



Glasnost at Twenty

By Leon Aron

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

—John 8:32

The twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the Russian revolution (1987–91) is a fitting occasion to assess the true scale and the impact of the national spiritual liberation known as glasnost, and to put it into a broader context of the history of ideas and their role in revolutions. Such an examination is doubly useful today, when a steady stream of Kremlin-sponsored propaganda seeks to distort and minimize what glasnost has wrought.

On January 27, 1987, at the end of the first working day of the Central Committee meeting, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Mikhail Gorbachev, strode to the podium and declared that the people should be given an opportunity to have “their say on any subject of the society’s life.”¹ From then on, he avowed, the “outside-criticism zones” of Soviet life were a thing of the past. “People must know the whole truth,” Gorbachev told the startled functionaries of the one-party dictatorship, which for seventy years had maintained total control of mass media, employing deafening and unchallenged propaganda, censorship, and terror to suppress the emergence and dissemination of independent thought. “As never before,” Gorbachev continued, “we need the Party and the people to know everything. [We need] [m]ore light!”²

To describe this new policy, Gorbachev used the nineteenth-century word “glasnost.” Derived from the old Russian word *glas* (voice), it had come to mean the ability to voice one’s concerns openly. Along with *perestroika* (reconstruction),

it would soon enter all the major languages as a label for the mammoth transformation of the Soviet Union that was underway.

There were many perfectly valid tactical explanations for introducing glasnost. One of them was to avoid the fate of the previous reformist Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev (1954–64), who was overthrown by the party establishment. By quickly giving people a stake in the liberalization, Gorbachev dramatically expanded the political base of the reforms. The ploy succeeded brilliantly and made Gorbachev invulnerable to the party conservatives. Yet from its beginning as a tactic in the service of a reform, glasnost quickly evolved into the primary engine of a revolution that destroyed the political and economic systems—as well as the very state—that Gorbachev had intended to modify.

An Astonishing Spiritual Self-Liberation

Twenty years is but a whisk in historical terms, but even so short a remove enhances our ability to see glasnost for what it was: an enormous—and enormously inspiring—instance of spiritual self-liberation of a great nation and people. As we know of no public opinion data prior to 1985 that dealt with the essence of the political and economic arrangements of the Soviet Union, it is impossible to say

Leon Aron (laron@aei.org) is a resident scholar and the director of Russian Studies at AEI. He is the author of a forthcoming book on Russia entitled *Russia’s Revolution: Essays 1989–2006*.

whether glasnost is entirely responsible for the appearance of new ideas and values, or if a significant segment of the Soviet population espoused them before and the new freedom only helped to disseminate and radicalize the ideas. If the experience of other great revolutions applies, both developments most likely unfolded in parallel and mutually reinforcing ways. Yet it is undeniable that glasnost became one of modern history's most astonishing examples of the power of the truth; the ideas that it generates; and these ideas' ability to change the values, perceptions, and, in the end, political choices of millions.

There were, of course, many good reasons *why* the Soviet Union should have collapsed as it did. But it is impossible without taking glasnost into account to explain how it happened. How, that is, did a mighty state and a multinational empire which had crushed or silenced all its internal enemies; which only a decade before became the world's other nuclear superpower and intimidated the international community into the permanent acceptance of its conquests; and which appeared viable and lasting despite visible faults, failures, and deficiencies both to the overwhelming majority of its own citizens and virtually all the foreign experts fall within four years virtually without the firing of a single shot?

Such an examination is particularly timely today because of the new revisionist mythology, sponsored by the Vladimir Putin Kremlin. In this version of the 1987–91 events there was no revolution, no shift in values, no new ideas or ideals—only the collapse of a good, healthy, and mighty state brought about by incompetence, malfeasance, or subversion from the outside. The implication is that those years have left no enduring legacy in the way Russians think about their past, assess their present, and construct a vision of a just society. Even a brief outline of what really happened belies this account.

“The Life-Giving Liquid of Glasnost”

In the crucial years from 1985 to 1987, Gorbachev entrusted the propaganda and ideology “portfolio” to his top aide and one-time confidant, Alexandr Yakovlev. The general secretary could not have made a better choice. To Yakovlev, glasnost was the touchstone of

perestroika. He thought that the society was tormented, first and foremost, by lies—“ubiquitous and all-consuming lies”—and without glasnost, perestroika would be “doomed.”³ “Write about everything but do not lie!” Yakovlev instructed newspaper and magazine editors. “Glasnost is the heart of democracy, not a gift by those in power. Do not run to me asking what to publish and what not to publish. Take the responsibility!”⁴

Gradually and wearily, the editors of “liberal” publications (most of whom Yakovlev had hand-picked for the job) began to publish as if there were no censorship and no swift sanctions from the Kremlin for printing a questionable phrase. Soon, the circulations of the most daring “flagships of glasnost” doubled and redoubled and redoubled again.⁵ The print runs of most popular dailies, weeklies, and monthlies expanded dramatically, yet the publishers could not keep up with demands. All over Russia there were long lines to newspaper kiosks, which were sold out of their daily allotments within hours. Between May 25 and June 9, 1989, the country quite literally came to a standstill, as most adults watched the live telecasts of the First Congress of the People's Deputies⁶—the first uncensored account of the Soviet leaders' deliberations in seventy-two years. The “life-giving liquid

of glasnost and freedom of speech slaked the enslaved society's thirst for truth,” Yakovlev wrote of those days.⁷ Like everyone else, at times he felt “intoxicated” by the “ability to speak freely, to think freely without the fear of denunciations or camps.”⁸

The National Self-Scrutiny

Yakovlev watched with satisfaction, and perhaps glee, as the first “carefully measured dosages of glasnost corroded the dogmas of the repressive system.”⁹ He hoped that the openness eventually would spell “the end of Stalinism and one-party rule.”¹⁰

Yakovlev's instincts as a veteran apparatchik-turned-revolutionary proved flawless. The relentless outpouring of uncensored truth fueled national self-scrutiny, which at times looked like a vast exorcism. First revealed were the shocking poverty and backwardness of what four generations had been told was the world's

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most advanced society. The “planned economy” was shown to produce unimaginable waste of resources and ecological disasters.¹¹

Seventy years after the 1917 Great October Socialist Revolution, 6.7 million families did not have an apartment of their own and lived instead in one room in hostels, barracks, or “communal apartments,” sharing a bathroom and a kitchen.¹² A hundred million Soviet citizens (a third of the country’s population) had less living space than was prescribed by the minuscule Soviet “sanitary norm” of nine square meters (fewer than 100 square feet) per person.¹³ Tens of millions of people spent several hours every day in lines for milk and soap, were only able to buy meat twice a year on the official holidays, and had to use ration coupons to get a pound of cooked sausage once a month.¹⁴

Organized crime and corruption flourished, while 35 percent of the Soviet hospitals had no hot water, 30 percent lacked indoor toilets, and nearly one out of every six hospital beds was in a facility with no running water.¹⁵ All hospitals but the ones serving the elite were desperately short on everything from basic medicines to single-use gowns for doctors to wraps for newborn babies.¹⁶ The Soviet Union was behind all developed nations in infant mortality, ranking fiftieth in the world, with a rate higher than that of Barbados, Mauritius, and the United Arab Emirates.¹⁷ Of the minimum 3 billion single-use injection needles annually required, barely 50 million were produced.¹⁸ Forty-three million Soviet men, women, and children (17 percent of the population) lived at or below the newly established poverty level of seventy-five rubles a month.¹⁹ Over one-quarter of the population (80 million people) earned fewer than a hundred rubles a month, and as a newspaper put it, they “could barely make ends meet.”²⁰ (In August 1988, the leading national daily, *Izvestia*, published a letter in which a reader described how she and her husband were unable to spend fewer than 150 rubles a month on food.²¹)

Pensioners were especially hard-pressed: every third urban senior citizen and eight out of ten villagers—over 15

million people altogether—received fewer than sixty rubles a month.²² After decades of sacrifice for the “glorious future,” people found themselves, as one of glasnost’s troubadours put it, “deceived” and “humiliated,” drowned in “nihilism, spiritual void, and decay,” and living in “socialism without freedom and without bread and butter.”²³

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mass murder, the horrific blunders, the lies. In articles, essays, and previously forbidden novels, the shuddering country learned of the true scale of the terror: the millions killed and millions more arrested and tortured in prisons and labor camps. The “collectivization” of agriculture, which for half a century had been touted as the crowning achievement and the cornerstone of the Soviet economy, was forged on the bones of millions of Ukrainian and Russian peasants. Women, men, the elderly, and babies starved in the manmade famine of 1932–33; were thrown out of their homes in the middle of winter and frozen to death; were herded into cattle cars, driven for days without food or water, and dumped in the swamps or forests with no food, warm clothes, or shelter.

The heroic victory in World War II, which like nothing else had bound the people and the regime, was now shown to have caused unnecessary deaths of millions of soldiers and civilians because of the executions of the majority of Soviet commanding officers—from marshals, generals, and admirals to majors—in the “Great Purge” of 1937–39. Adding to the

disaster was the Kremlin’s criminal negligence, incompetence, and stubborn pursuit of demonstratively failed strategies.²⁴ “We did not know how to fight,” wrote popular writer and war veteran Viktor Astafiev. “We ended the war not knowing how to fight. We drowned the enemy in our blood, we buried him under our corpses.”²⁵

The Destruction of Legitimizing Mythology

The key political ramification of glasnost was the erosion of the official dogmas that sustained the one-party rule, and that, as Yakovlev noted, held the entire Soviet

political and economic systems together “like hoops of steel.”²⁶ Important in any revolutionary endeavor, the role that ideology played in the emergence and maintenance of the Soviet regime was extraordinary. There are not many examples of ideas shaping a nation’s destiny so decisively and for so long, molding and trimming the economic and social structures to conform to the founding ideological credo.

Yet it was precisely this rigid ideology, which had so effectively sustained and energized the regime from birth, that made it vulnerable to any weakening of the founding dogmas. “Bolshevism was compatible with nationalism, as Stalin had shown all along,” wrote the great French historian François Furet. “Even with some autonomy restored to the market—as a temporary expedient, of course—as Lenin had thought to do with the NEP.”²⁷ Yet

Bolshevism had no flexibility whatsoever in matters of ideology. Even Khrushchev had to kill Nagy. Brezhnev put up with Ceausescu and Kádár, but not with Dubček. . . .²⁸ When the Communist regimes were forced to make way for ideas that the October Revolution had believed it was destroying and replacing—private property, the market, individual rights, “formal” constitutionalism, the separation of powers—the failure was total, for it wiped out the original aspiration.²⁹

Soon glasnost began to erode the Soviet state’s legitimizing mythology—a set of beliefs about the nature of the state and society, accepted by the majority of citizens, and sustaining their allegiance. Without such myths, no state can survive for long. In less than three years, the Soviet state’s core political and economic arrangements began to be seen as shameful, illegitimate, and intolerable by those in the politically active minority, who everywhere and at all times make revolutions. In the summer of 1989, the leading Soviet historian and the dean of the Moscow State Institute of History and Archives, Yuri Afanasiev, declared that the Soviet regime “has been brought into being through bloodshed, with the aid of mass murder and crimes against humanity.”³⁰ One has to admit, Afanasiev continued, that “Soviet history as a whole is not fit to serve as a legal basis for Soviet power.”

The Choices of the “Thinking People”

The anguish over the spiritual decline and the corrosive effects of the Soviet Union’s Stalinist past was

increasingly replaced by the desperate search for answers to the grand questions with which every great revolution starts: What are the alternative means of achieving a just social and economic order? What is a decent and legitimate state? What should such a state’s relationship with a civil society be?

By March 1989, there were 60,000 “informal” (independent) groups and clubs in the Soviet Union.³¹ “There are no longer the dark masses which could be ruled easily, whose minds could be controlled,” leading Russian sociologist and Gorbachev’s advisor, Tatiana Zaslavskaya, said of these newly minted civic activists in 1987. “There are thinking people.”³²

Already in the first semi-free national election to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR in March 1989, thirty-eight of the first secretaries of the regional party committees—until then the Kremlin’s unchallenged potentates who ruled the Soviet Union day in and day out—were soundly defeated. A year later, in the election to the legislature of the Russian Republic, the rejection of the party elite by the voters was even more decisive.³³ In the election to local Soviets (legislatures) in March 1990, pro-reform “democrats” won in fifty Russian cities, including the three largest: Moscow, Leningrad, and Sverdlovsk. In Moscow, the voters gave democrats fifty-seven out of sixty-five seats in the city council.³⁴ Commenting on these results, one of the most astute Russian political commentators, Igor Klyamkin, wrote that the elections had “shown that [the party apparatus] is only as strong as the key element . . . of a totalitarian regime maintained by lies and violence, but at the time of glasnost and an even limited electoral freedom, [the apparatus] is revealed to be completely illegitimate or, which is the same, completely unable to gain people’s trust.”³⁵

Disenchantment with the prospects for “socialist modernization” made millions of people increasingly “receptive” to the “non-socialist alternative” and attracted to the “liberal-democratic ideology and values’ of the Western civilization.”³⁶ Between 1989 and 1991, millions of Russians chose those who publicly espoused first reformist and then revolutionary agendas. In the words of a Russian observer, the elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR and to the Congresses of People’s Deputies of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR) in the spring of 1990 demonstrated “an inexorable decline” in the popularity of Gorbachev’s [moderate] supporters and the increase in the influence of his opponents: “the politicians who called themselves radicals.”³⁷ The political leadership passed

from Gorbachev to Boris Yeltsin, who campaigned “under an anti-communist, pro-Western liberal banner.”³⁸ In May 1990, Yeltsin was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, the permanent working body of the Congress of People’s Deputies.

Forty-five million people voted for Yeltsin in the Russian presidential election in June 1991, giving him 57 percent of the vote in the field of six candidates. At almost the same time, Yeltsin’s radical allies Gavriil Popov in Moscow and Anatoly Sobchak in Leningrad were elected mayors. As if “to underscore the repudiation of socialism,”³⁹ Leningraders voted to change the city’s name to St. Petersburg. As a Russian historian put it, the “liberal-democratic and simultaneously anti-communist revolution” occurred in Russia, “mostly via electoral ballots.”⁴⁰

When the fate of that revolution hung in the balance, huge but remarkably peaceful mass demonstrations in Moscow, smaller showings in other main cities, and a national strike of miners in spring 1991 came to its rescue.⁴¹ In August 1991, rallies and strikes in defense of Gorbachev and Yeltsin and against the attempted communist coup took place in many of Russia’s largest cities.⁴² An estimated 200,000 people marched in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and 50,000 held an around-the-clock vigil at the besieged seat of the Russian Federation’s government, the “White House.”⁴³

Years later, Popov, the first elected mayor of Moscow, wrote of these men and women:

But the main and decisive factor in the victorious revolution was people themselves. Thousands, hundreds of thousands citizens participated in the revolution. Young and old, men and women, workers and students, Russians and representatives of our other peoples. They voted in the elections. They, time and again, went into the streets. Taking risks for themselves, their families, their loved ones. On workdays and on holidays. In sunlight and in rain. They did not shoot. Or break windows. Or storm the buildings. Or burn cars. And in this opposition won those who, to use Tolstoy’s expression, were stronger in spirit.⁴⁴

“The Radical Break in Consciousness”

Writing to a Soviet magazine in 1987, a Russian reader called what he saw around him a “radical break in consciousness.”⁴⁵ We know that he was right because Russia’s was the first great social revolution whose course has

been charted in public opinion polls almost from the beginning. “For the first time in history, we can study a social revolution from within,” leading Soviet pollster Yuri Levada told an interviewer in 1989. “[A]t the time of the American and French and other great revolutions, there were no sociologists out polling.”⁴⁶

So exhilarating was this self-discovery—this sudden ability to learn what one’s fellow citizens really thought after seven decades of enforced muteness and deafness, and so central this element to the entire enterprise of democratization—that in early 1988, reborn Russian sociology, understood primarily as study of public opinion, was declared “one of the most democratic sciences.”⁴⁷

In 1989 and 1990, the surveys of the Soviet population, including the Russian Republic, traced fissures in the ideological foundation of the ancien régime. Russians first doubted the erstwhile certitudes, then revised and finally discarded them: the one-party rule and the suppression of dissenting views; the state monopoly over mass media and economy; the Soviet Union’s rule in Eastern Europe; and, by 1991, the legitimacy of Moscow’s rule over other republics of the Soviet Union. Gradually replacing these seemingly eternal values, the polls revealed, were visions of another political and economic organization in which everyone would be entitled to free expression and political representation, and under which the state’s total control of people’s livelihoods would be augmented and perhaps eventually supplanted by private property and individual responsibility for one’s own welfare.

After four generations under a one-party dictatorship (and with independent parties still illegal), in late 1989 there was an overwhelming support for competitive elections and the legalization of parties other than the CPSU.⁴⁸ Unanimity as a cornerstone of a political order and the perception of dissent as treason were being abandoned in favor of freedom of speech, plurality of opinions, and tolerance.⁴⁹ Like other Soviet citizens, Russians welcomed “political views that are fundamentally different from the [views] of the majority.”⁵⁰ Over two-thirds of them disagreed with the opinion that society should not put up with such views, while 90 percent felt that it was necessary for everyone to “express themselves freely,” regardless of their [view].⁵¹ Almost one-third of the sample preferred a free society to an orderly one.⁵² Along the way, Russians evinced no universal longing for a “strong hand,” commonly attributed to them by an age-old stereotype. Of those surveyed in 1989, half felt that “under no circumstances” should all the power be given to one person.⁵³

By an overwhelming majority, a sample of the residents of the Russian Federation agreed that everyone should be entitled to “the same legal rights and protections,” no matter what their political beliefs.⁵⁴ In their emphatic assertion of over a dozen basic political and human rights—among them freedom of speech, association, and conscience; equality before the law; and rights to privacy and to travel abroad—the residents of the Moscow region were found to be “uncannily” like the citizens of twelve Western European nations.⁵⁵

The State Ownership of Economy

Although not as quickly and decisively as in the case of the Soviet political system, the Soviet people began to question “core components of socialist ideology,” including the equality of incomes and the “beliefs about the role of the state,” especially its responsibility for the well-being of individuals.⁵⁶ Already by the end of 1989, an overwhelming majority thought that the state should provide the opportunity for everyone “to earn as much as he can,” and almost half of the national sample believed that “people should look out for themselves for success in life.”⁵⁷

In early 1990, over half of a sample in a Russian region agreed that “a healthy economy” was more likely if “the government allows individuals to do as they wish.”⁵⁸ Six months later, an all-Russian poll found that 56 percent of respondents supported a rapid or gradual transition to a market economy.⁵⁹ Commenting on the results, Tatiana Zaslavskaya, who was also the director of the Russian Center of Public Opinion Studies (VTzIOM), concluded that “in people’s consciousness there could be no way back [to socialism].”⁶⁰ Within a year, the share of pro-market respondents among the citizens of the RSFSR increased to 64 percent.⁶¹

From Questioning to Rejection

By early 1990, almost two-thirds of respondents in a national sample believed that the Communist Party had “led the country along a wrong path.”⁶² Nine months later, VTzIOM’s polls revealed a “crisis of socialist

ideology”: the “moral code” that “cemented” the ancien régime was “falling apart” and there was no “renewed socialist idea” that could replace it.⁶³ By then, depending on the wording of the question, the “socialist choice” was supported by between 10 and 20 percent of the Soviet people. This segment diminished rapidly in the previous two years and consisted largely of “older people,” while the “overwhelming majority” of the younger generations turned away from socialism.⁶⁴

The younger, better-educated, and urban among the respondents were considerably more susceptible to ideological revolution than those who were older, less educated and rural.⁶⁵ Age was especially relevant, with “striking differences” found among age groups’ attitudes toward democratization.⁶⁶ Younger Soviets in general and Russians in particular were also more supportive of private ownership of industry and the right to demonstrate or strike, and were more tolerant of dissent, demonstrations, and strikes.⁶⁷

While in February 1989 a majority of Russians favored a “socialist way of the development of the USSR,” in May 1991, 56 percent agreed that “communism has brought Russia nothing but poverty, lines [in stores] and mass repression.”⁶⁸ By the summer of 1991, in the words of a Russian historian, “the passive part of the population” looked on with indifference at the agony of the regime, while “the active were inspired by completely different ideas.”⁶⁹

The end of the Soviet regime in mid-1991 coincided with what a leading student of Russian post-Soviet political history called an “unprecedentedly sharp” change in Russian people’s attitudes.⁷⁰ In September 1991, 73 percent

of respondents thought that “all our political system must be radically transformed.”⁷¹ Continuing the trend noted by pollsters a year before, solid majorities were now in favor of some key features of liberal capitalism: openness to the outside world (74 percent), a multi-party political system (69 percent), and a market economy (63 percent).⁷²

Six months later, when asked about the events that gladdened them the most in 1991, more Russians mentioned the demise of the CPSU than they did any other development. The next most popular occurrence, cited

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by one-fifth of the sample, was “the abandonment of communist ideals.”⁷³

The “Proud and Generous Aspirations”

Like any truthful historiography, the twenty-year-old story of glasnost is valuable not only as a record of the past, but also as something to keep in mind for the future. The key lesson—seemingly obvious but clearly in need of reiteration today—is that ideas matter. They legitimize political, economic, and social arrangements—and, by the same token, are capable of eroding them quickly and decisively. When formerly guiding principles, no longer shielded by terror and lies, are tested by the truth and found wanting, they are discarded without mercy. Unless stopped by violence, as happened in China following the Tiananmen Square massacre in May 1989, a search for alternatives could evolve into a revolution.

Following other great revolutions, the Russian upheaval has also shown that the ideals that inspire and shape epochal political, economic, and social transformations are never implemented quickly or completely. Following the overthrow of the ancien régime, they may weaken and retreat, seemingly forgotten and irrelevant, like rivers that go below the ground in Tocqueville’s superb metaphor.⁷⁴ Yet if they inspire millions, as glasnost certainly has, these ideals are never extinguished. Without acknowledgment, they continue to inform new arrangements even during reactionary restorations, and if the stories of other great revolutions serve, may suddenly reemerge in force.

Thus, a century and a half ago, Tocqueville also may have written the best epitaph for glasnost: “That [was an] age of fervid enthusiasm, of proud and generous aspirations, whose memory, despite its extravagances, men will forever cherish: a phase of history that for many years to come will trouble the sleep of all who seek to demoralize the nation and reduce it to a servile state.”⁷⁵

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Notes

1. Mikhail Gorbachev, “Zaklyuchitel’noe slovo General’nogo sekretarya TsK KPSS M.S. Gorbachyova na Plenum TsK KPSS 27-go yanvarya 1987 goda” [The Concluding Remarks by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of

the CPSU at the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CPSU on January 27, 1987], *Pravda*, January 30, 1987.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Alexandr Yakovlev, *Sumerki* [Twilight] (Moscow: Materik, 2003), 464, 389. For more on Yakovlev’s crucial role in the latest Russian revolution, see Leon Aron, “The ‘Mystery’ of the Soviet ‘Collapse,’” *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 2 (April 2006): 21–35, available at www.aei.org/publication24215/.

4. Alexandr Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 390.

5. Between 1987 and 1988, the circulations of the key monthly pro-reform “thick” literary journals were up, including for *Druzhba narodov* (433 percent), *Novy mir* (132 percent), *Neva* (90 percent), and *Oktyabr* (35 percent) (Riitta H. Pittman, “Perestroika and Soviet Cultural Politics: The Case of the Major Literary Journals,” *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 1 [January 1990]: 116). The crusading weekly newspaper *Literaturnaya gazeta* was up by 23 percent (*Ibid.*). Between 1986 and the end of 1987, the circulation of *Moskovskie novosti* doubled, that of the weekly illustrated magazine *Ogonyok* rose 600 percent, and circulation of the weekly *Argumenty i fakty* went up from 1.4 million to 3.5 million (Minxin Pei, *From Reform to Revolution: The Demise of Communism in China and the Soviet Union* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994], 182). In 1989 *Argumenty i fakty* sold 32 million copies, and in 1990 *Ogonyok*’s circulation was 4 million and *Literaturnaya gazeta*’s was 4.2 million (*Ibid.*, 182, 197). In 1991, *Moskovskie novosti*’s circulation was around 5 million (*Ibid.*, 242, n. 87). See also Cathy Porter, introduction to Vitaly Korotich and Cathy Porter, eds., *The New Soviet Journalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 2; and Vladimir Lakshin, “Gresti vyshe” [Row Upstream], *Moskovskie novosti*, December 20, 1987.

6. The proceedings of the congress were “regularly” watched by between 70 and 90 percent of adults in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tallinn, Tbilisi, and Alma-Ata (Vera Nikitina, “God za godom: 1989” [Year after Year: 1989], *Informatsionnyi bulletin’ monitoringa* [The Public Opinion Monitoring Information Bulletin] 4, no. 30 [July–August 1997]: 38).

7. *Ibid.*, 373.

8. *Ibid.*, 471.

9. *Ibid.*, 476.

10. *Ibid.*

11. See, for example, Yuri Chernichenko, “Zemlya, ekologiya, perestroika” [Land, Ecology, Perestroika], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, January 29, 1989; Vasilii Selyunin and Grigory Khanin, “Lukavaya tsifra” [Deceptive Numbers], *Novy mir* 2 (February 1987): 181–201; Andrey Nuykin, “Idealy ili interesy?” [Ideals or Interests?], *Novy mir* 1 (January 1988): 190–211; Sergey Zalygin, “Nastupaem ili otstupaem?” [Are We Advancing or Retreating?], in Yuri Afanasiev, ed., *Inogo ne dano* [There Is

No Other Way] (Moscow: Progress, 1988), 228–37; and Vasily Selyunin, “Revansh buyurokratii” [Bureaucracy’s Revenge], in Yuri Afanasiev, ed., *Inogo ne dano*, 192–227.

12. L. Velikanova, “Kogda sbudut’sya nadezhdy nadezhdy na otdel’nuyu kvartiru” [When the Hopes for an Apartment of One’s Own Will Be Fulfilled], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 6, 1990.

13. L. Velikanova, “Kazhdoy sem’e—zdorovuyu kvartiru” [To Each Family—A Healthy Apartment], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, August 31, 1988.

14. Alexander Bekker, “Where’s the Beef?” *Moscow News*, July 17–24, 1988.

15. Zoriy Balayan, “Kogda Bolezn Obgonyaet Lekarstva” [When Disease Is Faster Than Medicine], interview with Minister of Health Care of the Soviet Union Yevgeny Chazov, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, February 3, 1988.

16. S. Fyodorov, “Voinstvo so strelami” [An Army with Arrows], *Pravda*, September 28, 1987; N. Gogol, “Defitsit lekarstv. Ch’ya vina?” [The Shortage of Drugs: Whose Fault?], *Pravda*, July 13, 1989; B. Mironov, “Rebyonok bez prismotra?” [Anybody Looking after the Child?], interview with the director of the All-Union Mother and Child Scientific Research Center, V. I. Kulakov, *Pravda*, August 10, 1987.

17. Zoriy Balayan, “Kogda Bolezn Obgonyaet Lekarstva,” and Evgeny Chazov, speech at the Nineteenth All-Union CPSU Conference (Moscow), *Pravda*, June 30, 1988. See also Mark D’Anastasio, “Soviet Health System, Despite Early Claims, Is Riddled by Failures,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 1987.

18. S. Tutorskaya, “Potryasenie” [Shock], *Izvestia*, March 7, 1989.

19. S. Kurbalazarov, “Minimum sushchestvovaniya” [A Minimal Existence], *Izvestia*, June 27, 1989; and A. Chernyak, “Edoki po statistike i v zhizni [Food Consumers in Statistics and in Real Life], *Pravda*, September 1, 1988.

20. Boris Bolotin, “Vadim Kirichenko’s Debut: Goskomstat Provides Food for Thought,” *Moscow News*, August 20, 1989.

21. Yu Rytov, “Kak zhivyotsya pensioneru” [How the Pensioners Fare], *Izvestiya*, August 20, 1988.

22. Ibid.; and Yu Rytov, “Na choym derzhitsya defitsit” [What Sustains Scarcity], *Izvestia*, April 27, 1989.

23. Yuri Afanasiev, “Otevetny istorika” [Answers of a Historian], *Pravda*, July 26, 1988.

24. See, for example, Yuri Geller, “Nevernoe echo voyny” [A False Echo of the War], *Druzhba narodov* 9 (September 1989): 229–44; A. Novikov, “U poroga voyny” [On the Threshold of the War], interview with leading World War II historian V. Kulish in *Komsomol’skaya pravda*, August 24, 1988; Mikhail Semiryaga, “23 avgusta 1939 goda” [August 23, 1939], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, October 5, 1988; and Lt. Gen.

Nikolay Pavlenko, “Triumph and Tragedy of the Red Army,” *Moscow News*, May 14, 1989.

25. Viktor Astafiev, “Istoria i literatura” [History and Literature], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 18, 1988.

26. Alexandr Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 503.

27. The acronym for the New Economic Policy, which between 1921 and 1928 allowed a limited reintroduction of private property and private enterprises after the “war communism” policy of 1918–21.

28. Imre Nagy was prime minister of Hungary during the 1956 anti-communist revolution suppressed by the Soviet Union. Nicolae Ceausescu was a nationalist communist dictator of Rumania from 1965–89. As the leader of Hungary from 1956–88, János Kádár significantly expanded economic and political rights of the Hungarians, making his country the most liberal in the Soviet bloc. As first secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, in 1967–68 Alexander Dubček initiated reforms similar to Gorbachev’s twenty years later. The “Prague Spring” was suppressed by the Soviet invasion in August 1968.

29. François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 500–501.

30. Quoting Yuri Afanasiev in Olga Avdeyevich and Elena Vlasova, “Sdelka” [The Deal], *Sovetskaya molodezh*, July 7, 1989.

31. Vadim Bakatin, *Nedelya*, no. 12 (1989), as quoted in Dmitry Mikheyev, *The Rise and Fall of Gorbachev* (Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 1992), 136.

32. Tatiana Zaslavskaya in Andrew Rosenthal, “A Soviet Voice of Innovation Comes to Force,” interview, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987.

33. See, for example, Gregory J. Embree, “RSFSR Election Results and Roll Call Votes,” *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1070–72, 1076.

34. Alexander Rahr, “Inside the Interregional Group,” *RL/RFE Report on the USSR* 2, no. 43 (October 26, 1990): 1. For details on the political mobilization and electoral revolution “from below,” see Vladimir Brovkin, “Revolution from Below: Informal Political Associations in Russia 1988–89,” *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 2 (1990); Brendan Kiernan and Joseph Aistrup, “The 1989 Elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies in Moscow,” *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 6 (1991); and Geoffrey A. Hosking, Jonathan Aves, and Peter J. S. Duncan, *The Road to Post-Communism: Independent Political Movements in the Soviet Union, 1985–1991* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1992).

35. Igor Klyamkin, *Trudnyi spusk s ziyayushchikh vysot* [A Difficult Descent from the Yawning Heights] (Moscow: Library of Ogniyok, 1990), 34.

36. Vladimir Sorgin, “Tri prevrashcheniya sovremennoy Rossii” [The Three Metamorphoses of the Contemporary Russia], *Otechestvennaya istoriya* 3 (2005): 7.

37. Ibid. See also M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995) 35, 42–43, 189. Blair Ruble similarly notes, “[A]t each stage, and despite significant variations in the pace of political change across regional and ethnic boundaries, Soviet citizens pursued demonstrations, strikes, protest actions, and electoral politics to push the political system to new frontiers of liberalization and democratization” (“The Soviet Union’s Quiet Revolution,” in George W. Breslauer, ed., *Can Gorbachev’s Reforms Succeed?* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990], 92).

38. Vladimir Sorgin, “Tri prevrashcheniya sovremennoy Rossii,” 7.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 8.

41. On February 4, 1990, 250,000 people demonstrated in Moscow for the abolition of article six of the constitution that mandated the “leading” role of the Communist Party. On January 20, 1991, 200,000 people protested the military intervention in the Baltic republics, which had declared their independence. In February and March of 1991 there were “vast” demonstrations in Moscow, Leningrad, Yaroslavl, Volgograd, and other cities in support of Yeltsin and Russia’s sovereignty. See Jack A. Goldstone, “Revolution in the U.S.S.R., 1989–1991,” in Jack A. Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies* (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2003), 270. See also M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch*, 47–48.

42. Harley Balzer, “Ordinary Russians? Rethinking August 1991,” *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 200–204.

43. Ibid., 198.

44. Gavriil Popov, “Igry patriotov. Chetvyortaya revoliutsiya” [Patriots’ Games: The Fourth Revolution], *Moskovskiy Komsomolez*, May 25, 2004.

45. As quoted in Len Karpinsky, “Pochemu stalinizm ne skhodit so stzeny?” [Why Would Stalinism Not Leave the Stage?], in Yuri N. Afanasiev, ed., *Inogo ne dano*, 662.

46. Quoting Yuri Levada in Hedrick Smith, *The New Russians* (New York: Random House, 1990): 88.

47. G. Valyuzhenich, “Nashe sotsial’noe samochustvie” [Our Social Well-Being], interview with Vilen Ivanov, director of the Institute for Sociological Research in Moscow, *Argumenty i fakty* 1 (January 1–8, 1988): 2.

48. Ada M. Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz, “Redefining the Political System of the USSR: Mass Support for Political Change,” *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 4 (December 1992): 859, table 1. Competitive elections were supported by 95 percent of the respondents. The study was the first

“large-scale true personal interview survey” in the USSR and included seven of the Soviet Union’s fifteen republics: Estonia, Belorussia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia (RSFSR), Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

In the Moscow region, surveyed in February–March 1990, 77 percent were in favor of legalizing other parties. Eighty-five percent *disagreed* with the proposition that “it is necessary to ban elections and allow the CPSU to rule the country (without elections),” and multicandidate local elections, again, were supported by 95 percent of the sample (James L. Gibson, Raymond M. Duch, and Kent L. Tedin, “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” *Journal of Politics* 54, no. 2 [May 1992]: 351, table 8).

Of course, one must be cautious in extrapolating to the rest of Russia the results from the Moscow region, which, although considerably more conservative than Moscow, was likely more liberal than most of Russia, aside from big cities. Yet when a few months later largely analogous questions were posed to a sample of residents of a far larger geographic territory—the “European portion of the USSR (Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine)” —James L. Gibson et al. found the results “remarkably similar” (“Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” 361).

49. Polled after the first-ever nationally broadcast parliamentary debates at the First Congress of People’s Deputies in May and June 1989, 84 percent of a sample of the citizens of the Russian Republic thought that the disagreements were “natural” (34 percent) and “useful” (50 percent), helping to arrive at “well thought-out” or “considered” decisions (Vera Nikitina, “God za godom: 1989,” 38).

50. James L. Gibson et al., “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” 342, table 3; 344, table 4.

51. While in 1989 almost two-thirds of the citizens of the seven Soviet republics, including Russia, preferred “traditional methods of political process,” over one-third supported “strikes, protests and demonstration” as legitimate political action—a degree of radicalism that the interpreters of the survey found “remarkable” (Ibid.; and Ada M. Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz, “Redefining the Political System of the USSR: Mass Support for Political Change,” 860).

52. James L. Gibson et al., “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” 342, table 3. The corresponding numbers were 56 percent and 28 percent. In addition, half of the sample was opposed to denying the right to demonstrate to “radical and extremist” political groups, even if their demonstrations were “disorderly and disruptive.”

53. Vera Nikitina, “God za godom: 1989,” 38. One-fourth of the sample thought the Russians needed a “strong hand,”

and 15 percent would allow personal dictatorship “under some circumstances.”

54. James L. Gibson et al., “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” 344, table 4. The actual figure was 94 percent.

55. *Ibid.*, 345; 346, table 5. Nine in ten respondents in the Moscow region thought that the press ought to be legally protected from government persecution (*Ibid.*, 349, table 7). After decades of the state’s complete control over print, radio, and television (and with no private newspapers, let alone radio or television stations, yet existing), over half of the same sample felt that privately owned media “should exist alongside” state-owned ones (*Ibid.*).

56. Ada M. Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz, “Redefining the Political System of the USSR,” 857.

57. *Ibid.*, 859, table 1; 860; 861; 872. Asked in the same year what should their country rely on, less than one-fifth mentioned “the working class” (18 percent), the government (16 percent), or the still officially “ruling” Communist Party (4 percent), while 54 percent thought that the most reliable source of success was “honest daily labor by individuals” (Vera Nikitina, “God za godom: 1989,” 38.).

58. James L. Gibson et al., “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” 348, table 6.

59. L. A. Sedov, “Peremeny v strane i otnoshenie k pere-menam” [Changes in the Country and the Attitude toward the Changes], *Informatsionnyi byulleten’ monitoringa* (January–February 1995): 24.

60. Tatiana Zaslavskaya, “Eto kakoe-to nervnoe istoshchenie” [It Is Something Like a Nervous Exhaustion], *Komsomol’skaya pravda*, October 30, 1990.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Yuri Levada and Leonid Gudkov, “The People’s Voices,” *Moscow News*, April 22, 1990.

63. Tatiana Zaslavskaya, “Eto kakoe-to nervnoe istoshchenie.”

64. *Ibid.* More Russians reported leaving the Communist Party between 1985 and 1990 (26 percent of party members) than after the collapse of the Soviet regime in August 1991

(21 percent). See Irina Boeva and Vyacheslav Shironin, “Russians between State and Market,” *Studies in Public Policy* 205 (1992): 38.

65. Ada M. Finifter and Ellen Mickiewicz, “Redefining the Political System of the USSR,” 864–66, 868; and James L. Gibson et al., “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” 356–57, 359.

66. William Zimmerman, “Intergenerational Differences in Attitudes toward Foreign Policy,” in Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger, and Vicki L. Hesli, *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 259–61; and James L. Gibson et al., 356–57.

67. William Zimmerman, “Intergenerational Differences in Attitudes toward Foreign Policy,” 259.

68. Lev Gudkov and Boris Dubin, “Konets kharizmaticheskoy epokhi” [The End of the Charismatic Era], *Svobodnaya mysl’* 5 (1993): 39.

69. Mikhail Krasnov, “My prosnulis’ v drugoy strane” [We Woke Up in a Different Country], *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, August 18, 2001.

70. Andrei Melvil’, “Politicheskie tsennosti i orientatsii i politicheskie instituty” [Political Values and Orientations and Political Institutions], in Liliya Shevtsova, ed., *Rossiia politicheskaya* [A Political Russia] (Moscow: Carnegie Center, 1998), 157. The survey results cited were compiled by Melvil’ from a half dozen surveys by major Russian polling organizations (*Ibid.*, 185, n. 16).

71. *Ibid.*, 157.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Vera Nikitina, “God za godom: 1991” [Year after Year: 1991], *Informatsionnyi byulleten’ monitoringa* [The Public Opinion Monitoring Information Bulletin] 6, no. 32 (November–December 1997): 50. The disappearance of the CPSU made happy 29 percent of the respondents; the rejection of communist ideology, 20 percent; 33 percent of respondents did not answer the question.

74. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), x.

75. *Ibid.*, xi.