating force.

As a result of the favourable impression made by his early articles on Mehring and Ruge, Marx was appointed editor of *Rheinische Zeitung* in October 1842, a position which he occupied until January 1843, when the journal was banned under the Prussian censorship laws and Marx emigrated to begin a new life in exile.

For the rest of his life Marx was assisted in his theoretical endeavours by Friedrich Engels, with whom he wrote in 1843 the first work of 'mature marxism', the *German Ideology*. The *German Ideology* describes Marx and Engels' theory of how human societies develop on the basis of an increasingly complex and productive division of labour; of how classes evolve, and how in class societies one class comes to dominate the others; of how a state develops, representing the social power of the dominant class 'in its practical-idealistic expression' (Marx and Engels, 1976, p.46). More importantly, for our purposes, the *German Ideology* argues that the dominance of a class in economic, material relations is reflected in and conditional upon its dominance in the intellectual sphere – the realm of ideology. In one of the most famous and oft-quoted passages of materialist literature the following relationship is postulated between the dominant class and the structure of ideas in a given society:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it.

(ibid., p.59) (their emphasis)

In short, the ruling class 'rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch' (ibid.).

The principal means for producing and distributing ideas are, of course, the means of communication, which develop and expand as capitalism does. In materialist theory, under capitalism, the means of communication become on the one hand, the basis for an increasingly rapid and voluminous circulation of capital across time and space, and on the other, crucial *superstructural* institutions in the reproduction of the social relations of production. Through the media, materialism argues, the antagonistic classes which make

up a social formation are 'cemented' together. The nature of this 'ideological work' and the difficulties of conceptualising the base/superstructure model remain at the centre of contemporary materialist debates,⁴ but there is no disagreement on the basic thesis of the media's role in reproducing, if sometimes problematically, the ideological conditions of the capitalist mode of production. The media, in short, are functional to the reproduction of capitalism. In more general terms, the economic 'base' 'conditions' the form of the superstructure.

The second of Marx's contributions to Soviet thinking on the media concerns his views on their role in the construction of the future, classless society anticipated by Marx. The *German Ideology* did not merely lay the foundations for the materialist critique of bourgeois ideology and identify the means of 'mental production' by which that dominance was achieved. As Marx had written in an earlier work, 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx and Engels, 1975, p.423). Marx was not satisfied with a merely intellectual attack on the society of which he was a part, but began with Engels in the *German Ideology* to espouse social revolution as a means of changing it: 'for the *practical* materialist, i.e., the *communist*, it is a question of revolutionising the existing world, of practically coming to terms with it and changing the things found in existence' (Marx and Engels, 1976, p.98) (their emphasis).

Revolution, Marx argued, was a practical necessity determined by the material conditions of bourgeois society: in particular, the heightening contradiction between the socialised character of modern industrial production, and the private ownership of capital. A class had come into being, argued the *German Ideology*, 'which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages, which is ousted from society and forced into contradiction to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution' (ibid., p.52).

This class, predicted Marx, would have to conquer political power, 'in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest' (ibid., p.47). It would have to establish its own ideology as the dominant one in a future socialist society. Like the bourgeoisie under capitalism the proletariat would become under socialism 'the ruling intellectual force', by implication 'regulating the production and distribution of ideas', and 'controlling the means of mental production'. Only then would the foundations of a classless, communist society begin to be laid.

For Marx, not least among the preconditions which were required before a revolutionary transformation of capitalist society could take place, was the coming into being of an effective communications apparatus. The media, which in Marx's time meant the press and the telegraph, were an important means by which the proletariat would overcome its isolation and become a class 'for itself'—a collective possessed of an awareness of common class interests and the necessity of revolutionary change.⁵ Establishing a proletarian media thus became in the materialist schema an important political priority, and an essential element in developing class consciousness to its full revolutionary potential.

To implement this belief Marx and Engels established the first communist media organs. In 1846 they formed the Union of Communists. Its official newspaper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, was first published on May 31st, 1848. Banned during the period of

social strife which engulfed Germany in May 1849, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* is regarded by Soviet historians of the media as the model for subsequent communist and workers' newspapers, including those established by Lenin and the Bolsheviks. One Soviet historian of the media writes that *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* 'appears as the precursor of subsequent communist...and Leninist, Bolshevik publishing, reflecting in its pages the greatness and multi-faceted character of the revolutionary epoch' (Kunitsyn, 1971, p.28).

Lenin on the media

As critics of historical materialism have frequently noted, Marx anticipated that 'fundamental revolution' would take place in countries like Britain and Germany, where capitalism and its 'grave-diggers', the proletariat, were at their most highly developed and thus antagonistic. Nevertheless, his theories were first successfully implemented in tsarist Russia by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and the Bolshevik movement led by him. In the struggle leading up to the October Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power in 1917 a crucial part was played by the Bolshevik media apparatus. This apparatus, based on materialist ideas and principles developed from Marx and Engels by Lenin, displayed all the basic features which have underpinned the structure and functioning of the Soviet media system throughout the post-Revolutionary period.

Lenin was born in 1870 into an economically backward, semi-feudal society in social and political ferment. As a young man he followed in his elder brother's footsteps by becoming a militant revolutionary firmly in the marxist tradition.⁶ The fact that socialist revolution occurred first in Russia was due in no small part to the theoretical originality and tactical genius of Lenin, who by the turn of the century had become a leading member of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), one of several groups engaged in the struggle against tsarist autocracy.

At this time the RSDLP was disunited, badly organised, and in danger of becoming what one writer calls 'a mere appendage' of the radical movement (Wildman, 1964, p.480). The party's weaknesses, as Lenin saw it, were the consequence of two basic errors in its theory and practice. Theoretically, Lenin believed along with others in the RSDLP such as Plekhanov that the party was dominated by 'economism'. 'Economists', it was alleged, placed too great an emphasis on purely economic struggles at the point of production in the factories and workplaces. Participation in struggles over wages and conditions would not be enough, of itself, to produce 'revolutionary' class consciousness amongst the proletariat. Rather, the energies of the RSDLP should be concentrated on overtly political struggles.⁷

A second major area of concern, for Lenin, was the party's organisational inadequacies. At the turn of the century the RSDLP was a somewhat loosely-connected aggregate of local groups, each working in isolation on its own local struggles, often with its own local press. In Lenin's view this weakened the party's ability to campaign on a national scale. 'Local newspapers', he wrote some years later, when elaborating his position on the need for centralisation, 'prove, in the majority of cases, to be unstable in their principles, devoid of political significance, extremely costly in regard to expenditure of revolutionary forces, and totally unsatisfactory from a technical point of view (I have

in mind, of course, not the technique of printing, but the frequency and regularity of publication' (1972, p.51).

For Lenin, both the struggle against 'economism' and the organisational strengthening of the RSDLP required a central party media—an all-Russian newspaper.

In an article written in 1899, while exiled to Siberia for his political activities, Lenin began to elaborate this view and to develop a theory of the media which, in its essentials, was to guide the organisation and output of Soviet news and journalism after 1917. His writings from this period refer, of course, only to the press, but as radio and then television were developed in the USSR the ideas and principles advocated by Lenin for the press were applied to broadcasting journalism with equal fervour.

The 1899 article echoed Marx's point that the proletariat could not be expected to develop revolutionary class consciousness while its members remained isolated, localised and in the grip of spontaneity. In order to transform the 'spontaneous working-class movement' which then existed in Russia into one capable of revolutionary change, Lenin argued, 'as our immediate aim', for 'the founding of a Party organ that will appear regularly and be closely connected with all the local groups' (ibid.). In 1901 he wrote that 'the starting point of our activities should be the founding of an All-Russian political newspaper. A newspaper is what we most of all need; without it we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation...which is...the pressing task of the moment' (ibid., p.55). Without such an organ, Lenin argued,

local work will remain narrowly 'amateurish'. The formation of the Party—if the correct representation of that Party in a certain newspaper is not organised—will to a considerable extent remain empty words. An economic struggle that is not united by a central organ cannot become the *class* struggle of the entire Russian proletariat. (his emphasis).

Such a newspaper would become the vehicle for a party-wide discussion of 'revolutionary technique' and the 'forms and rules for the conduct of affairs'. Through it 'the content of Social Democratic propaganda and agitation' would be deepened and extended throughout the country.

The need for a central newspaper was particularly acute in Russia, Lenin argued, since in the more advanced capitalist countries the workers had, apart from newspapers, 'numerous other means for the public manifestation of their activity' such as parliaments, trade unions, and the right to hold public meetings. '*In place of all that, yes, all of that, we must be served—until we have won political liberty—by a revolutionary newspaper, without which no broad organisation of the working-class movement is possible.*'

The propagandist

As early as 1899, then, Lenin had identified what he saw as the two broad functions of a party press. The first was *ideological*: what Lenin would later refer to as the role of 'collective propagandist' and 'collective agitator', in the spirit of 'consistent marxism', combating 'economism' in particular and what Lenin perceived as deviations from marxism in general. Lenin had in mind here Plekhanov's distinction between a

‘propagandist’, who ‘presents many ideas to one or a few persons’, and an ‘agitator’, who presents ‘only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people’ (quoted in Inkeles, 1956, p.39). Ideological work, Lenin recognised, had to be conducted with an appreciation of the relative intellectual and political sophistication of the party activists, on the one hand, and the working masses on the other. In 1902, he illustrated the distinction with the following example.

The propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present ‘many’ ideas, so many, indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole only by a (comparatively) few persons. The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and widely known to his audience, say, the death of an unemployed worker’s family from starvation, the growing impoverishment, etc., and, utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a *single* idea to the masses, e.g., the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty; he will strive to *rouse* discontent and indignation among the masses against this crying injustice, leaving a more complete explanation of this contradiction to the propagandist.

(1972, p.76)

As Mickiewicz puts it, agitation was to be ‘directed to a mass audience and involves messages of limited content but wide applicability and emotional impact. Propaganda, on the other hand, is directed to small numbers of ‘politically literate’ individuals, and it involves complicated theoretical messages’ (1971, p.259).

The distinction between propagandist and agitational communication was made at a time when the Russian population, and particularly those whom the Bolsheviks perceived as their main source of support, was largely illiterate. It thus had an important practical significance. After the revolution, as Bolshevik literacy and educational programmes had their effect, the distinction lost much of its relevance. In the Soviet media today the term ‘propaganda’ often incorporates ‘agitation’. As in Lenin’s usage, however, propaganda continues to advance ‘as a goal, the socialisation of the members of society to communist convictions...to disseminate a particular image of social reality which corresponds to the values of a socialist society; and...to create a particular kind of attitude towards reality amongst the people to whom the image is addressed’ (Grushin and Onikov, 1981, p.49).

All information appearing in the news media of socialist (and capitalist) societies can be described as ‘ideological’ in so far as it has been selected and presented on the basis of subjective assumptions and value judgements. Soviet news is distinctive, however, in loudly and openly proclaiming its propaganda functions of teaching and reinforcing marxist-leninist ideology, and of ‘agitating’ the masses.⁸

The organiser

The second major function of the press, for Lenin, was *organisational*. At the end of 1900 he wrote that the establishment of a central party newspaper would encourage the development of an organisation 'especially for the purpose of establishing and maintaining contact among all the centres of the movement, of supplying complete and timely information about the movement, and of delivering our newspapers and periodicals regularly to all parts of Russia. Only when such an organisation has been founded...will the Party possess a sound foundation, only then will it become a real fact and, therefore, a mighty political force' (1972, p.58). In 1901, Lenin wrote that not only did the newspaper play the role of 'collective propagandist' and 'collective agitator', but that of

collective organiser. In the last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding around a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effects on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events. The mere mechanical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents...who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions...and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions...If we join forces to produce a common newspaper, this work will train and bring into the foreground, not only the most skilful propagandists, but the most capable organisers, the most talented political party leaders capable, at the right moment, of releasing the slogans for the decisive struggles and of taking the lead in those struggles.

(*ibid.*, p.24)

Thus, for Lenin, the establishment of a centralised party press was an essential step in the creation of a revolutionary vanguard. The tasks imposed by the need to collect, process and distribute information on a mass scale would of necessity bring into being the type of organisation which he believed to be the prerequisite for socialist revolution in Russia. The effectiveness of the Party, and the effectiveness of the media, were inseparable.

To maximise the effectiveness of the Bolshevik media as an instrument of revolution and, after 1917, of socialist construction, Lenin proposed a number of principles for the guidance of media-workers. They can be summarised under four headings: i) partiality

(*partiinnost/ideonost*); ii) linkage with the masses (*massovost/narodnost*); iii) truthfulness and objectivity (*pravdivost/obyektivnost*); and iv) openness (*otkritost/glasnost*).⁹

The manner of their practical application, and the relative importance attached to these principles have varied with the shifting character of the regime throughout the post-revolutionary period, but no Soviet leader from Stalin to Gorbachev has seen fit publicly to renounce them. Consequently, they are to contemporary Soviet journalism what such principles as ‘objectivity’, ‘impartiality’, ‘neutrality’ and ‘balance’ are to journalists working in capitalist societies.

Partiinost

The most important principle of Soviet journalism was, for Lenin, partiality, expressed in Russian by the terms *partiinnost* and *ideonost*. Partiality is premised on Lenin’s assertion of ‘the importance of the subjective factor in social development’ (Kunitsyn, 1971, p.3). Partiality assumes that social consciousness and the means by which it is expressed, such as communication, have a class nature. There can be no neutrality in cultural production. The character of partiality—the direction of its ‘bias’—is determined by class interest.

Lenin first used the term in 1894, defining partiality as ‘a commitment to appraising events directly and openly, on the basis of the point of view of a definite social group’ (quoted in Kunitsyn, 1971, p. 188). In 1905 he narrowed down the notion of ‘social group’ to that of ‘class’, asserting that partiality begins with the awareness of class antagonism and that

a living human being cannot avoid standing on the side of one class or another, cannot but rejoice in the success of a particular class, cannot but be distressed by its failures, cannot but be indignant towards those who are hostile to this class.

(*ibid.*)

Thus, writes Kunitysn,

partiality in ideology is the conscious struggle of the ideologist, theoretician, journalist, artist, for the affirmation of this or that social class...The proletariat has in principle a different ideology [from the bourgeoisie]...That is why the partiality of proletarian ideology has clearly expressed specific characteristics: it is distinguished from bourgeois partiality...by its direct and open defence of working class interests.

(*ibid.*, p.42)

Lipovchenko’s textbook for students of journalism tells them that ‘in essence, this partiality is nothing other than the conscious repetition of a class-view...Soviet journalism clearly and openly takes a marxist– leninist position’ (1985, p.41).¹⁰

The openly-stated ideological commitment of Soviet journalism is the major point of difference between it and the practice of journalism in liberal democracies. The latter, as Lipovchenko puts it, ‘is charac-terised by the desire to hide its real aims and selfish

aspirations, cloaking itself in impartiality' (ibid., p.41). For the Soviets, on the other hand, 'there is no such thing as neutral information today. All information has an ideological character, and can be the object of class struggle' (Nozhin, 1983, p.68). 'Communist partiality', as Lenin understood it, and as Soviet journalists continue to apply it, means the rejection of cherished western notions of neutrality, impartiality, and the 'freedom of the writer'. For Lenin, absolute freedom for journalists, as for other cultural workers, was a bourgeois myth. Freedom could not be understood in isolation from the social conditions within which cultural life was organised. If freedom was a 'right', it also implied 'duties'. In a socialist society those duties were primarily to the masses, and the construction of communism.

Organisationally, *partiinost* implied that all media must become part of the 'wheels and screws' of the proletarian movement, institutionally affiliated to party organisations and supervised by reliable communists. In his 1905 text, 'Party Organisation and Party Literature', Lenin denounced the 'bourgeois-intellectual individualism' of those who were obsessed with 'the free battle of ideas, freedom of criticism, freedom of literary creation, etc., etc.' (1972, p.148). On the contrary, he argued, 'newspapers must become the organs of the various party organisations, and their writers must by all means become members of those organisations'. This approach was to form the basis for Party-media relations throughout the period of revolutionary struggle and subsequent socialist construction. Since 1917, *partiinost* has required the Soviet media's conscious identification with and subordination to the Communist Party, and through it, the proletariat.

The principle of *partiinost* was expressed in the doctrine of social ownership of media organs espoused by Lenin in 1917 and enshrined in the first Soviet constitution of July 1918. This outlawed the private ownership of press, printing, and broadcasting facilities, restricting access to three types of organisation. These included party organisations (which came in the course of time to mean *Communist* Party organisations), government bodies such as the Soviets and ministries, and public organisations such as trade unions and women's committees.

While the various media owned and operated by these organisations were to be responsible for their own output and enjoy a certain degree of independence from the administrative structures to which they were affiliated, the application of *partiinost* determined that Party committees 'constantly direct and supervise the activity of the Soviet news media, demanding that it be in total accord with the system of norms and values accepted as prevailing in socialist society and formulated by the leadership organisations of Party and government. All the other agencies of social control, including the trade unions, Komsomol and the like, are in exactly the same situation relative to the agencies of Party and state in our society' (Grushin and Onikov, 1982, p.5).

Lipovchenko makes a similar point: 'mass media are not independent, "autonomous" elements of the political system. Journalism is subordinate to the aims laid down for it by the political forces governing it...[journalism] cannot be an individual activity independent of the general activity of the working class' (1985, p.66).

The structural 'subordination' of the Soviet media to Party and state organs has resulted in their development of a distinctive 'tribune' role. As 'tribunes' the Soviet news media are required to act as platforms for the organisations to which they are affiliated, informing the population about official business and events rather in the manner of the

town-criers of antiquity. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, for example, routinely reports on the proceedings and decisions of leading Komsomol committees. *Trud* performs the same function for the official trade unions, *Krasnaya Zvezda* for the military, *Zarya Vostoka* for the central committee of the Georgian Communist Party, and so on. 'Ofitsioz', as these items are referred to by Soviet journalists, may include obituaries for recently deceased state and Party leaders; telegrams of congratulation or condolence from the Soviet leadership to a foreign government, as occurred following the King's Cross fire disaster when Gorbachev expressed the sympathies of the Soviet people to Prime Minister Thatcher; and texts of documents such as Draft Laws, decrees and announcements of call-ups from the Defence Ministry.

Accounts of the most important official events, such as meetings of the Politburo and sessions of the Central Committee in Moscow, are 'replicated' in several newspapers and television news bulletins. During our sample period of March 1988, Mikhail Gorbachov's speech to the IVth Congress of Kolkhoz workers in Moscow was broadcast in full on *Programme Vremya*, and printed in full in all of the central newspapers. In the same month the Theses for the 19th All-Union Party Conference, and the Draft Law on Co-operatives, both lengthy documents of several thousand words, were printed in all of the newspapers sampled. Indeed, on the day of its publication the Draft Law took up so much space that *Pravda* had only one page remaining for 'news' as such, while *Zarya Vostoka*, with only four pages, had to dispense entirely with news coverage that day.

Up to 9 per cent of all items contained in the sampled media organs in March 1988 were 'ofitsioz', a fact which largely contributes to the oft-claimed dullness of the Soviet media, since these items are not written by the journalists of the respective organs in which they appear, but by functionaries and apparatchiks of TASS, or of the relevant bodies, in a correspondingly bureaucratic style. The extent of the replication of these items means that much of the material contained in the Soviet media on any given day is redundant, a fact made more surprising in the light of the current shortage of newsprint in the USSR.

The 'tribunal' function of the Soviet media is also responsible for the predominance in the Soviet media of 'protocol' news. Protocol news reports the activities of Soviet delegations abroad, and of official or semi-official delegations from abroad visiting the USSR. The following protocol item taken from the edition of *Vremya* broadcast on March 1st, 1988 reported talks between the Soviet Foreign Minister and the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow. Its formal diplomatic style is typical of this category of news.

Talks took place in an open and business-like atmosphere, and an exchange of opinions on a number of questions of Soviet-Japanese relations took place. Several urgent international questions were also touched upon.

(*Vremya*, March 1st, 1988)

The activities of Soviet delegations abroad are reported in a similar fashion, as illustrated by *Vremya's* coverage on March 1st of a meeting of communist and workers' parties in Havana. After the official business of the meeting was over, it was reported, 'Comrades Dobrinin, Medvedev and other delegates travelled to the Isle of Youth. They visited a museum, the House of Friendship and a factory for the production of ceramics.'

Obyektivnost

To the western reader it might seem that the necessity of following a party line in journalism conflicts with another important 'Leninist' principle: that of 'truthfulness', or 'objectivity' (corresponding to the Russian terms *pravdivost* and *obyektivnost*).

Soviet writers acknowledge that propaganda 'has a valuejudgmental character, which admits the possibility and existence of different assertions, including contradictory ones' (Grushin and Onikov, 1981, p.48). Socialist propaganda, however, is distinguished by 'the profound scientific validity of the propositions it advances'.

To see how partiality and objectivity (or scientificity) can be reconciled in Soviet journalism we must introduce the important distinction in Soviet terminology between the concepts of objectivism and objectivity. Objectivism, which corresponds to the English 'impartiality' and implies the quality of standing aloof from the events and issues being reported, is, as we have seen, a negative concept for the Soviet journalist. On the other hand, 'the analysis of facts and their connection with reality cannot and must not depend on subjective sympathies and desires. Objectivity is the fundamental demand of Leninist methodology [in journalism]' (Lipovchenko, 1985, p. 56).

The possibility of being both committed and objective, of reconciling *partiinost* with *obyektivnost*, is premised on the assumption that historical materialism (and after Lenin's death, marxism-leninism) is both the revolutionary ideology of a class and a *scientific* worldview forming the basis for a genuinely objective account of the world. Lipovchenko writes:

The Soviet Press—and in this lies its distinctness—brings to the people a scientifically-based knowledge of nature and society, guided by the theory of marxism-leninism and developed from a methodical analysis of the appearance of reality. Bourgeois journalism [by contrast] formulates and defends certain political positions and instead of producing a widespread increase in knowledge about social activity creates myths, manipulates public opinion and to different degrees resorts to disorientation and disinformation...It attempts to portray the interests of the bourgeoisie as the interests of the whole of society, of the workers.

(*ibid.*, p.41)

A deputy editor of the foreign affairs journal *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn* observes that socialist journalism covers events 'from the point of view of a certain system of values, which do not distort events but give a perceptual framework for understanding them. Journalists cover events and relay them to the people from the point of view of marxist-leninist doctrine, which they are convinced is scientific.'

In his introduction to the 1958 Russian-language collection of Lenin's writings on the press, Okorokov explains:

Lenin taught that the revolutionary marxist press, as distinct from the mercenary bourgeois press (which deliberately perverts reality and presents things in order to confuse the consciousness of the masses, diverting it from the scandalous injustices of the capitalist system), must stand on a firm foundation of facts, reflecting the events and phenomena

of social life in their dialectical development, and in relation to concrete historical conditions.

(Lenin, 1958, p.19)

‘The people’, wrote Lenin, ‘must above all and before everything else, know the truth’ (quoted in Kunitsyn, 1971, p. 188). Kunitsyn adds that, for Lenin, ‘not only must a proletarian, communist newspaper struggle selflessly for the advancement of socialist positions, but link this to the attainment of objective truth, with an account of the objective laws of development’ (ibid.).

For Lenin, truth, or ‘*pravdivost*’, resided not only in the factual accuracy of coverage, but in ‘the truth of exposition, the degree to which coverage is illuminated by party policy, and in the coverage of facts in their totality’ (1958, p.119). For Soviet journalists, in short, ‘objectivity’ and ‘partiality’ combine to make their news more truthful on the one hand, and expressive of ‘reality’ on the other, than that of their ‘objectivist’ counterparts in the capitalist countries.¹¹

Narodnost

The principle of *narodnost*, or *massovost*, has no exact equivalent in English, but can be translated approximately as ‘linkage to the masses’ or ‘accessibility’. Okorokov emphasises that

this is one of the most important principles, deriving from the well-known marxist-leninist position on the decisive role of the popular masses in history. The popular masses create history, and advance the progress of humankind. They exert a decisive influence on all aspects of the material and spiritual life of society, including such an important institution as the press. Our press...can have no tasks or interests distinct from the tasks and interests of the people.

(ibid., p.16)

Alfyorov writes that ‘the principles of communist *partiinnost* and *narodnost* are inseparable. If the principle of communist *partiinnost* signifies the precise ideological and organisational orientation of press activity, then the principle of *narodnost* indicates for whom and with whose help the system of mass media functions’ (1984, p.6).

Narodnost can be understood in two senses. First, the media must be open to the views and opinions of the masses. In the absence of ‘bourgeois’ democratic forms such as political pluralism, the Soviet media must function as organs of socialist democracy. They link the Party to the masses, and operate as a platform for the transmission of views from below. From this derives the significance of two distinctive features of the Soviet news media: readers’ letters, and the institution of the worker-peasant correspondent.

From 1897 onwards Lenin stressed the need for a wide network of ‘worker’ correspondents in the factories and workplaces of Russia. These ‘correspondents from the people’ would broaden the base of contributions to the revolutionary press. After the Revolution the movement of Worker and Peasant Correspondents was formed (RABSELKOR), expanding throughout the 1920s with a membership of about two

million by 1930. RABSELKOR was seen by the Party as a form of popular participation in the administration of the state, and an important means of increasing the social and political activity of the masses. The 'special' correspondents took on the role of supervising efforts to improve the economy and the struggle against 'bureaucratic distortion' which became necessary after the Civil War. In March 1928 *Pravda* began a weekly feature comprising of RABSELKOR items exposing red tape, 'bureaucratism' and other deficiencies in the state and economic apparatus.

Another expression of *narodnost* in the Soviet media is the key role ascribed to readers' letters as 'a barometer of public opinion' (ibid., p.94). Since the October Revolution readers' letters have played an increasing role in enabling the expression of popular opinion. Today, a newspaper like *Pravda* receives thousands of letters each week, and must maintain a special department to process them. For reasons of space, only a small proportion of readers' letters to the media are published, but all, it is claimed by editorial committees, are read and passed on to the appropriate authorities if they contain a complaint or a useful suggestion for reform. Alforyov states that the Soviet media receive 60–70 million letters each year, and that about 12 million people (6 per cent of the population) have contributed to the press in one form or another (ibid., p. 168). In this way, he states, the Soviet media 'constitute a channel of two-sided communication. Establishing a return link from people to party they serve as a platform for the expression of popular opinion, and assist in the formation of that opinion' (ibid., p.79).¹²

Narodnost has important implications for the style and structure of news-values of the Soviet media in that they must above all be 'accessible' to the masses and reflect their 'genuine' interests as defined by the Party. For example, the Soviet media set aside several days throughout the year to honour groups of workers such as miners, steelworkers, teachers, and indeed journalists themselves. On Press Day, which falls on May 5th every year, the media print and broadcast material extolling the virtues of the journalistic profession and spelling out its duties and responsibilities to the Party and the state. This celebration of labour and its role in socialist construction represents the application to propaganda of the principle of *narodnost*, since it is intended both to honour and inspire 'the masses'.

Narodnost is also reflected in the time and space devoted to what the Soviets call 'economic news', or 'production propaganda'. In his 'Theses on Production Propaganda' Lenin notes that newspapers 'must be popular, in the sense of being accessible to the millions, but in no way fall into populism. Don't exclude the undeveloped worker, but gradually and surely enhance his development' (quoted in Alforyov, 1984, p.35). *Narodnost*, in this sense, meant writing for the audience and adhering to a structure of news-values which downgraded 'populist' matters in favour of 'production propaganda'—information about the construction of socialism. The implications of this for content were made clear by Lenin in 1919.

We must set to work systematically to create a press that will not entertain and fool the people with political sensation and trivialities, but which will submit the questions of everyday economic life to the people's judgement and assist in the serious study of these questions.

(1972, p.331)

The press was no longer to be 'mainly devoted to communicating the political news of the day' but was to become 'a serious organ for educating the mass of the people in economies' and 'give priority to labour questions in their immediately practical setting'.

Let there be ten times less newspaper material devoted to so-called current news, but let us have, distributed in hundred of thousands and millions of copies, a press that acquaints the whole population with the exemplary management of affairs in a few state labour communes which surpass the others...that is what should form the main content of our Soviet press.

(ibid., p.332)

'For the Soviet government', wrote Lenin, 'it is the organisation of labour...that is the chief, fundamental and urgent question of all social life' (ibid.). In their role as collective organisers, propagandists and agitators, the press were instructed to remember 'the importance of example', to serve collectively as an 'instrument of socialist construction' (ibid., p.337) and 'an organ for the economic reorganisation and re-education of the masses' (ibid., p.333).

In its essentials, this austere and strictly functional view of the role of the news media has dominated Soviet journalism since it was first articulated in this form by Lenin, resulting in the Soviet media's characteristic emphasis on the coverage of economic life above all else. Soviet journalists developed a system of news-values which emphasised the organisational functions of information. The news media, as the Party's most powerful means of communication with the masses, were to devote the largest proportion of their output to the problems of organising the economy and the social infrastructure. 'Economic news', defined in the widest sense as coverage of industry, services, the welfare state, the structure of management and the bureaucracy, etc., took precedence over all other categories of output.

In his classic study of the Soviet media, Alex Inkeles noted that 'the conception of what is news is everywhere clearly dependent on the social system' (1956, p.140). In the USSR, he could observe at the end of the 1940s, 'not events but social processes are treated as news and regarded as being newsworthy...Events are regarded as being news in so far as they can meaningfully be related to the process of socialist construction.'

Forty years later, although Soviet news-values have changed in significant respects, as we shall see, similar priorities are in evidence. Attempting to define the appropriate subjects of news coverage in the Gorbachev era, contemporary Soviet journalists cite Lenin's articles 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Power', 'On the Character of our Newspapers', and 'A Great Beginning' as the key texts, and quote approvingly Lenin's demand for 'a little less of the literary phrase, a little more of simple everyday affairs, of bread and coal!'¹³ The continuing influence of Lenin's views in this field can be seen clearly in any contemporary newspaper or television bulletin.

As a general rule economic news receives quantitative priority in the organisation of press and broadcast news. This rule is subject to revision only in the event of a major state or political occasion, such as a speech by the General Secretary, or a diplomatic visit to the USSR by a senior foreign delegation, when '*ofitsioze*' takes precedence. Otherwise, economic news dominates. Even during the Chernobyl crisis of April-May

1986, when events taking place in the USSR were making headline news throughout the world, routine economic affairs remained at the focus of Soviet media attention.

The content of a typical day's economic news can be illustrated by an edition of the main television news bulletin, *Vremya*, broadcast on March 1st, 1988. That day, *Vremya's* forty-minute bulletin began with a block of seven items of economic news. Characteristically, these items were linked by means of a slogan or 'rubric' expressing the Party's current propaganda themes. On March 1st the rubric declared 'Towards the 19th All-Union Party Conference' (due to take place in Moscow the following July). This rubric served to establish the approaching conference as an important rallying point for the productive efforts of the workers. In this way it contextualised the individual stories to follow within the overall 'process' of economic construction and progress.

The leading item of economic news on March 1st reported from the coalmining region of Ekibastuze where a competition was going on among the workers to overfulfil the planned output of coal by one million tons before the opening of the 19th Conference. The 'Magate' collective was 'at the forefront' of the competition. The reason for Magate's success was explained by reference to two factors. First, new rotary excavators were enabling a hugely increased output, and secondly, 'a big contribution is being made by leading communist Alexander Ivanovich Fedotov, whose personal output is already 50,000 tons in excess of the plan'. These themes—the potential contribution of new technology and the leading role of communists—are common in economic news of the Gorbachev era.

A second item reinforced this message, reporting from the Siberian city of Komsomolsk-na-Amur on how 'the steelworkers of the Amurstar factory will produce 2000 tons of steel and rolled metal more than the plan for the opening of the conference'. The correspondent went on to show, as in the previous item, how technological innovation could help in the achievement of these ambitious plans:

today, a new fuel is helping to get quality metal—natural gas from the island of Sakhalin. Using the wealth of the Sakhalin shelf is [part] of the long-term, state programme for the all-round development of the productive forces of the eastern economic region.

In the Soviet Union, as in the capitalist world, environmental problems have become a regular part of the news agenda. In this item the increasing Soviet awareness of ecological issues was expressed in the remark that 'factory economists and power specialists in this northern city are careful. They talk a lot about ecology, and the snow around the power generator is clean and white.' That ecological factors are an important aspect of successful economic organisation is now an unquestioned assumption of Soviet economic news.

These examples of 'positive' production propaganda typify the images of success and progress which largely make up the content of economic news. Following Lenin's principles, their prominence is related to their perceived organisational/educational function. The publicising of such 'good news' is believed to have an important 'demonstration effect' on the workforce as a whole, encouraging socialist emulation and improved productivity.

Glasnost

The last, but by no means least, of Lenin's principles to be discussed here, and the one which has become most familiar in the course of the reforms which have been taking place in the USSR since 1985, is that of 'openness' or 'publicity', expressed in Russian by the terms '*otkritost*' and, more popularly, '*glasnost*'.

The term *glasnost* can be dated to the reign of Tsar Nicholas I in the mid-nineteenth century, when it referred to 'an exchange of opinions within the bureaucracy about the country's much-needed social and economic transformation' (Gross, 1987, p.69). Soviet historians currently engaged in reclaiming the 'Leninist essence' of *glasnost* find Lenin's first use of the term in his seminal 1902 work, 'What is to be Done?' Here he 'first posed the question of *glasnost* as an indicator of democracy', referring to the need for 'openness' in the conduct of Party affairs.¹⁴

In relation to the press, *glasnost* was used by Lenin in two senses. After the revolution, as we have seen, Lenin argued that the role of the media in the era of socialist construction was to publicise and give voice to significant positive phenomena in Soviet economic life. This we can call 'positive' *glasnost*. 'Openness' and 'publicity' in coverage of positive phenomena would provide models for emulation throughout the economy.

'Positive' *glasnost* would also apply to social and cultural life. As historian Alexander Sovokin puts it: '*[glasnost]* is the popularisation of everything positive and good which has sprung up in the course of creating a new society, and of all authentic culture left behind by previous generations and civilisations'.¹⁵

For Lenin, however, *glasnost* also had a critical dimension. Criticism and self-criticism in relation to negative economic and social phenomena would help to maintain the revolutionary momentum necessary for successful socialist construction. For Lenin, suggests Sovokin, the media had to provide 'living examples of the repulsive and the attractive', organising a constant struggle against 'everything negative which remains from the old structure and has become manifest for one reason or another in the construction of the new'.

Gross notes that for Lenin, *glasnost* signified 'leadership-initiated and leadership-regulated criticism designed...to reverse undesirable socio-economic trends, accelerate economic development, and boost labour productivity. In the political realm, he saw the function of *glasnost* as a means to castigate bureaucratic malpractice and stimulate public participation in political life' (1987, p.70). The Soviet media, as Lampert notes, would exert 'considerable authority as an arm of the party apparatus, and...exert pressure on other agencies to get things done' (1985, p.134). In Lenin's own words:

Our first and main means of increasing the self-discipline of the working people and for passing from the old, good-for-nothing methods of work, and methods of shirking work, in capitalist society, must be the press, revealing shortcomings in the economic life of each labour commune, ruthlessly branding these shortcomings, frankly laying bare all the ulcers of our economic life, and thus appealing to the public opinion of the working people for the curing of these ulcers.

(1972, p.332)

Soviet journalism, then, was founded on commitments to objectivity, openness and a concern for the interests of, and accessibility to, the 'masses' of the new socialist state. Its partisanship was clearly signalled, as was its responsibility to be 'truthful'. We turn now to a consideration of how these commitments were met in practice.

From theory to practice— building the Soviet media

Lenin was involved in the production of several radical publications in the last years of the nineteenth century,¹ but the first truly 'Leninist' newspaper was *Iskra* (*The Spark*), set up after much pressure from Lenin and others in the RSDLP leadership as an 'engine of battle' against the 'economists' in the Party. The first issue was produced in Leipzig on December 11th, 1900, with Lenin as editor-in-chief.² In all Lenin edited twenty-nine issues before an organisational dispute prompted his resignation in November 1903³ and *Iskra* was taken over by what had by that time become known as the 'menshevik' wing of the party.⁴ While *Iskra* remained under the editorship of Lenin, it was used successfully as the 'transmission belt for directing Social Democratic activity and the framework upon which to build the future party' (Wildman, 1964, p.486).

In December 1904 Lenin and his 'bolshhevik' supporters, as they were now known, launched *Vperyod* (*Forward*) to compete with *Iskra* (by now considered to be anti-marxist) and carry on the ideological and organisational functions which the latter had originally been established to fulfil. It thus became 'the first Bolshevik newspaper' (Schapiro, 1970, p.113).

Iskra, *Vperyod* and the other publications of the social-democratic movement which appeared in the first years of the twentieth century were, in the political conditions of the time, illegal. They were often produced outside Russia by the many exiles, such as Lenin and Trotsky, who had been forced abroad by the tsarist regime. This underground press, and the organisations built up to distribute it inside Russia, were subject to constant harassment and closure. By 1912, however, changed circumstances made it possible for the RSDLP to consider producing its first *legal* daily newspaper.⁵

The idea for such a newspaper had been mooted by the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP in 1910, but Lenin, in the words of one historian, had been 'unenthusiastic and uncooperative' on the grounds that it would be expensive, impractical, and 'would give the workers the [false] impression that lasting political change could be obtained through legal, evolutionary means' (Elwood, 1972, p.355). Moreover, argues Elwood, since Lenin did not control the RSDLP in 1901, he would have been unable to control its newspaper.⁶ By 1912 Lenin had reversed his position, for two reasons. First, the Bolsheviks by then controlled the Party, and thus any press organ which it might produce; and secondly, political conditions in Russia had become sufficiently liberal to justify a certain amount of legal activity. At a meeting of the RSDLP on January 19th, 1912, the establishment of a legal daily newspaper was agreed in principle. The first issue of *Pravda* (*Truth*) appeared on April 12th, 1912, despite the fact that at this time Leon Trotsky was already publishing a journal by that name from exile in Zurich.⁷

Exiled in Paris, Lenin was not directly involved in the setting up of *Pravda*, a circumstance which led to some notable quarrels between him and the editorial board,

whose members frequently disagreed with Lenin's tactics and strategy.⁸ Elwood notes that 'relations between the Bolshevik leader and his famous newspaper were anything but smooth and harmonious' (ibid.). Nevertheless, *Pravda* became the most famous of all 'Leninist' media organs, and continues to be the official organ of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party: 'on *Pravda* were tried out most of the revolutionary methods, journalistic and otherwise, that later became standard Soviet mass communications theory and procedure'.⁹ From 1912 until it was banned by the Tsar's censors on July 5th, 1913, *Pravda* was the Bolsheviks' main instrument of organisation and ideological struggle. From 1913 until the overthrow of the tsarist regime in February 1917 it appeared only sporadically, sometimes under different names and subject always to censorship and political persecution.

After the February Revolution put an end to tsarist suppression of the media the Bolsheviks and other left-wing groups were again allowed to publish legally. And again, Lenin's relations with *Pravda* were somewhat strained. In the hectic months between the February and October revolutions of 1917 several of Lenin's contributions to the paper were rejected by an editorial board dominated, ironically, by a relatively unknown Bolshevik leader called Joseph Vissarionovich Dzugashvili—Stalin.

Stalin was appointed to the editorial board of *Pravda* on March 13th, 1917. By March 15th he had manoeuvred himself into a controlling position, along with two other Bolshevik leaders, Kamenev and Muranov. Medvedev writes that

once they had taken over *Pravda*, Stalin and Kamenev began to publish articles and other materials that did not reflect Lenin's line on the revolution but actually contradicted that line. The arbitrary rule of Stalin and Kamenev reached the point where they refused to print three of Lenin's 'Letters from Afar'. The one they did publish appeared in a distorted and abridged form.

(1971, p.8)

The October Revolution and the Bolshevisation of the media

The end of the absolutist monarchy and the establishment of the Provisional Government in February 1917 did not resolve the political and economic crisis afflicting Russia. On the contrary, it deepened through 1917, and as it did so the thoughts of the Bolshevik leaders turned to the question of what they would do if and when a Soviet Government achieved power.

Regarding the media the Bolsheviks at first said little in public, content to take advantage of the new liberalism. But on July 12th, 1917 the Provisional Government under Prime Minister Kerensky reintroduced censorship. *Pravda* was once again closed down, on the grounds that the Bolsheviks were planning a coup.

At the same time as these repressive measures were introduced the bourgeois press organised a campaign of 'lies and slanders' against the Bolsheviks, contributing significantly to the creation of an environment in which Lenin and other leaders were forced once again into hiding. From this point on, the 'problem' of the bourgeois press, and what to do about it, figured prominently in Lenin's writings, which began to express

particularly fierce hostility to such notions as 'freedom of the press'. Lenin's anger at and growing contempt for the bourgeois press in the wake of the smear campaign surrounding the 'July Days' are revealed in the following extract from his article, 'Thanks to Prince G.Y. Lvov', published on July 19th, 1917.

The proletariat will never resort to slander. They will close down the bourgeoisie's newspapers after openly declaring by law, by government decree, that the capitalists and their defenders are enemies of the people. The bourgeoisie, in the shape of our enemy, the government, and the petty bourgeoisie, in the shape of the Soviets, are afraid to say a single open and frank word about the ban on *Pravda*, about the reason for closing it down. The proletariat will tell the truth instead of resorting to slander. They will tell the peasants and everyone else the truth about the bourgeois newspapers and why they must be closed down.

(1972, p.185)

Some writers have argued that it was the experience of the 'July Days', rather than anything inherent to Lenin's materialism, which prompted his increasingly radical approach to the media issue. Prior to these events, as already noted, the Bolsheviks had said and written little on the subject of the media, and there was no evidence to suggest that in power they would suppress the bourgeois and opposition parties or their press. Resis notes that 'even on the eve of the October Revolution, Lenin neither anticipated nor advocated the establishment of a one-party dictatorship and its concomitant, a one-party press' (1977, p.283). Lenin clearly understood the value of press freedom to his own cause, and campaigned strongly for it in the pre-revolutionary period. Medvedev emphasises that just as press freedom 'was never even a debatable question' for Marx, Lenin 'from the very beginning of his revolutionary activity expressed his complete hostility to censorship' (1971, p.309). Resis adds that:

as long as the Bolshevik press was permitted to publish and circulate more or less freely, Lenin did not publicly advocate outright suppression of the 'counterrevolutionary' press. The most rigorous press restriction he advocated was the publication of a governmental newspaper, which by carrying commercial advertising, would presumably direct advertising revenues from the commercial press... The 'July Days', however, changed everything for Lenin.

(ibid., p.280)

Following the 'July Days' Lenin's media policy was undoubtedly radicalised, but as a materialist his rejection of liberal pluralist notions of press freedom was by 1917, as noted above, already well-established. In 1905 he had written to 'you bourgeois individualists' that:

your talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective 'freedom' based on the power of money, in a society in which the masses of working people live in poverty and the handful of

rich live like parasites...we socialists expose this hypocrisy and rip off the false labels...to contrast this hypocritically free literature, which is in reality linked to the bourgeoisie, with a really free one that will be *openly* linked to the proletariat.

(1972, p.150) (his emphasis)

As early as 1905, therefore, the notion of a *committed* 'literature' (press and other writing) was being presented as inherently superior to prevailing (bourgeois) notions of freedom.

In September 1917, as the Kerensky Government tottered, the newspaper *Rabochy Put*¹⁰ published an article by Lenin in which he argued that 'the capitalists call "freedom of the press" a situation in which censorship has been abolished and all parties freely publish all kinds of papers. In reality it is not freedom of the press, but freedom for the rich, for the bourgeoisie, to deceive the oppressed and exploited mass of the people' (1964a, p.380).

At the same time as he was becoming increasingly critical of the bourgeois press Lenin began to develop policy measures which would restrict its activities in the event of a Soviet Government coming to power. He proposed the setting up of a state monopoly on advertising as 'a simple, good and lawful means' of fighting 'this crying evil'. Such a measure, he argued, would deprive the bourgeois press of its main source of income, and thus assist in the development of a genuinely 'free' press.

Some may say this policy would mean infringing the freedom of the press. That is not true. It would mean extending and restoring freedom of the press, for freedom of the press means that all opinions of *all* may be freely published.

What do we have now? Now, the rich *alone* have this monopoly, and also the big parties. Yet if large *Soviet* newspapers were to be published, with all advertisements, it would be perfectly feasible to guarantee the expression of their opinion to a much greater number of citizens – say, to every group having collected a certain number of signatures. Freedom of the press would *in practice* become much more democratic, would become incomparably more complete as a result.

(*ibid.*, p.382) (his emphasis)

In the 'Draft Resolution on the Freedom of the Press', composed shortly after the October Revolution had taken place, Lenin dismissed the bourgeois notion of press freedom as 'freedom for the rich to publish and for the capitalist to control the newspapers, a practice which in all countries, even the freest, produced a corrupt press' (1964b, p.283). In the same text, he further elaborated the Bolshevik definition of 'press freedom'.

For the workers' and peasants' government, freedom of the press means liberation of the press from capitalist oppression, and public ownership of paper mills and printing presses; equal right for public groups of a certain size (say, numbering 10,000) to a fair share of newsprint stocks and a corresponding quantity of printers' labour.

(ibid.)

In his ‘Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat’, delivered to the First Congress of the Third International in 1921 Lenin condemned bourgeois ‘freedom of the press’ as ‘another of the principal slogans of “pure democracy”’.

This freedom is a deception while the best printing-presses and the biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists, and while capitalist rule over the press remains...In capitalist usage, freedom of the press means freedom of the rich to bribe the press, freedom to use their wealth to shape and fabricate so-called public opinion... Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the Communists are building, and in which there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the direct or indirect power of money, and no impediments in the way of any workingman (or group of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing-presses and public stocks of paper.

(1965, p.460)

Lenin, in short, had abandoned the notion of ‘press freedom’ in the liberal pluralist sense, insisting that it be seen in the context of the balance of class forces existing in society. In the USSR after his death similar arguments were deployed, as in the following comment by a leading Soviet sociologist of the media: ‘marxism-leninism has always been against the absolute, abstract freedom of the press. The conditions of capitalist society do not guarantee freedom of the press in general, but the freedom of the bourgeois press’ (Korobeinikov, 1983, p.70). And again: ‘socialism, rejecting bourgeois freedom of the press, which is to the advantage of only a small part of society, guarantees the freedom in which the overwhelming majority in the new society has an interest’ (ibid., p.71).

To implement this vision of freedom one of the first concrete measures adopted by the Bolshevik Government was a Decree on the Press, written by Lenin in his capacity as chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars and published in *Pravda* on November 10th, 1917. The Decree banned any press organ which advocated open opposition or insubordination to the Soviet authority, which ‘perverted the truth’ in its coverage of events, or which encouraged any activities of a criminal nature.

This Decree has been characterised as a deliberate and cynical attempt by Lenin and the Bolsheviks to ‘seize control of all channels of information’ (Salisbury, 1977, p.541), the better to impose their dictatorship on Soviet Russia. But the restrictions on the press were initially intended only as temporary measures. The Decree clearly stated that only the Council of People’s Commissars had the right to ban publications, and assured those who might have been concerned by the severity of the censorship which it implied that it was of a ‘temporary character and will be repealed by a special order on the restoration of normal conditions’ (Lenin, 1958, p.692).

In a preamble setting out the reasons for the measures it was argued that ‘everyone knows the bourgeois press is one of the most powerful weapons of the bourgeoisie. It

would be impossible to leave it in the hands of the enemy, especially at a time when the new order is being consolidated, as it is no less dangerous at such moments than bombs and bullets' (ibid., p.691). Again, it was stressed that the restrictions were not permanent, and that these 'temporary and extreme measures' would be reversed as soon as possible.

Other measures followed. On December 18th, 1917, a Revolutionary Tribunal on the Press was established, in order, as one Soviet media specialist puts it, to 'suppress the provocative activities of bourgeois newspapers' (Korobeinikov, 1983, p.72).¹¹ The Tribunal was empowered to investigate 'crimes and misdemeanours against the people carried out through the use of the press' (Lenin, 1958, p.692) and armed with considerable powers of sanction against offending publications. These powers included fining, imprisonment, exile and the confiscation of printing presses. 'False and distorted content on the phenomena of social life', and 'violations of Soviet laws on the press' would henceforth be dealt with harshly.

A third measure of major importance was the introduction on November 21st, 1917, of a state monopoly on advertising, depriving privately-owned newspapers of their main source of revenue.

Thus began the 'Bolshevisation' of the media in Soviet Russia: a process which by the autumn of 1918 had led to the virtual elimination of the privately-owned press in the republic. During 1917-18 some 3,200 publications ceased to exist. Many were closed down by the legal and administrative measures of the Soviet government. Others were simply unable to survive catastrophic falls in circulation and advertising revenue.

The first casualties of 'Bolshevisation' were the overtly anti-Soviet and anti-Bolshevik publications, but as the Civil War began and the situation of the government became more desperate, the non-Bolshevik, socialist parties were also squeezed out of the political process, their newspapers and journals banned or censored out of existence along with the bourgeois press. The process was accelerated by the participation of opposition groups in anti-Bolshevik military activity during the Civil War, or attempted coups such as that staged by the Left Social-Revolutionaries in July 1918.¹²

By March 1919 the country's entire media apparatus was operated or controlled by the Bolsheviks. The media system had been reduced to what Resis calls a 'one-party press' (1977, p.295). By the summer of 1922 the Bolsheviks had banned all opposition parties.

Discordant notes

The fact that these measures were never repealed under Lenin's administration was not the responsibility of the Bolsheviks, he later argued, but of the bourgeois press itself, which had chosen to repudiate Soviet power completely: 'the capitalist class adopted the tactics of forcing us into a desperate and relentless struggle, and that compelled us to destroy the old relations to a far larger extent than we had at first intended' (1972, p.203). Lenin cited the state monopoly on advertising as an example of a measure intended to make the transition to new social relations as gradual as possible:

breaking up as little of the old as possible...it implied that the proletariat, which had won political power, assumed that there would be...not the abolition of the private press, but the establishment of a certain amount of

state control...It assumed that privately owned newspapers would continue to exist as a general rule, that an economic policy requiring private advertisements would continue, and that private property would remain—that a number of private establishments which needed advertising and advertisements would continue to exist.

(*ibid.*)

Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks' media policies were denounced by the bourgeois newspapers and others most seriously affected by them. Neither indeed were they uniformly popular with the Bolshevik movement and its supporters. There were some who regarded 'Bolshevisation', both of the media and of the political apparatus in general, with suspicion.

On November 10th, 1917, the respected socialist writer Maxim Gorky used his own newspaper, *Novaya Zhizn*, to condemn the Press Decree published that day in *Pravda*, accusing the Bolsheviks of 'having forced the proletariat to agree to abolish freedom of the press' (1968, p.87). The next day he wrote that 'the throat of the press has been temporarily squeezed by the "new" regime which is so shamefully using the old means of strangling freedom of speech' (*ibid.*, p.90).

Between May 10th and May 14th, 1918, several non-Bolshevik newspapers were suppressed or fined. In *Novaya Zhizn* Gorky complained that 'the Soviet regime has again throttled several newspapers hostile to it' (*ibid.*, p.182). In evident disgust he continued:

it is useless to say that such a method of fighting with enemies is dishonest; it is useless to remind you that under the monarchy respectable people unanimously considered the closing of newspapers an underhand business; it is all useless, since the concept of honesty and dishonesty is apparently outside the competence and interests of a regime foolishly confident that it can establish a new state system on the foundations of the old—on arbitrariness and coercion.

Such means, Gorky argued, served only to compromise revolutionary democracy and create political martyrs. This, he reasoned with some foresight, would fuel counter-revolution and provide justification for 'future vileness, a vileness which will turn not only against the entire democracy, but primarily against the working class; the working class will be the first to pay and it will pay more than anyone for the stupidity and errors of its leaders' (*ibid.*, p.183).

Opposition to restrictions on the press was expressed at the highest levels of the Bolshevik Party organisation. When Lenin presented his 'Draft Resolution' to the Central All-Russian Committee, Kamenev and Zinoviev, two of its leading members, resigned. Anatoly Lunacharsky, an influential Bolshevik theorist with a special interest in art and cultural matters, attempted to resign from the Council of People's Commissars but was dissuaded from doing so.

In 1921 a report was delivered to the Central Committee of the Party which argued that freedom of the press should be restored. After all, pointed out its author, the Civil War had been won, and the emergency which had necessitated the imposition of

restrictions had passed. Not so, replied Lenin. First, he rejected the view that 'press freedom' no longer existed in the Soviet republic.

The 'freedom of the press' slogan became a great world slogan at the close of the Middle Ages and remained so up to the nineteenth century. Why? Because it expressed the ideas of the progressive bourgeoisie, i.e., its struggle against kings and priests, feudal lords and landowners.

No country in the world has done as much to liberate the masses from the influence of *priests* and *landowners* as the RSFSR has done, and is doing. We have been performing *this* function of 'freedom of the press' *better than anyone else* in the world.

(1972, p.199) (his emphasis)

The report's call for a relaxing of the restrictions on the press was rejected on the grounds that class enemies would use the freedom to publish as a means of attacking the Soviet state.

The bourgeoisie (all over the world) is still very much stronger than we are. To place in its hands yet *another* weapon like freedom of political organisation (equals freedom of the press, for the press is the core and foundation of political organisation) means facilitating the enemy's task, means helping the class enemy.

(ibid.)¹³

Until the end of his life, Lenin's position on the media would remain one of hostility towards any suggestion of a return to 'that bourgeois falsehood known as "freedom of the press"'.¹⁴

The Soviet media and the cult of the personality

The period of the New Economic Policy which followed the end of the Civil War and 'War Communism' saw a limited reintroduction of market economic principles in Soviet Russia. Paralleling this in the ideological sphere, the restrictions on press freedom introduced immediately after the Revolution were temporarily relaxed. Private publishing houses and non-Bolshevik newspapers were re-established. Within the Party, however, an opposing trend was evident. At the 10th Party Congress in 1921 a resolution prohibiting 'factionalism' and suppressing inner-party debate was urged on the delegates by Lenin and subsequently adopted. In 1922 the dissenting journal *Economist* was closed down and leading contributors were expelled from the Party.

Irrespective of how one judges the wisdom and motivation of Lenin's policies in relation to political pluralism and media freedom, few historians of the Soviet Union would dispute that they were arrived at from positions of high political principle. There can be no doubt, however, that by structurally subordinating the Soviet media to the Communist Party Lenin had put in place a media apparatus which would inevitably reflect the changing nature of the Party in power and which would be vulnerable to the

exploitation and abuse at the hands of Stalin and his supporters which followed Lenin's death in 1924.

The reasons for the rise of Stalin and his supporters to positions of dominance in the Soviet Communist Party are still the subject of debate among western historians, and increasingly now among Soviet historians themselves.¹⁵ For our purposes, the story must necessarily be brief.

After Lenin's death a struggle for control of the Party apparatus began. Through a combination of his own organisational skills and the tactical ineptitude of his rivals, Trotsky and Bukharin, the struggle was won by Joseph Stalin. As his influence grew from the mid-1920s on, the principle of Party control over the media championed by Lenin was extended and intensified so that by 1929 'there was not a single non-Party publication left nor any private publishing houses that could have served as vehicles for opposition views' (Medvedev, 1971, p.187). As Stalin gradually manoeuvred himself into a position of dominance during the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Soviet media increasingly came to function as the instrument of his personal power.

When Stalin achieved one-man rule he extended his personal control of all sources of information to an unheard of degree. Party members and citizens in general were given no other information than Stalin and his aides thought necessary. The idea of a proletarian monopoly on the press was perverted; freedom of speech was simply liquidated. The press was closed not only to enemy criticism and mudslinging, which was quite proper, but also to criticism from Party positions of the political, economic and cultural perversions that abounded in the years of the cult...He turned the Party's monopoly of the press against the Party and the people.

(ibid., p.371)

As Stalinism took hold, Lenin's journalistic principles were put to the service of an increasingly bureaucratic and despotic Party leadership. Medvedev describes how the principles of partiality (*partiinnost*) and objectivity (*obyektivnost*) were distorted.

Properly understood, the principle of 'partyiness' requires a writer and artist to defend the interests of the masses, to struggle for socialist and communist ideals and against the faults that hinder realisation of those ideals. In short, the principle requires a truthful picture of reality. But during the cult, 'partyiness' was taken to mean subordination of writers and artists to the decisions of various Party officials...

'Partiinost' and objectivity were supposed to coincide, because the proletariat and its Party do not need to conceal their shortcomings or to distort the truth. That is basically true, but it is also true that certain groups and strata in the Party, and certain individuals who usurped the right to speak for the Party, had an interest in concealing the truth. These officials did not want objectivity; they maintained their power and privileges by lies and demagogery. That was the origin of the distortions that were covered with talk about the interests of the people. The little

bosses of the arts only talked of 'partiinnost'; in fact they were dominated by the most cynical pragmatism: what was to their advantage was true.

(*ibid.*, p.526)

The worker-peasant correspondents (RABSELKOR), established in accordance with the principle of *narodnost* as a means of ensuring communication between the Party and the people, and of encouraging mass participation in the administration of social and economic affairs, were transformed into agents of the Stalinist police state. Often using their positions to inform on so-called 'enemies of the state', the special correspondents became known as the '*lying-rabselkor*' (*izherabselkor*).¹⁶

The principle of *glasnost* in news coverage was also subverted. Soviet historians argue that 'the first symptoms' of a retreat from the 'Leninist' principle of *glasnost* were evident as early as 1924, and 'the turn to [its] liquidation' was made in 1927.¹⁷ *Glasnost* was 'practically eliminated by the mid-1930s',¹⁸ as the Soviet media became the instrument of Stalin's personal power. As Gorbachov has put it, 'the printed word became the obedient instrument of authoritarian and arbitrary bureaucratic rule'.¹⁹

During the period of the personality cult, journalists, like other cultural workers in Soviet society, were intimidated by the prevailing political atmosphere into relative ideological and stylistic uniformity. Lenin's insistence on criticism and 'openness' in the Soviet media was largely ignored. Medvedev notes that 'there was a steady reduction in the publicity attending Party and state affairs' (*ibid.*). Criticism of the kind envisaged by Lenin was largely absent from the Soviet media under Stalin, although he publicly supported *glasnost*, 'expressed disapproval of Western-style investigative reporting, and...specifically opposed any press criticism of mid-level enterprise managers and party apparatchiks' (Gross, 1987, p.71). In general, negative phenomena ceased to be reported, unless it was in the interests of Stalin's group to uncover economic 'sabotage', political 'deviations', or other 'antisocial' manifestations which could be used to advantage in the innerParty struggle. Gross argues that Stalin used the principle of *glasnost* to 'stage and manipulate media campaigns against his opponents'. Thus, '*glasnost* served not only as a vehicle for reforming the bureaucracy, but as a pretext for eliminating political opponents and consolidating power' (*ibid.*).²⁰ The viciousness of the language used by the media against alleged enemies of the state such as 'Trotskyists' and 'Bukharinites' was matched only by the extravagance of the media praise heaped upon Stalin and the other political leaders.

Media organs were also given the role of explaining to the population the principles behind the purges and the reasons for their severity.²¹

The period of the personality cult lasted for more than twenty years, until Stalin's death in 1953. There followed a brief power struggle between his would-be successors, from which Nikita Khrushchev emerged triumphant. Whether from genuine political motives, or to gain personal advantage in his battle with the Stalinist Party apparatus, Khrushchev denounced the cult of the personality and its negative effects on Soviet society at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956. In the ensuing 'thaw' he exposed the 'violations of socialist legality' which had occurred during Stalin's rule and ushered in a period of relative liberalisation in all spheres of Soviet life, including the mass media. For Khrushchev, the media remained 'our chief ideological weapon...called upon to rout the enemies of the working class' (quoted in Inkeles, 1968, p.296), but it would do so

without the 'clichés...generalisations...and political jargon' of the Stalinist era (quoted in International Press Institute, 1959, p.16). Khrushchev urged that 'firmly rooted stereotypes and well-worn methods whereby everything is written according to a single pattern must be vigorously driven from the newspaper pages... Material must be more varied and more thought must be given to content and form of presentation' (ibid., p. 15).

In 1956 a Union of Journalists was formed in an attempt to revive the media profession and encourage its members to be more assertive and politically autonomous. In the same year a new press organ, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (*Soviet Russia*), was founded to produce a more lively, less clichéd and ponderous form of news output. By 1959 observers of the Soviet media were able to report that

the presentation of Soviet newspapers has become generally more lively and their contents more varied...one finds quite often in the Soviet press serial stories and light or humorous articles on the more negative aspects of Soviet reality. Crime reports have become more frequent and newspapers briefly report the condemnation of thieves, murderers, speculators, and 'hooligans'.

(ibid., p.18)

The Khrushchev reforms did not alter the basic relationship between the media, the Party and the state established by Stalin, but sought to encourage what Spechler calls 'social pragmatism'—criticism and dissent intended to improve the operation of the Soviet system; and 'cultural liberalism'—the rejection of Stalinist orthodoxy in cultural expression (Spechler, 1982, p.9). This proved, nevertheless, too radical a step for Khrushchev's colleagues. His removal from the leadership in 1964 and the consolidation of the Brezhnev–Kosygin regime in 1966 halted the 'thaw'. A return to Stalinist orthodoxy followed which, if it was not enforced by the brutal methods of the purges, had to be respected if a media professional was to have any hope of achieving his or her career ambitions. During this period of 'stagnation', as it is now routinely referred to in the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev became the focus of a new personality cult. As in the years of fully-fledged Stalinism, atrophy in the Party apparatus was reflected in media output, while triumphalism and complacency co-existed with a formal commitment to *glasnost*, as expressed in a Central Committee resolution of April, 1976, which called on the media 'to make public (*predavat glasnost*) the facts of bureaucratism and red tape' (CPSU, 1987, p. 71). A further resolution in 1979 instructed the media 'to guarantee the practical realisation of the Leninist principle of *glasnost*' and 'to further the development of principled, open and constructive criticism and self-criticism' (ibid., pp.91–2). Leonid Brezhnev's political report to the 26th Congress of the CPSU in 1981 called for 'the restructuring (*perestroika*)...of many aspects and spheres of ideological work' (ibid., p.95). His subsequent remarks are surprisingly similar, in tone and content, to those for which Gorbachov would later become famous.

It is very important that propaganda does not evade sensitive themes, and is not afraid to touch on so-called difficult questions. The policy of our Party is clear. We are prepared to reply to any questions posed by the Soviet people. We must do this more firmly, remembering that if we do

not reply to them, the enemies of our country will use them as slanders on socialism.

And there is another thing. All ideological and educational work must be conducted in a lively and interesting way, without clichéd phrases and the routine adoption of prepared formulas. The Soviet person is educated and cultured, and when they begin to speak to him in banal, official jargon, when general phrases are substituted for concrete connections with life, he simply switches off the television or radio, and puts the newspaper aside...Each article in a newspaper or journal, each broadcast on television or radio, must be viewed as a serious exchange with people who await not only a truthful and effective account of the facts, but a profound analysis of them, and serious generalisations.

Notwithstanding these expressions of support for *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the media, Roy Medvedev could observe in the 1970s that the Soviet people were

ill-informed on the simplest level about things going on in their own country and are even more ignorant about events in the world at large. The overwhelming majority of Soviet citizens have no available means of finding things out; besides being a source of irritation and discontent, this also results in an extremely distorted view of the world.

(1977, p.202)

In terms which anticipate the phraseology of the later *glasnost* campaign Medvedev insisted that 'it is in no way a question of destroying the values of the October Revolution. Rather, we must restore and purify them; they must be reinforced and built upon' (ibid., p.332).

Building the apparatus

As the 'Bolshevisation' of the Soviet Union began in 1917, so too did the planned development of a new media system. The organisational and ideological functions allotted to the Party media by Lenin in the struggle against tsarism took on even greater importance as the Bolsheviks set about the task of socialist construction. The Soviet media, now completely nationalised, were 'cast in the role of defending the new government and helping it supervise the state' (Hopkins, 1970, p.66).

The resources thereafter devoted to both press and broadcasting in the USSR bear witness to the early Bolsheviks' conviction, shared by all subsequent leaders of the CPSU, that the survival of the Soviet state depended to a large extent on the exploitation of the mass media's potential as an ideological instrument. As Barghoorn notes, a major tenet of Soviet political theory from the beginning has been that 'the success and very survival of communism as a movement depend largely upon the energy and skill of communists as communicators' (1964, p.4). This belief has been matched by a material commitment which, despite the other calls on scarce resources throughout the Soviet

Union's brief and traumatic history, has produced what is perhaps the largest and most complex media system in the world.

The press

The country inherited by the Bolsheviks was a vast, underdeveloped territory, its population a heterogeneous mix of social classes and ethnic groupings. If the media in Soviet Russia were to perform their prescribed functions they would have to reflect the diverse needs of that population. To this end the Party called for differentiation in the media.

During the Civil War newspapers were criticised for failing to reflect the needs and interests of their readers. The 8th Congress of the Party, held in March 1919, considered that 'the general weakness of almost all of our Party and soviet publications is their isolation from local... political work. The provincial party and soviet press hardly illuminate local life' (CPSU, 1987, p.183). A Party circular issued to local organisations on April 4th, 1921, identified a number of 'deficiencies' in the work of the local press, the most important of which were considered to be:

1) newspapers are filled with general discourse and rarely participate in the construction of local life, 2) newspapers are not popular enough: apart from the prevalence of abstract over practical content, they present material in the form of long articles with muddled phrases that are difficult to understand, and 3) newspapers aren't acting as platforms for their readers, they don't have links with the worker-peasant masses, or with local organisations and institutions.

(*ibid.*, p.186)

'Comrades' were reminded that 'the press is a mighty instrument of propaganda, agitation and organisation, and an indispensable means of influencing the broadest masses'. To improve the effectiveness of this instrument the 12th Congress of the Party, held in 1923, adopted the following resolution:

In the interests of correctly catering for a diverse reading mass it is essential to carry out the differentiation of newspapers. For each basic stratum of reader it is essential to create a special type of newspaper. Considering the newspaper system as a whole, the Party must distinguish more or less precisely between spheres of activity so that each newspaper can be oriented to the advantage of a specific stratum of the reading mass.

(*ibid.*, p.201)

A Central Committee Decree of August 11th, 1930 proposed a network of regional newspapers, differentiated according to what Buzek calls 'the territorial-production structure' of the Soviet political and administrative apparatus (1964, p.31). In essence, the structure of the Soviet press was to reflect the organisation of the Soviet economy and

political apparatus into 'production units', resulting in a pyramidal media structure which today is organised on four administrative levels.

At the pyramid's apex are the most important press organs—the central, all-union publications, so-called because they are produced in Moscow and distributed throughout the USSR. They are published by the highest-level organisations of the relevant bodies, such as the Central Committee of the CPSU (*Pravda*), the Supreme Soviet of the Council of Ministers (*Izvestia*), and the Central Council of the all-union trades union movement (*Trud*).

On the next level of the pyramid are the republican media. Each of the fifteen union republics has its own apparatus of Party, government and public organisations, with corresponding media organs affiliated to them. The Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party publishes *Zarya Vostoka* (*Dawn of the East*), while *Communist* is the organ of the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee.

The next tier of organisation is the *oblast*, a word which has no exact equivalent in English but can be translated approximately as 'provincial'.

Finally, there are the regional (*rayonny*) and city levels of organisation.

These are the main administrative divisions of the Soviet press apparatus. In addition, a large number of newspapers are published at the level of individual towns, villages, collective farms, and factories. Sometimes these are no more than broadsheets, known as 'wall newspapers', but they are regarded by the Party as important none the less in covering the nitty-gritty problems and events of economic and social life at the local level. In general terms, wherever the Soviet people gather together in significant numbers to live and work, newspapers are produced.

A second criterion of differentiation encouraged by the early Bolsheviks was that of nationality and ethnicity. The development of a media system which catered for the many national and ethnic groups who inhabited the USSR was considered desirable by the Bolsheviks for both theoretical and practical reasons.

The Bolsheviks, both before and after the Revolution, laid great stress on the right of national self-determination within the framework of a socialist state. After the Revolution this became an issue of immediate practical concern. The Soviet republic contained a variety of European and Asian cultures, each with its own linguistic and cultural traditions. One of the early priorities of the Soviet Government, entrusted to its first Commissar for Nationalities, Joseph Stalin, was to unite this population and win their support for the aims of the Revolution.²² Stalin and the other Bolshevik leaders recognised the role which the media could play in this task, and the 12th Congress of the Party instructed the Central Committee 'to develop mass party literature in the native languages' of the republics.

In 1918, Soviet newspapers were publishing in twenty languages. Today the figure is fifty-five. The degree of linguistic diversification which characterises the Soviet media contrasts sharply with the situation before the Revolution, and is often portrayed as one of the main achievements of Soviet media policy. As Inkeles notes, 'whereas Tsarist policy discouraged the development of native cultures and the use of native languages as media of public communication, the Soviet system has made it possible for virtually every minor nationality group to have its native language press' (1956, p.47).

The media were also differentiated along class and social lines. At the time of the Revolution, 80 per cent of the population of Soviet Russia were peasants. As noted

above, the great majority of both workers and peasants to whom the Bolsheviks were appealing for support were illiterate or practically so. Consequently, the Bolsheviks were required to develop an 'agitational' press, in the sense of newspapers which would present 'one or a few ideas...to a mass of people'. Newspapers had to be produced which were intelligible to a poorly educated population, and could thus 'agitate' with simple ideas rather than theorise on points of principle. The result of this policy was the appearance of newspapers such as *Byednota (The Poor Peasant)*, established in March 1918 and which had achieved a circulation of 750,000 by January 1920; *Batrak (The Farm Hand)*; and *Krestyanskaya Gazeta (The Peasant's Paper)*. Articles in these newspapers were characteristically short and simple, rarely more than thirty lines in length.

As the educational level of the population grew in the post-revolutionary period, and press differentiation on this basis began to lose its relevance, the specific concerns of the large rural population continued to be catered for in newspapers such as *Syelskaya Zhizn (Rural Life)*.

When the Civil War had been won and Soviet power had achieved a degree of stability, the media were assigned the task of assisting in the strategy of rapid industrialisation put forward by the 14th Congress of the Party in December 1925. Newspapers and journals began to appear which were directed at specific sections of industry and which concentrated on the specific problems of their respective readerships. In the Soviet Union today such publications include *Socialist Industry*, aimed particularly at Soviet managers; *Water Transport* and *Air Transport*, for workers in the transport industry; the *Teacher's Newspaper*, and *Journalist*, the monthly magazine of the Union of Journalists.

As in the capitalist countries, the Soviet media are differentiated along age and demographic lines, and in accordance with the diverse extra-curricular and leisure interests of the modern Soviet population. The aims of newspapers such as *Soviet Sport* and *Chess* are self-explanatory. There are newspapers and journals for women, for young people and old, and for those interested in music and literature, fashion and art.

By the end of 1918, the first full year of revolutionary government, 884 Party and Soviet newspapers were being published, with a total print run of 2.7 million copies.²³ Today, more than 8,000 newspapers are published in the USSR, and 1,500 journals. Newspaper circulation stands at approximately 180 million copies, with an average of 400 copies per 1,000 of the population.

Broadcasting

The history of broadcasting in the Soviet Union is one of rapid early development in the pioneering spirit, followed by a steady expansion, slow by comparison with that of the broadcasting systems of the advanced capitalist countries, but made more remarkable in the context of the formidable economic and geographical constraints faced by Soviet planners. The material and human losses suffered during the Civil and Great Patriotic wars imposed limitations on the development of all Soviet media, but broadcasting, as a high-technology, capital-intensive industry, was a considerable drain on scarce resources.

Nevertheless, the development of a broadcasting system was seen as a priority by Soviet leaders from the early days of the Soviet republic.²⁴

The widespread illiteracy of the Soviet population in the immediate post-Revolutionary period was a sociological fact of life which encouraged among the Bolsheviks an early recognition of the social significance of broadcasting as a mass information medium. To Lenin, radio was a 'newspaper without paper', as he wrote in a letter in 1920 to the director of the Nizhnegorodsky radio-laboratory where plans for a mass broadcasting network were being laid. In the letter he expressed 'our profound gratitude and satisfaction to you concerning the great work you are doing on radio-broadcasting', and assured the director of 'any and every support in this and similar work' (quoted in Korobeinikov, 1983, p.74). Here was a medium which could transmit the contents of newspapers to large masses of people without the necessity that they should be able to read.

To exploit the potential of radio to the full the Bolsheviks poured as much money and expertise into its development as economic conditions would allow, and in 1929 the first Five Year Plan of construction in the radio industry was adopted. On January 31st, 1933 the Council of People's Commissars adopted a resolution setting up an 'all-union committee for radiofication and broadcasting' to organise and administer the system. Local committees were also established. By 1948, all-union radio was broadcasting on three channels with an average daily output of forty-five hours. In the Soviet Union today there are five all-union radio channels, and hundreds of local services.

The development of Soviet television began in the 1930s.²⁵ The first experimental transmissions took place on May 1st, 1931, using the disc-system designed by the Austrian P. Hipkov, and a regular service began on March 10th, 1939, broadcasting to a mere 100 television sets in the Moscow region. Viewers on that occasion saw film of the opening of the 18th Party Congress.

In the USSR, as in other countries, the development of television was interrupted by the Second World War, but in the first post-war Five Year Plan, adopted by the Supreme Soviet on March 18th, 1946, the expansion of the broadcasting apparatus was identified as a priority. The transmitting capacity of the radio network was to be increased by 75 per cent, the television centre in Moscow was refitted, and new telecentres were built in Leningrad, Kiev and Sverdlovsk. By the end of 1955, telecentres were under construction in many of the republican capitals and major cities.

Television broadcasting on 625 lines began on June 16th, 1949, and by 1950 there were more than 100,000 television receivers in the Moscow region alone. Colour broadcasting began on October 1st, 1967, using the SECAM system developed jointly with the French.

Television did not move to the forefront as a mass medium in the USSR until the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1960 and 1981 the number of domestic TV sets increased from 4.8 million to 75 million, and in the 1980s the Soviet audience began to identify television, rather than the press, as their main source of news and information. Today, television broadcasting covers by far the greatest part of a country incorporating one sixth of the world's land mass and eleven time zones, although the size of the country and the inaccessibility of some of its population centres meant that at the end of the 1980s some 30 million people were still unable to receive any television whatsoever. The Five Year

Plan adopted by the 27th Congress of the CPSU in 1986 identified the bringing of this section of the population into the orbit of television as a major priority.

The same principles of differentiation which structured the development of the Soviet press have acted on the broadcasting system, within the limits imposed by technological factors. Today, Soviet television broadcasts in forty-five union languages, and radio in seventy-one. Each republic has its own broadcasting network, and the larger republics have further regional differentiation.

Controlling the apparatus

Four mechanisms have traditionally been employed to ensure that the output of this vast apparatus reflects and reinforces the policies and objectives of the Party leadership at any given time. These include the Party's right to grant licences, finance, and access to media facilities; its monopoly of the process of media policy-making; its control over the selection of senior media workers; its direction and supervision of journalistic training; and finally, if all of this fails to produce the desired result, the use of censorship.

The 'subordination' of the media to the Party, as the 'leading' and until recently only legally-recognised political force in the country, began at the very highest level, and was delegated downwards through the state and Party apparatus.

Media policy matters and general priorities in areas such as news output are decided by the Politburo of the Central Committee, the Party's ruling body. Direct political responsibility for overseeing the media's activities and ensuring that the Politburo line is implemented belongs to various departments of the Central Committee Secretariat, the most important being the Ideology Department.

As presently organised the Ideology Department has a Mass Media Sub-Department, incorporating responsibility for the press, broadcasting and book publishing. In 1989 the Head of Ideology, A.S. Kopto, stated that the main task of the Mass Media Sub-Department was to ensure the 'implementation of the CCCPSU guidelines on the leadership of the mass media and on increasing the efficiency of their work'.²⁶ The Ideology and Propaganda Departments take general decisions on the financing, staffing and content of the media as a whole, while certain categories of media are supervised by other departments of the Central Committee Secretariat. Publications intended for export are overseen by the International Department. The Department of Science and Educational Institutions supervises scientific publications, and the Administrative Organs Department is responsible for specialised legal publications. Military newspapers and journals are answerable to the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy, which has the status of a Central Committee Secretariat department.

This structure is replicated at local level, with each republic, regional and district Party committee having its corresponding departments with responsibility for the media.

The Secretariat's daily supervision of the apparatus is delegated to two groups: GLAVLIT, the official censorship agency; and senior media personnel.

Before the Gorbachov era the Soviet media tended to be portrayed in the west as subject to exceptionally severe censorship. In fact, as Alex Inkeles could observe more than thirty years ago, censorship in the USSR 'does not differ in kind from the surveillance exercised over subordinate units in any hierarchical organisation' (1956,

p.187), including those which make up many media organisations in the capitalist countries. Inkeles continues:

Censorship assumes a given relation between two distinct bodies: a government agency which exercises the censorship, and a body of newspapers which is not part of the government apparatus but are independent organs of opinion for either private owners or political parties. This distinction breaks down in the Soviet Union [because] the press is essentially part of the government apparatus.

(*ibid.*)

Buzek agreed with this assessment when, towards the end of the Khrushchev period, he suggested that ‘censorship as a governmental, bureaucratic institution does exist...but it stands at the bottom in the hierarchy of the means of control and supervision’ (1964, p.113). At the height of the Brezhnev era, Rand Institute scholars observed that the Soviet media system was organised in such a way as to necessitate ‘limited direct intervention...the Soviet censorship offices play a relatively minor role as instruments of political control; that is the job of the chief editor’ (Dzirkals *et al*, 1982, p.vi).²⁷

Chief editors, and other senior media workers such as the chairmen of TASS and GOSTELRADIO, are appointed by the Politburo and Central Committee Secretariats. These personnel are often purely political appointees, with little or no background in journalism.²⁸ They attend regular briefing sessions of the Central Committee, and act as the Party’s ideological watchdogs in the newsroom.

The link between the Party and senior media workers is institutionalised and strengthened by the cooption of chief editors and senior journalists on to leading Party committees. At the 27th Congress of the CPSU, journalists elected to the Central Committee of the Party included the chief editors of *Pravda*, *Kommunist* (an important theoretical journal), *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, and the chairman of GOSTEL-RADIO.²⁹ Staff of *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and *Sovetskaya Rossiya* were elected as candidate members of the Central Committee, which means that they will probably achieve full membership in the future. Several editors were elected on to the Party’s Review Committee, a major policy-making body. At regional level 160 media workers were elected to corresponding Party committees at the last round of regional congresses.

The close relationship between the Party hierarchy and leading media personnel represented by these figures is one of the most important factors in ensuring that for more than seventy years the output of the Soviet media has conformed to the Party’s requirements. Inkeles’ observation of more than thirty years ago still applies: ‘the party’s security in the political reliability of Soviet editors is the guarantee of its security in the political reliability of the newspapers themselves’ (1959, p.178).

Glasnost, perestroika and Soviet journalism

By November 1982, when Leonid Brezhnev died and was succeeded as General Secretary by Yuri Andropov, the features of Soviet journalism criticised by Roy Medvedev in the 1970s had become a source of more than ‘irritation and discontent’. The neo-Stalinist approach to news favoured by the Brezhnev administration was coming into increasing conflict with processes going on abroad and in the USSR, contributing to the worsening of the economic, political and ideological problems by then becoming evident to even the most complacent in the Party leadership.

As the Brezhnev era came to an end the Soviet Union, like other countries, was beginning to be confronted by the potentially dislocating effects of a global information revolution. Having enjoyed a near monopoly in the production and distribution of mass information and propaganda for several decades the CPSU now found that monopoly increasingly being undermined by alternatives to officially approved information sources. These included imported video cassettes, foreign radio broadcasts (with satellite television on the horizon),¹ *samizdat* publications, and expanding opportunities for Soviet citizens to make contact with foreigners. At the same time western leaders were making increasingly effective use of global information networks in order to conduct propaganda warfare against the USSR and its policies. Against this background the traditional Soviet approach to news and information was becoming untenable, as the Korean Airlines and Chernobyl crises showed.² Soviet news was losing credibility and legitimacy.

On another level, the successful introduction of computer and information technology to the Soviet economy—essential if competitiveness and productivity are ever to match those of the advanced capitalist societies—was inconceivable in the Brezhnevian cultural environment. A society which would not grant its citizens access to photocopiers could hardly expect them to develop the personal initiative necessary to shake off the stagnation of the Brezhnev years.

Gorbachov’s *glasnost*

The ideological rehabilitation of the principle of *glasnost*, after ‘half a century of virtual silence’, is dated by Soviet media sociologist Leonid Onikov to a speech delivered by Mikhail Gorbachov on the December 10th, 1984.³ In the speech Gorbachov reminded his audience of party workers that the Soviet citizen was a person ‘of growing cultural and educational standards, who has lived through much’.⁴ The collective experience of seventy years of socialist construction had produced a generation which ‘won’t accept simplistic answers to questions, and keenly senses the falsehoods produced by an inability or fear to reveal the real contradictions of socialist development...To that person, we are bound to speak only the truth.’ *Glasnost*, he continued:

is an integral aspect of socialist democracy and a norm of all public life. Extensive, timely and candid information is an indication of trust in people and of respect for their intelligence, feelings and ability to comprehend various events on their own...*Glasnost* in the work of Party and state agencies is an effective means of combating bureaucratic distortions and obliges people to take a more thoughtful approach to...the rectification of shortcomings and deficiencies. In large part the persuasiveness of propaganda...depends on this...We should respond promptly and effectively to questions posed by world development and the course of the struggle and competition between the two opposing systems and promptly make adjustments of one sort or another in our ideas and practice when life so requires.

Partly as a consequence of the favourable impression made by this speech, Gorbachov became General Secretary of the CPSU in March 1985.⁵ At the epochal Central Committee Plenum of the following April (hereafter referred to as the April Plenum) Gorbachov launched the *glasnost* campaign. Since the April Plenum, and drawing principally on the writings of V.I. Lenin, the Soviet Government has developed an information policy which promises nothing less than 'freedom of the spoken and printed word...a real socialist pluralism of opinions...the open exchange of ideas and interests' and 'legal guarantees for the rights of the minority'.⁶ In a study published too late for its author to have foreseen the 'post-April' reforms,⁷ we find the prediction that 'if there is to be an information revolution in the Soviet Union, it will not take place with the approval of the Party' (Shanor, 1985, p.3). The notion of 'information revolution' is, however, eminently suitable to describe the totality of the changes which the Party led by Gorbachov is attempting to implement by means of the *glasnost* campaign.

In the terms of a formulation frequently used by Soviet politicians in the current phase of restructuring, Gorbachov aims 'to establish the unity of word and deed' in Soviet life: to 'restore' and 'purify', as Medvedev earlier demanded, the 'revolutionary essence' of Soviet marxism. In the sphere of *glasnost* and information policy this general project can be encapsulated under three closely interrelated headings: *criticism*, *access* and *socialist pluralism*.

Criticism and self-criticism

The elites

The first objective of the *glasnost* campaign has been to restore the balance between the 'positive' and 'critical' dimensions of *glasnost* as defined by Lenin. While the propagandising of positive economic and social phenomena remains an important function of the Soviet media, they are now called upon to engage in genuine criticism and self-criticism.

The first blow for 'critical' *glasnost* was struck by an article published in *Pravda* on February 13th, 1986, concerned with the sensitive issue of Party privilege. The article quoted reader N.Nikolayev of Kazan, who wrote that

in discussing social justice, one cannot close one's eyes to the fact that Party, Soviet, trade union, economic, and even Young Communist League officials sometimes objectively deepen social inequality, taking advantage of all sorts of special refreshment bars, special stores, special hospitals, etc. Yes, there is socialism in our country, and everyone should receive according to his work. Let it be so, without wage-levelling. An official has higher earnings in monetary terms. But in other respects there should be no privilege. Let a director join everyone else in going to an ordinary store and standing in line—perhaps then the lines that everyone is sick of would be eliminated more quickly.⁸

The appearance of this article on the eve of the 27th Party Congress was timed to have the maximum political impact. *Pravda* editor Victor Afanasyev later described the piece as 'the beginning of *glasnost*. We gave a push, a cue to our press: we said, "this is what you should do comrades, this is what you should aim for".'⁹

Since then all areas of Soviet life have been subjected to greater or lesser degrees of 'critical' *glasnost*. Even the army and internal security organs, from being 'zones beyond criticism', have been placed under public scrutiny. A Soviet observer notes that of 216 articles about the *militsiya* (Soviet police) published by *Pravda*, *Izvestia* and *Moscow News* in 1987, only 67 were positive, while 40 were critical, and 109 neutral.¹⁰

The Defence Ministry newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*, like many other media organs, now runs a monthly questionnaire ('Express Analysis') to enlist the views of readers on the contents of the newspaper for the preceding month.

Questionnaires are one expression of the effort by the Soviet media in general to improve communication with audiences, as a means of establishing those aspects of a publication which are popular and those which require change. The results are subsequently presented in follow-up items. On March 1st, 1988, *Krasnaya Zvezda's* Department of Letters and Mass Work revealed that 686 readers had responded to the 'Express Analysis' for February. Some readers considered that *Krasnaya Zvezda*, generally thought of as a 'conservative' newspaper because of its military affiliations, was excessively slow in developing criticism and self-criticism of military matters in its content. Others, such as retired Colonel Vasily Gukin, considered that in the month of February, 1988, critical *glasnost* had gone too far. 'You [the editorial collective] have been publishing a great deal of criticism, but you have a special responsibility for the defensive capabilities of the state and the battle-readiness of the armed forces. Don't you think that our enemies will be studying [your critical articles] literally with a magnifying glass?'

'It goes without saying', replied the Department of Letters and Mass Work, 'that we consider such things. But we recall that criticism and *glasnost* is also a weapon. The strengthening of the critical line in our newspaper is done in the name of that defence capability and the preparedness of the armed forces.'

In an interview with the journal *Argumenty i Fakti* conducted in September 1988, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Red Army remarked with approval that

the life and activity of the army and navy have begun to be covered more widely in the press. In the interests of extending *glasnost*, press

conferences at the Ministry of Defence have become increasingly widespread...The army press now boldly expresses shortcomings and makes unbiased criticism of armed forces officials who commit errors.¹¹

The economy

In coverage of the economy—still the most important category of output, quantitatively—Soviet news continues to function primarily as ‘production propaganda’, but no longer is this function restricted exclusively to the ‘propaganda of success’. In 1986 *Izvestia* commentator Stanislav Kondrashov remarked that

a lot of economic coverage is simply boring for the viewer—sowing the harvests, showing the production process—these things are simply not interesting. But this is the force of tradition, the force of habit. Comparing our news with western news, I consider that there is far too much of this so-called ‘economic news’.

Two years later economic news had been thoroughly ‘restructured’. An increasing proportion of economic news-time was being devoted to the publicising and criticising of negative phenomena as its organisational function shifted from that of ‘teaching by example’ to the task of publicising mistakes and defects in the running of the economy, rectifying them, and preventing their duplication. Three such items from our March 1st edition of *Vremya* illustrate the new ‘openness’ in economic coverage.

The first contained a brief report on a meeting of management at the Ministry of Bread Production. At the meeting, the following self-criticism was expressed.

The participants at the session acknowledged that the work of the ministry on improving the quality of cakes and in supplying the population with the fresh products which are in demand is unsatisfactory.

This was followed with a longer item critical of the negative effects of poor central planning on industry. The item noted that GOSPLAN, the central planning agency, had set unrealistic targets for a factory engaged in the manufacture of bicycles and motorcycles. GOSPLAN’s target of 550,000 units for the year was impossibly high, complained the chief of production, E.S.Baretsky, to *Vremya*’s correspondent, since the factory only had a capacity of 467,000 units. Genuine improvements in design and manufacture were under threat because of over-ambitious planning at the centre.

A third item concerned the cuts being imposed on the bureaucratic apparatus as part of the policy of *perestroika*. Where the previous item demonstrated the dangers of an inflexible command economy, this report looked at the effects of the cuts on the employees of one of the ministries being abolished. Standing outside the offices of the Ministry of Machine-Building for Consumer Goods and Domestic Appliances, commentator Yevgeny Sinitsyn called on the viewer to look ‘for the last time’ at this symbol of the ‘old method’ of administration (i.e., the pre-1985 method), before moving inside to interview workers and management on the issues raised by the cuts.

Correspondent (to worker): Do you consider it necessary for the country to cut the administrative apparatus?

1st vox pop: Without doubt, it's necessary to cut. Without doubt.

Correspondent (to camera): But it is inevitable that there will be victims. *Perestroika* is proceeding, but it can't possibly suit everyone.

2nd vox pop: Do you understand, for us as yet it's...how to say... we are no better off than before.

Correspondent: Everyone is probably experiencing this feeling of being no better off, but in the end, if we stick together, things will come good. The factories under this ministry will be transferred to eight other ministries, but where will the papers be transferred to? [shot of large piles of official papers and documents, tied up in bundles—a literal mountain of paperwork] Papers, papers, millions of papers. It turns out that no one needs them. But people are a different matter.

The item now cuts to an interview with V.M.Filiminov, Secretary of the Party organisation within the Ministry, who proceeds to explain how the cuts will affect Ministry employees.

Filiminov: Of one thousand people in the central apparatus, five hundred will be cut, and five hundred transferred to another field of industry. That's why the first task now is job creation. Even in conditions of cutbacks the aim above all is to make work for people.

Correspondent: And here is the trade union committee which offers everyone a choice of a new work place. [shots of anxious workers in interviews with the trade union committee] These people are much troubled, and with justification. They will get work, but it has not yet been decided whether to preserve their benefits of service, or whether they will have to begin again. And what of their places in the queue for housing? Wherever they go, the local people will already have their own queue. Many questions still remain open. These people are not responsible for the changes in their working lives. Thus, they demand special attention, and the acknowledgement that there can be no callousness or formalism.

Having thus combined the theme of the need for cuts with a call for caution in their implementation, Sinitsyn ends on a positive note:

leaving [the Ministry] we look one more time at these papers, this mountain [of paperwork] from which other, similar mountains can be seen. One is sincerely glad that they will disappear quickly. The administrative apparatus is being cut.

The increasingly combative style of Soviet economic news can be seen in a *Vremya* item of March 3rd, 1988 which followed members of the People's Control Commission¹² as they carried out a 'raid' on one of Moscow's vegetable stores. Inside, workers were filmed amidst cratefuls of rotting cabbages, attempting to salvage from them some edible leaves. As the Commission sought out the responsible managers. Inspector Troyan explained to viewers that the cabbages had been placed in storage in 1987, but because of

poor refrigeration and bad management had deteriorated to the extent that the greater proportion of them had to be thrown out.

In such items the organisational function of the news is realised by exposing bad practice to public view. The humiliation of the individuals responsible is intended to act as a warning and a deterrent to others.

Several media organs make use of 'reply to criticism' formats in their economic news. Similar to those familiar to western audiences of consumer affairs programmes, these items provide opportunities for those who are the target of the new openness to 'reply' through the mass media. On March 9th, 1988, Yevgeny Sinitsyn presented the following item criticising the fact that in the USSR people are often required to stand in lines at government offices in order to submit details of their personal living conditions.

Sinitsyn: Greetings, comrades! It's nice to receive a thank you. A reply received by us from the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services of the RSFSR ends with these words:

The Ministry thanks the editorial board of *Programme Vremya* for its help in raising and solving long-standing problems.

The problem was the queues in which people have to stand to give information. This one [over film of people standing in line inside an office] is at the bureau of Technical Stocktaking in the town of Zhevsk. Every year the town's residents have to come here to confirm that they have no private living accommodation. The Ministry says in the letter that it has directed the attention of staff to this situation more than once, and that they have been instructed to learn from the experiences of Orenburg, Ryazan, Smolensk and other cities, where executive committees gather essential information on their own, without demanding it from citizens. It seems so easy to do this, so why are people [still] required to waste their free time standing in such lines, and not only their free time. It often happens that even during working hours people must stand in senseless and degrading queues.

The 'Reply to Criticism' rubric is a characteristic feature of the Soviet media but, as this example illustrates, 'replies' no longer take the form of standardised evasions by officials, but with increasing frequency represent genuine attempts to make constructive changes in a problem situation, advanced in the knowledge that failure to do so may result in condemnation and indignation on the part of mass media organs such as *Vremya*.

The openness of the post-April period has been reflected in the development of new outlets for critical campaigning journalism. *Spotlight on Perestroika*, broadcast by central television on most days immediately after *Vremya*, takes a different problem each day, presents an extended journalistic analysis of its causes and offers solutions. The edition of *Spotlight on Perestroika* for March 1st, 1988, is a particularly appropriate one to use as an example of its style and content since it concerned the problem of the shortage of newsprint in the USSR.

As *glasnost* and *perestroika* began to be reflected in the content of the Soviet media, demand for newspapers and magazines increased. By 1988 demand had outstripped

supply, leading to restrictions on opportunities for subscriptions to many organs. Some accused the authorities of inventing or artificially creating a shortage of newsprint, precisely in order to limit the circulation of excessively radical publications. It was in the context of this controversy that *Spotlight on Perestroika* tackled the issue.

The programme set the scene by sending a film crew on an early morning shoot to interview people at a newspaper kiosk in Moscow.

Voice-over: It's six in the morning in Moscow, at one of the hundreds of newspaper kiosks in the capital. [The video depicts a long queue of men waiting to buy newspapers. The correspondent approaches one of the men] Tell me, why have you come for your newspaper so early?

Man in queue: They're running out already. There aren't enough newspapers. It's as simple as that.

The correspondent then read out the first of a series of extracts from an official report by the body responsible for newspaper production, the State Committee for Publishing (GOSKOMIZDAT).

Voice-over: 'Between 1985 and 1988 the production of newspapers increased by 23 million copies.' [The correspondent approaches the newspaper vendor and asks:] When will you sell out of newspapers?

Vendor: They're all gone by 8 a.m.

Voice-over: Another quotation from the State Committee: 'Overall, the production of journals has risen from 215 million copies in 1985 to 252 million copies in 1988.'

The item then cuts to an interview with GOSKOMIZDAT Chairman M.F.Nenashev which revealed that despite these improvements the State Committee was far from happy.

Nenashev: Although interest has grown in books, newspapers and journals, all of us publishers, printers, and everyone connected with it are less than happy. Circulation has grown in leaps and bounds, but so has our sadness.

Voice-over: More official facts. 'Today there is a problem meeting the demand for subscriptions. Already, subscriptions have closed throughout the country for the journals *Moskva*, *Novy Mir*, *Druzha Narodu*, and others.' Why? *Spotlight on Perestroika* can't throw light on all the problems in one broadcast, but we will deal briefly with one.

Having set up the 'issue' in this way the programme proceeded to argue that the problem of newspaper shortages is largely attributable to the inadequacy of existing printing technology in the USSR.

Nenashev: We have approximately 79,000 printing machines, of which 46 per cent are fifteen years old. Technology which was installed fifteen or twenty years ago is obsolete and requires complete replacement. But the saddest thing of all is that nowhere in this country do we make this equipment.

Voice-over: More from the official report. 'In 1986 and 1987, from an order of fifteen POG 90 printing machines, not one was turned out. Of one hundred POG 60 machines ordered, only twenty were made.' POG means 'offset printer', like this one in Vladimir [the film shows printworkers on machines]. With this machine it's possible to increase output by 30 per cent.

Thus, *Spotlight on Perestroika* publicises the links between, in this case, poor economic performance and inadequate technology.



Figure 4.1 The face of glasnost, I. 'Photograph with commentary—The Face of Shortage', *Pravda*, June 12th, 1988

The new approach to coverage of the economy is also evident in photojournalism. Before *glasnost* the job of Soviet photojournalism, as one observer put it, was 'not so much to inform as to indoctrinate; to encourage achievement even when it cannot document it—in general ...to portray a phantom reality. The result is often compared to American advertising'.¹³ Traditionally, Soviet press photographs depicted exclusively 'positive' images of the happy, smiling, hardworking Soviet people. The majority of Soviet press photographs continue to display these characteristics, but on May 12th, 1988, *Pravda*

published what is perhaps the first item of critical photojournalism to have appeared in the mass circulation Soviet central press (see Figure 4.1). The photograph, 'with commentary', was headed 'The Face of Shortage' and depicted a scene familiar to anyone who has shopped in a big Soviet city: a near panic-stricken mob scrambling for the opportunity to buy some scarce commodity or other. Before 1985 such a scene could not have been published in the Soviet press.

B.Chugunov sent us this photograph from Kubyshev. The crush at the counter is, alas, a typical phenomenon. It can be observed in any town where a shop has been 'freed from shortage'. This queue was standing in relatively calm anticipation, and suddenly exploded, changing momentarily into a panic-stricken crowd, where each person is consumed by one and the same question: 'will there be enough for me?'

What does shortage mean? Economists answer that it is an excess of purchasing power over resources, a disbalance between the population's money income and the mass of marketable goods. More simply, there is none of what we are looking for in the shops. But the nature of shortage has changed. It often happens that the shelves are breaking under the weight of goods, but people pass by indifferently. This means that the goods are not of a high quality. Manufacturers are puzzled, but isn't it natural that our people want to dress well, and to wear shoes that are comfortable and attractive?

It's time for those responsible for the release of goods to take up seriously the study of demand, to get rid of the habitual appealing (that we produce more of this or that than anyone else in the world!), and turn to face the urgent problems of the day; to stop wasting raw materials, time and human labour on the production of things which gather dust on the shelves for years.

'More quality goods, and more variety!'—no one objects to this slogan. The question is, how to turn fine words into real deeds more quickly?

'Filling in the blank spots'

The principle of critical *glasnost* has been applied not only to the present-day workings of the economy, but to the past history of Soviet society. As already noted, the Soviet media have traditionally functioned as 'collective propagandists and agitators', a role in which the mass dissemination of historical knowledge has been central. Before the *glasnost* campaign, control of history was one of the most important aspects of the Party's ideological work.

If anything could be said to have been genuinely Orwellian about Soviet society before 1985 it is the manner in which history was continually rewritten in accordance with the interests of successive Party leaderships. The media, in common with other branches of the cultural apparatus, were required to propagate a selective, distorted and frequently dishonest account of history, from which all facts contrary to the Party's authorised version of events were expunged. One of the major achievements of the *glasnost* campaign has been to put an end to this approach to the past and allow the beginning of a process of reclaiming Soviet history.

The 'new history' has focused on the demystification of Stalinism through the full or partial rehabilitation of his victims, including hitherto *persona non grata* such as Bukharin, Tukachevsky and, to a limited extent, even Trotsky. This has necessitated

extensive publicity about the crimes committed during Stalin's rule, going far beyond the revelations made by Khrushchev at the 20th CPSU Congress in 1956.

Several organs have introduced new rubrics for the 'filling in of the blank spots', as the process of recovering Soviet history has been termed. In February 1988, *Pravda* began a series of articles 'devoted to important episodes in the history of the Communist Party and Soviet state'. The first was concerned with Lenin's 'Testament', dictated by him before his death in which he praises Trotsky and Bukharin and criticises Stalin as 'too rude', a shortcoming which 'although perfectly tolerable among us and in contacts between us communists, becomes intolerable in a General Secretary'.¹⁴ The article went on to analyse how, despite this criticism, Stalin nevertheless achieved his later position of dominance in the Party.

Under the new history rubrics, hitherto restricted writings by Bukharin, Rykov and others have been published. Previously unknown or unconfirmed details about Stalin's life have been printed, such as the fact that he suffered a nervous breakdown at the outset of the Great Patriotic War with Germany, and was rendered incapable of leading the country for several crucial days during which huge Soviet losses were incurred. Humorous and satirical material about Stalin has been published, such as the following piece by Chingiz Aitmatov which appeared in *Sovetskaya Kirgiziya* on May 6th, 1988.

Stalin, allegedly, gathered his close comrades-in-arms and said: 'You rack your brains over the question of how to rule the people so that all of them, the whole lot to the last one under the sun, will look into my eyes. If I blink—everyone will blink, if I open my eyes—everyone will open his eyes, so that I will be a living god to all of them, because it was said long ago: The tsar is not a god, but nonetheless he is not less important than God. I am going to teach you now how to treat the people.' So he ordered a chicken to be brought to him. He plucked that chicken in full view of all of them, down to the last feather, to the red flesh, so to speak. Only the comb was left on the head of the former feathered creature. 'Now you watch', he said, and released the plucked chicken. The chicken should have run away, in any direction. But the chicken would not go anywhere: it could not endure the sun, and it was cold in the shade. So the poor creature clung to Stalin's boots. The leader threw a handful of grain to the chicken, and it followed him everywhere, otherwise it would perish of hunger, that was clear. 'This is the way to rule the people', Stalin said in a didactic tone.¹⁵

During our sample period of March, 1988 *Krasnaya Zvezda* published a lengthy account of the arrest of Lavrenty Beria in the Kremlin in 1953. More traumatically, for those who may have clung to a sentimental affection for 'Uncle Joe' and the period over which he presided, articles began to appear which confirmed the more grizzly accounts of Stalin's crimes advanced by western Sovietologists. Journalists wrote about the 'unmarked graves' at Kuropata in Minsk, where victims of NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) purges had been shot and buried in the 1930s.¹⁶ NKVD responsibility for the Katyn massacre of Polish army officers during the Second World War was all but conceded,¹⁷ and the journal *Argumenty i Fakti* published, among many controversial and

ground-breaking pieces, an interview with Roy Medvedev in which he estimated the number of victims of Stalinism as 40 million. Medvedev, introduced to readers as ‘a well-known Soviet historian’, calculated that, taking into account the numbers of those shot, imprisoned, resettled, or who died of hunger during the famines of the 1930s caused by Stalin’s collectivisation policy, ‘the overall number of victims of Stalinism reaches approximately 40 million people’.¹⁸

Bad news

Disasters

Journalists in the capitalist countries have a maxim: ‘Good news is no news.’ In the USSR, before the *glasnost* campaign began, the reverse was true. ‘Bad news’—information about events which might divert attention from, or appear to contradict, the main themes of Party propaganda and the image which it projected of peaceful, relatively unproblematic socialist construction—was virtually non-existent. News of domestic affairs was unremittingly good. Events which, had they happened in the west, would have dominated the news media for days, were ignored by Soviet journalists as they focused their energies on the process of socialism-building. As Inkeles observed of Soviet journalism in the 1940s, ‘not events but social processes are treated as news and regarded as being newsworthy... Events are regarded as being news only in so far as they can meaningfully be related to the process of socialist construction’ (1956, p.140). This, as we have noted, was the heritage of Lenin’s early pronouncements on the role of the Soviet press, and their application by subsequent Soviet leaders. If Inkeles’ definition of Soviet news-values was applicable to the 1940s (and indeed the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s), it must now be updated to fit the realities of a time when the historical inevitability of communism can no longer be assumed by the Soviet leadership, and when many of the previously taken for granted ‘achievements’ of socialist construction in the USSR have been tarnished by an increasing acknowledgement of their cost in human lives. Now, as then, the process of historical development towards socialism in the USSR and the world as a whole remains the central unifying theme of Soviet media output, but as a consequence of Gorbachov’s *glasnost* campaign the gap between Soviet and western conceptions of news-value has begun to narrow. In particular, Soviet journalism is increasingly focused not only on the *process* of socialist construction, but also on the *events* which punctuate it. The organisational, propaganda and tribunal functions of the media continue to play the primary role in determining content, but Soviet audiences are becoming increasingly familiar with western-style reporting.

In 1986, Stanislav Kondrashov conceded that the Soviet people would like to see more coverage of such events as disasters.

It’s not something they demand, it’s more a kind of curiosity. If we report about a flood or an earthquake somewhere in South America, and we don’t report about Turkmenistan, then of course there will be dissatisfaction. Why do they report what happens abroad, but what happens here is not reported? It’s necessary to take people’s interests into

account. One has to avoid exaggeration, to keep a sense of proportion, but it would seem that there is a deficiency in our reportage.

Before *glasnost*, reporting of domestic disasters involving large-scale loss of life was limited to brief official statements which omitted details of casualties or causes. Only if foreign citizens were involved would such information be provided, and then only in the briefest of forms.¹⁹ When questioned on the reasons for this approach journalists would invoke the audience's disapproval of lurid and sensational accounts of human tragedy (although evidence for this was never provided). In view of what in the west often passes for news coverage of disasters, one can sympathise with this logic. Even if one assumes that the Soviet audience is no less interested in tales of death and destruction, heroism and valour, than those of capitalist countries, one can respect a system of news-values which downplays such stories and does not rely on the manipulation of morbid curiosity to maintain viewing and circulation figures. To this extent, the low newsworthiness of disaster stories in the pre-*glasnost* era can be seen as one consequence of the fact that, as Kondrashov puts it, 'our reportage is not based on commercial interests which, especially at the lower end of the market, exploit people's baser instincts, and arouse in a person a curiosity for the darker side of life, and therefore arouse the darker side of his character. This we don't have.' But news coverage of disasters can have the important positive function of exerting a form of social control over those who may otherwise, by their actions, cause or contribute to such tragedies, as well as monitoring the competence and capabilities of the services whose job it is to cope with their aftermath. In refusing to treat disasters as a legitimate subject for news coverage the Soviet media deprived their audiences of a means of exposing and punishing those (if any) who were responsible for them, and, more importantly, of preventing their recurrence.

The gradual extension of the Soviet news agenda to include disasters reflected the increasing dissatisfaction at the lack of disaster news being shown by the Soviet audience (by 1986 newspapers were publishing with increasing frequency readers' letters commenting on the lack of coverage of earthquakes and similar events inside the USSR). It was also part of the restructuring of the media's 'organisational' functions in so far as it acknowledged the social role of disaster news in improving the organisation of public services and eliminating weaknesses.

As the interview with Stanislav Kondrashov quoted above was being conducted the world's worst nuclear power station disaster was occupying the minds of Soviet politicians and emergency services. The Chernobyl disaster provided the first major test of the new approach.

At first, it seemed that the challenge would not be met. For ten days after the explosion news coverage was typically 'Brezhnevian' in quantity and quality, comprising the sparsest of detail written in the blandest officialese.²⁰ Zhores Medvedev speculates that the reason for the initially poor coverage of the disaster lay in Gorbachov's relatively weak position in the Politburo at the time: 'Gorbachov and Vorotnikov are said to have been in the minority in advocating a more open approach to the tragedy...The majority favoured a news blackout' (1987, p.266). On May 6th, however, Deputy Prime Minister Sherbina gave a news conference during which the causes, consequences and true scale of the disaster were revealed, indicating that the supporters of *glasnost* in the leadership had prevailed. Soviet sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky remarks that thereafter, '*glasnost*

began to change from an official slogan into an everyday practice' (1988, p.72). Furthermore, 'the truth about Chernobyl which eventually hit the newspapers opened the way to a more truthful examination of other social problems' (ibid.).

Since the watershed of May 1986, 'disaster news' has become a significant quantitative category in Soviet news. All the sampled media reported domestic accidents or disasters in March 1988, ranging in seriousness from mudslides to aircrashes. Although this news can be seen as a movement towards the adoption of western criteria of newsvalue, it retains distinctively Soviet features, avoiding the prurient and bloody aspects of human tragedies in favour of analyses of their causes, which tend to be linked to problems in the wider economy.

On March 2nd, 1988, for example, *Pravda* reported on the disaster which befell a Yak-40 aircraft flying out of Nizhnevartovsk on January 24th that year, with thirty-one people on board. This was not the first occasion on which the incident had been covered in the media, but readers, it was explained, 'are interested in what happened'.

The aircraft, it was reported, had crashed into nearby woods ninety-one seconds after taking off, and the chances of survivors being found were considered good. However, the ensuing search and rescue operation took five hours to find the wreck, by which time there were only four survivors. The bulk of the article was thus concerned with establishing why the rescue operation had taken so long, and concluded that 'the leadership and workers at the airport were simply unprepared for the extreme conditions...At the moment of the catastrophe there were no maps of the region available.' Those responsible for key roles in the local air-rescue service had been absent from their posts. An interview with the chief administrator of Soviet air-rescue services sought to reveal why certain relatively uncomplicated items of technology, which could have greatly assisted in the task of finding the aircraft in the woods, had not been available to the emergency services. One ex-change made it clear that a large part of the problem lay in general weaknesses of economic organisation.

Correspondent: Can it really be that in this electronics age there is no instrument, such as a radio beacon, which could transmit an aircraft's coordinates even in the event of its destruction?

Chief administrator: There are such instruments, but our industry has only just begun to assimilate them. For the entire civilian airfleet there are now in all thirty radio beacons. What, one would think, is more important than human life? What is more important than the effectiveness and reliability of air-rescue work? But no. Here, the separate interests of departments make themselves felt. The Ministry of Aviation asks for, demands, these radio beacons, and other items of equipment on which passengers' lives depend. But industry responds to these pleas and demands with long-drawn-out arguments and bureaucratic replies in which one can't distinguish 'yes' from 'no'.

Having identified air safety as largely a problem of economic management the article ended by observing that 'accidents are not chance occurrences, but the result of accumulated slovenliness, carelessness, and irresponsibility'.

The most serious disaster to have befallen the USSR since 1985 was the Armenian earthquake of December 7th, 1988. Media coverage of this tragic event confirmed the

trend towards immediate and full reporting of disasters. Coverage of these disasters broke with previous Soviet journalistic practice in that 'between the events themselves and the reports on them there was virtually no delay at all'.²¹

Crime

Before the *glasnost* campaign got underway crime news in the Soviet media was restricted to coverage of the evils of corruption, pilfering and other anti-social behaviours which could be linked to the theme of economic development. Coverage of such crimes as domestic violence, mugging and rape, was non-existent.

Two explanations were advanced for crime's lack of news worthiness. The first, advanced by the Party, was that the USSR had no crime problem of any significant scale, being a socialist society built on principles of equality and social justice. Crime news, in this sense, would have conflicted with the media's propaganda function of depicting Soviet society as safer and more crime-free than the capitalist world.²²

A second explanation referred to the argument that, as with disasters, media interest in such matters was inimical to Bolshevik press theory and inherently distasteful. Kondrashov again: 'in the West, reporting is centred on crime, rape, cruelty. This doesn't make a person better. It makes him harder, more cruel.' Again, the appeal is to a higher code of journalistic and ethical values with which, in the era of western tabloid journalism, one can have some sympathy, and to which many Soviet journalists genuinely subscribed. However, crime is a problem in the USSR, a fact which, as a consequence of *glasnost*, can now be openly declared. It can also be admitted that the averting of eyes by journalists before 1985 was due mainly to the Party's reluctance to concede this reality.

In the era of *glasnost* 'openness' about crime and related social phenomena has become an integral part of de-Stalinisation and *perestroika*, and the media can now deal with the subject in ways not dissimilar to those employed by western journalists. Crime rate statistics are now published, and journalists refer to 'crime waves'. While western tabloid-style dwelling on the macabre is not encouraged Soviet journalists now routinely report serious violence, mafia-style racketeering, narcotics abuse and other crimes previously hidden from the Soviet media audience.

On March 1st, 1987, for example, *Pravda* interviewed the Deputy General Procurator of the USSR, Sergei Shishkov, on the worsening problem of 'propaganda for the cult of violence and cruelty', i.e., pornography. Shishkov explained that increasing numbers of pornographic videos were being brought into the USSR by foreign tourists and Soviet citizens who had travelled abroad. Under the influence of such material, he complained, 'people's morality is reshaped, and they begin to confuse black with white'. Respectable people such as teachers and engineers were getting involved in smuggling and circulating this material, often to minors.

Mr Namaldala Pachmanov, an instructor at a sports school, organised the screening of an obscene video for pupils of the school in his flat. Twenty juveniles were present, each of whom paid ten roubles for the session...These films liberate a person from inner restraint and produce

immoral thoughts and actions leading to drunkenness, drug addiction, and prostitution.

Such material was also 'a most refined type of ideological diversion against our country'. While the tone of this item reminds one of the moral panics which periodically overwhelm the western media, the admission that such things go on in 'the land of the Soviets' is of itself remarkable. Moreover, and in the strengthening tradition of self-criticism, it was argued that the increasing penetration of the USSR by pornographic and other banned materials was partly a consequence of the vacuum created by the failure to produce sufficiently interesting films domestically.

The major crime story of the sample period was the attempted hijacking of a Soviet airliner on March 8th, 1988. Such an incident would immediately have been headline news in any western country in which it occurred, but the first Soviet references to it came on the next day, March 9th. Nearly twenty-four hours after the hijacking had been ended *Vremya* reported a brief statement by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, broadcast as item no. 21 at the end of the bulletin, after items about a 'Women of India' festival in Moscow and celebrations to mark the anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's death in Smolensk. Despite the low priority and sparse coverage initially given to the story (even in the era of *glasnost*, crime is never headline news), the fact that it was reported at all represents a significant break with long-standing practice. The next day, newspaper and broadcasting organs began to publish unprecedentedly detailed accounts of how a family from Irkutsk, the Ovechkins, had attempted to force the crew of the regular Irkutsk–Leningrad flight to fly to London, but had been persuaded to put down in an airfield near Leningrad, where a Soviet assault group was waiting for them. Reports examined the background and motives of the hijackers and interviewed key individuals involved in the successful operation to free the passengers, such as the commander of the 'snatch squad', Anatoly Bystrov.

Bystrov: Having arrived at the scene, we were convinced that the criminals were attempting to get through to the cockpit, and were using weapons to do this. They fired straight through the door, attempting to persuade the pilot to take off again and fly abroad. Well, there were seventy-seven passengers on board, among them children and old people. Members of the internal affairs organs who were there were instructed to storm the aircraft. The criminals opened fire. Among our people three were wounded...five of the criminals were rendered harmless [i.e., killed], and the remainder were seized. An investigation is now being carried out.

Correspondent: How would you describe the actions of the aircraft's crew?

Bystrov: I will say to you that in this situation the crew were very courageous. They didn't break under provocation.

Dissidents and other deviants

Disasters and crime are examples of previously excluded events which are now routinely covered. But *glasnost* has also sanctioned the inclusion on the domestic news agenda of politically problematic topics such as religion, dissidence, street protests and emigration.

On March 17th, 1988, several newspapers reported details of a press briefing by the Visa and Registration Administration in Moscow (UVIR). *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reported approvingly that

much has been done to remove bureaucratic obstacles caused by the design of documents...measures have been taken to simplify exit and entry documents. The volume of papers which it is necessary to fill in has been reduced two-fold. More than 82 per cent of applications to leave the country in order to reunite with families have been satisfied. In 1986–87 fifty-two people who had earlier left the Motherland returned to Moscow.

Izvestia's coverage of the briefing reported that in the first two months of 1988 applications to leave the USSR had increased by 47 per cent; those for emigration to capitalist or developing countries by 93 per cent. The number of such applications rejected by UVIR had fallen by 44 per cent. Given developments in eastern Europe at the end of 1989 it may now not be long before the Soviet media are reporting the free movement of citizens in and out of the USSR.

An article published by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on March 20th, 1988, illustrates the new openness in relation to religion. The article asked why the influence of Islam in the Central Asian republics of the USSR persisted. In the past, such a question would not have been asked, since the Party would have been unlikely to concede that Islamic influence was a problem of any significance. The author of this article, however, attributed the continuing, and indeed growing, popularity of Islam to the 'many absurd extremes and unreasonable steps which we [the Party] have permitted in recent years on questions of anti-religious propaganda'. The article painted a picture of Soviet Muslims as hard-working and loyal to the state—'non-Party communists'—but increasingly alienated by unsympathetic and insensitive policies towards religion.

Strikes and industrial conflict have also become part of the Soviet news agenda. In general, as we have noted, Soviet economic news contrasts sharply with that produced by news organisations in a capitalist society such as Britain. In the latter, economic news is concerned with the fortunes of capital on the one hand, and capital–labour relations on the other. British economic news is largely about the movements of share prices and profit figures, or about industrial disputes. In the USSR there is no coverage of the performance of capital, which does not exist in the western sense, while 'conflict' between workers and employers has traditionally been absent as a theme.

In the item about cuts in the bureaucratic apparatus referred to above (see pp. 56–7) both management and trade unions were seen to be cooperating to alleviate the effects of job cuts. Here, as in Soviet news generally, the management–worker relationship was portrayed as one of benign paternalism. The legitimate concerns of workers were acknowledged, but a strong effort was made to assure the viewer that these concerns would be addressed and problems resolved. The assumption of a community of interests between the workers, the Party and trade union leadership, and the management was uncontested, as it is in the greater proportion of economic news coverage.

This assumption was always an erroneous one in so far as strikes, industrial disputes and other forms of labour unrest have existed in the Soviet Union since Lenin's time. Until the April Plenum, however, like all social phenomena which contradicted official

ideology, they were absent from the news agenda. As a consequence of *glasnost*, this is no longer the case.

As late as March 1988, when the main sample used for this study was collected, domestic industrial unrest was still a relatively taboo subject for the Soviet media, except in the context of the ethnic dispute then gathering strength in the Caucasus (see p. 72). But a little over a year later, in July 1989, when the coalminers of the Donbass and Kuzbass regions of the USSR came out on strike over a range of issues including pay, conditions of work, and the chronic non-availability of many basic items, the Soviet media adopted a distinctly more 'open' approach. Quantitatively, coverage of the strikes was more substantial by far than that of any previous disputes. Moreover, journalists took a sympathetic approach to the workers. The strikers were reported to be exercising 'strict control over the maintenance of public order',²³ while 'party and trade union organisations identified with the striking miners' principal demands'. The causes of the strike were explained in great detail, with 'blame' being put not on the workers, but on those local Party and trade union officials who for years had ignored their grievances.

The main political problem faced by the Party since the beginning of the *perestroika* has been the re-emergence of strong nationalist tendencies in many of the non-Russian republics, leading, in the transCaucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaidzhan, to violent ethnic disputes, and to calls for independence and secession from the USSR in the Baltic republics. Pre-*glasnost*, manifestations of extreme nationalism were absent from the domestic news agenda, contradicting as they did an important tenet of marxist-leninist ideology: that the many nationalities which make up the USSR live and work alongside each other in conditions of equality, fraternity and mutual respect, a happy state of affairs largely attributable to Soviet nationalities policy. The reinforcing of 'internationalism' was as important for Soviet propagandists internally as it was in the global context. Since 1985, events and the policy of reporting them openly have removed this gap in Soviet news.

The sample period of March 1988 coincided with the first wave of serious ethnic clashes in Armenia and Azerbaidzhan, over the disputed oblast of Nagorno Karabakh. Clashes were first reported in February 1988, as ethnic Armenians called for the transfer of Nagorno Karabakh, then part of Azerbaidzhan, to the republic of Armenia. On the 28th of that month Azerbaidzhanis in the city of Sumgait rioted, killing and injuring dozens of Armenians. In response, workers in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh went on strike. Throughout March, as details of the disturbances emerged, the conflict dominated British and western news coverage of the USSR. In the Soviet media, too, the story was widely reported. Over this period *Vremya* broadcast thirteen items relating to the conflict.

That there was so much coverage of such a politically-sensitive issue is a reflection of the extent to which the principle of *glasnost* had been consolidated by early 1988. Following the lead of Gorbachov and the government in Moscow, the Soviet media openly acknowledged that there was, indeed, a 'nationalities' problem. Their attempts to make sense of it, however, were still at this early stage of the *glasnost* campaign characteristically 'Brezhnevian'. Throughout March 1988, Soviet journalists stressed two propaganda themes: first, and despite events in Nagorno Karabakh and Sumgait, life in the trans-Caucasian republics was proceeding in relative normality; and secondly, despite the actions of a small, unrepresentative minority of 'hooligan elements', the great

majority amongst the various ethnic groups in the region had long lived together in harmony and wished to continue doing so.

Inserted into economic news on March 1st, 1988, *Vremya* reported from Nagorno Karabakh that 'the ploughing machines began work today. Their operators are hoping to avoid losing time. Ahead of them is the task of sowing more than six hundred hectares.'

The item fitted in with the general thrust of economic news that day (see chapter 2), which was to show a society extending itself to produce and overproduce in preparation for the 19th Conference. But it also had an obvious bearing on the ethnic dispute. With this, ostensibly economic, story, *Vremya* indirectly countered unofficial reports then emerging from the Caucasus of mass civil disobedience, ethnic strife and strikes. Without referring to any of these negative phenomena the item presented an image of Nagorno Karabakh at work and in tune with Soviet society as a whole.

This example illustrates the tendency for Soviet journalists to select economic stories with a view to wider controversies. During the Chernobyl crisis, initially sparse coverage of the disaster was supplemented by a series of items conveying images of 'normality' in the regions rumoured to be most seriously affected by radiation contamination. In addition, then, to the organisational and inspirational functions of economic news such stories are often employed as a means of countering rumours and reinforcing social order.

On March 10th *Vremya* reported from Sumgait, the scene of the ethnic violence of February 28th. According to an earlier report, a 'group of hooligans' had 'provoked disorder. Unstable and immature people influenced by false rumours about events in Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia were drawn into the illegal activities. Criminal elements carried out acts of violence and plundering. Thirty-one people died at their hands' (*Vremya*, March 4th, 1988). From Sumgait, on March 10th, *Vremya* interviewed two residents of the city.

E.Nagieva: The events of February 28th have broken our hearts. We have always lived harmoniously in this city. Azerbaidzhanis, Armenians, Russians, we lived as one family.

R.Sardarly: I was born in Sumgait, and the city has grown up before my eyes. Like everyone who was born here, I am deeply worried about what has happened in the city. I want to stress that those people who organised the negative phenomena in the city cannot be called Sumgaitians.

These statements were followed by street scenes of people apparently going about their daily business, while the correspondent explained in voice-over that economic life in the city was as normal.

On March 11th, *Vremya* reported from Shusha in Nagorno Karabakh, where 'Armenians and Azerbaidzhanis live together'. The main part of this item depicted schoolchildren in Shusha, emphasising their love of the Russian language. Interviewed by the correspondent, the Russian language teacher declared that 'they [the pupils] like the Russian language very much. Sometimes I ask them at the beginning of a class—"Children, why do you study Russian, why do you like it so much?" They reply that Russian is the language of our great leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the language of Pushkin, the language of the Russian people.'

The mere fact that ethnic conflict has been reported in the Soviet media is a radical progression from pre-*glasnost* practice. In early 1988, however, coverage retained traditionally instrumentalist features, serving mainly as a platform for appeals to end the conflict from exemplary workers, propagating the themes of internationalism and ethnic harmony, downplaying the scale of the disorder, emphasising the ‘normality’ of life in the Caucasus, and blaming the problems on ‘hooligans’ and other anti-social elements, themes which continued to predominate in coverage of subsequent ethnic disputes.²⁴

By contrast, the British news media emphasised the themes of violence and disorder, while criticising the Soviet media for their lack of ‘open-ness’. On March 16th the BBC news obtained home-made video footage of events in Nagorno Karabakh showing mass protests in the streets of Stepanakert, buses with their windows smashed by rioting Azerbaidzhanis, and interviews with hospitalised victims of ethnic violence. From the film, suggested BBC’s Moscow correspondent, ‘the impression is given of clashes which are more widespread than have been admitted to officially. It confirms the unofficial reports reaching Moscow.’

On the same day that *Vremya* interviewed residents of Sumgait, ITN constructed ‘a different picture of what happened’ on February 28th, based on the evidence of ‘the Soviet Union’s unofficial media’. To a gathering of foreign correspondents in Moscow a representative of the underground news-sheet *Glasnost* provided gory details of the riot.

In the maternity hospital the doctors were held at knifepoint and forced to tell which wards had Armenian women in them. Women waiting to give birth had their stomachs ripped open. The babies were grabbed by the legs and beaten against the wall. Elsewhere, children were thrown from the windows of blocks of flats. A young Armenian girl was thrown out of the window and landed in some shrubbery. She survived but they then threw a wardrobe on top of her.

ITN’s correspondent qualified this graphic account with an acknowledgement that it was ‘gained second-hand’. It was emphasised, however, that the source

did see for himself a massive military presence now in the town—streets filled with tanks, riot troops in bullet-proof vests and steel helmets patrolling. The official pictures of Sumgait show this [excerpts from the *Vremya* report, showing ‘normality’ in Sumgait]. These pictures [stills showing tanks and armoured troop carriers] tell another story, for the real victim of unrest in the Soviet Union’s far south is Mr Gorbachov’s policy of *glasnost*. The new openness has limits.

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The limits of criticism

Critical *glasnost* does indeed have limits, although it is a key indicator of the changes that have taken place in the Soviet media since 1985 that this fact can be admitted by Soviet journalists themselves.

While there has been since the April Plenum what Onikov calls 'an unprecedented expansion of information' in the Soviet media, and 'the sharp criticism of existing deficiencies, of incorrect actions by people in authority, including those of high standing, and coverage of the so-called "blank spots" of history has become the practice',²⁵ a number of 'taboo' areas remain sheltered from the critical attentions of journalists, most notably direct criticism of the General Secretary, and of the founder of the state, Lenin. Recently, however, even these few remaining 'sacred cows' of marxism-leninism have begun to be considered legitimate subjects for 'critical' *glasnost*.

Also relatively untouched by the reform campaign has been the tendency of Soviet media organs to devote an inordinate amount of space and time to '*ofitsioz*' and 'protocol'—items about official government and Party business, visiting delegations, and the other formalities of statehood. Since 1985 '*glasnost*' has permitted this material to reflect more of the drama and debate which goes on behind the scenes in Soviet political life. The frequent Central Committee sessions between Gorbachov, Yakovlev and other leaders, and senior media workers, have been reported in the form of dialogues rather than unadorned statements of what was said by the participants. The report of the October 1988 Central Committee meeting at which former Moscow Party leader Boris Yeltsin was severely criticised, while edited and sanitised, was by any standards 'a good read'. At the 19th Party Conference in July 1988, television viewers heard leaders of the seniority of the late Andrei Gromyko criticised by name. Televised sessions of the newly-elected Congress of People's Deputies and Supreme Soviet in 1989 were equally lively. Before the era of *glasnost* such exchanges would simply have been edited out of media accounts of the event.

Yet despite these improvements in the style and content of *ofitsioz* there is increasing dissatisfaction amongst journalists at the sheer quantity of material which they are required to include in their newspapers and bulletins. A duty editor for *Izvestia*, A. Druzenko, likens the continuing prominence of *ofitsioz* to 'a mirror reflecting the old thinking'.

Slim newspapers are overflowing with official materials—four, sometimes six columns [are devoted to them]. Speeches, decrees, accounts of meetings, reports on receptions, arrivals and departures at airports, TASS statements—all of these overwhelm our newspapers. Official materials which are published simultaneously in central, regional, republican and oblast papers are especially annoying. If one considers that [many] of these reports have already been broadcast on radio and television, the absurdity of this [replication] is obvious.²⁶

Druzenko explains that his comments were prompted by the issue of *Pravda* published on August 2nd, 1989. A glance at this issue shows that on that day page 1 was entirely taken up by official items: a statement by the Politburo on various internal and foreign policy matters; a speech by Gorbachov to the Supreme Soviet; an appeal from the Supreme Soviet to the US Congress; an account of the session of the Supreme Soviet at which Gorbachov spoke; and a congratulatory telegram from Gorbachov to Hashemi Rafsanjani on his appointment as Iranian President. Gorbachov's speech and other Supreme Soviet business take up page 2, and part of page 3. What remains of page 3 is devoted to a

further four official items, leaving space for a brief report on events in Nagorno Karabakh and a feature on co-operatives.

This, complains Druzenko, is typical. The content and layout of a newspaper may have been planned down to the last column, when the instruction comes to print eight pages of a leadership speech, regardless of the wishes of millions of readers. Instructions on what official and protocol items to publish are issued by TASS, and Druzenko notes that, traditionally, to ignore these instructions was considered 'not a little sacrilegious'. Now, he concludes, if *glasnost* means anything, editorial collectives can and should assert their right not to publish *ofitsioz*.

Expanding access and socialist pluralism

The application of critical *glasnost*, limited or otherwise, depends upon two other elements of the reform process: the extension of *access* to a range of sources and voices previously excluded from the Soviet media, and the introduction of rights of access to information in general; and, secondly, the adoption by Soviet journalism of the principle of *socialist pluralism*. This chapter considers each of these key concepts in turn.

Opening up the Soviet media

In the context of the *glasnost* campaign the extension of access has referred, first, to rights of access to information. Onikov recalls that for Lenin *glasnost* meant ‘free, unrestricted access to any unclassified documents and materials connected with the work of soviets, executive committees, and services’.¹ Consequently, he argues, Soviet citizens and their organisations should be granted access to all unclassified information necessary for their participation in political and administrative decision-making, such as detailed and accurate statistics, copies of draft legislation, discussion documents and records of the proceedings of decision-making bodies. This would not necessitate the publication of all such information, he points out, since ‘it is obvious that to inform about absolutely everything is impossible, and is scarcely necessary if everyone has the right to acquaint themselves with all unclassified knowledge’. Rather, lists of unclassified information could be made available, with details of how access can be gained to it. Alternatively, a list of classified, secret information would be published on the assumption that ‘what is not forbidden, is permitted’.

To illustrate what such access would mean in practice Onikov cites the experience of the 1920s, before the influence of Stalinism had properly begun to be felt, and when ‘the principle of *glasnost* was more widely used in Party life than at any other time in CPSU history’. At this time, the Central Committee of the Communist Party made available a bulletin (*Izvestias*) containing lists of all published Party and state documents, the titles of the press organs in which they first appeared, and their date of publication. This practice allowed anyone to become acquainted with interesting documents, without difficulty.’ The limits on access to information in contemporary Soviet society would be determined, as in capitalist countries, by criteria of national security, individual privacy and administrative efficiency.

In January 1989, the first edition of a new monthly journal called *Izvestia TsK KPSS* was published. The title is a direct reference to the original *Izvestias* referred to above. Central Committee member A. Solovyev explained in a *Pravda* interview that the new publication was part of the effort to reclaim the spirit of *glasnost* which prevailed in Lenin’s time, when it was considered necessary to ‘regularly notify [*izbeshat*]

communists and workers about the most important events in the country and the world, the policies of the Central Committee and its leading organs and apparatuses, and to report on the work of other areas of the party'.² The new journal would cover the activities of the Politburo, Secretariat and Party Commissions, giving priority to the publication of documentary and archive materials.³

The Soviet reformers also stress the importance of increasing the citizen's access to the information media, to ensure the implementation of an effective right of reply in the event of inaccurate or unfair criticism by journalists.

The widespread public concern that such a right should be established is indicated in a letter published by *Izvestia* in March 1988. The letter complained of 'the great moral and material damage' which had been done to certain individuals and their families by a particularly 'thoughtless' journal article. The writer suggested that 'if every press "sensation" was carefully checked...then half of them would be shown to be false'. Claiming that in many cases 'sensationalist' and inaccurate media exposés go uncorrected the writer argued that

glasnost must reach into all spheres of life. It must concern the mistakes of journalists. As yet, those who do the criticising have been shown to be beyond the zone of criticism...On this basis, serious distortions of the principle of *glasnost* are possible. To prevent them I propose the introduction of a system in which a newspaper would be obliged, following the publication of a critical article, to publish the replies of those people who have been subjected to criticism, giving them the opportunity to present their opinion on the essence of the charges made against them.⁴

The *Izvestia* 'editorial collective' replied that 'we can't agree. *Izvestia*, like other central newspapers, publishes different points of view, and when inaccuracies get through, they are publicly corrected.' Many examples exist, nevertheless, to illustrate that not all Soviet media organs are as diligent. On July 19th, 1988, *Izvestia* correspondent R. Linev recounted the case of the Putintsev family, father and son, who had been severely (and in their view, unfairly) criticised by their local newspaper *Rudnensky Rabochi*. Having informed the editorial board of the inaccuracies contained in the article the Putintsevs found that they were unable to get redress in the columns of the paper. As a result, they had to take *Rudnensky Rabochy* to court. *Izvestia* commented that 'strictly speaking, the principle [of a legal right of reply] always existed in the press...[but] it was violated either by formula replies to critical articles from the editorial board, or by editors who had become used, as they say, to playing with only one goal mouth'.⁵

Complaints of this kind against the Soviet media can often be attributed to mischief-making on the part of the opponents of restructuring (see chapter 6), but the experience of Stalinism (and, indeed, of our own tabloid press) clearly lends support to the demand that the application of 'critical' *glasnost* should be fair. Recognising this, the resolution on *glasnost* adopted by the 19th All-Union Party Conference in July 1988 stated that, while criticism in the media should never be suppressed, it was impermissible to publish 'unobjective information which impugns the honour and dignity of the citizen', and spoke of 'the right of each citizen who has been criticised to publish a valid reply in the

same press organ...The viewpoint of all sides in a dispute must be reflected objectively and without distortion...No one has a monopoly of truth and there must be no monopoly of *glasnost* either'.⁶

Increased access has also been extended, as a consequence of the *glasnost* campaign, to voices from the capitalist countries.

Table 5.1 Media sources reported in *Pravda* coverage of the UK, March 1987–February 1988

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Number of appearances</i>
<i>The Times</i>	23
<i>Morning Star</i>	19
<i>Guardian</i>	18
<i>Independent</i>	14
<i>Financial Times</i>	9
<i>Reuters</i>	9
<i>Observer</i>	9
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	8
<i>BBC</i>	8
<i>ITN</i>	7
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	5
<i>Press Association</i>	3
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	3
<i>Daily Star</i>	2
<i>Evening Standard</i>	2
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	2
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	2
<i>Sunday Express</i>	2
<i>Today</i>	1
<i>Evening Chronicle</i>	1
<i>Daily Mail</i>	1
<i>Armed Forces Magazine</i>	1
Non-UK media sources	23
Total	172

The limited use of such sources for information, commentary and analysis predates the current reforms. A substantial number of foreign items appearing in organs such as *Sovetskaya Rossiya* which have no foreign correspondents are taken more or less directly from western news agencies. Foreign press and television sources are also used extensively as 'raw material' in the construction of stories. In addition to providing Soviet journalists with a convenient source of stories, the foreign media are also used as 'definers', interpreting and making sense of events. Table 5.1 shows the structure of access to British and other western media sources in *Pravda's* coverage of the UK over a twelve-month period. As can be seen, Rupert Murdoch's *Times* newspaper was used as a

source nearly as often as the pro-Soviet *Morning Star*. Indeed, the range of British media sources accessed by *Pravda* over this period covered the ideological spectrum from left to right, with the notable exception of the *Sun*.

A second group of western sources regularly accessed in the Soviet media before *glasnost* was representatives of political parties. Table 5.2 shows that the structure of access in the *Pravda* 1987–8 sample of UK coverage reflects the balance of political forces in the country at that time, with Mrs Thatcher and the Tories clearly dominant (92 appearances, as compared to 48 for Labour and the other opposition parties, including the Communists).

Table 5.2 British politicians reported in Pravda coverage of the UK, March 1987–February 1988

<i>Conservative politicians</i>	<i>Number of appearances</i>
Margaret Thatcher	31
Geoffrey Howe	18
Government (in general)	13
John Moore	9
George Younger	7
Nigel Lawson	3
David Mellor	3
Attorney General	3
Timothy Renton	2
Tom King	2
Douglas Hurd	2
Lynda Chalker	2
Lord Hume	1
Norman Fowler	1
Alan Clarke	1
Timothy Eggar	1
Anthony Marlowe	1
(Conservative total)	(100)
<i>Opposition politicians</i>	
Neil Kinnock	10
Anthony Benn	4
Denis Healey	3
Michael Meacher	2
Ron Brown	2
Other Labour MPs	15
Gordon McLennan (CPGB)	4
Gerry Pocock (CPGB)	1
David Owen (SDP)	3
David Steel (Liberal)	3
John Cartwright (SDP)	1
(Opposition total)	(48)

The access extended to western sources was of two types: *mediated access*, in which western views were qualified by comments from Soviet journalists; and *unmediated access*, where a viewpoint appeared without qualification. All access is 'mediated', of course, in the sense that the selection of western sources is in no way 'neutral', but the distinction is a useful one.

Prior to the *glasnost* campaign, as a rule, unmediated access was extended only to those non-Soviet views which conformed to Soviet policies and positions. For example, a considerable proportion of Soviet news output reported positive responses abroad to Soviet arms-control initiatives, policy statements, and other events of international importance. These items typically contained no comment from Soviet journalists. Since his appointment as General Secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachov has been extremely active on the international stage, and Soviet media coverage has reflected this. In the 1987–8 *Pravda* sample of UK coverage 34 items – nearly 10 per cent – fell into the category of 'response' news, accounting for a large proportion of the British views accessed (see Table 9.2 on p. 161). Without exception, the views selected to represent British opinion on these matters were approving of Soviet policy, or critical of NATO. Such items performed the function of confirming and reinforcing CPSU positions. Those responsible for editorial policy felt that there was something to be gained from giving readers the impression that Soviet views on an issue were shared even by 'bourgeois' sources, which in most other contexts were presented in an extremely negative light by Soviet journalists.

To the extent that western sources could be interpreted as agreeing with Soviet positions and policies, they were reported positively, and without qualifying commentary, as in the following item published in *Pravda* on December 29th, 1987, in which TASS reported that 'the *Sunday Times* has named the General Secretary of the CPSU "political leader of the year"'. For M. S. Gorbachov, it writes, "this was a year of achievement and strengthening position". The great majority of appearances by western sources before *glasnost* contained positive references of this kind, favourable to the USSR and intended to reinforce the legitimacy of CPSU policies in the minds of the Soviet audience.

Another form of unmediated access was provided under such rubrics as *Pravda's* 'Quote of the Day', where a foreign source was quoted on an important issue of the moment. In the 1987–8 sample period British sources made six appearances in this context, all expressing agreement with official Soviet policy. In July 1987, for example, *Pravda* reported the viewpoint of the *Mail on Sunday*, hardly a left-wing newspaper in British terms, that 'never since the end of World War Two has there been so good an opportunity to achieve nuclear disarmament as at the present time. The Russians, as Mrs Thatcher acknowledges, sincerely aspire to real progress at the [arms reduction] talks in Geneva' (July 28th, 1987). Other sources quoted under this rubric included Neil Kinnock, *The Times*, the *Sunday Express*, SDP MP John Cartwright and Bruce Kent of CND.

On occasion, articles from the British press were reprinted, typically with cuts. In January 1988 *Pravda's* African correspondent V. Tyurkin constructed an item about police repression in South Africa using articles attributed to *The Times* and *Guardian* newspapers (January 2nd, 1988).

Cartoons by western artists were often reproduced, with their captions translated for the Soviet audience. As with quotes, only cartoons which confirmed some aspect of

Soviet policy or ideology would be reprinted. In the sample period, three British cartoons were published.

Unmediated access was granted in the form of letters, written directly to Soviet media organs, or reprinted from western newspapers. On January 1st, 1988 *Pravda* published a letter by a Mr William Moore, which first appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper, critical of *Guardian* political commentator Hugo Young's alleged bias against the USSR.⁷

The following letter by a Mr Soley from Lancaster was sent direct to *Pravda* and published on January 26th, 1988.

I suppose that the Soviet Union has a constitution defining civil rights. But here in the West, human rights are determined by one's bank account. If you have nothing in the bank, you have no rights. Gold rules in this savage world of every man for himself.

Mrs Thatcher ignores those people who are entitled to social security benefits, but don't receive them. It is absolutely clear that she is not worried about this. She thinks singlemindedly about one thing – how to take money from the poor.

The Soviet media occasionally published commissioned articles by western writers. These were written by 'friends' such as Andrew Rothstein, an old British Communist who penned a congratulatory piece for *Pravda* on the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution; or Glasgow journalist Jim Tait, who wrote a long feature article for *Pravda* contrasting present-day perceptions of the USSR amongst the British people with the wartime history of alliance against Nazism. Tait observed that 'it is difficult for Britain's post-war generations, brought up on a diet of crude anti-Sovietism and distorted history, to believe that at one time the USSR was our ally' (May 10th, 1987). The rest of the item consisted of recollections from British veterans of the wartime 'Russian convoys', who told tales of UK–Soviet cooperation to defeat a common enemy.

Programme Vremya regularly extended unmediated access to members of the diplomatic community in Moscow, who would address the Soviet audience in a short statement live to camera. On March 17th, 1988, to mark St Patrick's Day, the Irish Ambassador in Moscow spoke on the theme of Irish–Soviet relations. These appearances can be seen as a sub-category of 'protocol' news and have never been the occasion for criticism of Soviet policy.

'Unmediated' access of the kind thus far described was, therefore, strictly limited to those whose views were consistent with, or at least did not overtly contradict, official Soviet policy. In this sense it was 'staged', with a clear propaganda role. Uncontrolled, unconditional access for critics or opponents of the USSR from the capitalist countries was denied.

Critical voices from abroad were present in Soviet news, but their access was framed with detailed dissection and critique, usually in tones of heavy irony and sarcasm. On the same day that *Pravda* reported, without qualifying comment, *The Sunday Times*' choice of Gorbachov as 'political leader of the year', the following item appeared in the paper concerning UK media coverage of the situation in the Persian Gulf. At that time in 1987 the Iran–Iraq War was still raging, with warships from the USA and Britain performing a 'gendarme' role in the face of Iranian attacks on merchant shipping. As the conflict

continued, with no visible end in sight, *Pravda's* Arkady Maslennikov presented the following analysis of the situation.

Bravo! At last, Britons tormented by the question of who is blocking peace and calm in the Persian Gulf have found a Fleet Street newspaper to dispel their doubts. *The Daily Telegraph* recently published an article which names the guilty party—the USSR. Here, in black and white, it is written that the Soviet Union has for several months ‘impeded’ the efforts of the United Nations to regulate the situation in the region.

Why? The newspaper has an answer prepared to this question: ‘Russia hopes to establish a beachhead in a region of vital importance for the west. If the USSR does not find new sources of oil soon, this region will grow in importance for it.’

Maslennikov rejected this interpretation, claiming that Soviet policy in the Gulf—which at this time was to call for the setting up of a multinational peace-keeping force—had met with general approval in the rest of the world:

this is precisely why it is not to the liking of those in the west who would like to preserve a naval armada in this strategically important region, for use in a gendarme role. Reflecting the view of these circles *The Daily Telegraph* calls on the west not to agree to the establishment of the multinational UN force.

The BBC was criticised in a commentary by political observer E. Yevgenev on May 9th, 1987, accusing the corporation of broadcasting ‘rubbish’ in its coverage of the Intermediate Nuclear Force talks then taking place between the USA and the USSR at Geneva. The ‘rubbish’ concerned was the BBC’s statement that ‘in the Far East it is feared that an agreement on nuclear missiles in Europe will give the USSR the opportunity to increase and modernise its nuclear forces in Asia’. Noting pointedly that the source for this claim had not been named, Yevgenev insisted that

even the most ignorant BBC editor must know that an INF agreement in Europe, if it is achieved, will simultaneously lead to a large reduction of this class of weapon in Asia, limiting each side to 100 warheads, and opening the way to talks on the future of the remaining INF missiles in this region. But the BBC is silent on this, as it is on the fact that the USA is now occupied above all with increasing and modernising its own nuclear forces in Asia.

Giving no source for his own account of events Yevgenev accused this item of supporting ‘the opponents of a nuclear-free Europe’. It was an example of the western practice of ‘casting a shadow on a clear day’, i.e., obscuring facts and distracting from the real issues.

One consequence of *glasnost* has been the development of more ‘open’ forms of mediated access which, while conforming to the general rule that critical voices may not

be reported without qualifying comment, nevertheless present such views in a more coherent manner. Typical of this development are the structured debates between western and Soviet viewpoints on international issues which appear under such rubrics as *Pravda's* 'From Different Positions'.

'From Different Positions' presents an article (or speech) written by a western source on a current east-west issue, and balances it with a reply from an authoritative Soviet commentator. On September 2nd, 1987, 'From Different Positions' presented articles by the *Guardian's* then diplomatic editor Jonathan Steele and Soviet economist E. Zelin on a recent statement by the Warsaw Pact on military doctrine. Steele's article began by praising the statement and condemning NATO's negative response to it. He then noted that 'a weak aspect of the Warsaw Pact proposal is that it is based on the concept of equilibrium. Another, that it proposes a series of agreed steps from each side as part of the process of change.' Steele called instead for unilateral steps, such as the Warsaw Pact's declaration of a no-first-use nuclear strategy. He welcomed the Warsaw Pact's adoption of 'sufficiency' as the basis of its defence policy, 'since it means that the Soviet Union no longer insists on parity. "Sufficiency" can mean that one side has fewer weapons than the other.' Steele also suggested that the Soviets' 'buffer zone' in eastern Europe should be dismantled, since it had been set up to counter the US monopoly of nuclear weapons in the 1950s and was thus no longer necessary.

Zelin began his reply by welcoming Steele's article as 'symptomatic of the positive response in the west to...Soviet peace initiatives'. It demanded a reply, however. First, why shouldn't the Warsaw Pact insist on 'equilibrium' with the west's nuclear forces? Secondly, argued Zelin, Steele had falsely posed the concepts of 'sufficiency' and 'parity' as contradictory. 'Sufficiency', Zelin suggested, recognises that more weapons do not necessarily mean more security, and that security can be established at lower levels of weaponry than currently exist. 'Parity' refers to the situation of rough equivalence of forces currently existing in east-west relations, a situation 'which has played a big part in the maintenance of international security'. 'Parity' and 'sufficiency' go together. Zelin also criticised Steele's emphasis on unilateral steps. The Soviets, he countered, had already shown a willingness to take such steps with their moratorium on nuclear testing. The USA had failed to respond. Zelin concluded: 'there are other debatable propositions in the article (for example, the excursion into the history of the military build-up of the 50s). We will consider these the personal reflections of the author to which, it goes without saying, he has full right.'

We note in passing that since this exchange was published the Soviets have indeed begun the process of dismantling their 'buffer zone' in eastern Europe.

Glasnost has also seen the extension of 'unmediated' access beyond the range of those who will merely reinforce official Soviet positions. It is no longer uncommon for the Soviet press to publish, uncut, articles by western sources which are critical of aspects of Soviet life. Thus, the magazine *Zhurnalists* regularly runs articles by western authors under the rubric '*Glasnost: a detached view*'. These articles, it is emphasised by the editorial committee, are not cut, unless for reasons of space and with the agreement of the authors, nor are they subject to editorial comment.

The August 1989 issue of *Zhurnalists* reprinted an article by American journalist Neil Hickey which had first appeared in the mass-circulation US weekly *TV Guide*. The article discussed in detail the impact of *glasnost* on Soviet television, balancing

favourable comment with criticism of, among other things, the continuing limitations on the ability of western journalists to report from Moscow. Most notably, the piece contained an interview with former political prisoner Andrei Mironov, who refuted the view, put by Hickey, that *glasnost* had 'introduced more truth to the Soviet mass media, and removed the ban from many themes, which can now be discussed on television'. Mironov replied:

'Talk that there is now nothing which cannot be discussed is a scandalous lie. Even the authorities don't believe it, although they attempt to convince themselves and you [western journalists].' The numbers in camps and prisons, 'cold and hungry', and the fate of those who have come out, is one of the themes which has not been touched, says Mironov, as is that of the psychiatric hospitals used for the confinement of political prisoners. The press never touches on the work of the KGB, and nowhere will you find mention of anti-semitism and the persecution of Christians. The occupation of Eastern Europe by Soviet forces for more than forty years is not discussed, nor the fact that in several of the fifteen union republics many thousands of people are experiencing national feelings so strong that they are calling for secession from the USSR. In the much-praised discussion programmes on television the question will not be put of the justice of the assertion that the country must be led by one all-powerful political party which controls the army and the police. 'The authorities are prepared to arrest us, but they will not do so because of the presence of western journalists in Moscow.' Andrei Mironov fell silent and looked around at the flat, and the slogans on the wall—'Stop all nuclear tests', 'Peace in Space', 'No to Star Wars'. 'They know who we are. Every word of our conversation today will remain on tape.'⁸

By August 1989, when this article was made available to a Soviet audience, many of Mironov's specific points were out of date. As already noted, the Soviet media had by this stage of the *glasnost* campaign begun to cover previously excluded themes such as religion, nationalism, industrial disputes, the KGB and the army. None the less, for a major Soviet publication to print, without commentary, such a fierce attack on the Party and the media, penned by a Soviet dissident and an American journalist, shows that, for some media organs at least, there is virtually no limit to the range of views which can now find expression.

It is also worth noting that in the era of *glasnost* access to the Soviet media has been extended not just to journalists from the capitalist world but to companies, in the form of advertising space.

Advertisements were a feature of the Soviet media before *glasnost*, performing the basic function of informing the population of the goods and services available to them in the state shops. Brief items in the press and on television would publicise the specifications and prices of goods for sale, and the addresses of the stores where it was possible to purchase them. By contemporary western standards such adverts were stylistically crude and few in number, reflecting the narrow range of consumer goods

produced by domestic Soviet industry, and the general absence of competitive pressures to sell what was produced.

Since 1985, however, the Party has encouraged the entry into the Soviet market of hundreds of capitalist companies. Associated with this has been the appearance of advertisements for these companies in the Soviet media. Such adverts have now become routine.

Capitalist companies have also been allowed to advertise on Soviet television, for the extremely reasonable rate of 78 roubles per minute in the Moscow region.⁹ Television advertisements produced for the Soviet market by multinationals such as Pepsi have been shown in the USSR to considerable publicity in the west, although the advertisements have preceded the goods which they are intended to sell. As yet, the thing being advertised is often the company rather than any specific product, although this will change as *perestroika* continues and the promised consumer boom in the USSR gets under way.

Another significant development in the sphere of access is the 'telebridge', a form of current affairs television in which representatives of western public opinion debate east-west issues with their counterparts in the USSR. The programmes are live and thus, though subject to careful managing by presenters from both east and west, relatively unpredictable. During the Sample period of March 1988, Central Television and GOSTELRADIO co-produced a series of six telebridges broadcast simultaneously in Britain and the Soviet Union, linking studio audiences in London, Glasgow, Belfast and other UK cities with their counterparts in Moscow, Leningrad, Riga and Tallinn.¹⁰

Socialist pluralism

The third key element of the *glasnost* campaign, and one without which the objectives of extending criticism and access would be meaningless, is *socialist pluralism*. The introduction of a concept of socialist pluralism into the terminology of marxism-leninism is one of the most significant theoretical revisions of the post-April period.

Pluralism of a kind has always been present to some degree in the Soviet media. Writing in the 1970s Katz noted 'the considerable differentiation and autonomy of certain media units as vehicles for particular attitudes and group interests. These may be of various kinds: bureaucratic, local ethnic, national, and ideological-political' (1977, p.9). Based on research carried out in the early 1980s, Dzirkals *et al.* concur with this assessment, observing that 'different organs... may sound different notes on major issues of the day' (1982, p.viii). For these authors, the Soviet media apparatus was 'more complex, changing and diverse than standard Western rules of interpretation usually allow for' (*ibid.*, p.7).

This pluralism, to the extent that it existed, was a consequence of the fact, previously noted, that all media organs in the USSR were required to be affiliated to particular state and government organisations, such as the Ministry of Defence and the trade unions. When the interests of these organisations came into conflict this was reflected in public debate through the media. A Soviet media specialist explains that

different groups in Soviet society have different perspectives on events, which determine the content of the newspapers which serve their interests. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the organ of the Defence Ministry, when writing about the US tends to put the emphasis on military rivalry. Thus, their understanding of American foreign policy is very negative. On the other hand, such a newspaper as *Sovetskaya Kultura* tends to cover the cultural life of the US, and reading it one tends to receive a more positive impression.

Sometimes these differences lead to quarrels between newspapers and journals. In the early 1970s there was a dispute between *Voprosi Filosofii* (*Questions of Philosophy*) and *Voenny Mysl* (*Military Thought*) on the subject of the 'winnability' of nuclear war. The latter defended the thesis that it is possible for socialism to survive a nuclear war, though with great losses, while the philosophical magazine argued that nuclear war would mean the devastation of all civilisation. There was also an intra-media debate about whether there are some social and technological problems which are common to all societies and not class-related, not problems of class struggle.

To the extent that such debates took place in the Soviet media before 1985, they did so despite rather than because of CPSU media policy. Pluralism as a concept had long been linked in marxist-leninist ideology with bourgeois democratic forms and was thus not considered relevant to the Soviet experience.¹¹ In May 1987, however, during one of his regular policy sessions with editors and senior media personnel, Gorbachov referred positively to a 'socialist pluralism', portraying it as an authentically leninist concept.

It is sometimes asked what the limits of *glasnost* are. We have resolved this matter within the framework of a socialist pluralism of opinions. We are for broad development of criticism and *glasnost*, but in the interests of society and of socialism, in the interests of the people...through restructuring we want to restore Lenin's image of socialism and lead Soviet society to a radically new level...Socialism in Lenin's interpretation makes it possible to ensure a pluralism of views, a pluralism of interests and requirements.¹²

Lenin's clearest statement of support for a 'socialist pluralism' is contained in his 'Declaration of the Iskra Board', written in 1900 on behalf of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party. In it he explained that

although we carry out our literary work from the standpoint of a definite tendency [that of Social Democracy 'in the spirit of Marx and Engels'], we do not in the least intend to present all our views on partial questions as those of all Russian Social Democrats; we do not deny that differences exist, nor shall we attempt to conceal or obliterate them. On the contrary, we desire our publications to become organs for the *discussion* of all questions by all Russian Social Democrats of the most diverse shades of

opinion. We do not reject polemics between comrades, but, on the contrary, are prepared to give them considerable space in our columns. Open polemics, conducted in full view of all Russian Social Democrats and class-conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to clarify the depth of existing differences, in order to afford discussion of disputed questions from all angles, in order to combat the extremities into which representatives of various views, various localities, or various 'specialities' of the revolutionary movement inevitably fall.

(1972, p.61)

In words which would have been entirely appropriate to the situation in the USSR eighty years later, Lenin identified 'one of the drawbacks' of the socialist movement of 1900 to be 'the absence of open polemics between avowedly differing views, the effort to conceal differences on fundamental questions'.

The appeal for 'open polemics between comrades' is far from being an endorsement of liberal pluralism, but it has in common with the latter the assumption that within certain parameters debate on 'fundamental questions' is possible, and indeed desirable. While liberal pluralism permits debate within the 'givens' of a capitalist economic order and a system of parliamentary democracy, the Russian Social Democrats to whom Gorbachov is the heir accepted the value of 'open polemics' within a broad 'consensus' about the necessity for, and goals of, the revolutionary movement.

This policy was adhered to throughout the pre-revolutionary struggle, and continued for a period after the October Revolution. Initially, the conduct of polemics and dissent between and within political parties was permitted by the Bolsheviks, though participation was conditional on acceptance of the legitimacy and progressive nature of the Soviet state. Indeed, for a time, attempts were made by the Bolsheviks to secure the participation of other left-wing parties in a coalition government.

In Soviet accounts, as we have seen, events prevented the consolidation of such a pluralism, in politics or in the media. Soviet historians have argued that civil war, foreign intervention, internal subversion and the prospect of economic collapse pushed the question of political pluralism in Soviet Russia to the margins, and encouraged the formation of a one-party state. Whether for these reasons or because, as Rosa Luxemburg and Bertrand Russell argued, Bolshevism contained within it the tendency towards dictatorship,¹³ a movement towards the suppression of debate between the various parties of the left, and later within the Communist Party itself, was becoming evident even while Lenin lived. Following his death, Stalin took the process to its ultimate conclusion of mass purges and gulags.

Ideological legitimation for the perpetuation of a one-party system long after the conditions which (in the Soviet version of events) led to its formation had disappeared was provided by defining Soviet society as one in which social class antagonisms no longer existed. Instead, the population of the USSR was said to be composed of 'non-antagonistic social strata' such as the intelligentsia, the workers and the peasants. Consequently, there was no class basis for political pluralism, in or its corollary, a pluralistic media system.¹⁴

In embracing socialist pluralism, Gorbachov has revised this Stalinist interpretation of marxism-leninism. As Djilas has correctly observed, Gorbachov recognises that in the

USSR 'conflicts stemming from group interests, collective interests, departmental interests and Party interests exist—that they have a stratified society. It follows that these interests must be given expression, and that implies the quiet entry of pluralism.'¹⁵ Gorbachov's pluralism, like Lenin's, is not of the 'liberal' variety. It insists upon 'consensus' around the strategic aims and values of Soviet socialism, and permits as yet no challenge to the leading role of the Party (although, as this book went to press, there were those within the Supreme Soviet who had begun to campaign for a change in Article 6 of the Soviet constitution, which guarantees the Party its leading role). Within this framework, however, Gorbachov and his supporters in the leadership have encouraged 'open polemics' on a variety of issues which were previously beyond debate.

Reviewing letters on the subject of socialist pluralism *Izvestia's* deputy letters' editor wrote that 'for a long time the term was exclusively one of abuse, applied only to bourgeois conditions. It is important that we have now acknowledged that pluralism, and diverse forms of political, economic, and cultural life not only don't contradict socialism, but are the condition of revealing its potential.'¹⁶ Socialist pluralism, for this writer, is premised on the notion that 'society appears before us as a complex structure, with different classes, social strata, and groups. At times, not only do their interests fail to coincide, they are antagonistic.'

An example of the new pluralism in practice can be seen in the exchange of views which occurred in the pages of *Pravda* during June and July 1988 between historians P. Kuznetsov and Yu. Afanasyev. The latter doubted whether, bearing in mind the continuing legacy of Stalinism, 'we have created a socialist society' in the USSR. Although *Pravda* intervened with an editorial which repudiated Afanasyev, the fact that an article which would previously have been considered heretical could be published uncut in the leading organ of the Central Committee indicates the increasing tolerance of dissent from the official Party line, and the recognition that socialist pluralism is a precondition of genuinely critical *glasnost*.

As socialist pluralism has become established tensions have developed around the issue of where the parameters of legitimate dissent should be drawn. An example of this tension is provided by a major theoretical article which appeared in *Pravda* in March 1989.¹⁷ The author began by noting that pluralism had to reflect 'the struggle between different interests and the competition of different opinions on how best to realise one and the same interest. In the process of comparing a multitude of viewpoints, polemics on debatable questions create the conditions for seeking and finding the truth, and for working out the most effective solutions.' However, pluralism had been and was being abused by certain individuals and organisations, including some Party newspapers. By way of illustration he pointed out that 'attacks on the CC CPSU are not limited only to the theory and policy of *perestroika*', which is permissible within the framework of socialist pluralism.

Doubt has been cast on the socialist character of Soviet society, its socialist future, and the realism and viability of the marxist doctrine of socialism itself...A number of items which contain interpretations of the history of socialist construction not only expose Stalin's crimes [permissible debate] but cancel out the progress of the Soviet people on the path to socialism [impermissible debate].

Like critical *glasnost*, socialist pluralism has its limits, ending at the point where 'criticism, at times unfounded, calls into question Party policy on questions of principle and socialist values. Such a relaxed position signifies a surrender of ideological-political positions.'

Not all Soviet journalists have respected these limits. As the ethnic disputes in the Baltic republics and elsewhere have intensified, it has become increasingly difficult for Party ideologists to restrain debate within the preferred limits. Lembit Annus, the chief editor of the republican organ *Soviet Estonia*, accused the Estonian journal *Loomnig* of deviating from socialist pluralism and displaying 'extremism and anti-Soviet bacchanalianism' in describing the 1940 'revolution' in Estonia as a 'Bolshevik occupation'.¹⁸ In doing so, he suggested, the editors of *Loomnig* were 'turning pluralism on its side', and deviating from the fundamentals of 'decency and honesty, not to mention socialist content'. At the time of writing, journalists in the Baltic republics were continuing to push the boundaries of legitimate dissent even further beyond what Party ideologists would consider to be acceptable.

6

Resistance and restructuring

The attempt to introduce critical *glasnost*, socialist pluralism, and increased rights of access to the Soviet media (and to information in general) has not been made without resistance. This in turn has prompted a series of legal and other measures designed to consolidate the achievements of the reform process thus far, and ease the path to further radical change. This chapter considers those measures, and the opposition to reform which made them necessary.

Resisting reform

There can be little doubt that the majority of Soviet citizens approve of the post-April reforms in media policy. There are those, however, for whom the introduction of *glasnost* brings little pleasure. While there is satisfaction, particularly amongst the intelligentsia, that a critical reappraisal of Soviet history has at last begun, others, including many who through luck or design survived the Stalin era and are now enjoying retirement, are openly resentful. A 'veteran of war and work' typifies this sentiment when he complains in a letter to *Pravda* that

in the last two years numerous articles have appeared in various newspapers and journals which give an extremely negative appraisal of the 1930s. The authors of these articles see nothing in this period but the cult of personality, yet in those years we laid the base for the economic strength of our country...We of the older generation well recall those years, and the enthusiasm which prevailed in society. The faith in our correctness and in the future which was created in those years helped us to win Victory in a cruel war and to defend our system. What happened happened, but the good things were greater.¹

The writer speaks for a significant proportion of those, particularly among the older generation, who fear that their achievements in building socialism in the USSR, despite the ravages of Stalinism, are in danger of being undermined by the *glasnost* campaign.²

The strength and persistence of such views may depress Gorbachov and his supporters, but the logic of 'socialist pluralism' means that they must have their place in the media. To exclude them on the grounds that they run counter to the current Party line would contradict *glasnost* and merely replace one kind of media uniformity with another.

Opposition to the new information policy also comes from that stratum of Party and state workers which, for financial and political reasons, has a personal stake in the maintenance of the status quo. For this group 'openness' in media coverage of history is

less threatening than media criticism of currently-existing negative phenomena in which they personally are implicated. This group is less outspoken in its criticisms of *glasnost* than the old age pensioners who write letters to the press condemning 'negative appraisals' of the past, but they are better positioned to impede its application. Requests by the media for 'probing' interviews with officials are refused, while counter campaigns of mud-slinging and disinformation against individual journalists are common, particularly in the republics and localities, where the introduction of *glasnost* has proceeded at a much slower pace than at the centre. If the political abuses and chronic mismanagement which plague many regions of the USSR are now regularly reported in the central media organs such as *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, the local media themselves often remain silent, choosing or being pressurised into 'banging the drum' for their Party organisations.³

The reasons for the 'uneven' development of *glasnost* are located largely in the nature of relations between the Party and the media at local level. As V.A. Bogachov, editor of the Gorky newspaper *Dzherzinetz* puts it:

unlike journalists from central newspapers, the local journalists have many complicating factors in their relations with people. The journalist from the central newspaper comes here, sees, writes, and leaves for the capital. But let's say the local journalist criticises a director—then he must meet with him, look him in the eye, and resolve some common problems. Or, let's say, the city newspaper criticises the chairman of the city executive committee, as often happens today, then the next day [the editor] has to go to him to resolve the housing problems of his workers. The editor must be very strong and courageous not to shift from his stance in the newspaper.⁴

Verbal and physical intimidation of campaigning journalists is common in the regions. *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* reported on the persecution of two journalists campaigning against organised crime and corruption in Bukhara, the capital of Uzbekistan. Having discovered corruption in the editorial office of their own newspaper, *Sovetskaya Bukhara*, the two journalists (who were husband and wife) first informed their local Party organisation and then, when nothing was done, officials in Moscow. Despite the fact that their accusations were proven in court, the couple subsequently found themselves threatened with dismissal, or worse: 'unknown persons called them at night, threatening them with violence and intimidating them. On one occasion some bandit caught their daughter in the doorway and putting a knife to her throat, ordered: "You tell your lot to keep out of other people's business, otherwise you'll get it."'⁵

In June 1989 *Komsomolskaya Pravda* told the tragic story of 32-year-old Nikolai Nikiforov, a press and broadcasting journalist from Chelyabinsk in the Chubashy region. Nikiforov had established a reputation for himself as a courageous, campaigning journalist in the true spirit of *glasnost*, whose writing and broadcasting activities had extensively publicised the 'unhealthy situation' in the region. The regional Party secretary, Muzhikov, was a regular target of his output. Nikiforov exposed the corruption and incompetence surrounding Muzhikov, and the fact that many of the 'cronies' whom he had gathered around him were former criminals. Largely due to Nikiforov's activities

Muzhikov and his circle were eventually removed from office, but not before Nikiforov began to be subjected to threatening phone calls, warnings and other forms of harassment. Finally he disappeared, to be found four days later, strangled to death. While the authors refrained from saying so directly, they strongly implied that Nikiforov's death was not unconnected with his work, and with Muzhikov's 'cronies'. Moreover, his fate had been used by conservative elements in the region to intimidate other local journalists who may have had ambitions of emulating Nikiforov's work. Campaigning journalists began to receive anonymous phone-calls in the course of which a voice would inform them, 'if you write about this, Nikiforov's fate will be yours'.⁶ The authors of the piece concluded that:

since *perestroika*, the methods of bringing pressure to bear on journalists have become more refined. They could make up an entire chapter of a textbook on the history of Soviet journalism: from mud-slinging accusations, to anonymous phone-calls, letters, blackmail, threats, and open provocations. A correspondent for *Soviet Miner* was even arrested and thrown into jail.

A third source of opposition to reform comes from those 'departmental interests', principally the ministries, anxious to prevent public scrutiny of their economic performance.

In the USSR, as in capitalist countries, powerful vested interests may lobby for and secure the suppression of embarrassing news stories. Before *glasnost* all news items on technical issues were subject to the approval of the relevant ministries, each of which operated a Department of Information (akin to a public relations office). One emigré source described these departments as functioning 'like a filter. They protect the ministry from possible criticisms in the newspapers, from various critical observations that would not be helpful to the ministry' (quoted in Dzirkals *et al.*, 1982, p.32).

The makers of a 1987 British television documentary about the Soviet media interviewed a *Pravda* correspondent who revealed that for several years his pieces about the pollution of Lake Baikal by a cellulose factory on its shores had been suppressed at the behest of the Industry Ministry in Moscow. Only the personal intervention of Politburo member Yegor Ligachov had enabled the pieces to be published.⁷

The extent to which vested interests can 'protect' themselves in this manner is closely related to the political atmosphere prevailing in the country, and since the onset of the *glasnost* campaign the power of the ministries to 'manage' news in this manner has declined, as the Baikal story indicates. Attempts by ministries to suppress news coverage of their deficiencies have come under increasing criticism. For example, on January 1st, 1986 the CPSU Central Committee adopted a resolution condemning the suppression of critical material appearing in the newspapers *Air Transport* and *Water Transport*. The guilty parties were identified as the Ministries of Water and River Shipping, and the Central Committee of the merchant seamen's union. The Resolution noted approvingly that after the April Plenum *Air Transport* and *Water Transport* had adopted 'a fastidious and principled approach to the coverage of urgent questions'. But, 'instead of supporting the valid criticisms in the newspapers' articles', the Ministry and the union

organised the persecution of the editors and journalists of the newspapers...such a position does not correspond to the policy of the April Plenum on open and truthful discussion of urgent social problems...on increasing the effectiveness of the press, radio and television, and on uncompromising struggle with all attempts to ignore or suppress criticism.

(CPSU, 1987, p.395)

As the *glasnost* campaign gained ground, the opposition elements formed a loose alliance of 'conservative'⁸ forces to engage the reformers in the cultural and political sphere. Notwithstanding his demotion from the position of Ideology Secretary in September 1988, their champion has been Yegor Ligachov, a politician himself untainted by the corruption and political degeneration of others of his generation who had been leaders in the Brezhnev era.⁹ The region of Siberia where Ligachov built his political base was, as he stressed at the 19th Party Conference in July 1988, one of the few in northern Russia which could boast self-sufficiency in foodstuffs. His reputation was that of a militant, and somewhat austere marxist-leninist. As he pointedly observed at the 19th Conference, he had been one of those who voted for Gorbachov as General Secretary. As we have seen, it was Ligachov who, against the opposition of the Industry Ministry, ensured the publication of articles criticising levels of industrial pollution in Lake Baikal. These articles contributed substantially to the decision to convert the offending factory to the production of goods which would be less damaging to the environment. At the 27th Congress, however, Ligachov adopted the mantle of what subsequently became known as the 'conservative' position. Chapter 4 referred to the *Pravda* article critical of Party privileges which, in the view of the then editor Victor Afanasyev, had 'marked the beginning of *glasnost*'. In his Congress speech Ligachov attacked the piece, saying that while 'constructive criticism and self-criticism play a great role...certain newspapers have been guilty of lapses, and even the editors of *Pravda* have not avoided them. Criticism should be aimed at eradicating what has outlived its times, and at the all-out strengthening and development of socialist democracy and our social system.'¹⁰ Ligachov and those whose interests he was perceived as representing by observers inside the USSR and outside it, thus signalled their opposition to the emphasis being placed by the reformers on 'critical' *glasnost*. For them, the most important role of the media remained as it was prior to the April Plenum, that of popularising the positive achievements and experiences of the *perestroika*.

Ligachov and his supporters had two further points of disagreement with the reformists. First, they continued to uphold the thesis that the role of the media in a socialist society—even one in which *glasnost* was the norm—was not to reflect public opinion in all its diversity, but to shape and mould it in the direction favoured by the Party. Secondly, and connected with this, they insisted that the media must remain under Party control, and that the Party must resist moves towards 'excessive' independence on the part of the media.

The debate dominated the 19th All-Union Party Conference, held in Moscow between June 28th and July 1st, 1988. Although the resolution on *glasnost* eventually adopted by the Conference was broadly supportive of the reformers' position,¹¹ speakers time and again attacked the media's performance of their new critical role, frequently to loud

applause in the hall from what was by all accounts a largely conservative audience. Even the General Secretary found that his statements urging restraint on the media were more warmly received than his calls for an end to the suppression of 'critical' *glasnost*.¹²

Representing the conservatives the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kirghizia, A.M.Masaliyev, alleged that 'there are quite a few journalists who display incompetence in the coverage of problems, frequently distort events and juggle with facts in their pursuit of sensationalism. Unobjective and unverified materials have started appearing in central and republican newspapers and journals.'¹³ V.V. Karpov compared the 'malicious, unreasoned, bilious articles' of the post-April period with the 'intrigues, denunciations, slanders and lies' of the Stalin era.¹⁴ Yuri Bondarov, conservative chairman of the RSFSR Writers' Union, suggested that 'nihilistic criticism is becoming, or may already have become, the driving force in the press...moulding public opinion, stunning readers and viewers with sensationalist noise and abuse, juggling with and distorting historical facts'.¹⁵ Bondarev counterposed 'objective *glasnost*' with 'biased *glasnost*' where 'the accused has no right of reply'. Ligachov in his speech expressed agreement with Bondarev's remarks, accusing some newspaper editors of 'cliquishness' and 'using newspapers to settle their own scores'. Referring to the post-April coverage of Soviet history, Ligachov asked:

can we really agree with it when, under the flag of restoring historical truth, what often goes on is the complete distortion of it? Can we really agree with it when the Soviet people are presented as slaves... who are supposedly fed only by lies and demagoguery, the whole people being subjected to the cruellest exploitation?¹⁶

Prominent among the defenders of *glasnost* at the conference were the editor of *Izvestia*, and M. Ulyanov, the Chairman of the RSFSR Theatre Workers' Union. In a powerful and eloquent speech Ulyanov declared the Soviet press to be 'an independent and major force, not the timid handmaiden of certain comrades who have become accustomed to living and leading without control'.¹⁷ Georgi Arbatov of the influential Institute of USA-Canada Studies 'detected in some speeches notes of nostalgia for the good old days of "ideological comfort", when the mass media were quiet, tame and inoffensive'.¹⁸

At a key meeting of the Central Committee held one year later in July 1989, these arguments were again rehearsed, often by the same people. Secretary Masaliyev from Kirghizia complained that

some mass media strive to erode Party control, and, on the pretext of criticising mistakes committed in the past, are busy compromising our socio-political system; essentially, a harsh struggle for people's minds is being waged. The press and television use all possible genres to discredit our achievements and set the people against the Party. And they are succeeding in this to a certain extent.¹⁹

Moscow Party Secretary and powerful Politburo member Lev Zaikov confirmed his place in the ranks of the conservatives by accusing the Soviet media of

indiscriminate propaganda of western values. The news from 'over there' is about luxury villas, cars, shop windows, and so on. And what about the news from our country? Perpetual shortages, law-breaking, drug addiction. As if restructuring had changed nothing, as if we can find no other colour but black to paint the picture of our own selves. *Glasnost* cannot be served in measured doses. But we must display at least objectivity and patriotic interest in the improvement of affairs.²⁰

The First Secretary of the Sverdlovsk oblast CP, L.F.Babykin argued that

if there are still 'closed zones' for criticism, they are the mass media themselves and their workers. The [media] are full of prostitutes, drug addicts, hooligans and dubious 'supermen'. We are morally corrupting our people, and first and foremost the young. It is time to draw the line between healthy pluralism of opinion and taste, and the propaganda of alien ideology, which openly corrupts society.²¹

Babykin ended by complaining of the absence of 'a firm line on ideological issues'.

Ligachov also had his say at the meeting, arguing that

dictates by certain groups reign in certain news organs and there is in fact no pluralism or democracy there. Moreover, there are calls for the mass news media to be removed from Party control and be transformed, so they say, into an independent force...In that case the mass news media would become a dictatorship in which certain forces ruled...Another [bad] idea that has gained currency is that the press and television merely reflect life the way it is. What are you demanding of us, they say. Life's like that. We merely reflect it in the press. By reflecting and showing life and developing criticism in every possible way, the mass news media are called upon to shape public opinion and influence society's cause constructively.²²

It is indicative of the underlying conservatism of the Central Committee as late as mid-1989 that such views as have been quoted above comprised by far the majority of those expressed at this meeting. One of the few who defended the performance of the media since 1985 was the First Secretary of the Kazakhstan Party organisation, N.A.Nazarbayev, who stated that 'it is time to abandon negative assessments of the activity of the press, which we ourselves called upon to be bolder in uncovering the old sores of the bureaucratic edict system...the mass media genuinely reflect the objectively contradictory nature of the socio-economic and moral processes taking place in society'.²³

Gorbachov and Prime Minister Rizhkov adopted a middle course in the debate. Rizhkov, on the one hand, supported the reformers in disagreeing with the view that 'there is too much criticism in the press and on television and that criticism must be given in limited doses'.²⁴ On the other hand, he stressed that 'the press must work under the leadership of the Party and its collectives'. Gorbachov's opening speech to the

conference also emphasised the Party's intention to retain its traditional role of control and supervision of the media, while calling for a more 'constructive' approach by Soviet journalists to the reporting of the *perestroika*.

The entire experience of world development, and present experience in particular, shows that the press—that powerful social institution—can never be independent of society anywhere. And Lenin was right—the press is always the Party press. It always expresses the interests of particular social groups. And that also applies fully to our society and to the times in which we live...There is a political line and main guidelines which must determine the direction taken by the press. In all other matters, communist and non-Party people working on any press body, publication or editorial board, must have complete freedom of creativity and the full right to raise whatever problems they wish, uphold and defend their standpoint and generally work creatively and responsibly. As a rule, Party members head our publications and a substantial proportion of journalists are communists.²⁵

Kagarlitsky (1987, 1988) and Dunlop (1987) have described the progress of the *glasnost* debate in the wider cultural sphere, as artists, writers and cinematographers took positions on one side or the other. Within the mass news media, individual newspapers began to be identified with reformist or conservative positions, to the evident displeasure of the General Secretary who, despite his espousal of socialist pluralism, has criticised the fact that

certain writers and even organisations have already divided up and distributed themselves among certain newspapers and magazines. Today I can tell you exactly which letters will be published by one magazine and which will be published by another. Group predilections can be discerned. And this must be overcome. Publish everything. There must be plurality of opinions, but pluralism aimed at defending and strengthening the line of restructuring and the cause of socialism.²⁶

Of all the news media, the most aggressive advocate of the conservative position has been *Sovetskaya Rossiya*. Set up in 1956, as noted on page 42, to promote the de-Stalinisation of the Soviet media, it is perhaps ironic that *Sovetskaya Rossiya* had by the mid-1980s become the 'voice' of Russian nationalism and orthodox marxism-leninism. For the editorial board of *Sovetskaya Rossiya* the *glasnost* campaign threatened patriotic socialist values. In the most spectacular single act of dissent from the reformers' programme thus far, the newspaper published on March 13th, 1987, the day before Gorbachov was due to depart on a state visit to Yugoslavia, a letter by Leningrad college lecturer Nina Andreyeva. Subsequently described as a 'manifesto' for the conservatives, and reportedly drafted with the knowledge and approval of Ligachov and other key conservatives, the letter denounced 'the obsession with critical attacks' and the 'monochromatic' portrayals of the Stalinist period which now prevailed in the Soviet media.²⁷

Andreyeva went on to enlist the support of Winston Churchill in painting a picture of Stalin as a 'a remarkable personality...a man of unusual energy, erudition, and unbending force of will'.

On April 5th *Pravda* published a reply to the Andreyeva article in the form of a full-page editorial condemning its defence of Stalinism, and ending with the observation that:

there are no prohibited topics today. Journals, publishing houses and studios decide for themselves what to publish. The appearance of the article, however, is an attempt little by little to revise Party decisions. It has been said repeatedly at meetings of the Party Central Committee that the Soviet press is not a private concern, that communists writing for the press and editors should have a sense of responsibility for article and publications. In this case the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* which, let us be frank, has done much for restructuring, departed from this principle.²⁸

Of less importance than the content of the letter was its impact on the *glasnost* campaign. The experience described by the following supporter of reform was not uncommon.

It is shameful for me to admit that I took this anti-*perestroika* position for the official viewpoint...I recall my first reaction exactly—'here...in an organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU, material written in a didactic, instructive tone, with no editorial commentary...Such a strongly principled position has surely been agreed, and has possibly been put out as a decree'. And then I had another thought. 'Okay. Apparently, those upstairs have become frightened of what the creative forces which they themselves have aroused will grow into.'²⁹

For three weeks, until *Pravda* published its rebuttal, the Andreyeva letter became the focus for a mobilisation of conservative forces throughout the USSR. Meetings in support of Andreyeva were organised and, in the case of the Leningrad region, even televised. The text was reprinted in a number of regional and local newspapers, reflecting the belief, and in some cases the hope, that the publication of the letter represented a change in Party policy. So widespread was this belief that on March 29th the news agency TASS issued a communiqué to the effect that the decision to reprint the letter was one for local Party organisations alone. For Party officials versed in Soviet political conventions, this clearly signalled that the Party leadership in Moscow was dissociating itself from the Andreyeva letter.

The editorial board of *Sovetskaya Rossiya* was eventually compelled to publish what was generally regarded as a half-hearted apology for its conduct. As for the reformers, it was acknowledged that the affair had exposed their vulnerability. 'Not one of us, who is for *perestroika* in heart, mind, and spirit, took up the pen or spoke in its defence. We waited. But our opponents didn't wait, and they weren't silent.'³⁰ Newspapers received many letters from readers opposed to Andreyeva, but these were not published until the *Pravda* article of April 5th had established the 'correct' line. For one supporter of the *glasnost* campaign, the Andreyeva affair revealed 'how deeply blind obedience and mindless assiduity have eaten into us'.³¹

In opposition to *Sovetskaya Rossiya* the 'reformist' media organs include *Izvestia*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Moscow News*, and *Ogonyok*, a current affairs magazine. The latter caused controversy on the eve of the 19th Conference by publishing an article accusing several of the delegates of bribe-taking. These publications are continually engaged in extending the boundaries of legitimate criticism and socialist pluralism. Television, which within the framework of GOSTELRADIO is free of the inhibiting institutional affiliations of some of the newspapers, has often been in the vanguard of reform.

Pravda, the organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the most authoritative voice of the Party, has tended to occupy a conservative position in the debate. While the article of February 1986 cited above was important in establishing the practice of criticism in the media, at other times *Pravda* has appeared to side with the conservatives in so far as its editorials stress the need for 'positive' rather than 'critical' *glasnost*. At a Central Committee session in May 1988, editor Afanasyev condemned 'unrestrained criticism of what was and what is', favouring instead 'positive proposals and the elaboration of forms, methods and means of resolving the urgent problems that face us'.³² At the same meeting, by contrast, *Izvestia* editor E. Laptev defended the radical position, arguing that 'it is impossible today to suppress a single fact relating to social life once it has happened. It cannot be done. It is not within anyone's power. Suppression is harmful. It breeds rumours, fabrications, lack of confidence. Sometimes, information alone resolves the problems.'³³

In December 1987 Afanasyev warned that 'principles remain principles, and it is impossible to abandon them'.³⁴ It could be seen as more than coincidental that the Andreyeva letter, published three months later, appeared under the title 'I Can't Abandon My Principles'.

The relative conservatism of *Pravda's* position in the *glasnost* debate was further illustrated by its decision to publish, without cuts, an article which first appeared in the Italian newspaper *Repubblica* about Boris Yeltsin's September 1989 tour of the United States. The article, subsequently the subject of an apology by its author and an admission that it was based on 'second-hand sources', accused Yeltsin of drunkenness, profligacy and general debauchery.³⁵

Sovetskaya Rossiya, for its part, published a similarly scurrilous attack on People's Deputy V.I.Schilitsey, for which the Supreme Soviet's Committee on *Glasnost*, Civil Rights and Civic Appeals accused it of deliberately spreading 'lies'. The same committee accused *Pravda* of 'defaming' Yeltsin with its decision to publish the Italian article.³⁶

In September 1989, on his return from a holiday on the Black Sea, Gorbachov convened a meeting of the Central Committee at which three of the Politburo's remaining conservatives were removed from office and his own supporters substituted. He also brought forward the 28th Congress of the CPSU from its scheduled date of March 1991 to November 1990, as a means of speeding up the process of restructuring inside the Party itself. These measures were related to the general deterioration of the political situation in the USSR in 1989 caused by intensifying industrial and national unrest, but their effect on the media was to strengthen the direction of change towards a more open, pluralistic system.

The following month Gorbachov addressed a gathering of senior media personnel, issuing strong warnings about the dangers of going too far, too fast in the development of

glasnost and socialist pluralism. Around the same time the editor of *Argumenty i Fakti* came under pressure to resign because of what the conservatives regarded as that journal's excessive zeal in embracing critical *glasnost*. The editor's colleagues rallied round, however, and were able to prevent his removal. Then, on October 19th, 1989, the conservatives suffered a further defeat. That day, and due in large part to the Yeltsin controversy, *Pravda* editor Victor Afanasyev was obliged to resign after ten years in office, to be replaced by the more reformist Ivan Frolov. As a senior correspondent of *Pravda* explains, 'he was ten years with Brezhnev, and now his time is past. It's usual that when the General Secretary changes, so must the editor of *Pravda*. *Pravda* is the mirror of the General Secretary. This newspaper belongs not to the Party, not to the Politburo, but to the General Secretary.'

Afanasyev was not for *glasnost*. He was a conservative. Afanasyev is a very honest man, and very devoted, but his position is that of the Russian patriotic conservatives, which you can link with Rasputin, Byelov—I don't say that he belonged to Pamyat—but he was a critic of corruption in high society, nepotism, children who drive luxury cars. He was for the dictatorship of the Party, but a clean Party. That's why *Pravda* was the first newspaper to write an article against the apparatus. Afanasyev had a very strong anti-corruption line, anti-apparat line, but not anti-Party. He was a Stalinist—not one who forgave Stalin for his crimes, but he was for order, for the Party, one Soviet Union strong, a united Russia. He was a Russian nationalist in the Communist Party.

On November 21st, 1989, the powerful conservative Lev Zaikov was removed from his post as Moscow Party Secretary, although he kept his seat in the Politburo. Taken together, these developments suggested that, while resistance to restructuring remained strong as the Soviet Union entered the 1990s, the reformers remained in the ascendant.

Restructuring the Soviet media: the Press Law

In the face of the opposition described in the previous section, the efforts of the reformers to implement the new information policy have been concentrated in two directions: the setting up of legal guarantees against obstruction by conservative elements; and secondly, the restructuring of the journalistic profession.

On the question of legal reform, a Soviet specialist on media law has recognised that '*glasnost* is above all the product of a political culture', and that without such a culture 'no law can help matters'.³⁷ Nevertheless,

I suggest that against the background of the current political culture, and as a temporary measure, a law is necessary. In twenty to thirty years, if today's political tendencies remain unchanged [i.e., if the reformers remain in power], the necessity for it will fall away, just as in a modern aircraft the accelerators are turned off when they have done their work. But until then, we need an 'accelerator' for *glasnost*.

The 'accelerator' is to be provided by the Law on the Press, presented to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in 1987, accepted in principle by the 19th Party Conference, and approved on its first reading at the Second Session of the Supreme Soviet in November 1989. The law came into force on July 12th, 1990.

That there should be a law regulating the operation of the media in Soviet society is not a new idea. Indeed, it can be traced back to Lenin himself when he insisted that the restrictions imposed on the media by his Press Decree of November 17th were merely temporary, to be repealed when the extreme conditions afflicting the USSR in its early years of existence were ended. For reasons already discussed in chapter 3 no repeal was forthcoming. Lenin's definition of press freedom—the right of certain groups in Soviet society to have access to the means of production of mass media—was incorporated in Stalin's 1936 Constitution, but, like so many other features of that document, rendered meaningless by the systematic violation of the law which characterised the Stalinist regime and its later Brezhnevian successor.

The Press Law thus represents the first legislation in Soviet history which guarantees individual citizens and their representative organisations (including journalists and news media) broad rights of access to information and the means of its mass dissemination, specifies the obligations of the authorities in respect of those rights, and sets down legal and administrative sanctions for use in the event of their violation. In short, the Press Law is the most significant single event in the development of the Soviet media system since Lenin's Press Decree of 1917. It defines the rights and responsibilities of journalists, establishes a new legal basis for relations between media organs and the state, and radically eases the restrictions which have existed on who can own and control media organs; it will transform the USSR into an 'open society'³⁸ and establish 'a quite new approach to the entire network of both internal and international information, of our links with the sources of information in the modern world...and a clear-cut notion of freedom of the press and freedom of information'.

The main objectives of the law are to 'regularise' relations between the media and (a) the Party and state machine, (b) the founding organisations to which they are affiliated, (c) the journalists who work for them, (d) the Soviet population as a whole, and (e) the international communications system.

On the first of these objectives the law states that henceforth the establishment of new media organs will proceed not, as before, on the 'permission' principle, which gave the Party a monopoly of decision-making, but the 'registration' principle. A formal procedure of registration for print and broadcast media organs has been instituted. Within the constraints of socialist pluralism individuals, Communist Party, government and public organisations, as well as 'creative unions, religious, co-operative, and other associations of citizens formed in accordance with the law, and also work collectives and citizens of the USSR'³⁹ may apply to found a media organ, register it, and begin to operate. The founding organisation draws up a programme or charter explaining the aims and intended circulation of the proposed new organ. This document is considered by the relevant state committee, which can reject it only if it involves the 'abuse of press freedom', or a systematic and blatant violation of the press law. Abuse, in the terms of the law, means

the use of the mass information media to publicise information containing state secrets or other secrets specifically protected by law [see the discussion of censorship below], to call for the violent overthrow or change of the existing state and social system, to propagandise war or racial, national or religious exclusivity or intolerance, to disseminate pornography, or to incite the commission of other criminally punishable acts.

The general thrust of these provisions is to loosen the Party's historic grip on who shall have access to the means of mass communication, and to open up the possibility of Soviet media organs coming into being which are genuinely independent of the Party and state machine. The trend towards diversity is reinforced by provision in the Press Law for the financial restructuring of the media system. Where before the technical means of producing mass information were owned by the state, now important parts of them will be economically independent.

The new law directly addresses the rights of journalists, particularly on the questions of access discussed in chapter 5. The Press Law recognises that citizens and their representatives have the right to receive reliable information, delivered promptly through the mass media, on the activities of Party and state organs, public organisations, and senior members of the leadership. This information must be presented to journalists at press conferences, in the form of documentary and statistical material, and in interviews. Responsible persons in the Party and state apparatus are now required by law to grant interviews on matters of public concern.

The right of the mass media to receive information in which they are interested corresponds to the responsibility of state organs, public organisations, and senior figures to present information at the request of the mass media. Leaders of state and public organs, and their deputies and staff in the press-service, and other authorised persons, are obliged to provide information to the limits of their competence. Refusal is possible only if the information contains state secrets.⁴⁰

A group of academics who made a major contribution to the drafting of the law list the 'minimum catalogue' of journalists' rights under its provisions as follows:

to search for and receive information, to appear in the mass media, to set forth their own personal judgements and appraisals of the materials selected for mass dissemination; to refuse to prepare materials which contradict their opinions; and to withhold their signatures from material the content of which has been distorted in the process of editorial preparation. In addition, an accredited journalist has the right to attend sessions of higher and local organs of state power and administration, leading organs in institutes, public organisations and enterprises for the discussion of questions of public interest.⁴¹

The refusal of a media organ or an official to grant these rights can be appealed against.⁴²

Corresponding to the professional rights conferred on journalists by the Press Law are a set of responsibilities, both to the organisation for which the journalist works, and to those who are the subject of media attention. The journalist is obliged to carry out the programme of the media organ as set out by the founder. The reliability and accuracy of information must be checked before it is used in an item. Permission must be obtained from sources before quoted extracts of their statements can be used, and the transmission of information about an individual's private life is prohibited, unless it is 'socially significant'.

These provisions are intended to 'balance' the newly-extended freedom of journalists with defences for the potential targets of their work. The law effectively protects Party and state officials from unjustified press attacks, and holds journalists accountable for any mistakes, libels or slanders, which they may commit in the course of their reportage. Such provision might appear reasonable, given the proclivity of journalists everywhere for muck-raking, but some Soviet commentators fear that it could be used as a brake on the campaigning activities of journalists, particularly in the provinces and localities where, as we have seen, opposition to *glasnost* and restructuring is still considerable.⁴³ The question of whether disputes between journalists and the subjects of their critical items are the result of genuine mistakes, deliberate slanders, or efforts to restrict *glasnost*, will be decided by the courts.

If the Press Law provides apparatchiks with 'privacy' in the new environment of openness, it also grants the Soviet population as a whole the right of reply to inaccurate reports. As chapter 5 showed, the short history of *glasnost* has already revealed that an effective right of reply is as necessary for Soviet citizens as for their counterparts in the west. The Press Law acknowledges this necessity. In the USSR (unlike many western countries) citizens and their organisations now have the right to demand that the media publish refutations of inaccurate reports.⁴⁴

In its provisions dealing with relations between the Soviet media and the global communications network the Press Law attempts to bring the Soviet system into line with international norms. Interviewed at the London Information Forum in May 1989, Yuri Baturin, co-author of an influential draft of the Press Law, stated that it would correspond 'absolutely in spirit and in letter with the Vienna documents'⁴⁵ in such matters as providing access within the USSR to information and copying technology, and permitting increased contact with foreigners. The draft presented to the Supreme Soviet in November 1989 declared Soviet readiness to implement all international treaties which it has signed in this sphere and, where these conflict with Soviet legislation, that the former will take precedence. In December 1989 the Soviet Foreign Ministry announced a package of measures to end the USSR's 'information isolation', including giving institutions and organisations the right to subscribe to foreign newspapers and journals, and the expanded sale of these in public newsagents.

These provisions will affect not only Soviet journalists but also their colleagues from around the world based in the USSR who have traditionally experienced major constraints in attempting to cover the Soviet Union for their own audiences.

The final publication and approval of the Press Law in November 1989 was preceded by years of debate and prevarication over a range of issues. Of particular contentiousness were two questions: first, the regulation of relations between a media organ's founding institution, its senior editorial personnel, and its journalistic staff as a whole.

Traditionally, as explained in chapter 3, a media organ was wholly subordinated, financially and administratively, to its founding institution, be it the Party, a trade union, or a ministry. This inhibited the organ's ability to make independent editorial decisions, let alone criticise the founder, if criticism was required. As a television journalist from Krasnoyarsk put it in September 1989:

today, the administrators of mass information media are unaccountable to their editorial staff. They carry no responsibility before their editorial collectives for arbitrary restrictions of *glasnost*...The administration decides which news the public needs...Why, when we are campaigning for the democratisation of management [in the economy as a whole] do we allow the nomenklatura to dictate relations between ourselves?⁴⁶

The new law does not fully address this concern, since it proposes giving founding institutions and publishers the right to demand discussion with editorial staff before items are published. For some, this permits 'interference' in the work of the media. The editorial board, they suggest, should be 'accountable to its founder from time to time but the founder should not control the daily activity of a newspaper or a magazine or any other body. Otherwise their hands will be tied up and this will turn into bureaucratic control.'⁴⁷ Others, generally of a conservative disposition, consider it to be a reasonable provision. The authors of an article in *Sovetskaya Rossiya* note that in the west proprietors of newspapers expect that editors should reflect their political line. 'Should our editors', they ask, 'not bear responsibility before their publishers?'⁴⁸

Related to this is the issue of the 'electability' of senior editorial staff, and the chief editors in particular. As noted in chapter 3, chief editors on Soviet newspapers and in broadcasting have hitherto been appointed on criteria of political and ideological reliability rather than journalistic proficiency. This has meant that the majority of senior media workers have no background in journalism, but are recruited from the political apparatus to fulfil a watchdog function over the organ concerned. At the Second Session of the Supreme Soviet at which the Press Law was adopted, it was proposed that the editor of *Izvestia* and the chairman of GOSTELRADIO, both organs of the Supreme Soviet, should be elected by the members of that body. An early draft of the law proposed that chief editors should be chosen by a secret ballot of journalists on the staff. Thereafter, the chief editor would bear responsibility for the content and organisation of the organ, representing it in dealings with the founder, the Party, the state and so on. The chief editor would share the collective leadership of the organ, alongside senior colleagues. In the event of disagreement between the chief editor and the collective leadership as a whole the founding institution would adjudicate. This draft also proposed that the main document setting out the editorial policy of a media organ—its 'charter'—should be adopted at a general meeting of staff journalists by a majority vote of no less than two thirds of the eligible electorate.

The adopted version of the law represents a compromise on these proposals. The editor-in-chief may be elected by the editorial collective, or appointed as before by the founding body.

A second and more fundamental area of controversy has been the issue of defining the limits of press freedom in a socialist pluralist society and, related to this, the role of

ensorship. In theory, as we have noted, the censorship role allotted to GLAVLIT in the past has been primarily technical. All newspaper copy and broadcast news scripts would be vetted by a GLAVLIT representative prior to publication, and banned only if materials were judged to pose a potential threat to national or state security. In practice, however, GLAVLIT was used as a mechanism for suppressing criticism of government and state bodies.⁴⁹ The chairman of GLAVLIT, Vladimir Boldyrev, has admitted that ‘until recently many of the press restrictions which existed were departmental in nature, and were not so much concerned with protecting state secrets as concealing shortcomings in the activity of the departments themselves’.⁵⁰

Against this background, two positions emerged in the debate about censorship which accompanied the preparation of the Press Law. On the one hand, there were those who argued that prior censorship should be completely excluded from the workings of the Soviet media system; on the other, that it should be retained in an ‘acceptable form’. The latter viewpoint was expressed by Boldyrev himself when he objected to a phrase in the draft law stating that ‘censorship of the mass media will be forbidden’,⁵¹ and proposed instead that the GLAVLIT organisation be formally recognised as the legal guardian of state secrets in the press. Reflecting this view, an early draft of the Press Law specified that it would be permissible to censor materials which would ‘contradict the interests of the state and society’.⁵² Fyedor Burlatsky was among those who objected that ‘this can be interpreted in any way’, and would therefore be open to abuse.⁵³ Within such a framework the novels of such as Bulgakov and Solzhenitsyn, ‘unbanned’ in the years of the *glasnost* campaign, would be vulnerable to censorship once again.

Supreme Soviet Deputy A. Gelman expressed the reformist position when he acknowledged that while there were legitimate state secrets requiring protection, ‘we have witnessed too often in the past how the defence of state secrets becomes political censorship’.⁵⁴ The authors of the draft law accepted this, but insisted that ‘freedom of the press and pluralism of opinion should not be confused with “anything goes”’. Abuses of press freedom—the use of the mass media to damage society, the state, the rights, responsibilities, and legal interests of the citizen—must be punished.⁵⁵

The draft discussed by the Supreme Soviet in November 1989 reflected the reformists’ position in this debate, declaring baldly that ‘censorship of mass information is not permitted’. However, as noted above, the publication of certain materials, including state secrets, will constitute a violation of the Press Law and will make the media organ liable to have its licence suspended for a period of up to one month. If the violation is repeated consistently over a period of at least one year, the licence can be revoked.

Fyedor Burlatsky insists that ‘press restrictions must apply to truly secret information and be set out in such a way that we have to resort as rarely as possible to consultations with other ministries and departments’.⁵⁶

The journalists

Despite the undoubted significance of the measures described above, Soviet journalists recognise that legal reforms, no matter how radical, will not of themselves guarantee the success of the *glasnost* campaign. In his address to the Sixth Congress of the Union of Journalists in March 1987, chairman Victor Afanasyev stressed the need to ‘restructure

ourselves, the Soviet mass media'.⁵⁷ Media organisations had to rid themselves of 'mediocrities'. To this end Afanasyev welcomed the recent introduction of a system of 'confidential reports' which 'have allowed us to get rid of "ballast", and to identify able people'. To those who might regard such a system in the light of past Soviet experience as vulnerable to abuse, Afanasyev stressed that the reports were themselves prepared in conditions of *glasnost*, with the participation of Party committees, trade union organisations, and editorial boards. He also called for an end to 'equalisation', whereby journalists are paid according to the number of words they write (the quota being determined in advance), rather than the quality of those words. Afanasyev noted approvingly that 'a number of central newspapers have adopted a new system of payment...Work of high quality is being paid up to 50 per cent more than the state salary.' We have already noted the introduction of the principle of 'electability' for chief editors.

The system of professional training for journalists is also under review. The importance attached by the Party to the journalist's role as propagandist has led to the evolution of a training system which is primarily ideological in its academic content. The quality of journalistic output, defined in terms of stylistic and cognitive attributes, has tended to be of secondary importance, both in the training process, and later, in the editorial collectives where journalists must work. Since the April Plenum it has become possible for journalists to criticise this approach, and even to mock it irreverently, as in an article published by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in May 1988. The author identified himself as a student at the most prestigious of all journalism schools in the USSR, the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University, and proceeded to make a number of complaints about the calibre of the training he had received there. He had learnt 'practically nothing' of journalistic skills in his three years at the Faculty. He had studied historical and dialectical materialism, philosophy, economics, and the history of Russian and foreign literature, but only one hour per week was spent on the teaching of practical journalistic skills. 'What are they preparing here', he asked, 'philosophers, literary historians, or journalists?'⁵⁸

The fact that such an article could be published on the front page of a newspaper with a circulation of some 11 million copies suggests that reform in this field is on the agenda.

Major restructuring of the Party's press is also under way. A Central Committee resolution of August 1989 announced that the 'decades-old structure of central newspapers and journals is in contradiction with political and economic developments'.⁵⁹ The resolution detailed plans to create a new daily newspaper, *Rabochaya Tribuna* (*The Worker's Tribune*),⁶⁰ a monthly, *Dialog* (*Dialogue*),⁶¹ and the radical reorganisation and updating of several existing publications. Party committees at all levels of the politico-administrative apparatus were given increased powers to close down unpopular, unprofitable organs, and to establish new ones.

Other measures have included the setting up of an independent news agency, *Nota Bene Press*, in December 1989. In April 1988 it was announced that the Journalists' Union and TASS would publish jointly a new magazine entitled *Eko Planyetu* (*Echo to the Planet*), which would be financed entirely from sales, and 'should not be seen as expressing the official view'.⁶² This latter development confirms the Soviet government's desire to establish the principle of 'separation' between the media and the state, and to encourage the perception, at home and abroad, that when a journalist or a media organ

'speaks', it does not necessarily represent the official viewpoint of the Party leadership. This change in perception is particularly relevant in the sphere of international journalism, to which, in the first of our case studies, we now turn.

Part II

Some cases

Soviet international journalism

Soviet international news is the combined product of three types of journalistic activity. Material is produced, first, by foreign correspondents based in Soviet embassies abroad. The quantity of coverage given by a particular media organ to a foreign country is largely determined by its access to this resource. Financial constraints and diplomatic agreements on the numbers of journalists to be posted to a country mean that only a small proportion of Soviet news organisations enjoy the luxury of a foreign correspondent in all the major capitals of the world. These organs tend to devote proportionately more time and space to coverage of international events. Of the eight media organs sampled here five had permanent representation in the United Kingdom during the period of the study. These were *Programme Vremya* (Vladimir Sheshkovsky), *Pravda* (Arkady Maslennikov, replaced by Alexander Lyuty in December 1987), *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Yuri Sagaidak), *Izvestia* (Alexander Krivopalov), and *Trud* (Andrei Burmistenko). *Krasnaya Zvezda*, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* and *Zarya Vostoka* had no correspondents of their own in Britain. Over the month of March, 1988, *Pravda* and *Izvestia* both ran twenty-four items about Britain. *Vremya* ran twenty-one, as compared with three items of coverage in *Zarya Vostoka* and eight in *Krasnaya Zvezda*.¹

The second major source of foreign news is the TASS news agency and, to a lesser extent, western news agencies such as Reuter and Associated Press. TASS provides a constant flow of items back to Moscow, a proportion of which will appear in the press and in television news bulletins.²

Finally, commentary and analysis on foreign events are provided by political observers based in the Moscow headquarters of the media organ concerned, for example Alexander Bovin and Stanislav Kondrashov on *Izvestia*, and Vsevolod Ovchinikov on *Pravda*.

The quantity of coverage given to international events by a particular organ is also influenced by its place in the differentiated structure of the Soviet media apparatus. *Pravda* and *Vremya*, for example, as 'general' organs have an interest in the full range of foreign events. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, on the other hand, as the voice of the Defence Ministry, is primarily concerned in its foreign coverage with issues of military and strategic significance. To the extent that other countries play a role in these *Krasnaya Zvezda* will cover them, through TASS dispatches or in commentaries. Coverage of foreign countries in other contexts is rare.³

Similarly, *Trud*, the organ of the trade union movement, accords special priority to coverage of trade union affairs abroad. *Trud's* London correspondent Alexei Burmistenko notes that

working for a trade union newspaper, trade union issues are at the top of my agenda professionally. But at the same time, being a central

newspaper, I obviously cannot limit myself simply to wages, working conditions, and things like that. I am here as a general assignment reporter with particular stress on trade unions, but whatever is happening that is interesting and vital is of interest to me, be it I.D. cards in soccer—the behaviour of fans in the Soviet Union is as important as it is here—some religious matters, science, technology, everything related to politics. And then, when I work out my schedule I also have to take into account what is of interest to Soviet society at any given moment.

The relatively small proportion of *Zarya Vostoka* devoted to foreign events reflects its specific remit to concentrate on the affairs of the Georgian republic. Unless a foreign event is perceived by the editorial committee of *Zarya Vostoka* to be of relevance to Georgia (such as a foreign film festival at which Georgian cinema is represented) it is unlikely to be reported.

East or west, which is best?

John Downing has observed that ‘compared to the great majority of western media, Soviet and Soviet-bloc media provide much fuller coverage of foreign affairs’ (1988, p.6). Ellen Mickiewicz’s recent study of Soviet and American TV news found that ‘*Vremya*’s universe of countries covered in some way was one-third larger than ABC’s’ (1988, p.90). A comparative analysis of foreign news on British and Soviet television reveals a similar pattern. In March 1988 *Vremya* covered events in 54 countries, while BBC news and ITN reported 27 and 26 countries respectively. Stories covered by *Vremya* but not deemed newsworthy by the UK bulletins examined in this study included elections in Senegal, Columbia and El Salvador, the re-election of President Koivisto in Finland, and the state opening of Parliament in Indonesia. On the assumption that the sample period is representative, and there is no reason to doubt it, it can therefore be argued that Soviet news coverage of the world is *broader* in its sweep than British, incorporating events in many countries which are generally absent from UK bulletins.

On the other hand, the 260 items of foreign news broadcast by *Vremya* over the sample period represented only 37 per cent of available news-time, while BBC’s 114 items and ITN’s 109 items represented 42 per cent and 41.5 per cent of available news-time respectively. On average, then, British television news devotes slightly more time to international events, though covering fewer stories.

If Soviet news coverage of the world can be shown to be broader, in quantitative terms, than that of western journalists, the latter would nevertheless argue the *qualitative* superiority of their output. Downing notes further that ‘Western analyses of Soviet media have usually categorised their [international reporting] as a mixture of dogmatism, dullness and deception’ (1988, p.6). While western journalists, at least those of the ‘quality’ press and broadcasting, lay claim to the professional values of ‘objectivity’, ‘balance’ and ‘impartiality’ in their coverage of international affairs, the output of their Soviet counterparts is viewed as ‘ideological’ and ‘propagandistic’, therefore inferior as an information source.

Of course, all Soviet journalism, including international news, is 'ideological'. Lenin's principles openly proclaim, and indeed make mandatory, the journalist's propaganda role. In foreign coverage, above all, the propaganda work of journalists is essential to the continuing legitimacy of the marxist-leninist world view. The journalists who produce this category of news are obliged to reconcile the facts of life beyond Soviet borders (*za granitsu*) with the interpretation of those facts emanating at any given time from the Party leadership. The central 'sustaining myth'⁴ of Soviet socialism's innate social, economic, political and cultural superiority over advanced capitalism is elaborated above all in international journalism, through the construction of the latter in images and symbols consistent with that myth.

All this is clear from the most cursory reading of Bolshevik press theory. Less obvious is the widespread western assumption that the transparency of the Soviet demand for 'propaganda' in news necessarily leads to accounts of international affairs which are less informed, less objective, or less truthful than those produced by western media organisations. A central theme of this chapter is that while Soviet international news can be shown to be—because openly ideological—selective and value-laden, these are features shared by western journalism. To this end, the purpose of what follows is not to prove that the Soviet media are more or less 'biased' than those of capitalist societies, but to show how and in what ways Soviet international journalism, like that of a capitalist society such as Britain, is the product of structural relationships and ideological presumptions which influence and constrain output. Assessing the 'truthfulness' of materialist and pluralist accounts of the world, it will be argued, is less a matter of the factual accuracy of reports, than of the interpretative frameworks and value-systems which journalists and audiences bring to the news.

Glasnost and international journalism

A study which aims, among other things, to contest the charges of 'dogmatism, dullness and deception' which have been made against Soviet international coverage is complicated by the fact that now, as never before, it is the subject of criticism and self-criticism by Soviet journalists themselves.

The substance of this criticism is that, of all the categories of Soviet journalism, international news has been the least affected by *glasnost*. In contrast to domestic coverage, Soviet journalists argue, the practices and conventions of international journalism remain to a large extent as they were before the reform process began. In one of the earliest manifestations of 'critical *glasnost*' on this subject, a *Pravda* commentator in 1986 attacked the international coverage provided by the main news programme *Vremya* for 'passing journalistic clichés from one broadcast to another'.⁵ Alexei Kuvshnikov, a deputy foreign editor of *Izvestia*, has complained of 'the hackneyed style' of much international coverage, observing that 'to judge by the newspapers, many still find thinking with originality a little frightening'.⁶ Senior *Izvestia* commentator Alexander Bovin remarks that, in the sphere of critical *glasnost*, 'international journalism has so far failed to match the level of domestic journalism'.⁷

Within international journalism as a whole, particularly harsh self-criticism is directed to coverage of the 'fraternal' socialist allies. 'Fraternal' news is characterised by the

application of the principles of 'production propaganda' (see chapter 2) to the international sphere. Just as production propaganda in coverage of domestic affairs has as its aim the publicising of the best of Soviet economic experience, fraternal news highlights the positive experiences of socialist construction abroad, such as the development of the oil industry in Cuba and the provision of old-age pensions in Hungary.

For as long as Soviet journalists and audiences can remember, such has been the content of 'fraternal' news. The countries and industries treated in this way have changed as states have moved in and out of the sphere of the USSR's fraternal allies, but the 'story' has always been the same: the socialist international community is building steadily, on the sweat of proletarian labour power, towards communism.

In the era of *glasnost*, however, when full warts-and-all coverage of the Soviet Union has become the norm, this type of news is no longer regarded as adequate. When Soviet journalists refer to the 'one-sided', 'hackneyed' and 'clichéd' style of their international coverage, it is the uni-dimensional triumphalism of fraternal news to which they are largely referring.

One complains that 'for many years...only two colours have been present in our propaganda—black and white. Black for them [the capitalist countries], and white for us [the socialist countries].'⁸ With reference to the Polish crisis of the early 1980s he argues that

when we came to talk about ourselves or our friends, we whitewashed. There was more fanfare, but less frankness. Unless we ourselves noted a problem in the fraternal countries, it didn't exist. We plastered the façade with zeal, as if we were concerned about the fate of socialism, and we didn't realise that make-up put on an inflamed skin would produce a still more serious condition...when the cataclysm around the Polish events happened at the beginning of the 1980s the population opened its eyes and asked: 'How could the Poles have been building, building, rejoicing in success, and suddenly...'

The author, writing in 1988, concedes that 'now, it is true, things have become a little easier...it is now possible to acknowledge that in a particular fraternal country "temporary problems exist"'. However, the application of critical *glasnost* in this category of coverage continues to 'limp along on one leg'. In the socialist countries, he warns, 'extremely unhealthy processes are taking place, and silence can only worsen them'.

In accounting for the persistence of 'old thinking' in the content of fraternal news, Soviet journalists identify two lingering and related problems. First, Soviet journalists working abroad are subject to considerable constraints on what they can write. Journalists in fraternal socialist countries often find that

some leaders in our diplomatic missions demand, on pain of expulsion from the country, that reporting to Moscow be 'positive'. The reason for this is usually given as, 'we are working here, searching for a common

language, building bridges, and you, preoccupied with criticism, are destroying them! We don't need slander, but more positive examples'.⁹

Foreign correspondent Anatoly Medvedenko makes a similar point: 'It's no secret that some of our embassies are very jealous concerning what is sent by journalists to Moscow. The more that the correspondent's analysis of events doesn't agree with their own, the more they aspire to distort it.'¹⁰

The sensitivity of foreign coverage is a result of the traditional lack of separation between the media and the Communist Party. Observers, inside the USSR and out, have tended to assume that when a Soviet journalist on a major newspaper or broadcast news outlet speaks on foreign affairs, he or she does so with the authority of the Government. In this context, criticism by the Soviet media of a foreign country has the potential to create a diplomatic incident, and thus to come into conflict with the interests of the Foreign Ministry. Consequently, Soviet international news has been perceived by the Party leadership not simply as a means of informing the population about foreign events, but as an instrument of foreign policy.

The chief TASS correspondent in London, Yuri Levchenko, agrees that international journalism lags behind domestic output.

The reasons? Maybe, the long-standing status of the Soviet journalist abroad. He was considered part of the state machinery, and whatever he said, whatever he expressed, that was considered to be the view of officials back home. There are some examples where reports caused serious conflicts between the Soviet Union and the East European states. Something was said by a journalist, and someone in the country didn't like what was said, and the Soviet leadership asked, 'who is causing trouble? We have enough trouble without journalists stirring it up.' We had to be very careful in weighing every word said. On the other hand, in some countries in Latin America and Africa they could kick you out for what they didn't like, or sometimes even they shot you. So you had to think twice before you wrote.

In the view of *Trud's* London correspondent Alexei Burmistenko:

Glasnost has changed the Soviet press enormously, but mostly concerning internal Soviet journalism. *Glasnost* has not affected foreign journalism as much, although it is changing slightly. You have to understand one thing. International journalism will lag behind internal journalism for the time being, primarily because the foreign public, foreign diplomats, foreign governmental officials, still tend to consider what appears in the Soviet press not as the voice of the journalist but as the voice of the Soviet Government. That conception is wrong but, by inertia, it is still with us unfortunately. If a colleague of mine working in Rumania writes a frank account of the real human rights situation, such a piece will not be considered as the individual work of the correspondent, but as a political action by the Soviet Government. And we will have a flood of protests

and diplomatic notes. In coverage of international relations we have this in mind, although it is less visible in coverage of western countries. We have tried to break this stereotype...but it is still with us, and influences our coverage. It will continue for the time being in spite of *glasnost*.

Alexander Bovin states that 'what we write is determined not by us, but by the anticipated reaction on the part of the countries about which we will be writing...if a country is regarded as friendly towards us, then the amount of information our readers get about the real problems that exist in that country is automatically curtailed'.¹¹ Bovin cites his experience as a correspondent in Poland.

I wanted to write about religion. I wrote a series of three articles, and one was about religion. I had to go several times there to agree it with their Central Committee, and then I had to do the same with our Central Committee, then again with their Central Committee, then again with our Central Committee. Finally the Poles...said—you have written everything correctly but it would be better not to speak of it because you speak of religion too seriously in your article. And that was that. After I had run up against such procedures a few times, I simply stopped writing about socialist countries.

An illustration of how diplomatic constraints on fraternal news have continued to affect Soviet journalism long after the beginning of the *glasnost* campaign can be seen by comparing British and Soviet coverage of the disturbances which took place in Tibet in March 1988. In Britain, BBC news presented an account of the events which portrayed the demonstrators in generally sympathetic terms and contradicted the official Chinese version on important points of fact.

An important Buddhist festival in Tibet has ended with violent anti-Chinese demonstrations. The protests took place in the capital city Lhasa. A police station was attacked and set on fire, but the Chinese say that the disturbances were soon brought under control.

(1 2100 5.3.88)

The next day it was reported that 'at least three people' had died.

It's thought the death toll could be as high as nine...Eyewitnesses say thousands of people took part in the protests. The violence came at the end of a two-week Buddhist festival which had been banned by the authorities for twenty years. They let it resume two years ago. Now it's become the focus of Tibetan hostility to control from Peking.

(1 2100 6.3.88)

BBC news speaks of 'demonstrations' against 'control from Peking'. 'Thousands of people' are reported to have taken part, and reference is made to the Chinese authorities' twenty-year ban on the festival.

Vremya, using the same film footage, constructs a very different account. Quoting the official organ of the Chinese Communist Party, *Zhenmin Zhibao*, *Vremya* reported that 'riots [*byesporjadki*] have been carried out [*uchinit*] by small groups of separatists' (March 6th, 1988). The suggestion of criminality by an unrepresentative minority is clear.

Where the BBC refers to the scene of the disturbances as 'the capital city' of Tibet, thus adopting the protesters' view of Tibet as a separate nation, *Vremya* refers pointedly to 'the economic and administrative centre of the Tibetan region of China', a form of words which would surely give satisfaction to the Chinese government.

Vremya further marginalised the protesters by reporting that, 'despite the wishes of the broad mass of the workers, the separatists attempted to provoke incidents. It is reported that hundreds of Tibetan monks spoke out against the actions. Security forces took decisive measures to quickly get the situation under control.'

'Decisive', in Soviet journalese, is a positive term connoting firmness and strength in the pursuit of a legitimate goal. When, as we shall see, Soviet news reports the suppression of demonstrations in other parts of the world, such as the Occupied Territories, the descriptive terms used are more likely to include 'savage' and 'cruel'.

Finally, where BBC news refers to three deaths, and speculates on the possibility of nine, *Vremya* is satisfied with the official Chinese figure quoted in *Zhenmin Zhibao*, of 'one person killed and twenty-eight wounded'. *Vremya* thus downplays the violence used by the Chinese army to suppress the protests, and by its use of language attempts to discredit those who participated in them.

At this time the USSR was proceeding towards the restoration of normal relations with China, a process finally consolidated with Gorbachov's visit to Peking in May 1989. Significantly, the massacre of Chinese workers and students in Peking shortly after his visit, on June 4th, 1989, was also reported in terms set largely by the Chinese government. In July 1989, a Soviet television correspondent in Peking refuted western reports that the clearing of Tienanmen Square had resulted in hundreds of dead and wounded. According to a Chinese army commander quoted in the report, 'not a single person died' in the square, an account accepted without qualification, as the journalist continued:

If it was possible to avoid tragedy on Tienanmen Square, it did find its victims in other squares and streets in Peking. This is recalled by the military patrols, and mourning wreaths displayed on the spots

where there were clashes between the demonstrators and the army units. This is recalled by the tears of the soldiers' mothers, which we have seen in the Chinese television programmes.¹²

In this category of Soviet news the extension of *glasnost* has been subordinated to the demands of political and diplomatic expediency. 'Openness' appears to end, or is severely restricted, where the borders of important allies, real and potential, begin.

Socialist pluralism and international coverage

For the same reasons that *glasnost* is 'lagging behind' in Soviet foreign news, 'socialist pluralism' has still to have a significant impact on its content. Alexei Kuvshnikov comments wryly that, while, in the era of *glasnost*, he approaches the domestic content of his morning newspaper with anticipation, the 'depressing uniformity' of the international section leads him to skim through its pages.¹³ Soviet international journalism, he argues, has so far failed fully to embrace the theory and practice of socialist pluralism in its coverage of world events. While journalism increasingly reflects the diversity of opinion now routinely expressed in domestic debates, foreign news remains a 'closed zone', despite the fact that, as seen in chapter 5, the appearance of western commentators in Soviet media organs, in ever more unmediated contexts, is a frequent occurrence. If *glasnost* can accommodate the viewpoint of a Kissinger or a Schultz, goes the argument, why are Soviet journalists unable or unwilling to disagree in public more vigorously?

Kuvshnikov's answer to this question refers to 'the genetic memory of experiences following past attempts at independent thinking'. Journalists are no longer prevented from writing analyses of international events which might differ in certain respects from those advanced by the General Secretary and the Central Committee, but the 'genetic memory' of Stalinism and neo-Stalinism remains with the present generation, breeding resistance to the appeals of the *glasnost* campaign. Recalling the fate of those journalists who deviated from the official line in the past, their successors are wary of doing so themselves until they are firmly convinced of the permanence of the reforms and the impossibility of another conservative backlash such as that inaugurated by the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime in the late 1960s.

News about Vietnam: a comparative analysis

If Soviet coverage of events such as those in Tibet and China is now increasingly the subject of critical self-reflection by its producers, it might also be seen by western Sovietologists of the 'dogmatism, dullness and deception' school as vindication of their view of the deficiencies of Soviet international journalism in comparison with the 'free media' of the advanced capitalist societies. But 'fraternal' news shares some important features with western coverage of socialist societies.

In a series of detailed studies, Chomsky and Herman have argued that the American media, like the Soviet, construct images of the world in accordance with the 'primary system propaganda needs' of the society in which they function. The US media, they assert, consistently downplay human rights abuses and the more unpleasant realities of life in US client states, while highlighting the problems of socialist countries. They argue that the facts about Vietnam, for example, 'have been interpreted, filtered, distorted or magnified by the ideological institutions of the West' (1979b, p.vii). The 'Free Press', as they refer to the US media,

has fulfilled its primary obligations to the state of averting western eyes from the course of the [Vietnam] war and effacing western responsibility...all problems are attributed to the evils of communism. The propaganda barrage has not only been highly selective, but has also involved substantial falsification.

(ibid., p.x)

Many take issue with what they would view as the instrumentalist and conspiratorial assumptions within which Chomsky and Herman frame this analysis.¹⁴ There is, however, considerable evidence to support their statements on media content, and to suggest that they have some applicability to the western media as a whole.

By way of illustration, the sample period used in this study included items by Soviet and UK television news about life in Vietnam. An item broadcast by *Vremya* on March 8th, 1988, was typically 'fraternal', stressing the themes of hard work and economic success. Coinciding as it did with International Women's Day (see chapter 10), the item elaborated these themes from a 'feminine' angle, with the journalistic spotlight falling on the commercial flower-growing and dress-making industries. Over footage of female Vietnamese workers picking and packing flowers for export, the commentary related that 'each year flowers are sent by Aeroflot from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city to the Soviet Union. Demand from Soviet customers is particularly acute at times such as International Women's Day and New Year, when these workers have practically no time for quiet contemplation' (March 8th, 1988).

The correspondent then moved on to a report about the success of joint Vietnamese-Soviet clothing cooperatives. Over film of Vietnamese women inspecting dresses and other garments, it was explained that

these dresses have been manufactured for Soviet women in Hanoi's clothing factory number 40. They are colourful, fashionable, and light, made from cotton fabrics. They are comfortable for work and leisure, and customers have praised their quality. This year many of the products for women sold in Soviet shops will have been made in Vietnam, using Soviet materials and designs. The first steps are being taken by joint Soviet-Vietnamese clothing cooperatives.

The item thus constructs a positive image of Vietnam as a country engaged in successful economic activity, producing high-quality goods with the cooperation of its fraternal ally in the north. As is the case in fraternal news as a whole, this comforting picture was not qualified by any reference to Vietnam's many economic problems and difficulties.

While *Vremya's* coverage of Vietnam focused on the traditional Soviet themes of labour and socialist construction, the British items, broadcast by ITN over three days in late April and early March 1988, concerned the return to the country of a political refugee, Nguyen Cong Nghiep. Nghiep, it was explained, had left his home in the Mekong delta following the communist victory in the war with America, and was now 'a resident of Colwyn Bay, North Wales' (3 2200 29.2.88). Nghiep and his wife had been forced to leave 'everything behind when they left. Nine years ago, a father and mother left their eldest son, even though he was little more than a baby. They found their way to

Britain, and they've been hoping ever since that one day they'd see their son again. Now they have.' The item, and two which followed it on successive evenings, accompanied Nghiep as he returned to Vietnam in search of his son.

Although presented to the viewer as human interest, the story of Nghiep consisted primarily of a discourse on communism, exhibiting several features attributed by Chomsky and Herman to the American media.

Writing about the US media, Chomsky and Herman observe that in coverage of socialist societies,

refugees or other victims are taken as the primary or exclusive source of information, even when other sources are available, and neither the selection of refugee testimony, the circumstances under which it is obtained, or the credibility or bias of those transmitting their version of this testimony is subjected to critical analysis.

(1979a, p.72)

With specific reference to coverage of the 'boat people' and others who fled the country after the fall of the US client regime, they argue:

the exposure that the press offers to non-Communist dissidents...is not a function of their prominence, their demonstrated courage and ability, or the credibility of what they have to say as compared with the direct testimony of others. Rather, it is determined by a single principle: the more negative their report, the more prominently it is featured.

(1979b, p.105)

In our example, ITN never informed viewers why Nghiep had felt it necessary to risk death and leave behind his child in escaping from Vietnam. For the correspondent, the apparent obviousness of such a need required no explanation of Nghiep's decision. Merely by joining the exodus of people—many of whom were collaborators and black marketeers afraid of retribution from the new communist government—that followed the victory of the Vietminh, Nghiep had acquired the status of sympathetic hero.¹⁵

The story of his return to Vietnam for the son 'he had to leave behind' became the vehicle for a narrative which portrayed Vietnam largely in images of political oppression and economic failure. At Saigon airport, with Nghiep awaiting his turn to go through passport control, the correspondent constructed an atmosphere of tension: would he get in?

He'd come all this way, after all these years, but things could still go dreadfully wrong. They could query his passport, his visa. An escaped refugee returning? What a cheek! And then a turnaround on the next flight out.

Such speculation was unfounded, however (raising the question of why it was included).

We had panicked too much. Nghiep was through. Welcome to Vietnam, they said. And somewhere out there in the crowd, a boy was waiting.

With Nghiep safely back in Vietnam, subsequent reports followed him up country to his home village, where his family were waiting. They, it was reported, 'benefit enormously from having a British citizen as a favourite son, who regularly sends them money and food parcels. They are well off in a society where most are not, where poverty is the norm' (3 2200 1.3.88).

Chomsky and Herman have argued that American news coverage of South-East Asia in the period since the end of the Vietnam war has generally attributed the problems of the region to the socialist organisation of the post-war economies, rather than as lingering after-effects of the war itself; that, when seen in the context of the US invasion and war, Vietnam's present-day economic difficulties are both predictable and explicable and that, if anything, the relative liberalism of the Vietnamese communist government since 1975 has been remarkable. They suggest that the American media tend to ignore this background in their accounts of the region's problems. In our example such context was restricted to a brief remark by the correspondent that Vietnam's poverty is

not simply the government's fault. It has abandoned its crippling bureaucratic rule and a farmer's profit's his own, but Vietnam has been denied the kind of development which only comes from generous western aid, and the west has turned a blind eye.

This is an important qualification to the reports' dominant themes of Vietnam's poverty and economic failure, but it was not developed with information about why development aid was being denied Vietnam, or who was responsible for the policy. Instead, the item returned to the discussion of standards of living. As the camera crew moved through Ho Chi Minh City we saw

streets choked with bicycles, cyclists choked with diesel. All the appearance of busy business. Certainly, there is more in the shops and markets, and some—not much—is even home-produced. What there's a shortage of is buyers. Wages have gone up, but look at the arithmetic, [over film of a shop window containing electrical equipment] and it would take a man two working lifetimes to buy a stereo like this. So who buys it all, if it's not the Vietnamese? Answer, the Russians, and the Bulgarians, East German technicians and tourists. The Soviet bloc and his wife shop here in Saigon.

Here was a story of economic failure (and the suggestion of exploitation by Vietnam's socialist allies), as selective and decontextualised in its way as *Vremya's* story of socialist construction, economic development, and mutually beneficial Soviet-Vietnamese relations.

For the Soviet journalist, guided by the ideology of marxism-leninism and the requirements of production propaganda, only the positive aspects of Vietnamese life are newsworthy; for his western counterpart, adhering to a value system hostile to

'communism', the emphasis is on economic problems. While ITN's focus was the 'dissident' (a feature of much western coverage of socialism), *Vremya* and the Soviet media in general ignore the existence of dissent. Both accounts, in their different ways, are incomplete. Both, it might reasonably be argued, reflect the dominant value system which informs their production.

'Hot spots of the planet'

The Soviet backyard

The ideological character of *both* materialist and liberal pluralist accounts of the world is illustrated by British and Soviet news coverage of the international conflicts which at any given time afflict various parts of the world with greater or lesser degrees of severity.

These 'hot spots of the planet', as Soviet journalistic shorthand describes them, include countries with pro-Soviet or Soviet-backed governments engaged in civil wars against indigenous opposition movements. In reporting such conflicts the western media tend to adopt the perspective of the opposition, positively labelled as 'rebels' or 'freedom-fighters'. Soviet journalists on the other hand attempt to bolster the government concerned by constructing images of strength, unity, and success in combating the enemy. In western coverage, popular support tends to be portrayed as belonging to the rebels. For Soviet journalists in such situations popularity is viewed as the sole prerogative of the government.

The conflict in Afghanistan, for example, has been reported in the British media, and western media generally, as a national war of liberation between freedom-fighting Mujahideen and a Soviet-backed puppet government. ITN, in particular, has given extensive coverage throughout the 1980s to the activities of the Mujahideen, often sending senior correspondents on expeditions behind rebel lines. Despite the fundamentalist Islamic views of these groups, they have rarely, unlike their co-religionists in Iran and the Middle East, been subjected to criticism by western journalists.¹⁶

Soviet coverage of Afghanistan, on the other hand, portrays the Mujahideen not as freedom-fighters, but as 'bandits' (*dushmani*) and 'terrorists', while emphasising that the pro-Soviet NDPA government of President Nadzhibullah enjoys the support of, if not all, the great majority of Afghan citizens.¹⁷

The legitimacy of official Soviet/Afghan policy on the conflict is reinforced by extensive coverage of the 'terrorist activities' of the Mujahideen. While the western media tend to downplay attacks by the Mujahideen on Afghan civilians, Soviet journalists make such attacks a principal feature of their coverage of the conflict. On March 9th, 1988, for example, *Vremya* reported that 'car bombs have exploded in several parts of the city. Attempts have been made to fire rockets, and there have been explosions at government establishments in the centre of the city.'¹⁸ These events were not reported on British television.

As we shall see in chapter 9, there are foreign news stories, such as the conflict in Northern Ireland, in which the discourse of terrorism used in Soviet international journalism has begun to converge with that of the western media. In the case of

Afghanistan, however, it is very clearly the case that in 1988 one side's 'terrorist' was the other side's 'freedom-fighter'.¹⁹

In the case of the war affecting another Soviet ally, Cambodia, western coverage has focused on the figure of Prince Sihanouk, the 'moderate' in the anti-government coalition which includes the Khmer Rouge, and the refugee problem created by the war. Soviet journalists, on the other hand, have highlighted the internal struggle of the Cambodian government to maintain its position and reconstruct the country in the face of the 'wrecking activities' of the Pol Pot forces.

Typical of such coverage was an item broadcast by *Vremya* on March 2nd, 1988, on the 'huge efforts being undertaken by the people's government to put into practice its declared policy of national reconciliation'. From a provincial city 90 kilometres from Phnom Penh *Vremya's* correspondent reported on the activities of three Pol Pot divisions and twenty 'propaganda specialists' said to be in the area. These activities, it was alleged, extended to the killing of unarmed civilians, as witnessed by two former Khmer Rouge officers who had deserted and given themselves up to the government forces. Asked why he had taken 'such a difficult decision', one of the defectors stated to camera that 'recently, a dreadful situation has developed in our [Khmer Rouge] camps. There are shortages of foodstuffs, supplies and medicines. Many are suffering from malaria and other tropical diseases... We have no future, no hope.'

This image of a starved and demoralised Khmer Rouge was supplemented by the testimony of the second interviewee who revealed that thirty fighters had defected along with him. 'Personally, I don't want to fight my own people. The republic offers hope of a future for me, my family and my children. I want to use that opportunity.'

The interviews which comprised the main part of this item illustrate a common feature in Soviet coverage of such conflicts—the visible recanting of wrongdoing by the enemy as a device to legitimate the official Soviet version of events.

In coverage of Afghanistan, too, this device is frequently employed in relation to the anti-government Mujahideen. In October 1986, as the first Soviet troops were preparing to leave the country, *Vremya* reported rocket and bomb attacks on Kabul, emphasising the extent of civilian casualties. To show that these incidents were being instigated by foreign powers, *Vremya* interviewed a group of Mujahideen fighters who had been captured in Kabul preparing to mount attacks on the population. As one of the Mujahideen, hands tied and head bowed, spoke into the microphone, *Vremya's* correspondent provided the following commentary.

Under interrogation the bandits testified that they received their orders to penetrate Kabul, organise diversions, spread provocative rumours, and sow panic among the population from instructors in the west and Pakistan. Why was this to be done? In order to disrupt the coordination of Moscow's and Kabul's steps towards the political normalisation of the situation around Afghanistan, and to demonstrate the opposition of the counter-revolutionaries.

The US backyard

Throughout the 1980s Afghanistan has received priority in the western media as a centre of resistance to Soviet 'imperialism'. Soviet journalists, for their part, have focused on the US 'backyard': Central and South America, and the Caribbean Basin. In coverage of these regions the Soviet media have told a continuing story of US 'imperialist aggression' directed against the efforts of small developing countries to throw off the colonial yoke and strive for independence. These countries have included Cuba, Grenada, and, during our sample period of March 1988, Panama.

The Panamanian crisis, which led ultimately to the US invasion of the country in December 1989, intensified in 1988 with the dismissal from office of Panama's President Eric Delvalle and his replacement by Carlos Solis de Palma, generally acknowledged as the choice of General Noriega, Commander-in-Chief of the Panamanian defence forces, and the most powerful figure in the country. These events prompted protests in Panama City, and the beginning of a campaign of economic sanctions against the Panamanian government organised by the Reagan administration.

These, as the Soviets would say, were the 'objective facts' of the crisis. However, the Panamanian and US governments interpreted these facts in very different ways. In the US version of events Delvalle's dismissal from office was unconstitutional, amounting to the imposition of a military regime led by the 'dictator' Noriega. Noriega's unsuitability for office was said to be confirmed by the fact that at this time he was under indictment in the United States for drug-trafficking and racketeering.

According to the supporters of Noriega, Delvalle had been legally removed by a vote of Panama's Legislative Assembly. US hostility to his regime, and the resulting campaign of sanctions directed against it, 'was aimed solely at retaining the Panama Canal beyond the year 2000'.²⁰ US concerns in this regard were based on Noriega's reluctance to negotiate a continuation of the Panama Canal Treaty, by which the US paid 'rent' for use of and effective jurisdiction over the canal (the treaty expires in the year 2000).

As the effects of US economic sanctions began to be felt in Panama, popular unrest increased, as did opposition to the Noriega government. On March 11th, BBC news reported that 'so far President Reagan has ruled out military intervention, though the Americans are more than well-placed for such action. Ten thousand military personnel are based here, the headquarters of the Southern Command.' On March 25th ITN reported President Reagan's determination 'to do anything' to remove Noriega, informing viewers that 'now, the opposition to Noriega has called for US military intervention'. The Americans' right to intervene in the affairs of another country was not at any time questioned.

On March 14th, both BBC and ITN reported riots in Panama City following the government's failure to pay the wages of public service workers. Both BBC and ITN stressed that opposition to Noriega was increasing, and had extended to 'poorer areas of the capital'. The BBC reported that Noriega was 'intimidating the poorly-organised opposition. Demonstrators are now being met with considerable force'. Both bulletins referred to accusations of drug-trafficking being levelled at Noriega by the US Justice Department, and noted the possibility of a deal whereby he would leave Panama, perhaps for exile in Spain. In the following days BBC and ITN presented a story of mounting

chaos in Panama, increasing violence by pro-government forces against opposition protesters, and growing support for the latter among the population as a whole culminating on March 22nd in a general strike organised by the anti-Noriega forces.

A notable feature of British coverage during March was the virtual absence, despite the substantial news-time devoted to the story, of background to the crisis. Bulletins referred only to the fact that it was 'the result of American economic pressure aimed at removing General Noriega' (1 2100 14.3.88), and that 'the American government has cut off funds to Panama in an attempt to force the resignation of the military dictator General Noriega' (3 2200 14.3.88). The explanation for this behaviour, and its legitimacy, were not explored. Throughout, journalists accepted the official US justification of their policy as a response to Noriega's despotic manoeuvres, reinforcing this definition of events by constantly emphasising the violence inflicted by government forces on the opposition. ITN's reference to Noriega as a 'military dictator' typifies British journalists' apparent adoption of the US view of the crisis: that it had been caused by the arbitrary and corrupt actions of a single man.

Only one bulletin in the sample presented an alternative explanation. This item, broadcast by ITN on March 25th, pointed out that, with Noriega demanding sovereignty over the Panama Canal from the year 2000, there were reasons other than concern about drug-running and dictatorship for the US campaign against him.

Diplomats here say that the US bases [in Panama] provide America with a window overlooking Central America. Indeed, the air base is the only one the US has from the Texas border to the Antarctic. And with America losing bases all over the world, as in Greece and Spain, observers here see Washington determined to hang on to Panama. Being pro-Noriega, they say, is regarded as an un-American activity, one which could attract support from countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua. That, it's said, is why Washington is nervous, and why Noriega has to go.

(3 2200 25.3.88)

To the extent that this commentary sets the Panamanian crisis in the context of American strategic concerns, rather than simply Noriega's alleged personal deficiencies, it was exceptional in British coverage as a whole.

Vremya's coverage, on the other hand, made no references at any point to Noriega's alleged despotism or drug-running activities, nor to the regime's suppression of anti-Noriega protests. Instead, Soviet journalists presented the crisis as yet another example of American imperialism attacking the national sovereignty of a small country, assisted by internal 'reactionaries'. On March 3rd *Vremya* broadcast a lengthy commentary on the situation, providing viewers with an account of the background to the crisis.

For a week already this small Central American country has been in the grip of a fever. One after another events are taking place which threaten Panama's independence and sovereignty. It all began with a declaration by the [former] President Delvalle on the dismissal of General Noriega from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President did this under pressure from the USA. Following this the Panamanian

Parliament revoked his Presidential authority on the grounds that he had violated the constitution. The new President, Manuel Solis Palma, declared that Panama would carry out an independent internal policy. All this happened at the culmination of an anti-Panamanian campaign started by the United States last summer. Then, the Panamanian government was subjected to threats for not allowing the country to be used as a base for anti-Nicaraguan adventurists from the USA, and for firmly coming out against the renewal of the Panama Canal Treaty, insisting that sovereignty over the canal must be transferred to the Panamanians in the year 2000.

The United States very much wants to retain control over [the canal] in perpetuity. To achieve this it wants an obedient government in Panama, and is prepared to take any measures to do away with the present one. Thus it has stopped economic and financial aid, and now threatens to introduce a trade embargo. A decision to freeze \$50 million of Panamanian funds in the USA has been announced...A base has been built in the canal zone which American forces can use for an armed invasion of the country on the pretext of guaranteeing security of passage.

It is difficult to predict the outcome of the anti-Panamanian campaign. In any event, the influential trade union organisations have declared their support for the government's policy. Practically every Latin American country has given a decisive rebuff to American attempts to impose its control on Panama.

(3.3.88)

This commentary introduces all the main themes which would inform Soviet coverage. First, the dismissal of Delvalle was constitutional, and done in response to *unconstitutional* action by him towards Noriega; secondly, the essence of the conflict lay in the Americans' desire for a malleable, 'friendly' government in Panama, which would enable the US to pursue its policies in the region unhindered; thirdly, those who opposed the government were working in league with the United States; and fourthly, the Panamanian people, and the workers in particular, broadly supported the stance of the government in resisting US pressure.

In Panama itself demonstrations and protests continue against the open interference of the USA in the internal affairs of the country. The Panamanian workers' national trade union centre has called on the population to mount a mass protest today to demonstrate its resolve to defend the national sovereignty and vital interests of the Panamanian people.

(6.3.88)

From the outset, then, *Vremya's* journalists were highly critical of the American role, asserting massive popular support for the Panamanian government inside and out of the country. In the Soviet account the Noriega regime was the wronged party, and, if Panamanian public opinion appeared to be moving against Noriega (a development

which was constantly emphasised in British coverage), this was because of US manipulation. As *Vremya* put it on March 13th:

Washington is attempting to drown this country with economic pressure, and to provoke the dissatisfaction of the population. Even now American mercenaries are active on the streets of Panama. All of this is being done to remove a regime which is inconvenient to the USA because it is carrying out an independent policy...[but] the actions are producing protests in Latin America. The President of Guatemala, for example, has spoken out against interference in the internal affairs of Panama.

An attempted coup against Noriega on March 16th was reported by *Vremya* as having been carried out by 'a group of mutineers...but the military forces didn't support the putschists and the coup was put down without bloodshed' (17.3.88). A few days later it was noted that 'according to press reports the majority of officers who took part in the recent attempt at military mutiny had recently returned from the USA, after taking so-called "courses in marksmanship"' (21.3.88). On March 19th *Vremya* referred to the United States' 'undeclared war' against Panama, blaming this for the economic problems and consequent civil disturbances.

While, as we have seen, UK coverage of the crisis constantly emphasised the consequences of the US embargo for ordinary Panamanians, and highlighted the violence of the regime against anti-government protesters, *Vremya* gave access to supporters of the Panamanian government. On March 22nd, for example, *Vremya* broadcast an interview with the rector of the National University of Panama. What, in his opinion, was the reason for the current crisis?

In the last seven years Panama has had six presidents. Under these conditions anxiety and disloyalty have developed amongst the country's patriotic forces. American imperialism and internal reaction have used this to hold back the process of socio-economic development. We Panamanian patriots consider that the damage which is being done to the national economy [by the USA] is not being undertaken simply in order to remove the present government, but to achieve a review of the Panama Canal Treaty so as to guarantee the USA control of the waterway after the year 2000. This eventuality worries all Panamanians, even those who are against the present government.

At the end of March *Vremya* reported anti-American demonstrations in Panama City. Over film of a noisy crowd waving Panamanian flags and shouting slogans, *Vremya's* correspondent reported that 'such demonstrations are taking place daily outside the American embassy. Every night people from all sections of Panamanian society assemble here' (29.3.88).

One of the protesters was interviewed.

Correspondent: Why are you demonstrating outside the American embassy?

Protester: We are protesting against the actions of the Americans. They are taking for themselves what belongs to Panama, to our fathers, to our mothers...[a reference, perhaps, to the government's inability to pay pensions]

Correspondent: These ordinary Panamanians see the connections between local reaction and the destabilisation of the country by the American Administration's economic sanctions. The results of the general strike [of March 22nd] have understandably brought thousands of Panamanians on to the streets, [over film of banners with slogans] 'Long live Panama!' 'Panama is sovereign!' 'Yankees out of Panama!' All night candles will burn outside the American Embassy as a symbol of the inextinguishable struggle for national sovereignty.

On March 26th *Vremya* contextualised the crisis in terms of US foreign policy as a whole:

The USA plans large-scale military manoeuvres in the Caribbean Basin—Ocean Venture 88—beginning on April 1st, and clearly linked to events in Panama. The American administration's policy in recent years has been characterised by open military and economic pressure to influence in its favour the path of events in the hot spots of the planet, and to remove those powers it does not want.²¹

The contrasting accounts of the Panamanian crisis provided by British and Soviet journalism illustrate a number of differences in their approach to international news in general. The British account is focused on the *events* which mark the progress of the story: principally, riots and their suppression. In making sense of the crisis, no alternative to the US version of events is offered. Following the 'line' of the administration, Noriega appears on British television news exclusively as a drug-running, dictatorial usurper of power.

Vremya, on the other hand, chooses to highlight the themes of order and stability, in the face of external and internal reaction. Anti-government riots, if mentioned at all in coverage, are presented as minor events, stirred up by mercenaries. At the explanatory level *Vremya* opts for a version of events which is consistent with the marxist-leninist worldview: the cause of the crisis is US imperialism. Reference to Noriega's alleged crimes as a cause of the crisis is absent.

Consensus and convergence in international journalism

In March 1988, Nicaraguan Sandinista forces clashed with the Contras around the Honduran border. Amidst US allegations that Nicaraguan forces had invaded Honduras, more than 3,000 US troops were flown from American airbases to Palmerole, thus creating the second Central American crisis of the sample period. In this case, however, and in contrast to coverage of the Panamanian crisis, British and Soviet approaches to the story shared some significant features. In particular, both British and Soviet journalists were highly sceptical of the official US version of events.

Vremya's coverage of Nicaragua began in early March, before the clashes on the Honduran border, with news of impending peace talks between the Sandinistas and the

Contras in the border settlement of Sapoa near the Costa Rican border. The talks, it was reported, would be beginning on March 11th and 'showed the Sandinistas' interest in a quick end to the bloodshed and the achievement of national reconciliation' (3.3.88). The next day, *Vremya* reported more good news for the Sandinistas: 'the US House of Representatives has rejected a draft law on the allocation of \$30 million of so-called "humanitarian aid" to the Nicaraguan Contras' (4.3.88).

Neither of these stories was reported in the British sample, but Soviet and British journalists agreed on the news worthiness of the border clashes later in the month, which led to the Contras' withdrawal from the peace talks and the rapid deployment of American forces to Honduras, allegedly in response to Nicaraguan aggression.

Vremya, looking at events through the 'prism' of marxism-leninism, rejected the American account in a scathing commentary.

As a result of the transfer of 3,500 men, including crack battalions and special paratroop divisions, the number of American soldiers in Honduras now exceeds 6,000 men. Why does the White House need such an increase in its forces at the border of sovereign Nicaragua? The American Administration asserts that they are there for the defence of its ally, Honduras, from Nicaraguan invasion. But there is no such thing. Even the Honduran authorities have not witnessed Nicaraguan forces crossing the border.

Many American legislators doubt the truthfulness of the [Administration's] story. Nicaragua never had and does not now have territorial designs on Honduras. She doesn't need war. She needs peace. In the difficult economic situation which Nicaragua is living through every cent she is forced to spend on defence deprives her of money for basic needs. The Nicaraguan government has more than once made clear its intention to achieve peace in the region. It is abiding strictly by the Guatemala Agreement, including contact with the Contras, [but] the Contras have broken off the talks...With the help of American money they want to continue the attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government by military means. But many American legislators don't believe in the Contras' objectives, and have rejected the President's intention to provide the bandits with new supplies [a reference to the Congressional vote reported on March 4th]. The sponsors of the counter-revolution will go to any lengths to secure these funds, and to furnish the murderers of Nicaraguan civilians with weapons and supplies once again. The clamour which has developed around Nicaragua is a new and very dangerous attempt to bypass the Guatemala Agreement on the peaceful resolution of this regional conflict by taking the military road.

(17.3.88)

In its condemnation of the United States this commentary is consistent with the approach of Soviet journalism to Panama and other Central American conflicts. More surprising perhaps, is the fact that on this occasion British journalists agreed with the essentials of

the Soviet account, in so far as it expressed doubts about the administration's explanation for its troop movements.

On March 17th BBC news reported that 'the dispatch of American troops does not enjoy bi-partisan support at home'. Democratic Senator and Presidential candidate Paul Simon stated his view that 'the whole thing is part of a ploy to get more votes for funding for the Contras by the Administration'. ITN also qualified the administration's position on the troop movements:

the US development is *said* to be in response to an invasion by about 2,000 Nicaraguan troops into Honduras...many in Washington believe it's a dangerous strategy...Reagan has faced the suspicion that he pressurised Honduras into requesting military assistance... While some administration critics think the President is risking American lives, others think that the White House is deliberately exaggerating the scale of the border conflict. They believe Mr Reagan is trying to frighten Congress into giving more aid to the Contras.

(17.3.88)

For the Soviet journalist, reporting criticism of the US position is routine. That such an approach should have been taken by the British media reflects the existence of strong internal division within the American political establishment as to the 'meaning' of these events.²² The 'primary definers' on which the western media tend to rely for authoritative definitions of events were themselves divided on this issue, as they had not been in the case of Panama.

British and Soviet approaches diverged in other respects, however. In general, *Vremya* gave more coverage to the Nicaraguan viewpoint. President Ortega was regularly reported denouncing the USA and warning of the threat of military intervention against his country. When British television news quoted Nicaraguan sources their comments were heavily qualified. A statement by the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry was framed in the following way:

Correspondent: ...and whatever they [the Nicaraguans] had done to provoke the tension, they weren't sorry.

Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry Spokesman: We were carrying out the duty of any state to protect its citizens. What are we supposed to do, cross our arms and let our people continue to be massacred?

Unlike UK bulletins, *Vremya* gave extensive coverage to the mass protests which were organised against the administration inside the United States. Only one of the sampled UK bulletins reported this aspect of the events, while *Vremya* carried nightly reports of demonstrations.

Thousands took part, under the slogan 'No Vietnam in Central America'. The demonstrators declared that public opinion in the country is outraged by the irresponsible and adventurist actions of the Reagan administration. It is an act of international arbitrariness and political blackmail. The

demonstrators demanded a quick removal of American forces from Honduran territory.

(18.3.88)

Vremya's emphasis on the anti-administration protests illustrates the tendency of Soviet journalism to highlight dissent and dissidence in the capitalist countries where possible (see chapter 9). In this case the protests, combined with evidence of dissent within the US Congress, provided *Vremya* with the opportunity to present the Administration as isolated, thus reinforcing the Soviet view of events.

'Convergence' in Soviet and British accounts of the Nicaraguan crisis in March 1988 was the consequence, it can be argued, of divisions within the western political establishment as to the wisdom of US government policy in Central America. It is also true, however, that at this time in 1988 political trends in international affairs were leading to what can be called a 'consensus' between east and west in journalistic ways of seeing some issues. Gorbachov has made much of the concept of 'new political thinking' in Soviet foreign policy, a formulation which connotes the downgrading of class-based ideologies in determining approaches to international conflict. 'New political thinking' is premised on the assumption that, irrespective of ideology, international conflicts can and must be resolved peacefully.²³ Whether through Gorbachev's efforts in this sphere, or despite them, a number of recent international crises have not led, as in the case of Panama, to polarisation across the traditional ideological divide, but to a degree of agreement among the capitalist and socialist powers on 'what is to be done'. The similarities between Soviet and western policies on events in the West Bank and southern Africa illustrate the growing international consensus in key 'hot spots of the planet'. In these regions Soviet and western governments have increasingly found themselves agreeing on central points: that Israel and South Africa are aggressor states, abusing human rights and international law; that the PLO and the ANC are the legitimate representatives of the Palestinians and the black South Africans respectively; and that solutions to the Middle East and South African conflicts must be found which respect the rights of these oppressed groups. To the extent that consensus exists it has been reflected in international journalism, as an analysis of Soviet and British coverage of the 'hot spots' shows.

In the case of the West Bank and Gaza Strip our sample period coincided with the fourth month of the Arab uprising in the Occupied Territories, or 'Intifada', which had by March 1988 already claimed approximately 100 lives. As the Intifada intensified, both Soviet and British news programmes agreed that events in the Occupied Territories were highly newsworthy. They also converged on the appropriate focus of coverage—the clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli soldiers. These clashes, with their daily toll of mainly Palestinian lives, formed the great bulk of the coverage in both Britain and the USSR. Moreover, in both countries the clashes were reported in terms which implied criticism of the Israeli forces.

It's reported that two more Palestinians have been killed, and dozens wounded, in a punitive operation by Israeli occupation forces in the annexed Arab lands.

(*Vremya*, 6.3.88)

Today there was more violence in the West Bank town of Ramallah ...A Palestinian was beaten up by an Israeli soldier, although the army has been instructed not to punish the demonstrators.

(1 2100 2.3.88)

Such items were an almost daily feature of British and Soviet news in March, reflecting a shared assumption of the newsworthiness of the conflict and a degree of consensus as to from which side the violence came. Although *Vremya's* language was more unambiguous in its condemnation of the Israelis—reports spoke of the ‘savagery’ and ‘cruelty’ of the ‘invaders’—BBC and ITN did not ignore the violence of the Israeli troops.

On the other hand, UK bulletins diverged from *Vremya* in broadcasting a number of reports which attempted to explain and legitimise the behaviour of the Israelis, often portraying it as a response to Palestinian aggression. While *Vremya's* framework for understanding was one of invaders and invaded, British news qualified the obvious brutality of the Israelis in the Occupied Territories with background pieces on the pressures experienced by the occupation troops and the settlers.

In February 1988, an American camera crew stumbled upon four Israeli soldiers beating handcuffed Palestinians with rocks in order to break their limbs. The film, and subsequent publicity surrounding the incident, led to condemnation of Israel even by its western allies, and to the arrest of the soldiers concerned. On March 29th, they were released pending trial. That day the BBC's Middle East correspondent spent time with the family of one of the soldiers, as they ‘defended the actions of their son. They told our correspondent he did it for his country.’ The report which followed included film of the kibbutz where the soldier grew up,

his family often having to cower in the shelter from Palestinian rockets fired from across the river, causing deaths and casualties. On a kibbutz people grow up together, they live alongside each other, and sometimes they die together. On an occasion like this, they stand together. And that's why they're getting ready to celebrate his release with a barbecue. His father says his son was provoked by four hours of Palestinian stoning. Even the British wouldn't stand for that.

Soldier's father: I think the British in Belfast will do it [break protesters' limbs] after quarter of an hour, not after four and a half hours...his friends think he's a hero.

ITN reported on the problems of Israeli settlers living in the Occupied Territories. At the beginning of March ITN began a series of items on the settler issue by acknowledging that there were ‘several recorded cases of settlers killing Palestinian rioters’ (3 2200 2.3.88). Eschewing any investigation of these cases the correspondent proceeded to highlight the dangerous situation faced by the settlers, allowing them space to articulate their views on the Palestinian question as he did so.

Correspondent: Being a settler in the West Bank today means carrying a gun as you take the children to school. This 15-month-old boy is recovering after being struck by rocks

thrown by Palestinians at his parents' car. On the West Bank even the rabbi has an Uzi sub-machine gun thrown over his shoulder.

Rabbi: Despite the fact they're trying to uproot us from here, the Arab terrorists, to kill men, women, and children, we will continue to live here.

Meir Kahane (ultra-right Zionist): I don't want to beat Arabs, I don't want to shoot Arabs, I want to throw them out and let them live with their brothers and sisters in Jordan.

No criticism of these views was reported.

The next evening, ITN followed up this item with a report on the measures being taken by settlers to 'defend' themselves from Palestinians. The item began with the news that 'in the West Bank a settler has been stabbed by a Palestinian. It's the first stabbing of a Jew in the present troubles. Israeli Jews are now increasingly worried about their safety, and they're taking action to protect themselves.' From the Occupied Territories ITN's correspondent reported that many settlers were now taking classes in stunt-driving and self-defence, so as to avoid the risk of injury from Palestinian demonstrators. Over film of settlers practising automatic gunfire we were told: 'the lessons reflect the dangers that can be encountered in the Middle East today: deflecting an assassin's knife, or foiling an attempt to take a hostage... At least two former pupils have had to use their skills for real. Both survived to tell the story.' The circumstances of these incidents, and what became of their (presumably) Palestinian victims, were not reported.

By this stage of the Intifada more than 100 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli troops, and an unknown number by settlers. The notion that the Palestinians might need lessons in self-defence was not explored in any bulletins.

British journalists would justify the extent of this coverage of the soldiers' and settlers' problems by reference to the need for information about their viewpoints and beliefs. In that case the requirements of impartiality would seem to demand equivalent coverage of the Palestinians' viewpoint, since they were the ones being beaten and shot daily. During March, however, only two Palestinians were given access to the sampled UK bulletins. In one instance, following the announcement of new reporting restrictions on foreign press coverage of the conflict, a Palestinian villager was heard to say, pointing to bloodstains on the ground in his village, the following five words: 'the Israelis shoot us here' (3 2200 4.3.88).

On March 29th, BBC news granted more substantial access to a Palestinian representative in the context of an item about support for the PLO amongst the Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

A poll amongst occupied Palestinians claimed 93 per cent reckoned that only the PLO could put their case effectively.

A statement from a Palestinian lawyer followed:

You need a body that is recognised by all Palestinians as legitimate, as authoritative. Yasser Arafat, in his individual capacity cannot do it. Yasser Arafat, as chairman of the Palestine National Council of the PLO, that speaks for all the Palestinian people, he can.

This statement, the most substantial by a Palestinian to be broadcast on any of the sampled UK bulletins, was qualified by the correspondent's observation that

the problem is, the Palestine Liberation Organisation is seen *with justification* by much of the world as a terrorist organisation, unacceptable to sit down at the peace table.

A substantial section of world opinion, including the United Nations, does not see the PLO as 'a terrorist organisation', a fact highlighted by *Vremya* which consistently gives extensive coverage to the PLO's viewpoint. Soviet coverage of international conflicts in which an ideological or political ally is involved often includes news about 'solidarity' demonstrations within the USSR itself. On March 3rd *Vremya* reported 'a solidarity meeting with the Palestinian people which took place outside the PLO buildings in the centre of Moscow'. The PLO representative in the USSR, Said Abu Imam, was heard addressing the meeting, and Said Abu Shafir, a representative of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was interviewed.

Vremya also devoted substantial coverage to a dispute involving the PLO at the United Nations in New York, which came to a head in March. In February, the United States Justice Department had announced its intention to close the PLO mission at the UN. Subsequent debates on the matter were extensively reported by *Vremya*, with the USA portrayed as being in breach of its international obligations. Coverage also emphasised the USA's use of its Security Council veto to block the adoption of a resolution aimed at ending the Israelis' 'inhuman policy...of savage violence in the Occupied Territories' (1.3.88). On March 2nd the US closure of the PLO mission was described by *Vremya* as 'blatant interference in the affairs of the UN, creating a dangerous precedent in the violation of international law'.

While the UN story was high on the Soviet agenda for covering the Middle East during this period, the British media largely ignored it. Of twenty-three UK items covering the conflict in the Occupied Territories only one reported the US Justice Department's decision on the PLO. The item, broadcast by the BBC, briefly noted the decision, and opposition to it: 'there's little support at the UN for the move. Even the American Secretary of State said, "it's dumb"' (2 2100 12.3.88).

Despite these differences in assumptions of newsworthiness and structures of access, the Middle East conflict can be seen as one in which there were significant points of convergence between British and Soviet coverage. Both gave extensive coverage to the clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers, often using the same film of Israeli violence against protesters.

That both Soviet and British news should emphasise these aspects of Israeli policy in the Territories is less a consequence of *glasnost* (since Soviet journalism has always reported the Middle East from an anti-zionist perspective) than of changing attitudes towards Israeli policy amongst primary definers in the west. As the Intifada heightened, many western governments, including the British, made public statements highly critical of Israel. The tendency to dismiss the PLO as 'terrorists' was still present in British television journalism in 1988, as we have seen, but coverage also reflected the newly-critical stance of British ministers such as David Mellor, who visited the Occupied

Territories and caused a diplomatic incident by the severity of his attacks on Israeli policy there.

Finally, apartheid in South Africa, like Israeli policy on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, has become the object of global opprobrium. During the sample period both British and Soviet bulletins reported the apartheid regime's repression of black South Africans.

Vremya's coverage was distinctive in the unqualified support it expressed for the armed struggle. On the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre *Vremya* presented viewers with a brief account of the history of the anti-apartheid movement. The Sharpeville massacres, noted the commentator, had 'shocked the world', demonstrating that 'in the South African apartheid state, a black person is not a human being. For the racists, his life is worth nothing...[but] the shooting of the peaceful Sharpeville demonstrators marked the beginning of a new stage in the Africans' struggle for freedom...and today, the armed struggle has caught hold of the entire country' (21.3.88).

Vremya also tends to give more coverage to western obstruction of international efforts to impose sanctions on South Africa than do the British media. On March 9th, for example, *Vremya* reported that 'Britain and the USA exercised their veto' on a UN Security Council resolution condemning the South African government. The story was not deemed newsworthy by the sampled UK bulletins.

On March 21st, a *Vremya* commentary claimed that the apartheid regime would have fallen long ago, 'had it not been for the political, economic and moral support extended to it by the western powers, Britain and the USA in the first instance. Their refusal to adopt sanctions against Pretoria can't be seen as other than an alliance between western ruling circles and the racists.' The commentary ended with an appeal to the audience that only 'solidarity with the people of South Africa can help to bring the crimes of apartheid to account'.

Conclusion

Soviet international journalism is informed by news-values and identifications which differ in fundamental ways from those of the west. Competing frames of reference structure sharply contrasting accounts of events. To some extent, however, if the cases examined here can be taken as representative, Soviet and western accounts are beginning to converge, as a consequence of wider processes of restructuring in international relations. In other cases, such as the coverage of Israel and South Africa in March 1988, it might reasonably be argued that the Soviet view of events is more representative of world opinion than that of the British bulletins examined.

8

Reykjavik and Moscow: a tale of two summits

The growing east-west consensus on international affairs, which has been a feature of the post-April period, was signalled most dramatically by a sudden outbreak of 'summit fever', leading first to the meeting between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov at Geneva in November 1985. This 'fireside summit'—so-called because of the cosy intimacy displayed by the two leaders, in such stark contrast to the years of the 'new cold war'—was followed by further meetings in Reykjavik (October 1986), Washington (December 1987 and 1988), and Moscow (June 1988). For the first time since the 1970s the USA and the USSR were talking at the highest level. Moreover, while substantial areas of disagreement remained at the summits, a number of significant achievements were recorded, particularly in the area of arms control. Most importantly, a treaty to remove intermediate-range nuclear weapons from Europe was successfully negotiated, and signed at the Moscow summit. Advances were made in negotiations about 'deep' cuts in strategic nuclear weapons, although no treaty on this matter could be prepared in time for Reagan's departure from office at the beginning of 1989. The number of nuclear warheads removed as a result of the Reagan-Gorbachov summits was small as a proportion of total global stockpiles, but the agreements were nevertheless perceived as ushering in a new era of improved east-west relations: following the new cold war, a new *détente*. The summits, consequently, were viewed as historic occasions, and for this reason received massive news coverage, both east and west. This chapter presents a comparative analysis of 'summit news' on Soviet and British television news, with particular reference to the meetings in Reykjavik and Moscow.¹

For Soviet journalists the post-April summits were reported as a sub-category of protocol news. As noted in chapter 2, a substantial proportion of Soviet news output chronicles visits to the USSR by foreign delegations, and official trips abroad by Soviet representatives. Before *glasnost*, protocol news consisted almost entirely of official TASS reports written in the traditionally formal prose of that organisation. Items focused on the ceremonial aspects of such meetings, taking the form largely of lists of those present, what was said (officially), and the places visited.

The newsworthiness of a given item of protocol was determined by a mix of ideological, political and strategic factors. The strategic importance of the major western powers was reflected in the extensive coverage given to Prime Minister Thatcher's visit to the USSR in 1987. However, extensive coverage has also been devoted to the official visits by leaders of lesser-known states such as the Guinea Coast in October 1986. On the departure of the President of this north-west African republic, *Vremya* devoted several minutes of news-time to coverage of the farewell ceremony, attended by Soviet President Gromyko and a host of Politburo members. The newsworthiness of this visit was a consequence of the fact that the Guinea Coast is regarded by the Soviet government as an ideological ally. The perceived value of maintaining this alliance in what the Soviets view as a strategically important region of the world, and of informing the Soviet

audience of its existence, outweighed the relatively minor international status of the Guinea Coast and guaranteed the President's visit the attention of Party officials and journalists.

Ideological factors also determine the quantity of coverage devoted to visits to the USSR by non-governmental delegations, such as that by British Labour politician Ken Livingstone when he was still leader of the Greater London Council in late 1985. At a time when UK–Soviet relations were tense (several diplomats and journalists had recently been expelled from both countries in ‘tit for tat’ measures, allegedly for spying), Livingstone's visit provided the Soviet media with an opportunity to highlight a centre of domestic political opposition to the Thatcher government. Similar criteria apply in coverage of former members of western governments, such as Jimmy Carter and Denis Healey, who tend to be reported agreeing with Soviet criticisms of current western policies on arms control and other issues.

This material has traditionally played an important symbolic role for the Soviet audience. The daily procession of men (and, on rare occasions, women) seen shaking hands and chatting across the conference table, laying wreaths at war memorials, and signing treaties and agreements, signified a world in which the USSR was a key actor. In these items the world outside could be seen coming to the USSR and, if not quite paying homage, acknowledging Soviet status as a world power. Whether dealing with visitors to the USSR, or with Soviet delegations abroad, protocol news portrayed the Soviet state to its own people as having friends and influence. This self-image has been crucial to the legitimation of Soviet ideology, which places the USSR at the centre of the world stage as the bearer of progressive human values.

In the post-April period protocol news has retained this ideological function, as it does many of its long-standing stylistic features. However, as the style of Soviet diplomacy has changed since 1985, so too has the content of protocol news. The distinctive approach taken by Mr Gorbachov in his frequent forays abroad, and the reciprocal visits by foreign leaders to Moscow, have been accompanied by a new type of coverage which displays some features familiar to consumers of western journalism. In others it remains distinctively Soviet.

Reykjavik, 1986: the summit that wasn't

The meeting which took place between Mikhail Gorbachov and Ronald Reagan in the capital of Iceland in October 1986 was their second in less than twelve months, reinforcing the widespread hopes of an improvement in east–west relations which had been raised by the Geneva ‘fireside summit’ of the previous November. The meeting at Reykjavik was billed, not as a ‘summit’ but as a ‘pre-summit’, to prepare for the meeting of the two leaders scheduled to take place in Washington in 1987. Despite its ambiguous official status, the Reykjavik meeting was universally perceived as a protocol occasion of the greatest importance. Without exception the Soviet and British television news bulletins sampled for this study led with the summit. In addition, they shared a basic optimism as the meeting got under way. *Vremya* noted on October 11th that ‘the Soviet and American leaders are already well acquainted with each other’ and that, ‘in their first dispatches correspondents here have reported the relaxed atmosphere in which the

meeting began'. On the same day BBC news detected 'signs that something positive may be emerging', while ITN spoke of 'some optimism' about the prospect of agreements being reached.

Vremya reinforced the theme of optimism and sought to outline more precisely what might be achieved at Reykjavik by interviewing some of the 2,000 foreign correspondents in attendance. A correspondent for the Japanese broadcasting company NHK gave *Vremya* his assessment that 'the most important thing in this meeting is disarmament, and we expect positive responses from the Soviet and American sides'. Joyce Barntham of the American journal *Newsweek* thought that 'there might be some progress on the question of medium-range missiles in Europe'. Talking about public opinion in the United States, she assured her Soviet interviewer that 'the majority are expecting concrete results. I don't think that anyone, in America or the Soviet Union, wants it to be unsuccessful.'

To end this 'framing' item *Vremya's* correspondent explained that, although some in the west 'would like to present this meeting as an informal, familiarising session, it is obvious that the event is of the greatest political significance, and much – the development of Soviet– American relations, and the world political process in general – depends on its outcome'.

For the 2,000 foreign correspondents based in Reykjavik, coverage of the summit was hampered by the imposition, with the agreement of both the US and Soviet delegations, of an information 'blackout', to apply for the duration of the talks. As *Vremya* reported on October 11th, 'the several thousand journalists who have arrived in the capital are, as they say, starved of news'. For *Vremya*, this fact posed no special problems. Faced with nothing to report, *Vremya's* correspondent reported—nothing. On October 12th he reported that 'under the conditions of the mutually-agreed "blackout"—to preserve confidentiality during the talks—there is an absence of information for the press. All that is left is for the journalists here to construct suppositions about what is going on behind the closed doors of the Hofti House.' This correspondent's own suppositions were restricted to the following comment: 'the very fact of the continuation of talks is being appraised by many observers here as significant, and possibly a reassuring sign. It has been announced that immediately after the end of the meeting Gorbachov will give a news conference in one of the city's halls.'

With this *Vremya* concluded its coverage of the day's events in Reykjavik, confirming the tendency of Soviet journalists to eschew the practice of filling in information gaps with speculative commentary and other devices for making up news-time. Western journalists, on the other hand, had no such qualms. Confronted, like the Soviets, by a news blackout British correspondents substituted 'hard' news about the progress of the talks with a series of 'soft', human-interest items.

On the first day of the summit a major story on both BBC and ITN bulletins was the minor hitch in the programme caused by the fact that when Mr Gorbachov's motorcade arrived at the Hofti House to be officially welcomed by President Reagan, the latter was nowhere to be seen, having become confused about the time. Fortunately, as ITN reported, 'acute embarrassment' was 'averted at the last moment by the President's hasty appearance' (3 2200 11.10.86).

Vremya's correspondents accorded no newsworthiness to this story, nor to the activities of Mr Gorbachov's wife, Raisa, as she was escorted around Iceland. At this,

relatively early, stage in the *glasnost* campaign, openness in Soviet journalism had not yet extended to the USSR's 'first lady' (a situation which, as we shall see, had changed by the time of the Moscow summit). Soviet journalism remained uninterested in the personalities of Soviet political leaders, let alone members of their families. Outside the USSR, however, Raisa Gorbachov was by 1986 a major media 'star' in the west. For a media system fascinated by human interest and the trivia of political life, Raisa's obvious charm and personal charisma made her immensely newsworthy. Faced with a news blackout, therefore, the foreign press corps in Reykjavik gratefully accepted the sound-bites and photo-opportunities provided by Raisa in the course of her official duties.

Raisa's newsworthiness was further enhanced by the rumoured personal enmity between her and Nancy Reagan which had emerged following their first meeting in Geneva. This allowed Mrs Gorbachov's presence in Reykjavik to be framed in terms of 'bitchiness' at the highest level. As the BBC's Brian Hanrahan reported, 'last week there'd been a slight diplomatic tiff between Moscow and Washington over just who should travel to Iceland with the leaders. Because it was meant to be a strictly business session the White House said Mrs Reagan wouldn't be going, but Moscow had other views and Mr Gorbachov was accompanied by his wife, Raisa' (2 2100 11.10.86). ITN reported that 'even [Raisa's] presence in Iceland was controversial. Nancy Reagan had stayed in Washington, and the quiet, working atmosphere of this pre-summit was under Soviet threat' (3 2200 11.10.86).

Both BBC and ITN devoted a substantial proportion of their coverage of Reykjavik to Mrs Gorbachov's official visits, first, to an open-air swimming pool where 'she swapped greetings with the bathers', and then to the National Museum. According to ITN, 'the vivacious style of the Soviets' first lady never faltered, a television image of Gorbachov's Russia at its most glamorous' (3 2200 11.10.86); an image, however, which was absent from Soviet news coverage of the Reykjavik meeting.

British news-values differed further from those applied by Soviet journalists in the emphasis given by the former to the themes of human rights and dissidence. BBC news reported on the activities of human rights groups 'competing strongly for publicity' and 'continuing to keep up their pressure on the summit. Today it was a prayer vigil for Soviet Jews denied permission to emigrate, an attempt to persuade world opinion that behind the amiable face the Soviet Union presents in public there's another, more sinister one' (October 11th, 1986).

Dissidence from another source was covered by ITN the next day, when it reported a protest by the Greenpeace organisation in Reykjavik harbour. Neither the human rights' activists nor the environmentalists were included on the Soviet agenda for news coverage of Reykjavik.

The exclusion or playing down of ideologically inconvenient events was characteristic of Soviet news at this time, and a feature which remains largely unchanged in the central media organs. In other respects, however, the Reykjavik summit reveals the extent to which Soviet attitudes to news and information had been transformed by late 1986. We have already referred to Mrs Gorbachov's high visibility in the western media during the Reykjavik summit. The prominence of these images of glamour and 'vivacity' was related, as already noted, to the information gap produced by the official news blackout. It seems unlikely, however, that Raisa's activities were organised without an appreciation of their public relations potential. Similarly, Soviet information managers had already, by

this point in the *glasnost* campaign, comprehensively 'restructured' their approach to the western journalists engaged in reporting east-west issues. Consequently, and in stark contrast to the techniques of news management favoured by the government of the USSR before 1985, the information vacuum at Reykjavik was filled to a large extent by the Soviets themselves. In the days leading up to the summit, and during it, the Soviet delegation at Reykjavik successfully pursued what ITN described as a 'policy of aggressive public relations' (3 2200 11.10.86). Continuing the approach established at Geneva, daily news conferences addressed by leading Soviet experts on current east-west issues dominated coverage. While the American side largely retained its silence the Soviets, to a degree unprecedented before 1985, set the western news agenda for coverage of Reykjavik.

Vremya's coverage of the first day of the summit noted that in the conditions of a news blackout the international journalistic contingent showed 'even greater interest in the news conference taking place this morning at the Soviet press centre' (11.10.86). Speaking at the conference were Georgi Arbatov and Yevgeny Velikov, the USSR's leading nuclear physicist. In *Vremya's* broadcast excerpts of the press conference Arbatov defined the significance of the Reykjavik meeting thus:

I have noticed the existence of a debate about whether this meeting is important or not, about whether or not much attention should be paid to it. I think—I am sure—that it is a very important meeting, to which a great deal of attention should be paid. What is being decided today? They are deciding whether or not there will be a continuation of dialogue at the highest level [i.e., between Gorbachov and Reagan].

This point was taken up by ITN that evening, when it was reported that at the press conference there had been 'no mincing of words about the importance of the session'. Arbatov was heard to state that 'the fate of future dialogue on the highest level is being decided here'.

Further confirmation of the Soviets' ability to set the agenda was provided in British coverage of both Arbatov's and Velikov's assessments of the key issues in the talks. Both referred to the 'banning of nuclear tests' as the primary area of concern for the Soviet government. This position was prominently featured in both BBC and ITN coverage that evening. Prior to his arrival in Iceland, President Reagan had proposed a treaty limiting nuclear tests, but not banning them, as the Soviets wished. As reported by BBC news,

Correspondent: The Soviets rejected the new and softer American line on nuclear weapons testing.

Arbatov: The real problem that we face now is a comprehensive test ban, and this is just a trick to lead opinion away from this real problem, it's a fake problem.

ITN's correspondent reported that at the press conference the Soviets had 'proceeded to denigrate what the Americans have claimed is a new initiative on limiting nuclear tests. They complained that America would not ban them because of the need to test Star Wars devices.'

The Soviet success in news management at Reykjavik was acknowledged by this correspondent's observation that

the news blackout has left the Russian publicity machine in a strong position. Mr Gorbachov has, not for the first time, seized a moment of world attention to deploy his revamped propaganda machine, this time to stress that he's here in the search for disarmament, and in that alone he has so far left the Americans looking more cautious.

British coverage of the second and final day of the summit was also effectively 'managed' by the Soviets. In the afternoon of October 12th, Georgi Arbatov announced, in response to questions from western journalists, that 'the Russians [have] made very serious [arms control] proposals, very serious proposals, of a historic kind. What will be the answer of the Americans we will know in a couple of hours' time' (quoted by ITN). Arbatov confirmed that the 'serious proposals' included an offer to cut strategic nuclear weapons by 50 per cent—the so-called 'deep cuts' option—and to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear missiles entirely, if the Americans agreed to give up their research on Star Wars.

Much to the consternation of the Americans these revelations dominated news coverage in the afternoon and early evening of October 12th, as Reagan and Gorbachov pursued their negotiations in the Hofsti House. As White House spokesman Larry Speakes complained at a specially-called news conference, 'this is a flagrant and blatant violation of the agreement between the two leaders that these should be personal and private talks'. BBC news reported Speakes' hope that 'the Soviet spokesmen are not engaging in a propaganda war in order to bring pressure on us'.

Whatever Arbatov's motivation in breaking the news blackout, it did indeed put pressure on the Americans. The Reykjavik summit produced no agreement on cutting nuclear weapons, because of the Reagan administration's refusal to meet Soviet conditions on the future of SDI. In accounting for the breakdown of the talks on the evening of October 12th, both BBC and ITN, armed with Arbatov's revelations about the radical nature of the Soviet proposals, 'blamed' the Americans. In an interview with diplomatic correspondent John Simpson, the BBC news' presenter remarked that 'it does appear that the whole thing collapsed because of Star Wars and because of that it appears that the world is a less safe place tonight. Is that your interpretation?' Simpson replied that it was. Then, referring to Arbatov's earlier intervention, he observed:

One of the key things that seems to have emerged today, during this agreement that wasn't, was that if the Americans had agreed to some kind of increase on the ABM treaty, to increase that for ten more years, then strategic weapons might have been done away with altogether. Now, that's so remarkable, that no-one's ever suggested it, except the Russians, before. We're not that far away from something very remarkable.

Presenter: You mean we might have got to that today had it not been for Mr Reagan's intransigence over Star Wars, if that's what it was?

Simpson: Yes. That's not how Mr Reagan would see it of course, but yes, that does seem to be the case.

ITN's correspondent noted that 'in the Russian camp the mood is one in which they feel confident they have left the finger pointing at the American side for any disappointment at what happened today'.

Programme Vremya made sense of 'what happened today'—the breakdown of the talks—by resorting to a distinctively Soviet journalistic device. In British news (and for western journalism as a whole) the 'primary definers' of events tend to be recruited from a relatively small circle of establishment specialists and academics. Imbued with a privileged legitimacy these commentators, in combination with the journalists themselves, construct 'preferred readings' of events. The Soviets, by contrast, frequently define events by reference to the views of 'ordinary' citizens, who are accessed in the form of 'vox pop' interviews conducted on the streets of Moscow and other cities of the USSR. Presented to the viewer as the spontaneous canvassing of opinion, these interviews represent another application of the principle of '*narodnost*' in Soviet journalism. Here, it is not the 'expert' or the politician who defines events, but 'the people'. These interviews are controlled, in the sense that no view which seriously dissents from Soviet foreign policy will be broadcast, but they represent nevertheless a significant break with the structures of access favoured by western journalists, and an illustration of what '*narodnost*' means for Soviet journalists in practice.

On October 13th, after the unsuccessful conclusion of the Reykjavik meeting, those Soviet citizens accessed on *Vremya* to assess the events of the preceding two days represented a revealing selection of ideologically-sound Soviet opinion. Mr Voyevodin, labelled as a miner, gave his view that, at the summit Gorbachov 'spoke correctly. He was speaking for our people about the struggle for peace, for the reduction of strategic forces by 50 per cent. But Reagan went simply to make a noise, with nothing to say to anyone.' Pensioner L.S.Leonova agreed that Reagan 'did not approach this question seriously', while soldier A. L.Dombhik suggested that 'they were on the verge of an agreement to end or reduce nuclear weapons, but the [US] industrial complex, by its very nature, can't take this step'. Another soldier, a war veteran, two metal workers and an engineer were also invited to comment. All voiced the same opinion: that Gorbachov had made constructive proposals at Reykjavik, which had been unjustifiably dismissed by the US delegation. Engineer Grigoryan related the US reluctance to agree on arms reduction at Reykjavik with the desire of its military-industrial complex not to lose the source of its profits, and added: 'but really, I think at this stage there must be a more realistic outlook on life, which recognises that if nuclear catastrophe happens, there will be no profits for anyone.'

Consistent with the structures of access described in chapter 5, *Vremya* elicited further (supportive) comment from the Afghan President Nadzhibullah, and some workers from Czechoslovakia. Foreign views were also accessed in the form of quoted extracts from Italian, French and American media organs. Without exception these reinforced the Soviet line on the summit—that US intransigence on the SDI issue was the main cause of the failure to reach agreement.

Moscow, 1988: the new cold war is over

The Reykjavik summit failed to produce hard agreements, but with hindsight it can be seen that the talks laid the groundwork for the INF Treaty agreed at the Washington summit in December 1987, and signed by Reagan and Gorbachov in Moscow in June 1988. Reflecting the further improvement in east-west relations between 1986 and 1988, the Moscow summit was an altogether more relaxed affair, given added poignance by the fact that it occasioned Ronald Reagan's first visit to 'the evil empire' of his earlier rhetoric. As British television news reported, the Moscow summit saw Reagan make a symbolic break with the cold war language of his first term in office: 'he told Mr Gorbachov he no longer saw Russia as the evil empire' (1 2100 1.6.88). As ITN's correspondent put it, 'who, five years ago, could have predicted that Ronald Reagan would walk into Red Square and hug a Soviet leader?' (3 2200 1.6.88).

Soviet coverage, too, stressed the fundamental change in attitudes which the Moscow summit represented. On June 1st, the last full day of summit business, *Vremya* suggested that 'one of the most important things to emerge from this summit is the fact that millions of Americans, many of them for the first time, have seen the life of our people in all its diversity, thanks to the broadcasts from Moscow'.

Invited, as in coverage of the Reykjavik summit, to make sense of the Moscow meeting for *Vremya*, representatives of the Soviet public this time submitted unanimously favourable assessments.

Correspondent: What hopes did you personally have for the summit?

1st vox pop: Undoubtedly, that the dialogue between two great countries should be continued. It's very interesting that such relations should have developed. Secondly, the state of the arms race. It's very important that it has been slowed down, and that a new mechanism of regulation has been found.

Correspondent: Do you think that one result of this has been a breakthrough in the field of strategic offensive weapons?

2nd vox pop: It would be good if it were so, but if it's not yet the case it's not a tragedy, it seems to me. It's important for the leaders of the two countries simply to be meeting.

Correspondent: Tell me, has the visit changed your view of the US President?

2nd vox pop: Certainly, yes.

3rd vox pop: I liked how our people reacted to the meeting with Reagan. There was goodwill, and I consider that everyone was forgiving and understanding.

4th vox pop (although no identification of this speaker is shown, he appears to be the popular Soviet poet and Supreme Soviet delegate, Yevgeny Yevtushenko): When the American astronaut stepped on the moon he said, 'a small step for a man, a great step for mankind'. [Before the summit] they knew nothing about our country. They had an image which in many respects was far from the reality. But he [Reagan] took this step, and this step has been taken by the leaders of two great states. And if one considers all the problems of disarmament, this is a small step, but a very important one. A small step, but a giant step for mankind.

(2.6.88)

A note of discord was sounded by Soviet journalists concerning the priority attached by the American delegation to the question of human rights in the USSR. While the western media dutifully covered President Reagan's pronouncements on human rights at great length, Soviet journalists, reflecting the official line as given by Gorbachov himself, expressed disappointment at his frequent denunciations of Soviet human rights violations (for a discussion of Soviet media coverage of human rights in the capitalist world see chapter 9).² Reporting foreign response to the summit, *Vremya's* Swiss correspondent observed with evident satisfaction that

regarding the President's attempt to put himself forward as the supreme arbiter in the field of human rights, the newspaper *Le Matin* writes: 'Mr Gorbachov, in your next visit to the USA you must visit some Indian reservations. You will hear complaints. Or, have a meal with some of the beggars in American cities. If you do this you will soon find out how Americans view interference in *their* affairs.'

(2.6.88)

Such departures from the generally favourable assessments of the summit's achievements were rare in the Soviet media, as in the west. Overall, the impression given on both Soviet and British television news was of an extremely successful meeting, which had put the seal on one arms control agreement, and laid the groundwork for others (in the field of strategic nuclear weapons).

A significant degree of convergence between Soviet and British reporting of the Moscow summit was evident not only in the content of coverage, but also in its style. At Reykjavik, Soviet journalists remained within the conventions of 'protocol' news and *ofitsioz*, although the sophistication of Soviet news management was notable. In Moscow, the reformed post-April approach to public relations continued, with Gorbachov in particular dominating coverage, east and west, with his articulate and charismatic public appearances. On June 1st, ITN described Gorbachov's news conference of that day as 'a remarkable *tour de force*, without a doubt'. BBC news conceded that 'today, certainly, it was Mr Gorbachov who dominated the proceedings, not least at a remarkable press conference, the first a Soviet leader has ever given in the Soviet Union itself. Reagan, on the other hand, appeared on both Soviet and British television as ill-informed and distracted, reluctant to answer any but the simplest questions without the aid of advisers.'

By June 1988, moreover, Soviet journalists had adopted a more informal, western-style approach to their coverage of 'protocol'. TASS reports in anonymous officialese still comprised a substantial proportion of *Vremya's* coverage, but this was supplemented by items of what western journalists would recognise as 'human interest'. By 1988, for example, it had become acceptable for Soviet journalists to report the activities of the two 'first ladies', Nancy and Raisa. At the Moscow summit British television news once again emphasised the apparent mutual lack of affection which characterised their relationship. Reporting a visit by Nancy Reagan to the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, hosted by Raisa Gorbachov, the BBC's correspondent informed viewers that

Mrs Gorbachov arrived at the rendezvous first, made a point of telling reporters that Mrs Reagan was late, and launched into an impromptu and lengthy lecture on the icons they had come to see. When Mrs Reagan eventually did arrive, Mrs Gorbachov presented her with a book about the icons, but then offered an identical book to be given to the reporter who had covered the summit best. Mrs Reagan clearly felt she was being upstaged.

(1 2100 1.6.88)

ITN's coverage of this part of the summit reported that at the Tretyakov 'even the façade of togetherness between the two first ladies was beginning to show serious signs of wear: Raisa Gorbachov tut-tutting over the lateness of Nancy Reagan. She got there half an hour late, but even then there was a dispute about who should get the next word in.'

Vremya's coverage of the meeting made no reference to their apparent falling out, presenting instead a straightforwardly factual account of the visit.

While lacking the sensationalist flavour of the British reports *Vremya's* item, merely by acknowledging that this event was worthy of news coverage, represents a significant concession to a structure of newsvalues previously the preserve of western journalists.

‘The world of capital’

International news in the Soviet media is primarily about events in a relatively small number of advanced capitalist countries. The frequency of appearance of a particular country is determined by journalists’ perceptions of its relative importance in international terms. Thus, in the seven Soviet newspapers which made up the sample for this study, the United States of America was by far the most newsworthy country, being covered in 421 items,¹ as compared with Japan (113), France (122), West Germany (111), and Britain (109).² To study this coverage in detail, it was decided, for reasons outlined in chapter 1, to focus on one country, the United Kingdom.

The constraints on coverage

In chapter 4 the existence of constraints on the work of Soviet journalists in the ‘fraternal’ countries was noted. Constraints of a different kind affect the work of journalists in a western country such as Britain. According to the chief TASS correspondent in London, Yuri Levchenko,

the most serious handicap is the limit on the number of people working here. I see Britain as a very interesting country, rich in events and traditions. Much happens here, everywhere you look. There is much in common with the USSR. But we have only four staff to cover events [excluding Levchenko himself]. We don’t have time to do research. We try to give correspondents two or three days off a month, so that they can do in-depth reporting.

Komsomolskaya Pravda correspondent Yuri Sagaidak complains that Soviet journalists based in Britain require official permission to travel more than 25 miles from the centre of London. Securing permission for a trip beyond the 25-mile zone takes a minimum of two working days, during which time the journalist must go through what Sagaidak describes as ‘humiliating procedures of interrogation by state officials ...they meticulously study documents, check photographs against physical appearance, and ask if there are any deviations from the planned route, with whom it is intended to converse, when one plans to leave, and so on’.³

These constraints are analogous to those which exist for western correspondents based in Moscow, and can be assumed to have similar restricting effects on the range of themes which can realistically be covered. Levchenko again:

Here is a paradox. Our military advisors are coming here to verify the INF treaty. They must give eighteen hours notice before they can enter Britain. For us to go and cover them, we must give forty-eight hours notice. It's too late. They come in, go out, and it's only after two days that we can report on their visit. I don't see any reason. If the military can come in and go out, why can't the civilian correspondents be with them and cover their stay, not running about the base or whatever, but accompanying them. We cannot do it.

Trud's London correspondent Andrei Burmistenko makes a similar point.

The restrictions relating to freedom of movement in this country interfere with my practical coverage. Let's take a concrete example of violence breaking out in Ulster. I could take a shuttle and be there within a couple of hours, writing a first hand account, but I cannot do this, because I have to give forty-eight hours warning, not counting Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, which sometimes means a delay of five days, which makes it senseless for a newspaper reporter.

I can give you a practical example. The Lockerbie disaster happened late evening on Thursday. I need forty-eight hours. That means Friday, then Saturday is out, Sunday is out, so the soonest opportunity for me to fly there is Wednesday, nearly one week later.

Of course, the Soviet authorities were the first to impose restrictions on the movements of foreign correspondents, and the British government merely reciprocated. However, Levchenko argues that since *glasnost* the Soviet side has shown a willingness to remove restrictions, while the British and other western governments have been reluctant to do so. 'These are reciprocal restrictions. We were the first to introduce them, and we should lead the way in removing them. We have recently eased the restrictions in Moscow, and our people seem to be willing to go further, but the Foreign Office is standing tight, and I don't see any hope in the near future.'

Burmistenko states that 'I asked the Deputy Foreign Minister here, if the Soviets abolished their restrictions, would the British Foreign Office follow suit? His reply was very evasive. The conditions are ripe in the USSR to abolish the reciprocal restrictions. Whether western societies are ripe for this I don't know.'

In other respects, *glasnost* has made a significant difference. Burmistenko observes that his first period as a journalist in Britain, between 1979 and 1984, was 'one of frustration and enormous difficulties'.

A few years ago, to be a Soviet correspondent in this country was to be an outcast, simply because the image of the Soviet Union was terrible, and rightly so in some ways. Therefore, I was viewed in this country as a representative of that country, that regime, a symbol of the worst in that society. I had no relations with the TUC, with individual unions, they actively showed me their revulsion to dealing with Soviet correspondents in this country. Therefore, you couldn't simply telephone and request an

interview. Almost invariably you would have a polite, or not so polite, decline. They would say 'I'm busy', or 'I'm disgusted with your system, don't phone me again'. So our work was to a considerable extent based on written sources, newspapers, television, etc. It lacked an individual presence and flavour. This has changed dramatically since 1985. Now it's fashionable to have positive feelings towards the Soviet Union, to be sympathetic towards the Soviet Union. Although there are still outright anti-Soviets who, whatever happens in the Soviet Union, will say 'I don't believe it', they are an insignificant minority, I'm happy to say. In that sense, *glasnost* makes my work easier in this country. Many of my articles would have been impossible a few years ago. I am invited to all press conferences in the TUC. I have good working relationships with a number of general secretaries, and those unions themselves have good working relationships with the Soviet unions in their own fields.

As we shall see, the improved atmosphere described by Burmistenko has been reflected in Soviet news coverage of the United Kingdom.

Capitalism in one country: priorities of coverage

In general, Soviet news coverage of capitalist societies focuses on events with an international dimension and with which the USSR is directly concerned. Consequently, the most frequently covered subjects in Soviet news about the capitalist world are those of defence and foreign policy. Britain in particular, by virtue of its world role as a nuclear power and a key ally of the United States, is from the Soviet point of view an important international player, whose actions and policies are closely monitored. As Tables 9.1 and 9.2 show, more items were devoted to coverage of UK defence and foreign policy over the sample period than to any other category.

With very few exceptions, and despite the general improvement in east-west relations post-April, Soviet readings of British policy in these areas were highly critical, with two themes predominating: first, that Britain is an imperialist power in decline, and secondly, that it has become a proxy for the United States.

Illustrative of how these themes were elaborated was the coverage in March 1988 of the British forces' 'Fire Focus' exercises on and around the Falkland Islands. Soviet policy on the Falklands conflict of 1982 was to support the Argentinian claim to sovereignty of the islands, in line with UN Resolution 2065, while publicly desisting from financial or military support of the strongly anti-Soviet, anti-communist regime of General Galtieri. Since that time, British policy in the Falklands has been regularly

Table 9.1 Pravda coverage of the United Kingdom, March 1st, 1987–February 29th, 1988, by content category

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>
Defence and disarmament	44
UK foreign policy	41
UK response to Soviet initiatives	34
Party politics	32
Protocol and UK–Soviet relations	31
Industry and the economy	24
Labour	19
Northern Ireland	16
Law and order	15
Media and censorship	14
Social affairs	14
Art and culture	13
Disasters	12
Fraternal	5
Public opinion	5
Demonstrations	4
Science and technology	3
Ecology and environment	2
Human interest and miscellaneous	23
Total no. of items:	351

denounced by the USSR as inherently aggressive, a view which clearly informs Soviet media coverage of the issue. In reporting ‘Fire Focus’ the Soviet media emphasised condemnation of the UK by the Argentines and the Organisation of American States. *Izvestia* mocked the British government’s justification of the exercises—‘to support the islanders’ belief that Britain has not abandoned them’—by reporting that the local Falklands newspaper, *Penguin News*, had practically ignored them (March 12th, 1988). *Krasnaya Zvezda*, with its interest in wider issues of military strategy, linked the exercises to US troop movements in Honduras, the Strategic Defence Initiative or ‘Star Wars’ (SDI), and NATO’s global objectives:

Washington rendered Britain full military support when it occupied the islands in 1982, and now, although not so openly as six years ago, is doing everything it can to help strengthen the military presence of its ally. There can be no doubt that the British military base on the Falklands is marked on NATO maps as an ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’.

(March 22nd, 1988)

Sovetskaya Rossiya’s political observer V.Globa shared this interpretation, asserting that ‘without doubt, Britain’s interests in this part of the globe are...the politico-military goals of the west in general, the chief of which is the strengthening of the British military presence in the occupied archipelago, transforming it into yet another “unsinkable aircraft carrier”’ (March 3rd, 1988).

Table 9.2 Coverage of the United Kingdom in eight Soviet media organs, March, 1988

Content category	<i>Pravda</i>	<i>Izvestia</i>	K.P.	S.R.	<i>Trud</i>	K.Z.	Z.V.	<i>Vremya</i>	Total
Northern Ireland	5	5	1	1	4			3	19
Foreign policy	3	6		1		2		4	16
Response	2			2	1	1	2		8
Labour	1	1			2			4	8
Defence and disarmament	2	1	1			1		1	6
Art and culture	1	1				1		1	4
Economy and Industry		2		1	1	1			5
UK-Soviet	2	2							4
Party politics	1	1		1					3
Women	1					1			2
Environment	2								2
Science				2					2
Disaster	1								1
Censorship				1					1
Human interest/miscellaneous	3	5	3	7	4	1	1	4	28
Total:	24	24	5	16	12	8	3	17	109
K.P. = <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda</i> S.R. = <i>Sovetskaya Rossiya</i> K.Z. = <i>Krasnaya Zvezda</i> Z.V. = <i>Zarya Vostoka</i>									

The fiercest criticism of British foreign policy to appear during the sample period was provoked by the situation in Afghanistan, where at this time Soviet military forces were still heavily involved. Here, Britain was alleged to be supporting ‘terrorism’ and obstructing a political solution to the conflict. On April 9th, 1987, Arkady Maslennikov reported the London *Times* account of talks between British and Pakistani politicians during which, it was alleged, the Pakistan government had been advised “to show firmness” in the talks about a political solution in Afghanistan, and not in any event to enter into an agreement which could “benefit the Kremlin”. This, suggested Maslennikov, was ‘provocative advice, having nothing in common with the tasks of peacefully resolving this problem’. Maslennikov also accused the British government of ‘aggravating the tragedy of the Afghan people’ by supplying weapons, including the Blowpipe missile, to the Mujahideen guerrillas: ‘this conflict would have been resolved long ago if forces hostile to the Afghan revolution had not poured oil on the flames of fratricidal war.’

The issue of the ‘Blowpipes’ later developed into a minor diplomatic crisis, and on May 27th, 1987, *Pravda* printed a statement by the Soviet Foreign Ministry alleging that ‘London...is extending direct military support to forces who are carrying out attacks on civilians and engaging in terrorism against women and children’. In a commentary of

October 13th, 1987, Yevgeny Grigoryev pointed to the irony contained in the fact that US 'Stinger' and British 'Blowpipe' missiles delivered by Mujahideen forces had subsequently been sold to Iran, at that time engaged in the 'Tanker War' against western-owned ships in the Gulf. British and US policy on Afghanistan, Grigoryev implied, would 'boomerang' on them: 'it's a miracle that 'Stinger' and British 'Blowpipes' sent to the Afghan bandits [*dushmani*] haven't yet turned up in the arsenals of other groups involved in international terrorism.'

Soviet coverage of UK foreign policy during this period was not universally condemnatory, however. In early 1988, Foreign Office minister David Mellor visited the Arab territories occupied by Israel and unambiguously condemned conditions there. Mellor's statements, and subsequent official declarations from the UK government on the Palestinian issue, were favourably received in *Pravda*. Following the principle that a statement by a western source becomes more newsworthy if it echoes the Soviet position on a particular issue, British condemnation of Israel became a regular feature of *Pravda's* foreign coverage in the early months of 1988.

Israeli terror against the inhabitants of the occupied territories has provoked criticism and outrage in the British Isles. The killing of innocent people and the forcible deportation of groups of Palestinians has been condemned by the government and public opinion.

(January 20th, 1988)

Right-wing Tory MP Anthony Marlowe, not a politician with whom the Soviets have a great many points of agreement, was quoted approvingly in the same article: 'Israeli actions run counter to all international norms and UN statutes...the Arabs in the occupied territories are deprived of civil rights.'

The main defence policy item involving Britain in March 1988 was the summit meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels, held in order to discuss the future of short-range nuclear weapons in Europe following the successful conclusion of the INF Treaty. At the summit Mrs Thatcher urged the NATO allies, and a reluctant West German government in particular, to adopt a policy of modernisation of short-range and tactical nuclear weapons, such as the Lance missile. In some contrast to the relatively conciliatory tone of UK-Soviet relations in the preceding twelve months, she emphasised in statements to the media her continuing adherence to the concept of the Soviet threat. In February 1988, just prior to the summit, she had warned the western media against the 'seductive and sophisticated advances of the Russian bear'.⁴ At the summit itself, she was reported on British television as warning NATO leaders that

the nuclear threat from the Soviet Union is serious. Ever since Mr Gorbachov took over, the build-up and modernisation of Soviet weapons has continued...She said the Soviet Union was striving for a denuclearised Europe so that it could intimidate and overawe some European countries. Modernisation of nuclear weapons was the only way to counter this.

(1 2100 2.3.88)

On the basis of these and similar statements, Soviet media coverage of the Brussels summit identified Mrs Thatcher as 'the main obstacle on the path to the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons' (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 5.3.88). In a long article analysing the outcome of the summit, *Komsomolskaya Pravda's* UK correspondent Yuri Sagaidak argued that Mrs Thatcher's aim was to 'pre-empt the anticipated US– Soviet summit in Moscow...[and] to put an end to the "dangerous" stirrings of certain NATO leaders, particularly the Federal Republic of Germany, which is calling for the reduction of tactical nuclear weapons around the border with the GDR'. Sagaidak suggested that the UK government's objective was 'to stop Moscow's peace offensive' and, 'in the event of success', to 'declare itself the ideological leader of the west, replacing the aged and decrepit American administration'. For all these reasons, the British government was accused of 'inertia, suspicion and conservatism'.

On March 6th, V.Nikanorov of *Krasnaya Zvezda* attributed the belligerent tone of the NATO summit to the fact that NATO leaders, and the 'Iron Lady' in particular, had watched the crumbling of negative stereotypes of the USSR and the Soviet threat with mounting concern. Since these notions formed the cornerstone of their strategic doctrine, he noted, 'Mrs Thatcher is beginning to worry that in the epoch of *glasnost*, summits, and arms control, "it is becoming difficult to make people take the Soviet threat seriously"'. For this reason, it was suggested, Mrs Thatcher had been 'one of the chief driving forces' of the NATO meeting, 'at which she consistently tried to convince the allies of the expediency of the further growth in the bloc's arsenal of nuclear and conventional weapons'.

A *Vremya* commentary broadcast on March 4th argued that, while Mr Gorbachov's 'new political thinking' had compelled the NATO leaders 'to rethink their stereotyped views of international relations', this process was not taking place without difficulties: 'British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, on whose initiative the Brussels summit was convened, continues to present the Soviet Union as a military threat. She demands compensation for the missiles which are to be eliminated [under the terms of the INF agreement], modernisation, and even the expansion of some nuclear systems.'

Only *Pravda's* Alexander Lyuty made any positive assessment of Mrs Thatcher's contribution to the process of arms control. In an otherwise critical piece Lyuty conceded 'the positive role played by London in the period of preparation for the [INF] Treaty. One must note, for example, the British government's constructive position on the question of the Pershing-I missile stationed in the FRG' (*Pravda*, March 1st 1988). This was followed, however, by criticism of the alleged contradiction between Mrs Thatcher's verbal support for the INF Treaty and her view expressed in Brussels that 'NATO must in no event refrain from "modernising" its nuclear potential'. Lyuty added that 'sooner or later the question of British nuclear weapons must be put on the agenda'.

Deprivation and dissent

If a central objective of Soviet international journalism is to propagate a critical view of the capitalist countries' foreign and defence policies, particularly those of powers such as Britain whose governments are on the right of the political spectrum, it must also construct capitalist society itself in images consistent with marxist-leninist ideology. This

means highlighting the deprivation and inequality produced by capitalism, while excluding information which would contradict the Party's assertion of the social and economic superiority of Soviet society. In coverage of Britain during the sample period the negative consequences of Thatcherism were regularly reported in items covering UK living standards and quality of life. In 1987, 'official figures' were quoted to show that for the decade from 1975 to 1985 the share of national income enjoyed by the poorest 20 per cent of the British population had fallen from 0.8 per cent to 0.3 per cent, while the richest 20 per cent now claimed, after tax, 40 per cent of the national income, a rise of 2 per cent from 1975. This 'widening gap between rich and poor' was attributed to 'the social and taxation policies of the Conservatives' (*Pravda*, August 21st, 1988). The article poured scorn on 'that well-known apologist of the 'new Toryism', Brian Walden' (the television interviewer), who, writing in the *Sunday Times*, had asserted that 'we [the British people] all belong to the middle classes today, or at least we want to belong to them'. Those of Mr Walden's viewpoint were criticised for believing that the main consequence of Conservative policy had been the increase of 'the so-called middle class, that social class which possesses property and is vitally interested in the preservation of the existing order'. On the contrary, 'the inevitable consequence of the principle of "the survival of the fittest" which lies at the basis of neo-conservative philosophy' was simply greater extremes of wealth and poverty.

During the sample period official figures were frequently used to show the Soviet audience how inadequate and underfunded the National Health Service had become under Thatcherism. A *Pravda* report of May 19th, 1987, began with the observation that 'if all the British people currently waiting for a place in a hospital were put in a queue side by side the result would be a human chain 240 kilometres long... at the current time, 724,350 people are on the hospital waiting list'. British doctors were quoted blaming the situation on government expenditure cuts: 'More than 47,000 are waiting for urgent operations, and many of the sick, especially the elderly, are dying before they can be seen by a doctor.' On January 8th, 1988, *Pravda* reported that the number of UK hospital beds had fallen by 13 per cent, or 19,000. Again, the Conservatives' policy of 'financial starvation' of the NHS was blamed for the crisis.

Upon these images of inequality and social deprivation, the Soviet media construct Britain, and the capitalist world in general, as riven by social conflict and class antagonism. According to marxism-leninism, conflict is inherent in the capitalist organisation of economic life. Capitalism, it is argued, contains within it the tendency to maximise the exploitation of the workforce, which leads inevitably to class conflict expressed in strikes and industrial disputes. International events which appear to confirm the validity of this basic tenet of marxist-leninist ideology are particularly newsworthy for the Soviet media.⁵

In Guatemala workers have begun a strike protest against the government's economic policies, which are increasing the cost of living in the country. They are also demanding the adoption of effective measures against unemployment.

(*Vremya*, 11.3.88)

A national strike by oilworkers is taking place in Bolivia. An acute shortage of oil products is developing in the country...The authorities have declared the strike illegal and placed industry under the control of the military. The trade unions have expressed their support for the oilworkers' pay demands, and intend to mount a solidarity strike if the government doesn't meet them.

(*Vremya*, 11.3.88)

On March 28th, *Vremya* covered a twenty-four hour general strike in Portugal, said to involve about two million people: 'the economic life of the country was practically paralysed.' The cause of the strike was explained to viewers as 'the workers' response to the government's attempts to introduce a new labour law allowing enterprises full freedom in the hiring and firing of labour'.

In many instances, including the three quoted here, the importance attached by Soviet journalists to stories of industrial unrest in far-flung corners of the capitalist world is not shared by their western counterparts. In this sense, Soviet news-values are distinctively marxist-leninist. While British and other western media accord high newsvalue to strikes and industrial conflict in the socialist world (Poland, Armenia, etc.), the Soviet media focus on disputes in capitalist countries. In both east and west, it would appear, the newsworthiness of industrial conflict is largely determined by ideological considerations.

The dominant theme in coverage of UK labour disputes in 1987-8 was that of intensifying industrial militancy in the face of an anti-union, anti-working-class government. On March 2nd, 1987, *Pravda* commented on the Thatcher government's Green Paper on trade union reform. The long history of the government's efforts to weaken the trade unions was summarised, before it was asserted that 'these measures haven't fully suppressed the workers' struggle...the working class of Great Britain has no intention of backing down before the dictates of the bosses'.

In subsequent months strikes were reported in the coal industry, the civil service and, most frequently, the National Health Service, including what was called 'the first 24-hour strike in the history of the NHS' (*Pravda*, January 9th, 1988). The following *Vremya* item covering an anti-government demonstration in support of the nurses presented Soviet viewers with detailed background to the causes of the dispute.

Presenter: The medical workers' strike in Britain is already in its second month. This social conflict has acquired an unusually sharp character. Here are pictures of the demonstration which took place in London.

Correspondent (over film of the demonstrators): 'Defend the Health Service', 'Social Needs Come First', 'No to the Conservative government's Military Programme' – these are the main slogans in the biggest demonstration to have taken place in Britain in recent years. There are columns of trade union and public organisation delegations from all regions of the country.

Nurse (vox pop, voice-over translation): We are forcing the government to listen to our demands. The present government is completely indifferent to the problems and anxieties of millions of the British people.

Correspondent: The huge demonstration ended with a mass meeting in Hyde Park. Speakers stated their intention to make greater efforts in the developing struggle against the Thatcher government's programme.

Presenter: Of course, in principle a strike by health workers doesn't reflect the interests of the sick. At the same time, as we have seen, the strike has mass support. We asked our London correspondent to say something about the details of the situation.

Correspondent: Almost everyone here understands that the health workers' demands are absolutely justified. Their aim is not just to increase their own wages. They are appealing for help for the entire health service, which is going through a major crisis. Last year alone, 200 hospitals were closed. Those which remain can't operate as effectively as before. This damages the interests of millions of British people.

Presenter: ...Is there a system of private medical institutions in Britain?

Correspondent: There is such a system, and I have to say right away that in many instances it is superior to the state system. [*Over film of well-furnished private rooms*] These pictures were taken yesterday at the Cromwell hospital in London. It has been provided with the best [resources] in the country. [It is the best for] the transplanting of internal organs. There are several hundred places, and the majority of rooms cater for one or two people. All are beautifully decorated. However, the majority can't afford it. One day's stay here will cost the average Briton almost half a month's wages. A liver transplant in the hospital will cost £30,000. The demise of the free National Health Service will be a catastrophe for millions of Britons.

In an article entitled 'Striking Britain', Alexander Lyuty noted that the UK 'hasn't known such an upsurge in the strike movement in ten years' (*Pravda*, February 10th, 1988). Citing as evidence for this the disputes in the health service and the car industry, he informed his readers that 'in Downing Street they are worried. In 1986 the number of days lost through strikes was two million. Last year the figure reached three and a half million, and this year it will be much higher. Employment Minister Norman Fowler already sees a repeat of "the disastrous days of the 70s".' The following month Lyuty could report that:

at the present time more than a million Britons are participating in some form of strike action...*The Times* noted that in 1987 about 3.5 million working days were lost through strike action. And, although the figure is lower than in the years 1978-9, when the country was overtaken by an unprecedented spirit of class conflict, the strike-mood is rising. The period of relative calm in the workers' relations with government and business has come to an end.

(*Pravda*, March 22nd, 1988)

For Lyuty a 'characteristic of the current phase of the class struggle [in Britain] is the increasing role and authority of the unions'. He described Conservative government claims that the unions had been dealt a death blow as 'wishful thinking', a theme reinforced by a photofeature depicting striking car-workers on the picketline at Ford's Dagenham plant in England. The accompanying text read: 'as already reported, Britain

has been gripped by a new strike mood. The production lines at one of the biggest Ford plants have been stopped' (*Pravda*, February 11th, 1988).

From the Soviet perspective such events are 'good news'. They reinforce the marxist-leninist view that capitalism is in a more or less permanent state of crisis, and that the working classes of capitalist societies are in a more or less permanent state of conflict with 'the bosses'. The assumption of such coverage is that industrial disputes in general and strikes in particular are justified and legitimate expressions of proletarian class struggle. In the case of Britain, images of conflict are used to refute Thatcherite claims of the end of effective trade unions and working-class radicalism in the United Kingdom. In Lyuty's coverage of the Ford workers' victory in their dispute, the image of 'Striking Britain' became the basis for the following conclusion:

In recent years it has often been said that the working class in western Europe has been apoliticised, and that a conservative political spirit has developed which, if it hasn't entirely killed the trade union movement, has weakened and even fatally damaged it. But any gloating on this account would be premature...Recent weeks have shown that the trade unions have not ceased to be an important factor on the British social and political scene.

(*Pravda*, February 21st, 1988)

The western peace movements

In accordance with the propaganda objective of revealing unrest and dissonance in the capitalist world, Soviet media coverage places great emphasis on the 'dissidents' of the peace movement. For as long as the Soviet government has emphasised in its official propaganda the goals of international peace and nuclear disarmament, the Soviet media have tended in their foreign coverage to highlight world events which allow the elaboration of this policy and, crucially, the demonstration to the domestic audience of its popularity outside the USSR. This is reflected most obviously in the coverage given by the Soviet media to anti-nuclear protesters. This coverage portrays citizens of other countries proclaiming their support for Soviet peace policies and their criticism of western governments, particularly the US administration.

A recurring theme of this category of news is the extent of opposition to United States nuclear policies in those countries which are American allies. Such items portray to the Soviet audience a disunited western alliance, and often attempt to suggest an overbearing

US administration resisted by the popular will of the people. On the eve of the 1986 Reykjavik summit, for example, *Vremya* covered an anti-nuclear protest in Glasgow thus:

Presenter: A mass demonstration by peace campaigners has taken place in Scotland.

Correspondent: Tens of thousands of people came out on the [Glasgow] streets...The nuclear threat causes alarm in the hearts of millions of people all over the world, but in Scotland there is a special reason for anxiety. Submarines with American nuclear missiles lurk in the Holy Loch...and Polaris submarines are based at Faslane. Peace campaigners here consider that there are more nuclear weapons in this region

than in any other European country. This is why the demonstration, which is part of the programme for the International Year of Peace, was supported by Scotland's public organisations.

Eric Clark (member of the Labour Party Scottish Executive): Today's demonstration has been organised to show that we don't need the arms race. We want peace. I hope that this message will be understood at Reykjavik. The British people, and the British government, speak differently on the questions of war and peace. In my opinion the British government doesn't reflect the will of the people, who aspire to peace and nuclear disarmament.

(11.10.86)

The extensive coverage given by the Soviet media to the western peace movements can be compared in content and function with the traditional emphasis placed by the western media on the activities of Soviet dissenters.

For western journalists in the 1980s such stories formed a substantial proportion of their coverage of the USSR. Dissidents acquired newsworthiness as symbols of dissent and conflict in a socialist society. To the Soviet audience, on the other hand, such groups and individuals were invisible, their activities excluded from the news agenda.

Conversely, for Soviet journalists the protests and demonstrations organised by western peace movements, often small in terms of numbers, take on news-value as evidence of the 'correctness' of the marxist-leninist worldview and the CPSU foreign policy line. The activities of these western groups are unlikely to receive coverage in their own countries. The October 1986 Glasgow demonstration, covered by *Vremya* for an audience of 260 million Soviets, was not reported on British television news.

Similarly, the traditional western journalistic emphasis on such figures as Andrei Sakharov, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Anatoly Scharansky is echoed by Soviet coverage of western dissidents such as Brian Wilson, Charles Heider and Leonard Peltier. In the Soviet media these names are frequently mentioned as symbols of resistance to US policy, in a manner analogous to the way in which Soviet dissidents come to represent heroic resistance to communist totalitarianism in the west. Yet Wilson, Heider and Peltier have been virtually ignored by the media of their own society, and by the western media in general.⁶

In both Britain and the USSR the media's focus on the other side's political dissidents is best explained in terms of the ideological importance of portraying dissent in the enemy camp.

'Behind the façade of the free world'

A consistent theme in western media coverage of the USSR has been the poor record of that country's government in the provision and guaranteeing of human rights. While the situation is changing rapidly in this regard, western coverage was and remains critical of Soviet restrictions on the freedom of its citizens to travel, to publish freely in the spheres of journalism, art and culture, and to challenge the dominance of the CPSU in political life. In reply the Soviets have rejected such criticisms, on the grounds that they are often factually inaccurate and that, in any case, Soviet definitions of what constitutes 'human

rights' are substantially different from those which prevail in advanced capitalist societies.

The distinctive Soviet definition of 'human rights' is reflected in coverage of capitalism. 'Human rights' items are organised under rubrics which in *Pravda* include 'A society without rights', 'Human rights: myths and realities', 'Behind the façade of the free world', and 'Chronicle of the deprivation of rights'. Under these rubrics, and their equivalents in other media organs, human rights coverage is an almost daily feature of Soviet news.

The content of Soviet human rights coverage is selected in such a way as to portray the superiority of the USSR over capitalist societies. In the USSR, for example, employment is a constitutional right, indeed a duty. *Not* working is illegal, except on health or other legitimate grounds. Noting the mass unemployment which exists in many of the advanced capitalist societies, the CPSU regards the sphere of work as an aspect of human rights in which it is superior to capitalist economies. Soviet news consequently focuses on unemployment as a human rights theme.

Shortly after Mrs Thatcher's visit to the USSR in March 1987, *Pravda* published a letter from a resident of Odessa, P. Krasnopolsky, responding to a remark made by the British Prime Minister in the course of her tour. Krasnopolsky recalled Mrs Thatcher's public assurance to the Soviet people that 'there are no human rights problems in Britain. She declared that anyone who wants to can find work, and that those who nevertheless remained without jobs are little worse off than those with jobs. I am a driver by profession, and politics isn't my field, but I would like to know, is it really as Mrs Thatcher said?'

To answer this question *Pravda's* UK correspondent Arkady Maslennikov wrote an article based on interviews with unemployed people at a TUC centre in London. Four people were interviewed, beginning with John Davies, described by Maslennikov as 'a thin man of about 40' who explained that, though a builder by profession, he had been unable to find work for eight months because 'our current Conservative government long ago stopped building'. Mr Davies explained that he received in benefit £163 every two weeks, from which £140 was deducted as rent for a private hotel room. He had been allocated the room by the Department of Health and Social Security, and thus 'this £140 is not income for me but for the owner of the hotel, who votes Conservative'. Mr Davies pointed out that looking for work in London was expensive, since it involved travel, and required 'economising on the most basic essentials, and above all on food. Since I became unemployed I never eat more than twice a day and then I prepare only the cheapest meals.'

Rose Clutterbuck, a teacher, told Maslennikov that she too had been unable to find work, and since she could not afford her own home was forced to share a council flat with friends. Like John Davies, she claimed to have practically no money left for food after paying rent and bills: 'there is meat on the table no more than once a week. Our main diet consists of beans, bread, potatoes and oatmeal. In a phrase, we have a "Third World" diet.'

One should note here that the typical Soviet diet is overwhelmingly carnivorous, since the concepts of vegetarianism and health food are still relatively undeveloped in the USSR. To the Soviet people, with the collective memory of famine and extreme privation still strong, the quantity of meat consumed in one's diet is an important index of

affluence and well-being. Hence, the image of a trained teacher reduced to a state of near vegetarianism by unemployment has a particular poignancy for the Soviet audience.

Maslennikov's third interviewee was 20-year-old Michelle Johnson who, she said, had come to the centre with her two-and-a-half-year-old child simply to keep warm: 'in the house where we take shelter it's too cold. I just can't imagine how I can live there any longer.' The young woman, noted Maslennikov, was herself 'as thin as a child'. For the Soviet audience, which views the welfare of children as the major social responsibility of the state, this too was a powerful image of poverty and deprivation.

A final word was contributed by ex-soldier Michael Stenger, who observed with some bitterness that 'when I returned from the army it turned out that no-one needed me'. Stenger admitted that 'in the beginning I was ashamed to apply for benefit. To me, only scroungers did that. Now I know it isn't so.' The ex-soldier's final statement, and the conclusion of the article, contained a clear rebuke for Mrs Thatcher, and a direct reply to Mr Krasnopolsky's original question.

You [Maslennikov] told me that when she was in Moscow Mrs Thatcher tried to give the Soviet people a lesson in human rights. I can say only one thing to that: before teaching others how to conduct their affairs let our ministers, and Mrs Thatcher herself, think about how to guarantee normal conditions of existence for millions of their own citizens.⁷

In their efforts to highlight the effects of unemployment, Soviet jour-nalists are attracted to stories such as that reported by *Pravda* on February 2nd, 1988.

This evening a car exploded at the entrance to Downing Street, where the Prime Minister's official residence is situated. The fire which developed as a result of the explosion was quickly extinguished, but the driver was found dead behind the wheel...Police refute the suggestion that a bomb was found in the wrecked vehicle. According to Reuters, the possibility that the driver was attempting to commit suicide hasn't been ruled out.

The story was followed up in March, under the rubric 'Behind the façade of the free world': 'Forty-year old Derek Bainbridge had been trying to attract the attention of the Prime Minister to the fate of 2.6 million unemployed...[but] the government hasn't yet responded to the tragedy. Almost all of the major press have assisted in a conspiracy of silence' (March 25th, 1988).⁸

Prominently featured in Soviet human rights coverage is the problem of homelessness. During the General Election campaign of 1987, Arkady Maslennikov informed *Pravda* readers that 110,000 British citizens of 'no fixed abode' were being deprived of the right to vote, and reported a demonstration by activists of the anti-homelessness organisation 'Shelter' on the lawns outside Parliament (March 28th, 1987). On New Year's Day, 1988, Alexander Lyuty reported from Trafalgar Square that 'appeals for money are traditional at this time of year...It is as if the country is hurriedly trying to deliver itself from the shame of its inattention to poverty during the year, so that it can cheerfully be forgotten about again in the coming twelve months.' The item contained an interview with the director of Shelter, Sheila McKenzie, who told Lyuty that the organisation was

marking its 21st anniversary, although not with satisfaction: 'the fact that we continue to exist shows that the problem of homelessness hasn't been solved.' Lyuty quoted a figure of 35,000 homeless teenagers in London alone, 'the highest for many decades'.

Racism in Britain is a common theme of coverage, both as an example of 'negative social phenomena' in capitalist societies, and as a human rights issue. Items in the sample reported racist persecution of ethnic minorities in the UK, including Jews and Blacks. In a piece headed 'Second-class citizens', Arkady Maslennikov reported the findings of a survey by the Commission on Racial Equality which concluded that 'individuals and entire families among the "coloured" population continue to be exposed to attacks and victimisation from fascist elements' (*Pravda*, July 12th, 1987). Discrimination in the job market was reported, figures cited indicating unemployment amongst young Blacks at two and a half times the level of Whites of a similar age.

Soviet news has been highly critical of the Conservative government's immigration policy. In 1987 Maslennikov based an item on Home Office figures showing that immigration into the UK had fallen from 80,000 in 1976 to 47,000 in 1986, as a consequence of the Tories' new immigration rules. More importantly, from the perspective of human rights, 'the victims of these restrictions have above all been "coloured" immigrants from the countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean Basin' (June 16th, 1987).

Coverage of a hunger strike undertaken by fifty-three Tamil refugees in August 1987 to protest against their incarceration in the floating detention centre 'Earl Williams', informed readers that the Conservatives' refusal to grant the Tamils refugee status had been criticised by 'democratic circles', on the grounds that it revealed double standards: 'while white immigrants, and especially those from English-speaking countries, continue to gain practically unrestricted entry to the British Isles, dark-skinned immigrants from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean face any number of obstacles, including incarceration in a specially-created floating jail' (August 8th, 1987). The article concluded with this lesson, and a rebuke to western critics of human rights violations in the USSR: 'the residents of government offices in Whitehall like to deliberate on freedom of travel, the need for the reunification of families, and other humanitarian principles, when this concerns other states. In their own country they practice the most blatant racial discrimination.'

The longest-running and most frequently reported 'human rights' story in Soviet coverage of the United Kingdom over the sample period was the continuing conflict in Northern Ireland, 'the longest undeclared war in Europe', as Soviet journalists have called it. The official Soviet viewpoint has traditionally defined the Northern Ireland conflict as a national liberation struggle waged by an oppressed people against an occupying colonial power. As Mikhail Gorbachov asked during his official visit to the UK in December 1984, how could British politicians criticise the USSR when 'you oppress entire communities'?⁹ All who heard the remark interpreted it as a reference to the situation in Ulster.

This view of the problem was reflected in news coverage during the sample period. For Arkady Maslennikov British policy in Northern Ireland 'has always been based on the forcible suppression of the local population's struggle for the right to manage their own province' (*Pravda*, April 30th, 1987).

In common with the rest of the world's media, Soviet press and television news reports Northern Ireland almost exclusively in terms of 'the troubles'. By far the greatest

proportion of this coverage is concerned with alleged violations of human rights, such as the use of violence by the security forces against the nationalist population. On March 20th, 1987, *Pravda* reported that 'the British Crown Court has justified the shooting of young Irish patriot John Downs at point blank range by a policeman'. The TASS report, under the rubric 'Chronicling the lack of rights', alleged that since adopting the use of plastic bullets the security forces in Ulster had killed thirteen people by this means, including six children, while sixty people had received serious injuries: 'in no case have those responsible been subjected to any punishment nor even been prosecuted.'

The use of plastic bullets by the security forces in Northern Ireland was further explored in another TASS item published the next day. The report consisted mainly of an interview with Teresa Holland, described as a Sinn Fein councillor in West Belfast and a representative of the 'Committee Against Plastic Bullets'. Ms Holland told TASS that contrary to official references to the plastic bullet as a 'humane' means of struggling against social disorder it was 'a weapon of repression and death'.

Soviet news has closely followed the cases of those Irish men and women allegedly falsely-imprisoned in British jails for terrorist offences committed in the 1970s, most notably the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four. The Soviet media tend to assume the innocence of the accused, as in TASS coverage of a mass meeting held in Dublin to support the Birmingham Six, 'condemned to life imprisonment for a crime they didn't commit' (*Pravda*, June 21st, 1987). An article by Arkady Maslennikov pointed out that the original trials took place in 'a situation of high political and emotional tension, when clashes between the British police and civil rights activists led to bombs planted in England itself' (*Pravda*, August 24th, 1987).¹⁰ From the beginning, he informed *Pravda* readers, the trials and the sentences imposed had been the subject of controversy, which increased when it subsequently transpired that confessions had been extracted using 'psychological and physical pressure'.

Alexander Lyuty reported a 1988 decision by the British judiciary to reject an appeal by the Birmingham Six in the context of Anglo-Irish relations. Asserting that the Six had been 'illegally arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes they didn't commit', Lyuty quoted Irish MP Dick Roches: 'it is becoming ever more obvious that when one combines the word 'British' with the word 'justice' one distorts the original meaning of the term' (*Pravda*, February 5th, 1988). Lyuty's explanation for the failure of the Birmingham Six appeal was that 'in London they have decided to disregard human rights, the law and moral norms, so as not to create an inconvenient precedent...One thing is clear—in order to strengthen its military occupation of Ulster London is prepared to go to any lengths in the violation of laws and the deprivation of human rights.'

The adoption of a human rights framework for reporting the conflict has been reflected in the tendency of the Soviet media to be sympathetic to and supportive of republican activists, including members of paramilitary organisations. In an article mainly concerned with the progress of the Anglo-Irish agreement, Arkady Maslennikov noted in passing the Northern Ireland Secretary's declaration that the UK government was considering the expansion of military forces in the province. That is, he will further suppress the patriotic forces fighting for their rights' (*Pravda*, April 30th, 1987). In January 1988, Alexander Lyuty interpreted the UK Attorney-General's decision not to prosecute RUC officers involved in a 'shoot-to-kill' scandal in the following manner: 'the Ulster police have been

given the “green light” to carry out new killings of Northern Irish patriots’ (*Pravda*, January 28th, 1988).

The view of republican paramilitaries as ‘patriots’ and thus as legitimate freedom-fighters informed a 1987 piece by Maslennikov marking the sixth anniversary of the 1981 hunger strikes. As Maslennikov put it, ‘six years have passed since the heart of Bobby Sands—the ardent Irish patriot—stopped beating’ (*Pravda*, May 7th, 1987). A lengthy account of the causes and circumstances of the hunger strike followed, concluding with Maslennikov’s assessment that ‘ten Irish men died as a result of the fast, having given their lives in the defence of human dignity and the right to be masters in their own homeland’. The article ended on a note of unambiguous support for the republican cause.

But the struggle for freedom and human rights in Northern Ireland is far from over. It will continue for as long as ‘direct rule’ from London still exists, for as long as the Irish are deprived of rights and the opportunity to be masters in their own homes.

These images of republican paramilitaries contrasted sharply with Soviet coverage of the unionists. Reporting Belfast street battles in 1987 TASS spoke of ‘revolutionaries [referring to the IRA] killed by terrorist groups of Protestant ultras’ (*Pravda*, April 11th, 1987). Early in 1988 TASS reported that ‘this year’s account of Ulster’s victims has been opened’ with the shooting of 19-year-old Bill Rose by unknown assailants. ‘It is believed that the killing is the work of activists from an extremist Protestant group’ (*Pravda*, January 11th, 1988).

While, at this time, republican paramilitaries were most frequently portrayed as freedom-fighters suffering cruel repression at the hands of an occupying colonial power, their unionist counterparts were described in terms which carry, for the Soviet audience as well as the western, negative connotations: ‘terrorists’, ‘extremists’, and ‘ultras’.

In recent years, however, this approach to the conflict has been modified. At the end of 1987, following the IRA’s bombing of the Remembrance Day Parade at Enniskillen, *Pravda* printed a photo-feature depicting casualties of the attack being carried away on stretchers by ambulancemen. The accompanying text was stark, to the point, and contained no references to ‘patriots’ or ‘revolutionaries’.

Northern Ireland. 11 people killed, more than 60 wounded, including 13 children and teenagers. These are the tragic results of an explosion at the war memorial in Enniskillen. Those who suffered from the terrorists’ raid were civilians, gathered to commemorate the dead of two world wars, and also the victims of the long-running conflict in Ulster.

(November 10th, 1987)

The transformation of Northern Ireland’s ‘patriots’ into ‘terrorists’ continued in a commentary written a few days later by *Pravda*’s Moscow-based commentator Pavel Demchenko. While acknowledging the IRA’s statement that the bombing of civilians at Enniskillen had been ‘accidental’, Demchenko insisted that ‘a fact remains a fact: 11 people dead, 65 wounded’ (November 15th, 1987). Demchenko situated the bombing in the context of attacks carried out against civilians in Sri Lanka and Beirut, suggesting that

‘regardless of what motives guided these people, regardless of what crimes have been committed [against them], there is no justification for these actions. Bombs in the streets, the seizure of hostages and aircraft, etc., not only wrongs the victims but engenders new violence and makes the situation still worse.’

The facts testify that terrorism has been taken up as a weapon by *provocateurs* of different colours. An example is the recent killing of two policemen during a non-violent demonstration in the West German city of Frankfurt...similar acts are taking place at all of the world’s crisis points. Territorial, national and ethnic problems are a breeding ground for any number of adventurists and fanatics.

In so far as it linked the IRA with ‘adventurists and fanatics’, thus adopting in part the dominant western framework for understanding terrorism, this article represents a significant break with the traditional Soviet view of Northern Ireland and the role of the republican paramilitaries. However, Demchenko’s article did not depart from the long-standing Soviet view that ‘responsibility for the tension in Ulster belongs to the British authorities, who have carried out a punitive, colonial policy against the Catholic minority’.

On the evening of March 6th, 1988, three members of the IRA were shot dead on the streets of Gibraltar. The first official version of what happened stated that, following the planting of a suspected car bomb in the centre of Gibraltar, the three had been shot by members of the British security forces in self-defence. This was the version which appeared in a brief TASS item headlined ‘Explosion prevented’.

According to reports from Gibraltar a car has been found 500 metres from the residence of the Governor-General containing an explosive device. The explosion has been prevented. Reuters has reported that police shot three terrorists, two men and a woman who, they think, intended to carry out this act.

(*Izvestia*, March 8th, 1988)

The use of the word ‘terrorist’ confirms the movement of the Soviet media towards the embracing of an interpretative framework for reporting the conflict in Northern Ireland not dissimilar to that advanced by the British state. It was only later, when the first official version of events was shown to be false, that the Soviet media adopted a critical tone in its coverage of the shootings. ‘It turns out’, noted *Pravda* on March 9th, ‘that the dead were unarmed. They were shot practically without warning, at point-blank range, aiming at the breast and the head.’ Given that no bomb had been found, the report continued, ‘even if the three were terrorists, there is no justification for the crime. If the police had suspicions it would not have been difficult to detain unarmed people.’ For this reporter the incident showed that ‘a British settlement has been created on the rock of Gibraltar where, just as in a Northern Irish city, “anti-terrorist” operations can be practised’.

In the period since March 1988, Soviet attitudes to, and thus media coverage of, the Northern Ireland conflict have altered further. On November 19th, 1988, a Moscow

Radio commentary asserted that, due to the ethnic clashes which had occurred in Nagorno Karabakh, the Soviet people had changed their opinion on the issue of Ulster: 'they can now feel more the tragedy of the situation and its complex character.'¹¹ It was now recognised that the British Army had a legitimate role to play in Northern Ireland, preventing civil war. Although the troops should modify their behaviour towards the Catholic population, the commentators accepted that 'to pull out, to withdraw, can lead to bloodshed'.

Andrei Burmistenko, who has covered Northern Ireland extensively for *Trud*, now acknowledges that

the problems in Ulster are deep-rooted and complicated. I adopt the approach of covering Ulster matter-of-factly, in a reportorial way, to cover events as they occur, without biases either way, and at the same time trying to convey the idea that the solution ought to be political, and only political. And the main responsibility with finding a political solution lies with the British government. I think that is the general underlying idea. Lately, however, another idea has developed: that you cannot find a political solution by increasing violence on any, or all sides, because violence breeds violence. Therefore, whenever we cover actual events—whether it's a bombing on one side, or a killing on the other—we let the facts speak for themselves to our readers, that outrages on all sides, and revenges against outrages, only lead to further violence and not to a proper political solution.

Some acts are terrorist by nature, whether they are committed by republicans or loyalists, and I don't hesitate to use this word. I don't think there is a shift in definitions. It's simply more a realisation of things as they are these days. And also it is the by-product of *glasnost*. More and more we see human rights issues not as class issues. In this sense it is a departure from the orthodox marxist position that you must see all events in the world from a class point of view, and the creation of a doctrine of human values, and human rights in particular, over class values.

Law and order

The Soviet media portray capitalist societies as afflicted by rising crime and declining moral standards, aggravated by unequal social conditions. Britain in particular is presented as a society of deteriorating law and order, where police brutality is endemic. In 1987 *Pravda* reported UK Home Office figures showing rising crime and falling rates of conviction. Noting that 3,847,410 crimes were reported in 1986 in England and Wales, '7 per cent higher than in 1985 and almost 2.3 times higher than fifteen years ago', Arkady Maslennikov linked the figures with the widening social divide in Britain.

The report testifies that crimes connected with infringements on property are growing especially quickly. Over the years of the Thatcher government, when the gap between rich and poor has been widening

especially quickly, the incidence of theft registered by the police has risen by 40 per cent, break-ins by 100 per cent, and muggings [in the Russian, the phrase meaning 'street robberies' was used] by 140 per cent.'

(April 5th, 1987)

Maslennikov's report ended with a quote from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Kenneth Newman, who blamed 'the aggressive propagating of the values of the "consumer society"' for the rise in crime, and also criticised cinema and television for 'encouraging' people to take the shortest path to satisfying their desires, i.e., illegality.

Law and order coverage of the United Kingdom is also concerned with the activities of the British police and secret services. In general, they are portrayed as repressive agents of the state, whose functions are primarily those of putting down demonstrations, suppressing strikes, and maintaining order in an increasingly conflict-ridden society. An example of this type of item was written by Arkady Maslennikov after the trial of a group of London policemen who had been jailed for assaulting five schoolboys in 1983. Maslennikov's piece (the story was also widely covered in the British media) recounted in detail how the policemen, without provocation, had leapt from the van in which they were travelling and administered severe beatings to five youths. 'It might seem', commented Maslennikov on the jail sentences of up to four years handed out to the policemen, 'that justice had been served', but 'most of those involved in the affair aren't rushing to express satisfaction' (*Pravda*, July 21st, 1987). On the contrary, Maslennikov asked, why had it taken four years to bring the case to trial? The views of an unnamed London newspaper were enlisted in order to reinforce the point: 'Yes, we can talk about the triumph of the justice system, but I assure you that if the accused in this case had not been police officers, but striking miners, printers, or those schoolboys themselves, the matter would have been brought to a conclusion a great deal sooner.'

The theme of Britain as a 'police state' was elaborated in a piece entitled 'McCarthy would have been proud' by Alexander Lyuty, based on an *Observer* story about the blacklisting of a certain Edward Best by the British secret service. Best, reported Lyuty, a researcher with the International Institute for Strategic Studies, had been placed on the 'Index of suspicious persons' by the British security services because his wife, a native of El Salvador, had publicly criticised the government of her country. This blacklist had prevented Best from getting a job in the civil service, and had led to his being placed under surveillance whenever he left or entered the country. 'The irony of the situation', noted Lyuty, is that

Best does not belong to any party, nor does he profess any progressive opinions. As distinct from his wife, he is supportive of the policies of the Salvadorean regime, and of the actions of the US in the region, as witnessed by his recently-published clearly pro-American book, *US Policy and Regional Security in Central America*. The British security services, however, automatically 'blacklist' anyone who is connected, no matter how indirectly, with criticism of London, Washington, or their satellites in the world.

(*Pravda*, February 8th, 1988)

Lyuty concluded by noting the 'distress' which the case had caused to those who 'blindly trusted in British democratic freedoms, and those who were convinced that they were insured against political arbitrariness.'

The free press

Notwithstanding the introduction of the concept of socialist pluralism into Soviet thinking, marxist-leninist ideology remains opposed to western notions of a 'free press'. Consequently, international journalism frequently criticises the 'freedom of the press' in the capitalist societies.

In their coverage of the United Kingdom during the sample period Soviet journalists emphasised two media-related themes: the increasing centralisation of ownership of the British media apparatus, and increasing state censorship of the activities of the 'free press'.

In July 1987, it was reported that Rupert Murdoch's News International company had been given permission to acquire the *Today* newspaper from Lonhro for a price of £38 million. The resulting item emphasised Murdoch's tightening grip on the British media, linking this to his support for the Thatcher government at successive general elections.

Henceforth, Murdoch will own 35.5 per cent of British newspaper circulation. This is not only of economic, but political importance. At the last three general elections Murdoch's newspapers played no small part in the Conservative Party's victories, and the debt has been repaid in full. This is how the opposition has interpreted the Thatcher government's decision to give the 'green light' to Murdoch's purchase of yet another British newspaper, without reference to the Monopolies Commission, as normal practice here demands.

(*Pravda*, July 3rd, 1987)

Later in the year, *Pravda* special correspondent Vladimir Goncharov paid a visit to the UK and wrote a long feature on Rupert Murdoch's Wapping installation. Here, Goncharov reported, a group of Soviet journalists was shown around the facilities by a News International employee. When asked about the printworkers' strike of the preceding year, and the sacking of 5,000 workers, the employee reportedly 'defended his master's views with zeal. Yes, he said, the workers refused to change to a new printing system, and to adopt new technology. They went on strike, violating their contracts, and were legally sacked' (September 7th, 1987). Later in the article, Goncharov, by way of assessing Murdoch—'the new Magellan of the information age'—quoted the American magazine *Fortune*:

'he fills his newspapers with sensational headlines and almost naked girls...He unashamedly uses his newspapers for political ends, shocking the world with his yellow journalism, right-wing views and lightning takeovers. He demands loyalty from his chief aides, but is capable of firing them at the first sign of independence.' Comment is superfluous.

Goncharov also gave an account of a discussion between Soviet and British journalists organised by the British-Soviet Association in London. The theme of the exchange had been 'objectivity in journalism', allowing Goncharov to put his view that 'objectivity in journalism is not only possible, it is essential. But since we [Soviet and British

journalists] stand on opposite sides of the ideological barrier, we will often appraise facts differently. Even an optimist and a pessimist will view the same event differently.' For the British side, Goncharov quoted *Daily Telegraph* editor Max Hastings, who said that 'we Conservatives defend our point of view. Each person on the editorial staff can have his own opinion, but if it doesn't compare with the opinion of the editor, then that person will have to seek work on another publication.'¹²

The subject of censorship in capitalist societies has traditionally been a difficult one for Soviet journalists to discuss with any conviction, since not even the most adept exponent of Bolshevik press theory could plausibly assert that this was a sphere in which the USSR had a good record. In the post-April period, however, an ironic inversion in the positions of Britain and the USSR has taken place. As described in chapter 6, the censorship regime in the USSR has been relaxed as a consequence of *glasnost*. In the same period UK censorship restrictions have been increased and extended by the Thatcher government, providing the Soviet media with a rich source of material with which to 'expose' the concept of the 'free press'.

The main censorship story of the sample period was the '*Spycatcher*' affair, given added significance for the Soviet audience by the fact that *Pravda's* coverage of the story in 1987 included an article which was itself banned by the UK courts when it appeared in the English-language edition of the newspaper.

On May 27th, 1987 Maslennikov reported the major revelations contained in '*Spycatcher*', including the alleged break-ins by MI5 into the offices of the then-Prime Minister Harold Wilson and his closest associates. He noted that the government had refused to commission an independent inquiry into these 'scandalous facts'. This was not surprising since, Maslennikov concluded, the government 'clearly fears that such an investigation would cast an undesirable light not only on the activities of the secret services themselves, but on those political circles who sat in the wings of this international conspiracy'.

The same reading appeared in an article of July 27th.

Several journalists here recall that MI5 gathered compromising material not only on the unions and the Labour Party, but on several Conservative Party activists, such as their leader Edward Heath, who was considered by some Tories to be 'showing weakness towards the unions'. They recall that it was precisely then [the mid-1970s] that Heath was replaced by Margaret Thatcher as Conservative leader. Clearly, this is why present ruling circles are attempting to prevent at all costs not only the publication of Wright's book, but the discussion of the question in Parliament.

In the article subsequently banned by the British courts when it appeared in English translation, Maslennikov described the affair as a 'tragicomedy' beyond the imaginative powers even of Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond. The banning of the article was a response to Maslennikov's reporting, among other things, Wright's suggestion that "'certain political circles" or "groups of people" planned the overthrow of the [Wilson] government'. Maslennikov suggested that it was this embarrassing evidence of right-wing subversion, rather than the official references to 'protecting national security' and 'duties of confidentiality' which accounted for the government's efforts to ban

Spycatcher: 'this shows that while British government circles lecture other states on political morality, they are not concerned about it when their own interests are under threat' (*Pravda*, July 18th, 1989).

The ban on Maslennikov's article when it appeared in English, and the resulting confiscation from news-stands of copies of the publication which printed it, were the subject of a *Pravda* commentary later in the year. Asking his readers, rhetorically, if the article was 'really such a threat to the security of Great Britain?', the author answered: 'allow me to doubt it. Another explanation is more likely: the hunt for "*Spycatcher*" is being used as an excuse to begin repression against the press' (September 1st, 1987).

The related story of the government's suppression of the BBC radio series *My Country, Right or Wrong* was also reported by *Pravda*, with a similar emphasis on the theme of 'mass media censorship'. In his coverage of the story Alexander Lyuty informed his readers that, while the ban had been imposed by the High Court on grounds of 'national security', expert committees had judged that 'the content of the programme did not exceed the bounds of what is already known about the country's secret services' (December 20th, 1987). Rather, suggested Lyuty, with an unmistakable reference to recent media developments in the USSR, 'the government's actions are being seen here as attempts to silence journalists who are publicising [*predavat glasnost*] the illegal activities of the British secret services at home and abroad'.

The good news

The greatest proportion of Soviet media coverage of capitalism is, then, critical in its portrayal of political, economic and social life. But it is not exclusively so. 'Light' human interest and life-style themes have always been covered to some extent, but in the post-April period they are increasingly common.

One product of *glasnost* has been the acknowledgement by Soviet journalists that their coverage of the capitalist world has hitherto been inadequate. A *Pravda* commentator complains of *Vremya* that items about capitalist countries 'mainly show meetings, demonstrators and protests. They rarely talk about the [positive] achievements of [western] science and technology.'¹³ Referring to coverage of the USA, a *Komsomolskaya Pravda* correspondent concedes that 'we liberally painted everything black, while not forgetting to be indignant about the primitive anti-communism and anti-Sovietism of the American press'.¹⁴ Since the April Plenum *glasnost* has encouraged journalists to present positive messages about the west. TASS's chief correspondent in London, Yuri Levchenko, explains that

the subjects and tone of our coverage have changed, in so far as before *glasnost* we concentrated mainly on the negative side of western life, and talked about problems. There are problems, of course, and we did not exaggerate them very much, but now we are shifting it a bit more to the positive side, to find out what is worth introducing in the Soviet Union, covering useful laws, habits, whatever could be useful to solving our problems at home.

Before *glasnost* there was one idea, that marxism-leninism was always right, and so we were finding examples to prop it up. But we see now that in reality life is much more complex, and much more interesting, and by concentrating on the negative we have overlooked a lot of useful and ordinary things which are equally good for people living in the west and the east—'human interest', so to say, and we now try to compensate for that.

We are very busy now writing articles on different British laws, on employment, the medical service, strikes, etc. Whatever the problem is back home, they ask us to look into the situation in Britain, and write for them about how things are being managed here. This is very much sought after, and contributes to the general improvement of things back home.

Andrei Burmistenko concedes that

previously we used to see western societies, and Britain in particular, in black-and-white terms: a strike is good for the cause of class struggle, therefore we are for the strikers. Unemployment, homeless people under the bridges, all those signs of capitalism at its worst became typical clichés in the Soviet media. Now we are wiser and more sophisticated. Because of the opening up of internal journalism we have discovered that many of the negative features we used to attribute as exclusively belonging to capitalist society are unfortunately with us [in the USSR] as well: prostitution, drugs, even unemployment in certain areas, deficit budgets. And therefore we can't blame the capitalist system for something which also exists in the socialist system. This influences our coverage, which is becoming more balanced, and more objective.

And the other side of the same coin is that we try to write more and more about the positive sides of British and western society: mostly non-ideological themes, such as the saving of energy, the absence of queues, the delivery of milk, the production of food, any experience which by writing about we can give an idea to someone in the USSR.

Probably the biggest achievement of *glasnost* for us is the gradual but firm movement towards objectivity in reporting. We cannot any longer simply publish a picture of homeless people under London Bridge and say, that is capitalism. It's bad propaganda.

On March 20th, 1988, *Vremya* reported on the American construction industry. This subject was addressed in the context of problems facing the Soviet construction industry—in particular, *dolgostroya*, running behind schedule in building works. From the city of Seattle, *Vremya* noted that 'such problems are completely absent'. As the camera panned over a square in Seattle city centre where building work was much in evidence, the correspondent noted the architectural beauty of the buildings under construction, and the fact that work on them was proceeding with the minimum of disruption to the population. The manner in which these observations were presented

revealed the correspondent's implicit criticism that neither convenience to the public nor aesthetic quality were high in the list of priorities for Soviet builders.

Above all, the correspondent noted, construction work in Seattle was completed on time. Why? The most important factor, according to the correspondent, was 'the pace at which people work. In the Soviet Union we have such a thing as "mass enthusiasm" [the intensification of workrates to coincide with a public holiday or political commemoration], which appears in the final quarter of the year and in the period coming up to a big holiday. Here it's the norm.' To explain why this was the case, construction worker Ron Briegel was interviewed: 'if we complete a building quickly it means new contracts. We aren't used to sitting on our hands. In America you need a lot of money, and, for that, hard work is essential.'

This item demonstrated alternative methods of working to the Soviet audience. In contrast to the general emphasis of Soviet journalism on industrial disputes and labour unrest in the west, the American proletariat is here presented as hard-working and virtuous, indeed worthy of emulation.

In 1987 the Soviet journalist and playwright Alexander Gubaryev's piece play about Chernobyl, *Sarcophagus*, won the Laurence Olivier Award for best play of the year. On February 26th, 1988, *Pravda* published an article on the British theatre co-authored by Gubaryev and Alexander Lyuty. The article described Britain, admiringly, as 'a theatregoing culture', with consistently high attendances and enthusiastic audiences. The authors noted that, by contrast, 'in our [Soviet] theatres, especially those in the provinces, the actors on the stage sometimes outnumber the audience. Why is the picture different in Britain?'

The article reported the view of British writer Michael Glenny that the theatre in the UK is successful because, 'while preserving tradition, it tries to react to processes going on in the contemporary world'. Gubaryev and Lyuty added to this by observing that the repertoire of London's West End theatre is 'unusually full. We compared it to our own: on two stages, there were nineteen productions in a year. How many premières were there in the whole of Moscow last year?' They concluded: 'the British theatre has always lived and worked for the pleasure of those in the audience. This is the guarantee of its success and originality.'¹⁵

On February 12th, 1988, *Pravda* published a feature article by Alexander Lyuty on British education which, though critical of such features as public schools and elitism, presented a detailed account of the positive aspects of the comprehensive system, and complimented the 'devotion' of the teachers he met. Talking to teachers at the 'typically English' Henry Compton school, Lyuty 'heard much that reminded me of the problems of our own [Soviet] schools', and in conversation with the author he explained how the article had been written as a contribution to the education debate in the USSR:

there was a debate about educational reform in the USSR and I wanted to make an input to that. They [in Britain] had some of the problems we have. I like the dedication of British teachers. Our teachers have less dedication. We are not so demanding, or so choosy when we take people into the pedagogical institute...I am sure [the article] did something. People [in Moscow] told me it had a favourable impact.

These examples show that news about the successes, as opposed to the more ideologically-convenient defects of capitalism, has become more common in the Soviet media since 1985. Such coverage has, on the one hand, an 'organisational' function, inputting, as Lyuty suggests, to debates taking place in the USSR about how to reform society and the economy. But 'good news' also has an important ideological function connected with the wider project of *glasnost*. The shift from a restrictive, uniformly-critical, Party-monopolised view of the capitalist world to one which is multi-faceted, with positive characteristics acknowledged and highlighted, can be seen as a necessary response to the new tasks of the Soviet media. As more Soviet citizens travel abroad, more tourists and business people come to the USSR from the west, and western information media become more accessible to the average citizen, Soviet journalists are increasingly obliged to work in an information environment where alternative accounts of the world are readily available. If journalists in the USSR are to compete successfully in this environment their images of life abroad must command credibility and believability. To that end, the 'one-sidedness' of the past is clearly no longer adequate. For Burmistenko,

what is going on in Soviet journalism today is a product of the realisation that theory must interpret facts, rather than facts be twisted to fit a pre-determined theory and ideology. Ideology and theory must be based on objective facts, not vice versa, where you first work out an ideology and then journalists must provide facts exactly fitting the preferred ideology and theoretical constructions. We are moving quickly in that direction. We must provide facts, and other people must reinterpret history, ideology and scientific communism in the light of the objective facts of reality.

The implications of this for the content of international journalism remain difficult for some Soviet leaders to accept. Chapter 6 (see pp. 98–9) quoted the then-Moscow Party Secretary Lev Zaikov who, when addressing the Central Committee in July 1989, complained that as a result of *glasnost* the Soviet media now contained 'indiscriminate propaganda of western values'. The persistence of such views may continue to inhibit the development of what Burmistenko calls a 'balanced and objective' approach to news coverage of capitalism, but it seems unlikely that they can now prevent it.

Women of the world, unite! —women in Soviet news

We turn, finally, to a subject about which much has been written in the west: the relationship between the mass media and the reproduction of sex and gender-role stereotypes. The greatest part of this literature has concerned capitalism,¹ but what of the USSR, where pornography is banned, sexism is officially denounced as a reactionary ideology, and women are proclaimed to be the equals—economically, socially and politically—of men? This concluding case study considers how, in the era of *glasnost*, one part of the Soviet media apparatus—news—performs its organisational and ideological functions in the sphere of what marxist-leninists often refer to as ‘the Woman Question’.²

The position of women in Soviet society is contradictory. On the one hand, if compared with advanced capitalist societies such as Britain and the United States, Soviet women have gained access to many areas of traditional male domination in the sphere of paid work. On the other, patriarchal notions of femininity and maternity have been preserved and strengthened, reflected in the continued existence of sexual inequality and an exploitative division of labour within and outside of the family. A study undertaken in 1967 showed that the women of Moscow spent an average of seven hours per day on housework, and seven hours per day in paid employment, leaving less than ten hours free for other activities, including sleep (Kurganov, 1968, p.110). There is nothing to suggest that this pattern has changed in the intervening period.

Soviet ideology incorporates a biological determinism which would resemble more closely the views of Mary Whitehouse than of Rosa Luxemburg. Thus, while the role of the woman as worker is continually propagated, her domestic responsibilities as a wife and mother are also emphasised. Indeed, the Mother has become one of the most powerful symbols of Soviet nationhood.

In what follows we examine how these contradictory roles are reflected in the Soviet news media.

Women’s Day

March 8th is International Women’s Day in the Soviet Union. This event can be compared to Mother’s Day in Britain, since it involves much eulogising and giving of flowers. But while Mother’s Day is essentially a marketing opportunity for the manufacturers of chocolates and greeting cards International Women’s Day in the USSR is a major state and public holiday, dedicated to the celebration of women. As such, March 8th is a key event in the media calendar, on and around which press and television devote a substantial proportion of space to the theme of women. Women’s Day thus

provides an excellent opportunity, through analysis of the content of this coverage, to reconstruct the complex of gender roles which make up the Soviet concept of 'femininity', and to examine how these are propagandised in Soviet news.

At the state level, Women's Day is marked by a congratulatory message from the Central Committee of the Party. On Women's Day in 1988, the main theme of this message was the *perestroika*, and the role of women in contributing to its success.

In accordance with the practice of replication of *ofitsioz* every newspaper printed the Central Committee message prominently on page 1. *Programme Vremya* led its March 8th edition with the news that Women's Day was 'a joyful spring holiday on which we feel a deep love and esteem for women: mothers, toilers and patriots of the socialist Motherland', etc. In addition to the Central Committee message, press and television news on March 8th was filled with items for, about and by women.

Many of the correspondents responsible for this material were women, illustrating the sexual division of labour within the Soviet journalistic profession. Within news output as a whole there are a range of 'women's issues', such as fashion, in which females are well represented as correspondents. They are virtually absent, however, from the 'serious' categories of coverage such as the economy and international events.

Images of women

The lover

International Women's Day is interpreted by Soviet men as an occasion, first, to express their love for and devotion to women in the most romantic and sentimental of terms. *Vremya's* coverage of the event included, for example, an item on a celebratory concert presented under the title 'From men to women'. Three well-known male singers who performed at the concert were asked by the correspondent to say something to their female viewers to mark the occasion.

Correspondent: What would you like to say to women on the holiday?

Performer 1: That the most important thing in life is happiness, health and love.

Correspondent: And you?

Performer 2: That they fulfil all their plans in life.

Performer 3: To all our dear women I wish only one thing: I wish them love.

Vremya's coverage also included an interview from Rome with one of Italy's, and the USSR's, most popular pop singers, Toto. *Vremya's* Italian correspondent Yuri Vibornov caught up with Toto on the set of a television programme in which he was involved. With Toto at the piano, surrounded by dozens of young Italian girls, the interview began.

Correspondent: Toto [pointing to the girls and laughing], you are in pleasant company.

Toto: I'm preparing for the broadcast. [They're here because] today is International Women's Day. It's celebrated all over the world.

Correspondent: Toto, I get many letters from the Soviet Union putting the question, when will you come on tour to the USSR again?

Toto: I hope it will happen again this year, because I'm simply burning with the desire to return. I spent an entire month in Moscow and Leningrad, and I want here to greet my Soviet friends in the hope of another meeting soon. And so [turning to the girls], it's March 8th, a holiday. I would like to send a musical greeting to all Soviet women [Toto conducts the girls in an Italian love song]. And now, it's time to say goodbye. How is it in Russian? *Dos Vidaniya!*

A third item informed viewers, over a soundtrack of romantic music, that:

There are as many stars and planets in the sky as there are beautiful women in the world. On January 1st, 1900, the first day of the new century, Sicilian astronomer Guiseppe Piazza discovered the first asteroid. He named it after a beautiful woman, Serreri. Since then, tradition has it that newly-discovered asteroids are given women's names. And now, let's get to know them. [The camera pans across the sky.] There's Agnetha Bartov. Do you know her? There's Sophia Perovskaya, Alexandra Kollontai, Valentina Tereshkova, Alexander Platnova, and many, many others. Astronomers have already identified about 3,000 small planets, and many others await discovery. According to custom, the person who discovers a planet has the right to name it. That's why you have a great opportunity. Discover a planet, and dedicate it to your loved one.

The worker

Soviet women are honoured as lovers on March 8th, but a more important theme in coverage of Women's Day is that of 'woman as worker'. The historic demographic imbalance between the male and female population of the Soviet Union has meant that the latter play a crucial role in the economy. More Soviet women are engaged in paid work outside the home than is the case for women in advanced capitalist societies although, as Sacks notes, 'women are concentrated in sectors of the labour force in which wages are low' and 'female earnings are between two-thirds and three-quarters those of men' (1988, p.81). The importance of women in the economy is reflected in the fact that the Soviet media constantly 'propagandise the role of women in production' (Mamonova, 1989, p.188), and Women's Day is a key event in that propaganda effort.

On March 8th, 1988, *Vremya* began with an item about a clothing factory in the town of Ivanov, where women 'not only make up the majority of workers, but are departmental supervisors and factory directors'. The factory's Party committee secretary was a woman, as was the chairman of the union committee: 'in a phrase, this is a real women's domain.' This, it was stressed, 'does not prevent it from having advanced technology and, in conditions of full cost-accounting [*khozraschet*] setting an example of a truly innovative approach to business'.

Here was an example of women contributing to *perestroika* by staffing and managing a modern, efficient enterprise. Two women were highlighted, in the tradition of positive *glasnost* and production propaganda, as model workers: the first, 'only 19 years old, but already a deputy in the oblast office'; the second, a Tatyana Provnina, 'came to the

factory a long time ago, shy and reserved. Now she is a member of the factory Party committee and an initiator of productivity increases using new technology.'

Vremya covered the annual congress of the International Association of Women Cinematographers, held in Tbilisi early in March. In interview the newly-elected president, L.Gogoberidze, explained that the function of the Association was 'to assist the development of cinematography in the USSR and the world, and to create more opportunities for women to become professionals' (6.3.88).

Pravda's coverage of Women's Day selected some examples of women gaining entry to traditionally 'male' professions. Galina Shubira, who had been 'twenty-three years behind the wheel of a taxi', was asked by the male correspondent why she had chosen such 'unfeminine work' (*nyezhenskaya rabota*), to which she replied: 'why isn't it feminine? It's a service job...[and] by our nature we [women] are more disciplined, we understand passengers more easily.' *Pravda* quoted some of Galina's customers to the effect that she was 'sensible, reliable, but still feminine'.

Pravda also contained a feature on the first female captain in the Soviet deep-sea fishing fleet, Anna Shetinina, and reported that there were now four such captains.

The theme of women doing 'unfeminine work' was developed in an article about Kun Sarin, a Cambodian woman whose job was clearing the countryside of unexploded bombs remaining from the war with the United States during the 1970s. This was described as 'dangerous work, definitely not women's work', but done, nevertheless, by a woman. In addition, it was reported, Kun Sarin was 'an initiator in the creation of women's organisations in work collectives'. Women, she was quoted as saying, 'can and must be custodians not only of domestic, but social well-being'. In Cambodia, it was explained, the role of women in society was particularly important, since men had been reduced to 20–30 per cent of the population during the period of Pol Pot's government.

As in the west, Soviet women are largely excluded from the high-level political management of their country. In the krai, oblast, regional, city and village Soviets, women comprise a respectable 49 per cent of deputies. In the Supreme Soviet this figure falls to about one third which, though comparing favourably with the 4.5 per cent of US Congressional representatives who are women, does not reflect the proportion of women in the Soviet population. As we move higher in the Party and state apparatus, women's involvement declines further. In the Central Committee and the Politburo, women are virtually absent.³

Around Women's Day, 1988, and despite the apparent lack of material, the image of 'woman as politician' was stressed in the Soviet media, largely through the figure of Central Committee secretary (and now Politburo member) Alexandra Biryukova, who was dispatched on an official tour of Georgia in early March, thus providing the Soviet media with suitable images for Women's Day. In content and style, this coverage was typical of *ofitsioz*, and is worthy of note only in that the most senior politician on show was seen to be a woman.

As workers Soviet women are also 'patriots': fighters for and builders of socialism. To reinforce this theme *Vremya's* coverage of Women's Day included an item about a woman who had made a particularly exceptional contribution to the Great Patriotic War. Accompanied by newsreel footage and archive photographs the item told the story of Alexandra Maximova Cherkasova, 'known to the whole country' as a war hero, and now an old-age pensioner in the city of Volgograd. With virtually all the able-bodied men at

the Front, Alexandra and the other women of her town, like women all over the USSR, were left on their own: 'Cherkasova broadcast an appeal to the wives and mothers of soldiers all over the country to form voluntary construction brigades ... Thus was born the famous Cherkasova movement. We met Alexandra Maximova today, as a warm spring breeze blew in from the Volga.' Alexandra reminisced to *Vremya's* correspondent: 'I have lived through a difficult century, but I managed to overcome all the difficulties.' The item ended with effusive praise for this 'patriot of the socialist Motherland': 'I looked at the face and eyes of this woman, and saw that deep down she remains young.'

The mother

The image of the Mother has always been a powerful referent in Soviet culture, signifying the values of family and nationhood. The word '*Rodina*', often used to denote the Soviet Union in propaganda and agitational documents, is translated in most dictionaries as 'Motherland' or 'Homeland'. The significance of the Mother in contemporary Soviet culture can perhaps be best illustrated by the famous statue erected after the war at Stalingrad (now Volgograd). Like the wartime poster which it resembles, the statue depicts a woman standing, sword raised, in a gesture of defiance to the enemy.

In recent years the Mother symbol has taken on pressing practical significance. As is the case in the majority of advanced industrialised societies, the Soviet birthrate declined in the 1980s, raising the prospect of a potential labour shortage in the future. An additional complication, from the perspective of the predominantly Russian population, has been the fact that the birthrate is highest in the Central Asian republics. The combined populations of these largely Muslim areas of the USSR will, at some point in the future, outnumber that of Russia itself. Thirdly, in a pattern familiar to western capitalist societies, the USSR has begun to experience the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency. In an interview with *Izvestia*, Soviet sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya, while defending the right of women to bear children *and* have a career, suggested that 'none the less, the absence of women from the home is one reason for the serious phenomena now spreading amongst children, such as bullying'.⁴ For Zaslavskaya, as for many Soviet sociologists, 'latch-key kids'—those coming home to an empty house because their parents are out at work—are more likely to develop negative character traits. The combined effect of these beliefs has been to shift the emphasis of recent Soviet propaganda from the theme of 'woman as worker' to that of 'woman as mother', strengthening family values and what is referred to as 'socialist morality'. The Central Committee's Women's Day message of 1988 expressly identified the provision of help to women with several children as an immediate priority of Soviet social policy.

The extent to which individual media organs have chosen to adopt this theme varies. As we have seen, *Vremya*, *Pravda*, and *Izvestia* stressed the 'woman as worker' theme in their coverage of March 8th, 1988. The relatively conservative *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, by contrast, focused its coverage almost entirely on 'woman as mother'. Its coverage of Women's Day began with a plea:

Don't rush, dear reader, to accuse us of forgetting about or underestimating the great contribution of women to the working life of the country on Women's Day. We remember, value, and honour it. But for far

too long we have valued only those women who work in the economy. We have been overly modest and reticent in speaking about, simply, Her, the Woman. That's why today, on the eighth day of spring, we intend to acknowledge the holiest of the holy, the family, where the Mother, the Wife, and the Grandmother make their magic, (their capitals)

The main subject of an article pointedly entitled 'The main business of our lives has already been done', was those women who, unusually in Soviet society, have chosen to have a large number of children (more than two) and to stay at home full-time in order to look after them. As already noted, the majority of Soviet women work outside the home and the 'housewife' (*domokhosaika*—literally, 'mistress of the house') is a relatively rare animal. As the *Sovetskaya Rossiya* item observed:

for the majority of us today the large family in the modern city is not only surprising but incomprehensible. It would seem that presentday life-style 'protests' against the large family. The parents of large families are considered as little more than cranks; we stare at them not in envy, as in earlier times, but in bewilderment and even pity—why do they need this? Large families are few in number today, as are the women who have devoted their lives to the domestic 'kindergarten'. Who are they, these so-called 'cranks'?

The rest of the article set about challenging what has traditionally been the predominantly negative image of housewives in the USSR. This was done by focusing instead on the image of the 'Hero-Mother', i.e., women who have been awarded state medals for their contributions to motherhood and child-rearing. From Leningrad the newspaper interviewed a number of such women at their 'club', where they mixed with other housewives. They included Galina Shatrova, the most productive mother in Leningrad, with sixteen children; Alevtina Alekseyeva, mother of five; and Lyudmilla Yurdan, mother of ten. These women, stressed the interviewer, were housewives and proud of it. In the words of Alevtina Alekseyeva, 'many of us have left interesting work, given up professions, not because we are cranks, but simply because we have made a choice in favour of the family and of children'.

The article discussed the special problems faced by the mothers of large families, such as the difficulty in obtaining adequately-sized flats (Leningrad's housing shortage is among the worst of all Soviet cities), and purchasing cooking utensils large enough to prepare food for all the children. It also stressed their isolation and called for more appreciation of the Soviet housewife.

One of the women quoted in this piece, Lyudmilla Yurdan, was featured the same day in a *Trud* piece entitled 'Madonna of the Neva' (the river on which the city of Leningrad is built). The article explained how Lyudmilla had been trained as a medical worker, but had given up paid employment to look after the youngest of her ten children, since the oldest were now working and the family no longer needed her salary. As Lyudmilla put it, 'everyone has his own conception of the main values of life. I am a mother by calling. Some people keep themselves warm with a winter coat, but me—I use the warm hands of a child. For some, supreme happiness is the smell of French perfume, but for me there is

nothing sweeter than the smell of a child when you hold him close to your face.’ On the sexual division of labour within the home, she gave her view that ‘the mother, indisputably, is the heart of a big family, preserving its centre, and the father is the support of the home. Our family subscribes to the cult of the father (excuse me for saying this on Women’s Day). To our children father is both best friend and chief authority.’

Women abroad

Soviet media coverage of women abroad is consistent with patterns already identified in international news generally. On the one hand, the position of women in fraternal socialist countries is portrayed in largely positive terms. In the article about Kun Sarin of Cambodia discussed on page 192, women were seen to be making real progress in difficult circumstances. The existence of problems and inequalities was not denied, but these were treated constructively. In coverage of capitalist societies, however, inequality and oppression of women are emphasised, and portrayed as structural and endemic. On Women’s Day, 1988, *Trud* printed a series of four items on the position of women abroad, prefaced by the observation that ‘in the era of the atom bomb and space travel it is difficult to believe that savage customs handed down from the Middle Ages still exist on our planet, and that ancient traditions of discrimination and violence directed against representatives of the weaker sex have been preserved. But it often happens.’ To substantiate this claim *Trud* published dispatches from Egypt, ‘where men decide everything’ and about 70 per cent of women were reported to be illiterate; Italy, where male violence against women was said to be a major problem;⁵ and India; where, it was explained, the ‘dowry’ system continued to result in the horrific deaths of hundreds of women every year.⁶ Britain is not exempt from such criticism. On March 8th, 1988, the Defence Ministry organ *Krasnaya Zvezda* published TASS coverage of a report recently issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission in the United Kingdom. TASS invited readers to ask themselves if women ‘play a big role in British political and social life? Many British men are doubtful that such a question is necessary in a society where the government is led by a woman.’ However, the Equal Opportunities Commission report had shown that ‘attitudes to women in Britain reflect stereotypes established in the Middle Ages which portray women exclusively as housewives’. *Pravda’s* Women’s Day coverage quoted the Equal Opportunities Commission report under its ‘Quote of the day rubric’, highlighting the statement that ‘we [the British] choose women only for those jobs which men “won’t do”: boring, monotonous, ‘unmasculine’ jobs...Many British businessmen say that they simply won’t hire men for those jobs, because a woman will work industriously and without complaint, since this corresponds to her natural temperament.’

Positive coverage of the role of women in capitalist societies tends to be limited to those women who are engaged in dissenting political activities, such as the Greenham Common peace campaigners. In December 1987, to mark the signing of the INF treaty in Washington, *Pravda* printed an item about the Greenham women which combined the themes of courage and maternity.

[At Greenham Common] more than six years ago, on September 5th, 1981, the women’s camp, now known all over the world, came into being.

Its residents, young and old, from different regions of the country, gave up their immediate concerns, disregarded the weather and the inconvenience of life under an open sky, motivated by a sense of high civic duty and maternal instinct for the preservation of life.⁷

Glasnost and women

Soviet media coverage of women involved in politics, in work, including 'unfeminine work', and as war veterans, presents positive images of the role of women in Soviet society. To this extent it can be categorised as one dimension of the 'propaganda of success' which featured so prominently in Soviet news as a whole before the April Plenum and the beginning of the *glasnost* campaign. As with economic news, coverage of women's issues tended to ignore negative phenomena, such as the continued existence of a sexual division of labour. Aspects of 'the Woman Question', such as sexual discrimination, which conflicted with the view that the CPSU has given women 'the opportunity ...and real guarantees of...full participation in socio-economic transformation', as the Central Committee put it in their Women's Day message, were, if touched upon at all, glossed over. And, as with economic news, *glasnost* has permitted some qualifications to this 'propaganda of success'. *Pravda* correspondent S. Posthukov identifies as an achievement the fact that Soviet women generally acquire a higher educational standard than men. He then notes that only 40 per cent of scientific workers, 13 per cent of doctors of science, and 28 per cent of candidates are women. 'The discrimination', he concedes, is clear. But this discrimination is then downplayed by the following statement: 'I think, however, that if women wished it equality in this could be achieved.'⁸

As a result of *glasnost* the existence of discrimination can now be acknowledged, but analysis of the deep-rooted social and cultural factors which restrict the progress of women in all industrialised societies, capitalist and socialist, from birth, continues to be off the media agenda.

Elsewhere in his article, Posthukov refers to the fact that 69 per cent of Soviet doctors are women, as compared with 13 per cent in the USA. This is not qualified with an acknowledgement that in the USSR doctors have a relatively low status, *and* a low salary, as compared with their counterparts in capitalist countries. Posthukov notes simply that 'our medical profession has been subject to a clear process of feminisation...this is a question demanding separate analysis'.

Limited recognition of the deep structural inequalities underlying sexual stratification was presented in *Izvestia's* coverage of Women's Day, in keeping with that organ's relatively 'open' approach to social and political issues in general. The item presented an interview with leading Soviet sociologist Tatyana Zaslavskaya, one of the authors of the 'Novosibirsk' document which is widely considered to have been a key text in the formulation of the *perestroika* strategy.

Zaslavskaya herself presents a positive model for Soviet women, having reached the heights of policy-making in the USSR. She is therefore an important 'primary definer' of women's issues. On Women's Day she was asked to discuss her own experiences of sexual discrimination, if any, and to explain why, if Soviet women enjoyed full equality

under the law, their positions in economic, social and political structures continue to be subordinate to those of men. Zaslavskaya stated first that she herself had not experienced discrimination in her career, and added:

I don't think that conspiracies are hatched against [Soviet women]. Women fulfil their working abilities. 51 per cent of workers are women. They amount to a majority of students and specialists receiving higher education. A woman who hasn't been passed over by promotion in her youth will go further than a man. However, the majority of women don't aspire to a career of service at the highest level.⁹

This assertion, reflecting the view of Posthukov already referred to, was balanced by the concession that 'not only the lack of careerism, but life itself hinders a woman, as she is responsible for the family'. Zaslavskaya pointed out how difficult it was for a woman to pursue, for example, a programme of doctoral research if, as is the case for so many Soviet women, she lives in a cramped communal apartment with a husband and several children. Furthermore, the problems faced by such a woman are compounded by the fact that Soviet students receive only a token grant, or 'stipend' of about 50 roubles: 'this is a major constraint on women combining careers with child-rearing.'

Though still rare, such analyses are a reflection of growing *glasnost* in relation to the 'Woman Question'. As in a different way was an item which appeared elsewhere in the same issue of *Izvestia*, apologising to the mothers of the USSR for the shortages and problems they are required to put up with.

Forgive us, Mama, that you can so rarely find attractive or comfortable shoes on the shop shelf; forgive us, that the clothes made for you are so old-fashioned in colour and design; and, forgive us, that television hardly ever plays any songs and melodies from your youth ... Believe us, when we say that the recognition of our mistakes is the first step on the way to their correction.

On March 8th *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published a 'feuilleton'¹⁰ which complained about the lack of quality cosmetics and toiletries available to Soviet women:

The French say that women aren't born beautiful, they become so through their grooming. But for us [Soviet women] it's easier to be born beautiful than to be well-groomed. We run like mad around the shops in search of anything that will make us look our best. But how many of the basics will you find in our shops? Excuse me, but you [Soviet clothes designers] can't like women very much to turn out the outfits that you do.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of *glasnost* on Soviet media images of women has been the emergence of approaches to sexuality previously regarded as western and, thus, as decadent. Before 1985 sexual life in the USSR was cloaked in a public puritanism matched only by the Islamic fundamentalism of Iran. As a Soviet participant in a USA-USSR telebridge put it in 1988, 'we have no sex here'.¹¹ A Soviet journalist notes that

before *glasnost* it was publicly maintained that ‘a Soviet person does not have problems below the navel and above the knees...When a Soviet person fell in love they went away to build Komsomolsk-na-Amur.’¹²

One result of *glasnost* in this hitherto taboo sphere of Soviet life has been to open up the media to the presentation and discussion of sexually explicit material. Following the transmission of the *Emmanuelle* films in Finland in 1987, and their reception in the Soviet republic of Estonia, the Estonian journal *Kultuur ja Elu* published a discussion of whether these films were examples of pornography or ‘eroticism’.¹³ According to psychologist Auti Liiv, ‘we are now in a fascinating situation: for years the influence of such films through the communication channels was utterly unthinkable. Now the progress of technology has brought these subjects to the homes of thousands. At the same time we acknowledge that there are professional prostitutes working in our country.’ No longer, he noted with approval, was ‘eroticism’ only the ‘privilege of decaying imperialism’.

Confirmation of this is shown by the fact that on April 9th, 1989, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published the following reader’s letter concerning the young female star of the film *Little Vera*: ‘I have heard that the magazine *Playboy* printed a photograph of Natalya Nagoda. Is it true?’ This was a reference to Nagoda’s semi-nude appearance in the aforementioned magazine. Such an appearance could not have been made before *glasnost*, nor is it likely that it would have been referred to in the official media. No longer. ‘Yes’, replied the letters’ editor. ‘It’s true. *Little Vera* had great success at the recent Chicago Film Festival, and N. Nagoda won the prize for the best female role. In its characteristic manner, *Playboy* awarded her the title, “First Soviet Sex-Star”. N. Nagoda works in the Moscow Youth Theatre.’ Given the continuation of present trends, it cannot be long before nude pictures of Nagoda and other Soviet ‘sex stars’ will be appearing in the Soviet media itself.

Another indicator of *glasnost* in the area of sexuality is Soviet official permission for, and media coverage of, beauty competitions.

Prior to the April Plenum beauty competitions were unknown in the USSR. Partly because of an ideological attachment to the view that women should not be paraded and judged according to the size of their breasts, thighs and hips, and partly because of the aforementioned puritanism in relation to the public acknowledgment of sexuality, Soviet culture could justifiably claim to be free of this particular manifestation of male sexism. No longer, however. On June 12th, 1988, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* published the photofeature reproduced in Figure 10.1. Accompanying the photograph of a ‘Moscow beauty’ dressed (barely) in an appropriately scanty bikini and clutching what appeared to be a giant lollipop, correspondent P. Timofeyev wrote that ‘above all, a woman must be feminine—these words have become the motto for the final stage of the Moscow Beauty-88 competition. After three days the jury, chaired by People’s Artist Muslim Magomaev, must choose one girl from thirty-six finalists. She will become the first holder of the title “Moscow Beauty-88”.’ Points were being awarded on a range of criteria, such as proficiency in ‘dance and sport numbers’. Perhaps aware that such competitions are regularly condemned as sexist in the west, Timofeyev distanced ‘Moscow Beauty-88’ from such as ‘Miss Universe’ by quoting the director of the show, Mikhail Zlotnikov: ‘in contrast to western beauty competitions we don’t adhere to a set standard [of attractiveness]. Girls with any type of figure can take part in the competition. We don’t

take family or work status into account. The only restriction is age: no younger than 17 and no older than 27.' The purpose of the competition, added Zlotnikov, was to show that the Soviet woman can be 'beautiful, as well as strong, decisive, and businesslike'.

On Women's Day *Vremya* reported from Lithuania on the holding of 'the first Lithuanian beauty competition', 'Miss Vilnius'. One hundred girls, it was reported, had entered the competition, to be tested on a variety of artistic, creative and intellectual skills. Thirteen women between the ages of 17 and 27 had made the final, in which each would have to answer questions on the history and literature of Vilnius. Not only would the winner become the first Miss Vilnius in Soviet history, but she would win a free trip abroad.

As the competition moved towards its conclusion, *Vremya* interviewed the chairman of the judges' panel, A.Chekudis. What would be his advice to Vilnius' first beauty queen? 'I would say to her, first, don't become conceited. This is nothing special, just a holiday. Tomorrow the working week begins: there will be work, or study, love, marriage and children. Secondly, I say, let this festival do us all a service. Let men be men, and women be women. If people pay more attention to the beauty of our girls after this, that is to the benefit of us all.'

Conclusion: all that is *glasnost* is not gold

The restructuring of Soviet journalism described in this book has been welcomed by all but those, described in chapter 6, whom it threatens. Since 1985 the agenda of Soviet domestic news has been extended to include a vast range of topics and themes previously banished to the 'zones beyond criticism'. Chapter 1 began with Chernobyl, and the suppression of timely and detailed information which characterised its coverage in the Soviet news media. Such a thing could not happen today, one suspects.

In foreign coverage, although the process of change has been slower, there have been important breaks with the one-sided portrayals of the past, and the promise, as one Soviet correspondent put it in chapter 9 (see p. 187), of a more 'objective' account of the world in the future. While Gorbachov has insisted that this movement should be seen not as a retreat from, but as a return to, 'authentic' marxism-leninism, there is a clearly observable tendency for Soviet journalists no longer 'to see all events from a class point of view'. Soviet journalism will remain, like that of the west, ideological and value-laden, but it will increasingly acknowledge the legitimacy of viewpoints other than those advanced by the Party leadership at any given time.

Taken together, the full panoply of reforms which have occurred since 1985—*glasnost*, socialist pluralism, rights of access—has arguably resulted in the emergence of a media system which is comparable in its openness, reliability, depth of information, and entertainment quality to those of most western societies. While in the USSR the right of reply for individuals and organisations wronged by the media is now guaranteed, in Britain, as this book went to press, the provision of such a right was still being successfully resisted by the press barons and their supporters in government. As we noted in chapter 6 (see p. 182), the relaxation of censorship in the USSR has coincided with a tightening-up of restrictions on the freedom of the British media.

In other respects, however, the changes have not been positive. Chapter 10 showed how some Soviet journalists have interpreted the *glasnost* campaign as an opportunity to indulge in forms of media sexism previously the preserve of capitalist societies. Coverage of beauty competitions, soft-core pornography, and other examples of what was once regarded as 'bourgeois decadence' are now welcomed as evidence of progressive change. Soviet feminists, limited in number and marginalised as they are, have protested at the enthusiastic adoption of western stereotypes of women by their male-dominated media organs, but their views have been largely ignored.

As yet it is too early to say whether the pressures of commercialism and the need to compete in a 'socialist pluralist' market of the media will push Soviet journalists further in this direction, or whether Soviet ideology with its nominal commitment to sexual equality, and the traditional puritanism of Soviet society, will act as a restraining influence. The experience of Hungary, where the restructuring of the media is more advanced, is not encouraging.

Московские красавицы в Лужниках

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ТЮРИН.



Женщина должна быть прежде всего женщиной — эти слова стали девизом начавшегося в пятницу заключительного этапа Московского конкурса красоты. За три дня жюри — его председатель народный артист СССР Муслим Магомедов — должно выбрать из 36 финалисток одну. Она станет первой обладательницей титула «Московская красавица-88».

После представления ведущих и жюри конкурса, объявления призов и подарков на сцену поднимаются финалистки. Жюри приступает к работе. «Первое впечатление» — так называется эта часть программы. Участницы получают от трех до пяти баллов за каждый конкурсный выход. В программе первого дня спортивные и танцевальные номера.

— В отличие от распространенных на Западе конкурсов «Мисс», — рассказывает главный режиссер конкурса «Московская красавица-88» Михаил Злотников, — мы не следовали так называемым мировым стандартам. В конкурсе могла принять участие девушка с любой фигурой. Не учитывали мы и семейное и служебное положение. Единственное ограничение — возраст: не моложе 17 и не старше 27 лет. Главная задача, которую мы перед собой ставили, показать, что советская женщина может быть не только решительной, деловой и сильной. Она обязательно должна быть еще и красивой.

Сегодня на сцену Дворца спорта в Лужниках выйдут лишь шесть финалисток. Поздно вечером мы узнаем имя той, кому присуждена корона первой московской красавицы.

П. ТИМОФЕЕВ,
Э. ЖИГАЙЛОВ (фото).

Figure 10.1 The face of Glasnost II

Similarly, the trend towards more coverage of such subjects as corruption, crime and disasters may lead in time to the emergence of a Soviet form of 'yellow journalism',

comparable in content and style to that of British and American tabloids. The dead-pan TASS coverage of aliens landing in the city of Voronezh in the summer of 1989, and the increasing fascination with faith-healers, psychics and other brands of the paranormal displayed by the Soviet media might be thought to give some grounds for pessimism in this regard.

But for most observers—and consumers—of the Soviet media, these possibilities would be but a small price to pay for the de-Stalinisation of news and journalism in the USSR. From this perspective, of greater concern is the question of the long-term survival of the reform process in general, and *glasnost* in particular.

One view interprets *glasnost* as consistent with a pattern in which, following a major change of direction in the Party leadership, like that of 1985, and before the new political trend has been consolidated, a relatively high degree of media ‘freedom’ can be observed. Subsequently, ‘uniformity’ is re-established. Martin Walker, writing before the present reform process began in the USSR, observes of *Pravda* that ‘after each interregnum...[it] begins to act like a Western newspaper, reflecting different thrusts of debate within the party establishment’ (1982, p.147). Peter Reddaway detects ‘remarkable parallels’ between the current strategy of the ‘Gorbachovites’ and that pursued by Khrushchev. Indeed, he compares the Andreyeva affair discussed in chapter 6 (pp. 101–3) with the attempted coup against Khrushchev in 1957 and the conspiracy which led to his removal from office in 1964.¹

The logical conclusion of such an analogy is clear: *glasnost* is a temporary phenomenon, to be followed at some point in the future by a return to neo-Stalinist orthodoxy. In this scenario, someone of the stature of Ligachov (if not he himself) will be Gorbachov’s Brezhnev and *glasnost*, like the ‘thaw’ of the Khrushchev years, will eventually be defeated by a combination of economic failure and bureaucratic resistance.

Although the possibility that the new information policies will be reversed cannot be ruled out, such a prognosis underestimates the extent to which the *glasnost* campaign is a necessary and overdue response to internal and external developments which threaten the ideological hegemony of the Soviet Communist Party at home and the status of the USSR as a major world power. As noted in chapter 4, the CPSU cannot ignore the ‘information revolution’ if it wishes to maintain its leading role. More importantly, perhaps, it cannot afford to neglect the possibilities for economic growth presented by the unfettered introduction of new information technologies.

The *perestroika* of the Soviet media, seen in this context, is less a tool in the consolidation of the reformers’ political power-base than the result of the Party’s recognition that its ability to compete ideologically, and to develop successfully the Soviet economy, is dependent on a more liberal information policy.

The experience of the late 1980s has shown that nothing to do with the USSR can any longer be foretold with any degree of reliability. Even as this book went to press, there were signs of backtracking on the part of the Gorbachov administration, with the President’s threat to ‘temporarily’ suspend the Media Law, made at the Supreme Soviet on January 16th, 1991. Despite this and other failures of nerve, the dramatic ending of the neo-Stalinist governments in central and eastern Europe in 1989 makes it unlikely that the 1990s will see the demise of *glasnost* and a return to the Brezhnevian ways of old. The pressure of events might delay the coming of a fully open, information society to the

USSR, but it is already too late for the process to be stopped. The genie, as Soviet observers put it, is out of the bottle.

Notes

1

Introduction

- 1 See Mickiewicz (1967), for a discussion of the oral propaganda network. She notes that, although the mass media are powerful instruments of ideological influence, oral propaganda plays a distinctive role (p. 170).
- 2 See, for example, Chomsky and Herman (1979a, 1979b, 1988).
- 3 Unless otherwise indicated, all statements attributed to Soviet sources in this book were obtained from interviews conducted by the author.
- 4 ‘*Samizdat*’, meaning ‘self-publishing’. In the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, when many Soviet citizens were arbitrarily deprived of their constitutional rights of access to the means of production of news and information, some established their own small-circulation publications operating outwith Party and state control. These became known as *samizdat*.
- 5 One Soviet survey claimed that *Programme Vremya*, the main news bulletin, has become ‘the most important source of political information. 99% of workers declared that they usually get their domestic and foreign news from *Vremya*’ (Zinin and Disky, eds, 1985, p.164). While the methodological reliability of such a finding cannot be taken for granted, few western observers would doubt that the vast majority of Soviet citizens do indeed use the official media as their main source of information.
- 6 See *The Media in a Soviet Industrial City*, by B.A. Grushin and L.A. Onikov (eds), published in English by the journal *Soviet Sociology*, vol. XX, nos 1, 3, and 4 (1981); vol. XXI, nos 1 and 2 (1982); and vol. XXII, no. 3 (1983). Zinin and Disky (eds, 1985) and Korobeinikov (ed., 1986) typify an increasingly sophisticated literature of public opinion. Welsh notes that ‘public attitudes are being investigated more fully and more openly in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The expression of public attitudes is being cautiously encouraged in most of these societies. As a result, the manifestations of mass thinking are more systematic and continuing. In short, surveys of public opinion are increasingly common and apparently institutionalised practices in most of the European socialist countries’ (ed., 1981, p.xxii). Inkeles and Bauer (1959), and Mickiewicz (1981) use Soviet sources in their studies of the Soviet public’s use of the media.
- 7 A history of the best-known of these publications, the ‘Chronicle of Current Events’, is contained in Hopkins (1983), while Reddaway (ed., 1972) presents English-language translations of several editions of the ‘Chronicle’. Loeber (1973) outlines the legal status of *samizdat* in the Brezhnev years, while Christian *samizdat* of the late 1970s is discussed in Walters (1980).

2

Marxism, Leninism and the media

- 1 For a summary of Marx’s journalistic career see ‘Marx the journalist’, in McLellan, 1970.
- 2 See Okorokov’s introduction to Lenin, 1958, p.19.
- 3 Despite the importance of mass communication and the media in the analysis of modern industrialised societies, the views of the early materialists on the subject have rarely been

subjected to scrutiny. Yves de la Haye's short selection of Marx and Engels' writings on the media (1979) is claimed by its publishers to be 'the first volume of its kind'. Selections of Lenin's writings on the media have been published in Russian (Lenin, 1958), and in English by the International Organisation of Journalists (Lenin, 1972).

4 For a summary of contemporary materialist debates on the role of the media see Lodziak, 1986.

5 In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Marx observes that

in so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among [them], and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class.

(Quoted in de la Haye, 1979, p.54)

6 Lenin's brother was hanged in 1887, following an attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II.

7 For an account of the 'economist' controversy see Schapiro, 1970, chapter 1.

8 The contemporary Soviet media attempt to fulfil these functions by the use of material which is, on the one hand, 'inspirational', and on the other, didactic and instructive. Anniversaries of the births and deaths of leading political, cultural and scientific figures in Russian and Soviet history are celebrated, reminding audiences of the best that Russian and Soviet civilisation has produced. Lenin is the main subject of this type of news, but non-Bolshevik heroes such as the scientists Vernadsky and Lomonosov are also remembered annually, in line with Lenin's insistence that Soviet society should take the best from pre-revolutionary culture.

Decisive historical events are commemorated in the news, and the Soviet media frequently publish long theoretical essays by philosophers, sociologists and other specialists in which the key propaganda themes of the moment are explained to the population.

9 Definitions of Lenin's media principles vary from one author to another. Buzek, for example, identifies *ideonost*, *partiinnost*, and *massovost* as Lenin's principles: 'these determine the content and methods of the press, its approach to such important events as freedom and independence, truthfulness, objectivity, tolerance and respect for other political or religious views, world outlook and ideology' (1964, p.56).

10 Western observers frequently take a more cynical view of the concept of *partiinnost*. In practice, according to Swayze, what he refers to as 'communist partiality' is simply the view that 'what is true, as well as what is ethically good, must be what corresponds to party policy and, on the basis of the pragmatic principles inherent in Marxism, to what serves the party's aims' (1962, p.11).

11 Denis McQuail expresses the distinction well when he writes that Soviet press theory

excludes the possibility of an 'objective' press in the western sense, with its connotation of neutrality. While factualness is also valued by the Soviet press, it has to be assumed that all facts imply values. The observer or reporter can be no more objective than his class position in a particular society allows, and the concept of objectivity underlying Soviet theory refers to a consistency with the realities of historical change as accounted for by marxist theory. The Soviet notion of

objectivity connotes a particular recognition of a determining reality rather than the attempt to be impartial.

(1976, p.13)

- 12 For a content analysis of a sample of readers' letters from Soviet newspapers of 1947 see Inkeles, 1968.
- 13 Anatoly Karpichov and Alexander Chernyak, 'Poblizhe k zhizni, pobolshe vnimaniya', *Pravda*, May 5th, 1987. For Lenin, they continue, 'the constant business of the journalist is to write the history of the here and now... Today it means writing about the revolutionary essence of the change taking place in Soviet society.'
- 14 See the interview with historian Alexander Sovokin published under the headline 'Glasnost i demokratiya', in *Pravda*, June 19th, 1988. This article, prepared under the editorship of the director of the Institute of Marxism- Leninism, G.L.Smirnov, can be taken as representative of current official thinking.
- 15 Sovokin, op. cit.

3

From theory to practice—building the Soviet media

- 1 In 1895 he played a major role in the publication of *Rabocheye Dyelo* (*The Worker's Business*), the first illegal organ of the St Petersburg League of Struggle, which preceded the RSDLP as the main organisation of Russian Social Democracy. In 1899 he became editor of *Rabochaya Gazeta* (*The Worker's Paper*), established as the official organ of the RSDLP at its first Congress.
- 2 Between July 1902 and May 1903 Lenin produced seventeen issues of *Iskra* from a first-floor room in a semi-detached house at Clerkenwell Green in London, now the Karl Marx Museum.
- 3 For an account of this dispute see Schapiro, 1970, pp.55–7.
- 4 'Menshevik', meaning 'of the minority', the name given by Lenin and his supporters to their opponents in the RSDLP following the Second Congress of the Party.
- 5 The Bolsheviks' first legal publication was *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*), which first appeared in October 1905.
- 6 Schapiro reports that 'in the summer of 1911, when the idea of launching a legal daily paper for workers had been raised in discussion by a group of mensheviks inside Russia, the bolsheviks had derided the suggestion. It would only serve, they argued, to create illusions among the workers that a legal press was possible inside Russia without the overthrow of the monarchy' (1970, p.131).
- 7 For a discussion of the role of the 'other' *Pravda* in the Russian social democratic movement, see White, 1974. Soviet journalist A. Petrushov writes that Trotsky's *Pravda* originated as an organ of the Ukrainian 'Spilka' union in Lvov, before printing was transferred to Vienna. In all, twenty-five editions were published. When the Bolsheviks' *Pravda* appeared in 1912 they were accused by Trotsky and his supporters of stealing the title. Rejecting this reproach Petrushov writes that 'the idea of calling a press organ "*Pravda*" did not belong to Trotsky'.

He began to put out his newspaper in 1908, but before this (from 1904 to 1906) a monthly social-democratic organ called '*Pravda*' was published in Moscow, covering questions of art, literature, and social life. The official editor-publisher was V.A.Kozhevnikov, who also founded the journal. However, he was not original in his choice of name either. In Russian history the concept of *Pravda* (Truth) has its roots in folklore, epics and tales. The great traditions of

freedom-loving and free-thinking in Russia gave Dekabrist P.E. Pestel the idea of calling his daring social document on the future of the country 'Russkaya Pravda' (Russian Truth).

(‘Znamya Pravdy’, *Pravda*, May 5th, 1889)

8 Roxburgh notes, ‘it is true that Lenin played an important part at the conference in Prague, in January 1912, at which the Bolsheviks decided to publish a legal daily newspaper inside Russia...But during the next month it was Nikolai Poletayev, a Social Democratic Deputy to the Duma (Parliament) in St Petersburg, and publisher of the Bolshevik weekly *Zvezda*, who received funds and obtained permissions for the new daily paper, while Lenin was in exile in Paris’ (1987, p. 15).

9 From the official history of the CPSU, quoted in Walker, 1982, p.141.

10 *Pravda* under a different name, in order to beat the censor.

11 Korobeinikov expresses the standard Soviet defence of these measures.

They attempted to present this legitimate decree for the liquidation of the monopoly bourgeoisie’s use of the press to spread counter-revolutionary ideology as a violation of Russian culture, and a deprivation of the people’s elementary democratic rights. In reality it was only an insignificant minority of the population—the capitalist class—which was deprived of the right systematically to corrupt the working masses with disinformation.

(ibid.)

12 See Medvedev, 1971, p.381.

13 Discussing this exchange Prokhorov argues that, while the demand for press freedom was ‘absolutely justified’ within the framework of capitalism, under socialism it was an ‘anti-proletarian, reactionary demand’ (1971, p.35). He continues: ‘Marxism-leninism demands judicial freedoms only for those who are truly free in the socio-historical sense, those who represent the forces of progress’ (ibid., p.36).

Following Lenin’s intervention against the 1921 report, its author, G. Myasnikov, carried on his campaign for a return to press freedom locally, eventually publishing a volume of ‘Discussion Materials’ outwith the Party’s own publishing machinery. For this, and other infringements of Party discipline he was expelled in 1922. He disappeared during the period of Stalin’s purges (see Smirnov, 1971, pp.49–54).

14 From the Draft of the RCP’s Reply to the Letter of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, in Lenin, 1972, p.204. In a speech delivered to the First All-Russian Congress of Workers in Education and Socialist Culture on July 31st, 1919, Lenin replied to critics of his media policy thus:

freedom of the press in capitalist society means freedom to trade in publications and in their influence on the masses. Freedom of the press means that the press, a powerful medium for influencing the masses, is maintained at the expense of the capitalists. Such is the freedom of the press that the Bolsheviks violated, and they are proud of having produced the first press free of the capitalists, that in a gigantic country they have for the first time set up a press that does not depend on a handful of rich men and millionaires—a press that is devoted entirely to the struggle against capital, the struggle to which we must subordinate everything.

(1972, p.198)

15 One of the fruits of Gorbachov’s application of *glasnost* has been the opportunity presented to Soviet scholars to investigate the period of the ‘personality cult’ with a freedom and intellectual rigour hitherto impossible in the USSR.

16 See Alfyorov, 1984, p.62.

- 17 Leonid Onikov, 'Glasnost i demokratiya', *Pravda*, June 19th, 1988.
- 18 Onikov goes on to argue that the establishment of the cult of personality, with all that this subsequently entailed for Soviet society, would not have been possible without the prior abandonment of *glasnost* as it had been practised in the early years of Soviet power.
- 19 From his closing speech to the 19th All-Union Party Conference (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 4th, 1988).
- 20 Gross cites items appearing in the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad* in the mid-1940s which led to a purge of Zhdanov's Party organisation in Leningrad.
- 21 For a discussion of the role of the local media in this respect see Getty, 1985, p.51.
- 22 In 1921, Stalin observed that 'of the 140,000,000 people constituting the population of the RSFSR the Great-Russians do not comprise more than 75,000' (1936, p.117).
- 23 See Korobeinikov, 1983, p.69.
- 24 A number of notable firsts are claimed for Soviet broadcasting. Korobeinikov (1983) credits the Soviet Union with the construction of the first mass radio network, and the first use of satellites in domestic television broadcasting, the latter necessitated by the sheer size of the Soviet territory. Soviet historians also claim that it was a Russian—Alexander Stepanovich Popov—who invented broadcasting, and not, as generally assumed in the west, Marconi. According to Yurovsky, Popov demonstrated the world's first 'radiotelegraph' on May 7th, 1885 (1983, p.18). Another Russian, Boris Lvovich Rosing, is described by Yurovsky as 'the father of television' (*ibid.*, p.23). Burton Paulu (1974) discusses this debate in his study of broadcasting in eastern Europe, but fails to reach a definite conclusion.
- 25 Material on the development of television is taken from Yurovsky, 1983.
- 26 Interview in *Pravda*, February 20th, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 9th, 1989).
- 27 Similar observations can be made of creative writing and other forms of mass-produced media text. While the banning of specific texts and authors has been the practice of all Soviet governments, up to and including Gorbachov's, the majority of writers could be relied on to censor themselves on the understanding that failure to do so would make publication and recognition of one's work impossible. For a revealing discussion of how Soviet journalists and other cultural workers engage in self-censorship see Dewhirst and Farrell (eds), 1973.
- 28 Mickiewicz observes that many high-level media workers have a background in the Young Communist League (*Komsomol*) (1984b, p.649). Remington notes that 'in 1986, a year of high turnover in the central and republican media, 30 of 54 new chief executives had been party officials in the past, and 17 of these were appointed directly from the party committee to the media organ' (1988, p.138).
- 29 *Zhurnalists*, no. 4, April 1986, p.6.

4

Glasnost, perestroika and Soviet journalism

- 1 In 1988 a Soviet observer warned that 'the development of satellite television in the western countries will put before our country—or has already put – urgent political, economic, legal and social problems' (Sergei Drozhin, 'Potok nyesvobodnoi informatsii', *Zhurnalists*, no. 9, September 1988). Global television networks such as Worldnet would, he argued, be aimed largely at influencing the population of the Soviet Union. Consequently,

the unregulated 'free flow' of information and ideas broadcast with the help of satellite TV is a threat to the cultural and political sovereignty of our state...The effect of television programmes crossing our borders would be 'contamination of the intellectual environment'. This would have a definite effect on the social sphere.

Faced with this 'threat', the current position of the Soviet government is to call for United Nations regulation of direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS). In the Soviet view, DBS should take place only with the agreement of all the countries within the reception area of a particular satellite. Drozhin argues further that the USSR should produce its own television network to compete with Worldnet. It could also participate in a United Nations world television service if and when one were to be established.

- 2 See McNair (1988) for a comparative discussion of Soviet and western news-management techniques during these crises.
- 3 Leonid Onikov, 'Glasnost i demokratiya', *Pravda*, June 19th, 1988.
- 4 Excerpts from the speech are published, in English, in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. XXXVI, no. 50, January 9th, 1985.
- 5 See Anthony Barnett's account of conversations with Central Committee functionaries (1988, p.165).
- 6 Yuri Baturin, 'Glasnost i demokratiya', *Pravda*, June 19th, 1988.
- 7 Soviet politicians and academics frequently use the term 'post-April' to indicate their view that the April Plenum represents a major break with the past, and the beginning of the 'revolutionary restructuring' of society.
- 8 *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 6, March 12th, 1986.
- 9 Viktor Afanasyev, 'Demokratiya i glasnost', *Pravda*, May 5th, 1988.
- 10 V.Lozyakov, 'Militsiya i pressa', *Izvestia*, August 9th, 1988.
- 11 This was qualified with a warning to journalists against adopting 'a biased approach' to the army with 'unobjective coverage'. He also signalled the limits of critical *glasnost* in military affairs by attacking some of the media for downplaying the scale of the threat posed to the USSR by the west: 'the fundamental issue is whether the military threat to us from the imperialist states is real. Some organs of the press are beginning to call into question the existence of that threat' (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, September 26th, 1988).
- 12 An organisation of concerned citizens and Party activists dedicated to rooting out deficiencies in the organisation of the economy.
- 13 Lois Cunniff, 'Soviet photojournalism: three emigrés open their portfolios', *Columbia Journalism Review*, May/June 1983. This article reproduces photographs from the portfolios of three emigré Soviet photojournalists. Examples are provided of work that was censored, with explanations as to why particular images could or could not be published.
- 14 Published in *Pravda*, February 26th, 1988 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 10th, 1988).
- 15 Chingiz Aitmatov, 'Are the foundations undermined?', *Sovetskaya Kirgiziya*, May 6th, 1988 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, June 1st, 1988).
- 16 See *Izvestia* on September 12th and November 27th, 1988.
- 17 The Katyn massacre was discussed in a Moscow home service commentary of February 20th, 1989, which took as its subject an article in the Polish weekly *Odrodzenie*. The commentary did not deny the conclusion of the Polish article that 'there could only be one perpetrator of the action—the NKVD' (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 24th, 1989).
- 18 Published in *Argumenty i Fakti*, no. 5, 4–10, February 7th, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 14th, 1989).
- 19 For example, it was former Soviet scientist Zhores Medvedev, rather than the official Soviet media, who informed the world of the nuclear disaster which occurred in the Urals in 1957 (Medvedev, Z., 1978).
- 20 See McNair (1988) for a discussion of Soviet media coverage of the Chernobyl disaster.
- 21 N.Yerofeyev, 'Ispitaniye glasnostyu', *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, May 5th, 1988.

22 Hopkins, writing in the late 1960s, suggested that the objective of crime news (or the lack of it) in the Soviet media was

to show that Soviet socialist society is harmonious and does not stimulate crime and violence, while the reverse is true of capitalist societies... Soviet authorities consider that nonpurposeful fictional or documentary presentation of violence, crime and civil strife by the mass media are inimical to society's interests.

(1970, p.242)

23 Moscow World Service, July 14th, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 17th, 1989).

24 On the other hand, an important consequence of *glasnost* is that media coverage of such disputes can now be openly criticised, as in an 'appeal' to the Soviet people published in the Latvian press in September 1989. In response to central Soviet media coverage of the Baltic states' campaign for greater autonomy and independence from the USSR, the Sajudis and People's Front groups jointly declared that 'half-truths, a distortion of the actual events are going hand in hand with outright lies'. They alleged that the central Soviet media were making them in 'the image of a new enemy, an internal enemy', and that, 'as in the times of Stalin, the authors of this campaign are not ashamed of attributing this role to an entire people' (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, September 15th, 1989).

25 Onikov, op. cit.

26 A.Druzenko, 'O glasnosti, ofitsiose u prochem', *Pravda*, August 18th, 1989.

5

Expanding access and socialist pluralism

1 L.Onikov, 'Glasnost i demokratiya', *Pravda*, June 19th, 1988.

2 *Pravda*, December 2nd, 1988.

3 Since its establishment the documents published by *Izvestia TsK KPSS* have included the secret protocols of the Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact.

4 D.Grishanov, 'Pressa—vnye kritika?', *Izvestia*, March 23rd, 1988.

5 Around the same time the Moscow correspondent of the *Guardian* reported that radical sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky had been forced to take out a libel action against *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, after which the newspaper was ordered to print a correction to the offending article and an apology (Jonathan Steele, 'Crime and punishment in Moscow', *Guardian*, July 20th, 1988).

6 From the Resolution on *glasnost* (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 6th, 1988).

7 The article complained about by Mr Moore consisted of an attack on the USSR as 'without a rival the most inefficient country in the developed world'. Recounting his experiences with Aeroflot, Soviet hotels, and other sectors of the economy while on a brief visit to the USSR, Young asked, rhetorically: 'Can any country so incapable as this one of making the planes run on time seriously be envisaged sweeping all before it across the central plain of Germany, as its mighty army, with clockwork precision, effortlessly asserts the notorious supremacy of its conventional forces over anything ranged against them' ('Pomposity, trumpery, and ovations still rule', *Guardian*, December 4th, 1987).

8 Neil Hickey, 'Dobroe utro, SSSR', *Zhurnalist*, no. 8, August 1989.

9 According to the deputy chairman of GOSTELRADIO, quoted in the article by Neil Hickey cited above.

10 The developing culture of debate and dissension being created by the *glasnost* campaign is illustrated by the fact that these telebridges, despite the relatively uncontrolled and at times

highly contentious nature of the British-Soviet exchanges, were extensively criticised in the Soviet press for being too 'safe' and bland (see *Izvestia*, March 19th, 1988).

- 11 A typical exposition of what has until recently been the Soviet argument against media pluralism was presented by former *Izvestia* editor Melor Struva in 1983, in the course of an interview with BBC journalist Peter France. France pointed out that 'we' in Britain had 'a whole range of newspapers, from the *Morning Star*, which attacks our system of government, to the *Daily Telegraph*, which supports it. Don't you think, as a journalist, it would be a good thing if your readers had the same degree of choice?'

Struva: The *Morning Star* reflects the philosophy of the Communist Party which exists in Britain. There is no capitalist party in my country. If we had such a party maybe we would have a paper like the *Daily Telegraph* or *The Times*, but the point is that in my country there are no parties except the Communist Party. And it would be artificial for us, just to show you how broad-minded we are, to create a small, anti-Soviet party, and then allow them to publish a paper and then say, 'you see, we also have diversified democracy'. We don't play such a game.

(*Global Report: News of the Second World*, BBC2, December 16th, 1983)

12 *Pravda*, May 12th, 1988.

- 13 In 1920 Russell predicted that, because of Bolshevik policies, a 'bureaucratic aristocracy' would come into being in Soviet Russia, 'concentrating authority in its own hands, and creating a regime just as oppressive and cruel as that of capitalism' (1962, p.68). See too Luxemburg's critique of democratic centralism in 'Leninism or Marxism?' (1961).

14 In his speech to the 19th Party Conference *Pravda* editor Victor Afanasyev articulated this approach when he said that 'we have no political opposition, nor could we have...because there is no social or class basis for this' (*Pravda*, July 2nd, 1988).

15 'Djilas on Gorbachov', *Encounter*, September/October 1988.

16 *Izvestia*, May 7th, 1988.

17 G.Smirnov, 'Obshechelovecheski interes i interesy klassov', *Pravda*, March 1st, 1989.

18 L.Annis, 'Pluralizm naiznanku', *Pravda*, December 3rd, 1988.

6

Resistance and restructuring

1 N.Sinyakov, *Pravda*, May 18th, 1987.

2 Young people, as one might expect, have fewer such reservations. In July 1988, the organ of the Young Communist League, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, reported the results of an opinion poll conducted among students. Sixty-nine per cent of those polled welcomed media criticism of the Stalinist era, while 18 per cent considered that critical items were weakening the faith of young people in the ideals of socialist society (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, July 23rd, 1988).

3 From comments made by L.Kayumov, the editor of *Sovetskaya Uzbekistan*, in a round-table discussion with editors of other republican newspapers, reported in *Pravda*, March 2nd, 1988. Kayumov stated that the 'negative phenomena' of political life in Uzbekistan had been reflected in the republic's press. While 'abuses of authority' were rife, newspapers were filled with 'ostentatious' praise for the republic's leaders. 'As a result we, the journalists, forfeited the trust of our readers.'

4 V.Bogachov, 'Povishat zozidat'yelnuyu rol pressy', *Zhurnalist*, no. 9, September 1988.

5 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, September 8th, 1988.

6 A.Kalinin, V.Kuznetsov, 'Smyert Zhurnalista', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, June 14th, 1989.

7 '*Pravda*', produced by Granada Television Ltd and broadcast on ITV, October 1987.

- 8 The term 'conservative' is used here and subsequently to denote the defenders of the status quo in the Soviet Union, as opposed to the 'reformers' who argue for change. In these terms a 'conservative' is one who subscribes to an orthodox marxist-leninist position, as opposed to the 'revisionist' thinking which underlies much of the reform campaign.
- 9 Although in 1989 he was accused of bribery and investigated by the USSR's special prosecutor. He was cleared of all charges.
- 10 *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. XXXVIII, no.10.
- 11 As *Izvestia* reported with approval in an editorial of July 14th, 1988, the conference declared 'the inalienable right of each citizen to receive full and reliable information on any question of social life which does not constitute a state or military secret; and the right to open and free discussion of any socially significant question.' The editorial also welcomed the fact that the resolution on *glasnost* contained proposals on the opening up to public scrutiny of Party forums and sessions, the provision to the public of information about Party business, and the creation of democratic mechanisms for the promotion of Party cadres.
- 12 In the view of observers there was an unmistakable tendency for applause from the audience to be at its most forceful when a conservative was on the rostrum. A participant at a news briefing to discuss Gorbachov's opening speech to the conference observed that

we journalists were somewhat taken aback that when Gorbachov spoke about journalists' great responsibility and about their sense of balance in their appraisal of that they are doing, thunderous applause broke out in the hall, but when he drew attention to the impermissibility of suppression or punishment for criticism, including in relation to the mass media, there was silence in the hall.

(Summary of World Broadcasts, July 1st, 1988)

- 13 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 4th, 1988.
- 14 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 6th, 1988.
- 15 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 4th, 1988. Accusations of 'nihilism' against those in the media who engage in critical *glasnost* are a common theme in conservative rhetoric.
- 16 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 6th, 1988.
- 17 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 4th, 1988.
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 24th, 1989.
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 *ibid.*
- 22 *ibid.* At a session of the Central Committee in September 1988, Ligachov noted that

after the April Plenum the Soviet media began more actively to publish materials reflecting different opinions, manifestations of democracy and *glasnost*. But it has been noted that some editors willingly publish that which corresponds to their own point of view, while that which they don't agree with is either not published, or accompanied by a repudiating editorial commentary. The end result is one-sided democracy, and it's necessary to get rid of it. Indeed, it is entirely outwith the framework of democratic practice when materials are published by the decision of the editor alone, without review by editorial colleagues on the newspaper or journal.

(*Pravda*, September 17th, 1988)

- 23 *ibid.*
- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 21st, 1989.

- 26 From the report of a Central Committee session with leading media workers, in *Pravda*, September 25th, 1988.
- 27 N.Andreyeva, 'Nye mogu postupatsa moey prinsipii', *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, March 13th, 1988.
- 28 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 7th, 1988. For journalistic accounts of the political background to this debate, see articles by Martin Walker in the *Guardian* of April 16th ('Glasnost and perestroika triumph in another clash of words' and April 22nd, 1988 ('Prospect of defeat worries reformists').
- 29 Ruslan Koslov, 'Povorot, kotorovo nye bylo', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 21st, 1988.
- 30 Pavel Demidov, 'Nye nada zabluzhdatsa', *Zhurnalists*, no. 5, May 1988.
- 31 From a speech given by M.Ulyanov, the chairman of the RSFSR Theatre Workers' Union, to the 19th Party Conference (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 4th, 1988).
- 32 *Pravda*, May 11th, 1988.
- 33 *ibid.*
- 34 V.Afanasyev, 'Demokratiya i glasnost', *Pravda*, December 14th, 1987.
- 35 Typical of the piece was the allegation that 'over the five days and nights spent in the United States [Yeltsin] slept an average of two hours a day, drained two bottles of vodka, four of whisky, and an innumerable number of cocktails at official parties' (*Pravda*, September 18th, 1989).
- 36 S.Kiselyev, 'Golosuitye za glasnost!', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, September 23rd, 1989.
- 37 Yu.Baturin, 'Glasnost i Demokratiya', *Pravda*, June 19th, 1988.
- 38 F.Burlatsky, interviewed on the Moscow Home Service, October 6th, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, October 11th, 1989).
- 39 This and subsequent quotations from the draft law are taken from the English translation of the document provided in the *Summary of World Broadcasts*, December 7th, 1989.
- 40 Yu.Baturin, M.Fedotov, V.Entin, 'Kakim byt zakonu o pechaty', *Zhurnalists*, no.3, March 1989. Although this article predates the adoption of the Press Law the authors played an important role in its publication. This article, consequently, can be viewed as a 'draft' of the law, as many of the proposals contained in it were subsequently incorporated into the final version.
- 41 Baturin *et al.*, *op. cit.*
- 42 In the article cited by Baturin *et al.* cited above, it is suggested that officials who break the law on the provision of information are liable to fines of between 25 and 100 roubles, to be paid from their own pockets. The obstruction of journalists by officials is punishable by a fine of up to 200 roubles. In the published version of the draft, however, these proposals are absent.
- 43 See for example V.Teplyuk, who warns that the provisions for the protection of officials may, especially in the localities, come to take precedence over the provisions on openness ('Zakon rassudit', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, May 5th, 1989).
- 44 Baturin *et al.* suggested that if the reply is written by the complainant cuts or changes to the original text should be clearly indicated. Replies must be published within seven days of their being received, or within fifteen days of the complaint being made. They should be placed in the same position in the guilty media organ as the original offending article. In the case of broadcasting, replies should be of a minimum length (specified as no less than the time taken to read half a page of standard type). The call for a right of reply, they suggested, should be made within three months of the appearance of the offending item. As with the proposals mentioned in note 42 above, these did not appear in the published version of the draft.
- 45 'Zhurnalists imyeyet pravo...', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, June 3rd, 1989.
- 46 T.Davidovich, 'Pora zhurnalistam zashishat zamikh sebya', *Zhurnalists*, no.9, September 1989.
- 47 Burlatsky, *op. cit.*

- 48 S.Karkhanin, G.Orlovsky, 'Shtrafnaya Zapyataya', *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, November 26th, 1989.
- 49 In an interview with *Zarya Vostoka*, the head of GLAVLIT in Georgia, V. A.Petriashvili, conceded that the organisation in the republic had played an important role in maintaining the 'bureaucratic-command system' ('GLAVLIT: snyaty mnogiye ogranicheniya', *Zarya Vostoka*, February 15th, 1989).
- 50 Interview conducted in *Izvestia*, February 10th, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, February 17th, 1989).
- 51 Yu.Sorokin, 'Budyet li prinyat Zakon o pechati na etoi sessii?', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, September 30th, 1989.
- 52 As reported in Burlatsky, op. cit.
- 53 *ibid.*
- 54 Sorokin, op. cit.
- 55 Baturin *et al.*, op. cit.
- 56 Burlatsky, op. cit. The role of censorship has also been sharply reduced in the sphere of book publishing. Until the 1980s hundreds of thousands of literary and scientific works published in the USSR and abroad were designated as 'restricted access' and kept in 'special repositories' closed to all but a select few. As of 1987 some 6,000 such works remained in the special repositories, including titles by Kerensky, Denikov and other non-Bolshevik writers. When these books were originally published, as GLAVLIT representative V.A.Solodin explains, 'the Party of the victorious proletariat was certain of the rightness and strength of its ideas and was not afraid of its political opponents' ideas being expressed in print' (interview published in *Sovetskaya Kultura*, March 22nd, 1988. *Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 5th, 1988). Now, on the same principle, the books are being 'unbanned' and returned to the public library stock. In 1988 the number of books referred to 'special repositories' was only one-tenth of the 1986 figure.
- 57 *Pravda*, March 15th, 1987.
- 58 Alexei Romanov, 'Budyet li otlichno zhurnalist?', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, May 4th, 1988. For a discussion of the problems faced by young Soviet journalists, see Remington, 1988, ch. 6.
- 59 *Izvestia*, August 6th, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, August 7th, 1989).
- 60 To 'cover extensively the life of the working class, comprehensively revealing its decisive role in modern Soviet society and in the running of state affairs, reflect the position of the working people on the most important problems of socio-political and socio-economic development, and actively promote the consolidation of the USSR's peoples in the struggle for restructuring'.
- 61 This publication will cover 'the diversity of forms of the country's political life, actively mould a constructive attitude to restructuring by presenting various points of view, help to renew ideological work, freeing it from routine, windbagery and cliché'.
- 62 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 9th, 1988.

7

Soviet international journalism

- 1 The exception to this pattern was *Sovetskaya Rossiya* which, although it has no London correspondent, reported the United Kingdom in sixteen items over the sample period. This is explained by the fact that the major part of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*'s coverage comprises short human-interest stories gleaned from news agencies, reflecting its traditionally 'populist' approach to news.

- 2 For a history of the TASS news agency see Kruglak, 1972. Traditionally, TASS was used as an intelligence agency by the Soviet government, items being classified according to their political and ideological sensitivity. Thus, 'green' and 'blue' TASS stories could be disseminated as news items through the mass media to the general public. 'White' items were for limited circulation amongst selected officials, and 'red' items were restricted to the highest echelons of the leadership (see Lendvai, 1981, p.130). At the time of writing in late 1989 this system continued to be in operation.
- 3 Though not unknown. It is perhaps paradoxical that *Krasnaya Zvezda*, with its reputation as a relatively 'hard-line' publication should have been one of only two newspapers sampled in March 1988 to report the results of a survey by the Equal Opportunities Commission into the social position of British women.
- 4 The term 'sustaining myth' is used by Robert Tucker to refer to the legitimating ideology of marxism-leninism. He argues that when this myth breaks down, as it did under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev, Soviet society enters a state of political and ideological crisis, which the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* are intended to address (1987).
- 5 Dimitri Lyubosvetov, 'Vremya na ekranye', *Pravda*, May 19th, 1986.
- 6 Alexei Kuvshnikov, 'Davaiyte sporit—v gazete, a nye sa chaskoi kofe', *Zhurnalst*, no. 3, March 1988.
- 7 From a discussion of these problems by eminent Soviet journalists broadcast by Soviet television in November 1988. English text in *Summary of World Broadcasts*, November 19th, 1988.
- 8 Alexander Novikov, 'Krizis zhenra', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, March 12th, 1988.
- 9 Novikov, op. cit.
- 10 A.Medvedenko, 'Pravo myslut, obyazannost myslit', *Zhurnalst*, no.11, November 1988.
- 11 As note 9 above.
- 12 'Mezhdunarodnaya Panorama', July 2nd, 1989 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, July 20th, 1989).
- 13 Kuvshnikov, op. cit.
- 14 See Schlesinger for an elaboration of the view that Chomsky and Herman's work is based on 'a highly deterministic vision of how the media operate coupled with a straightforwardly functionalist conception of ideology' (1989, p.297).
- 15 This is not to cast doubt on Nghiep's right to sympathy, but to point out the journalist's assumption that he should be presented as a positive hero.
- 16 This has remained true in the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, as the Mujahideen have engaged in attacks upon civilians and massacres of their own forces.
- 17 For a discussion of Soviet press coverage of the Afghan conflict, see Downing, 1988.
- 18 Interestingly, while British media coverage of the situation in Northern Ireland strenuously seeks to depoliticise and criminalise what is called 'terrorism' by para-military groups in the province, *Vremya's* coverage of these Mujahideen attacks emphasises that 'their political character is absolutely obvious: to block the peace process, and to dash hopes of an end to the bloodshed.'
- 19 Soviet coverage of the latter stages of the Afghan conflict has played on western, and indeed Soviet, concerns about opiate addiction fed by heroin exported from Afghanistan by the Mujahideen. On March 13th, 1988 *Vremya* reported that 'the face of popular power in Afghanistan strikes not only against the reactionaries and counter-revolutionaries. It is brought to the struggle against criminal elements who use the war situation in the country [to smuggle drugs].' Commenting on a successful anti-drugs operation, a representative of the Afghan Internal Ministry stated to camera that 'the establishment of peace in Afghanistan will help to win the international struggle against the drugs trade'.
- 20 *The Times*, March 4th, 1988.
- 21 As the US-Panama dispute continued into 1989, the Soviet media remained highly critical of the US government. Following the general election in Panama on May 7th, 1989, and the

subsequent further deterioration of relations between the Bush administration and the Noriega regime, TASS reported an

extremely tense internal situation that is being aggravated by the anti-Panamanian campaign unleashed by the USA and which has continued for over a year... Whatever attitude one takes to what is going on in Panama, it is clear that only the Panamanian people itself can and must make its internal choice. The concern for democracy—and that is how Washington's line on Panama is being presented—is nothing more than interference in internal affairs, and disdain for the elementary norms of international law.

(TASS statement, May 13th, 1989. *Summary of World Broadcasts*, May 15th, 1989)

The US invasion of Panama in December 1989 was described by TASS as 'gunboat diplomacy'.

- 22 We note that while the administration's policy on this issue was not reported without qualification or criticism, some journalists appeared to view the official line as unquestionable truth. On March 18th, Honduran aircraft attacked Sandinista positions inside Nicaragua. 'The Hondurans', reported the BBC's correspondent, 'were fighting back', on the apparent assumption that the Hondurans had indeed attacked.
- 23 For a full elaboration of the 'new political thinking' see Gorbachov, 1987.

8

Reykjavik and Moscow: a tale of two summits

- 1 The sample for this chapter includes editions of *Programme Vremya* recorded on October 11th, 12th and 13th, 1986, the period of the Reykjavik summit. BBC1 and ITV main evening bulletins were recorded on October 11th and 12th. Soviet and British news bulletins were recorded on June 1st and 2nd, 1988, the final two days of the Moscow summit.
- 2 At his news conference on June 1st, 1988, Gorbachov said of Reagan's emphasis on human rights, 'propaganda gambits prevailed, and all sorts of spectacles, all sorts of shows. I'm not filled with admiration for this part of the meeting. Let's get back to real politics' (1 2100 1.6.88). The 'propaganda gambits' Gorbachov had in mind included Reagan's address to a group of Soviet dissidents at the US embassy in Moscow.

9

'The world of capital'

- 1 In this respect Soviet news-values converge with those of western journalists. Comparing *Vremya* with British television news, one finds that both devote more items to the USA than to any other country.
- 2 The USSR's socialist allies also receive extensive coverage.
- 3 'Korpunkt', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, June 3rd, 1989. Sagaidak's article was written shortly after the Information Forum which took place in London in May 1989. He notes further that the attitudes of the 'functionaries' who deal with these requests are slow to change.

For them, any progress in relations between east and west presents a challenge to their entire life's philosophy. That's why it is possible to predict with a sufficient degree of certainty that if the Soviet government puts forward proposals on the removal of mutual limitations on the movements of correspondents, the British won't agree. They are not yet ready for such a change.

Appended to Sagaidak's views on the problems faced by Soviet correspondents in Britain was the following note from the editorial board:

Henceforth we will be deprived for some time of up-to-date news from London. Soon after the Information Forum, at which Prime Minister M. Thatcher tried to show how important it is to struggle for freedom of information and all kinds of measures to assist the work of journalists, the British government without any explanation or evidence expelled eleven Soviet workers from the country, among them three journalists, including our correspondent.

4 Quoted in the *Independent*, February 22nd, 1988.

5 This is a long-standing Soviet concern. Based on a sample of Soviet news from 1946, Alexander Dallin found that 'economic crisis and industrial class struggle' were one of the main topics in coverage of the United States (1947).

6 Leonard Peltier was an activist for the rights of native Americans before he was imprisoned for murder, in what is widely regarded to have been a miscarriage of justice. Charles Heider is an American astro-physicist who went on hunger strike outside the White House in 1987 to protest against the US government's SDI programme. Brian Wilson is an American anti-nuclear campaigner who lost both legs after being run over by a train during a protest against nuclear testing in Nevada.

7 Appended to the article by the editorial board was a letter from 'unemployed architect's assistant' Colin Cameron, of Wayside Cottage in Fife, Scotland. Cameron expressed some surprise at the favourable response which Mrs Thatcher had reportedly received from the Soviet people during her 1987 visit, and at the fact that she was now being referred to in the USSR rather affectionately as the 'blue-eyed lady': 'for a worker who can't find a job in this country because of her policies it is difficult to understand why the "Iron Lady" should now be called the "blue-eyed lady" [in the USSR].' The latter term, explained Cameron, is used in English to refer to someone who can do no wrong: 'unfortunately, in this country we know from bitter experience that Mrs Thatcher is the opposite.'

8 Absent from these reports, and from Soviet media coverage of this theme as a whole, is a comparison of the standard of living of the British unemployed with that of Soviet workers. Were this to be done, the bleak picture of unemployed life in Britain which emerges from the coverage would have to be qualified with the acknowledgement that many workers in the USSR receive the equivalent of £100 per month in wages. Just as much western reporting of life in the USSR lacks context and background, Soviet coverage of the UK often exaggerates the scale of the poverty caused by unemployment.

9 Quoted in the *Guardian*, December 19th, 1984.

10 We note here the equation of bombing campaigns against civilians in England with the 'colonial' violence of the security forces. Reporting on the original convictions of the Guildford Four in 1975, Alexander Lyuty referred to this period as 'a time when the cruelty of the British expeditionary force in Northern Ireland was often echoed by explosions in Britain itself (*Pravda*, March 28th 1988). We note, too, that in the case of the Guildford Four

the Soviet position, like that of all who asserted their innocence, was subsequently confirmed by events.

- 11 *Summary of World Broadcasts*, November 22nd, 1988.
- 12 The reporting of this exchange not only allows the restating of the conventional marxist-leninist view of 'objectivity', but shows that the media of the capitalist world are, by their own admission, highly ideological, and in a conservative direction. The 'freedom' of the journalist, in Mr Hasting's own (reported) words, is shown to be conditional on ideological conformity, rather as Soviet journalists portray their own 'freedom'.
- 13 Dimitri Lyubosvetov, 'Vremya na ekranye', *Pravda*, May 19th, 1986.
- 14 Alexander Novikov, 'Krizis zhenra', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, March 12th, 1988.
- 15 Space was found, however, for some criticism of the government's policy on the arts. It was reported that British actors and directors were involved in a campaign against the introduction of censorship to the British theatre (a reference to 'Clause 28' legislation, outlawing the 'promotion' of homosexuality by local councils, at that time going through the UK parliament). Secondly, the generally favourable image of the British theatre presented in the piece was qualified by a paragraph on the 'commercialisation of art' which, though 'common to the west as a whole, is intensifying in Britain... because of the reduction in state subsidies the number of productions is falling'. An actress was quoted as follows: 'for Madame Thatcher the theatre is not the main priority, and this makes us anxious. If we continue to receive state grants we can preserve creative independence, putting on what is useful and important for the audience rather than the businessman.'

10

Women of the world, unite!—women in Soviet news

- 1 For an analysis of Soviet women's magazines see McAndrew, 1985.
- 2 Although some background on the position of women in Soviet society is necessary for the subsequent analyses of media content, space does not permit the inclusion of a detailed discussion of the social position of Soviet women in this chapter. The interested reader is directed to the many excellent studies of this theme which are available, especially, Lapidus, 1979, and Holland (ed.), 1985.
- 3 The lack of women at this level of government was demonstrated, ironically, in coverage of the Party's ceremonial meeting to mark Women's Day. As *Vremya's* newsreader recorded the names of the official dignitaries filing on to the stage at the Hall of the People in the Kremlin—'comrades Gorbachov, Ligachov, Rizhkov, Zaitsev'—the roll-call of male names was broken only by that of comrade Biryukova, Central Committee secretary for light industry.
- 4 Tatyana Zaslavskaya, 'Dyelo, dyeti, i sudba', *Izvestia*, March 8th, 1988.
- 5 Italy also featured in a *Pravda* item which noted that, while the social position of Italian women had improved in recent years, female unemployment was still 2.5 times higher than that of men. In Italy, it was reported, as evidence of women's subordinate position, 'there are 10 to 12 million housewives' (N.Miroshnik, 'Eti italyanskiye muzhshiny', *Pravda*, March 8th, 1988).
- 6 From India, A.Artamonov wrote that 'the "dowry" is a custom handed down from time immemorial, whereby a sum of money is demanded from the parents of the bride. After the wedding, it often ends in tragedy when a veritable hell begins for the young woman. Dissatisfied with the dowry the husband literally terrorises the bride, demanding more and more gifts. Not all can cope with it, and some find escape from the violence and the insults in suicide. But more often, in accordance with the law of "dowry", the victim is covered in

petrol and burned alive by the husband's relatives. 387 women were victims of the "dowry" in India in 1985, and there were 829 victims in the first eight months of 1986.'

7 A.Lyuty, 'Vakhta v Grinem-Kommon', *Pravda*, December 23rd, 1987.

8 S.Posthukov, 'Dushaya Polovina', *Pravda*, March 8th, 1988.

9 Zaslavskaya, op. cit.

10 The 'feuilleton' is a type of Soviet journalism popularised in Russia by Suvorin in the 1860s, who defined it thus: 'the *feuilleton* reinforces the lead article and, for the busy person weighed down by the trifles of life, repeats in light form what he has no time or inclination to read in serious form. A *feuilleton* is a popularisation of those ideas which newspapers try to disseminate by means of lead articles' (quoted in Ambler, 1972, p.58).

Neal Ascherson argues that 'the best way to describe the form is to say that it regards all social phenomena, including politics, as something to be reviewed like a play. When a minister makes a speech the *feuilleton* writer does not ask how the speech affects the next election but what it reveals about the sort of society we live in and the myths on which that society rests' ('Columnist captains of their bathtubs', *Observer*, August 30th, 1987). Today, 'Russians consider the newspaper *feuilleton* to be one of the most important and characteristic features of their journalism, although precisely what is and what is not a *feuilleton* is hard to say. At present it may be stated at least that it is a short informally written article employing satirical methods of topical criticism' (Ambler, 1972, p.57).

11 Quoted in S.Maslov, 'Seksa u nas nyet', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 19th, 1989. This article contrasted the relative liberalism of the East German media in matters of sexuality with the continuing reluctance of the Soviet media, even in the era of *glasnost*, to concede that such a thing existed.

12 From the Estonian journal *Kultuur ja Elu*, March 1988 (*Summary of World Broadcasts*, April 28th, 1988).

13 'Blank spots' in the discussion of sexuality remain, however. According to Liiv, 'it is customary not to talk about homosexuals and their problems in the Soviet Union. One does not know precisely how widespread this might be and only VD clinics have any kind of idea of how often it might possibly occur...Of lesbianism psychiatrists have an even more vague idea...Here one keeps quiet about the fact that a large proportion of boys and girls masturbate.'

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