

The *Neformaly* and the Development of Civil Society during Perestroika

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the *neformaly* (unofficial clubs) which were active during Perestroika, in particular, the Federation of Socialist Social Clubs (FSOK) and the Moscow Popular Front (MPF). This study addresses the intellectual origins of this group in the genus of a new generation of left-wing dissidents of the late 1970s and early 1980s and the activity of these groups in mid-1988 in the atmosphere of the Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference.

The thesis also addresses the larger conception of alternate discourses in Soviet society in the form of a generational study to compare the 'new left' with older generations of critical thinkers. It firstly addresses the *shest'desiatniki* (men of the 1960s) whose formative experience took place during Khrushchev's Thaw and the trauma of the liberalisation of the Prague Spring to be followed by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the abandonment of hopes for reform. The *shest'desiatniki* later became divided into a movement of *pravozashchitniki* (rights defenders), activists disillusioned by socialism who became preoccupied with power of the rule of law and human rights as a means to improve Soviet socialism and those *shest'desiatniki* who internalised and betrayed their liberal views in the Brezhnev era, only to emerge as enthusiastic proponents of Perestroika.

The thesis contextualises the history of Perestroika as a striving for civil society and the drive towards democratic socialism on behalf of both the older *shest'desiatniki* represented by Gorbachev and his reformers and the *neformaly* activists. However, it concludes that the emergent civil society of Perestroika was manipulated by the ruling elite around the figure of Yeltsin, who perceived the benefits of an evolution towards capitalist society and the prospect of private property and used their power to enact this, diminishing the influence of the *neformaly* at the grassroots and Gorbachev's reformers to achieve a form of democratic socialism.

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Introduction

This thesis will examine the intellectual roots and the emergence and activity of the sections of the *neformaly* who were democratic socialist activists at the grassroots level during Perestroika.¹ The basis for the *neformaly* was located in the emergence of a new generation of dissidents who began engaging in samizdat publication and underground discussion groups in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This group of people who were mainly university students in their early twenties, nominally Boris Kagarlitsky, Gleb Pavlovsky, Pavel Kudyukin, Grigory Pel'man and others, were convinced that Soviet socialism needed to be democratised and elements of popular participation needed to be restored for socialism to be truly realised. They had rejected the contention that 'really existing socialism' had been achieved in the Soviet Union, citing the repressive, authoritarian nature of Soviet society and the corruption embedded in the system. Rather they considered themselves to be members of a global Left. They read about the liberalised Western communist parties who had adopted Eurocommunism at this time, and the Third World revolutionary figure of Che Guevara and even social democratic thinkers. While not calling for the straightforward transplantation of the ideas of these parties and intellectuals to the Soviet Union, they were didactic thinkers who were open to a variety of currents of Marxism and willing to draw inspiration from different sources to construct a model for the rejuvenation of Soviet society. When consorting with the media, this group referred to themselves as the Soviet 'new left,' as they considered their discussions to be reminiscent of similar Western discussions that had taken place in Paris and California in the leftist youth revolts of the 1960s.

¹ The informal movements are generally referred to in this scholarship as *neformaly*. The word '*neformaly*,' meaning, 'informals,' entered the Soviet vocabulary during Perestroika. It refers to all the different groups of people who became active in different of areas of social, cultural and political life. Despite their differing intellectual standpoints and their different activities, the feature they have in common is that they had not been incorporated into official 'formal' structures and were able to act independently.

This 'Soviet new left' displayed a generational difference with the older generations of dissidents. The older generation of dissidents, which this thesis shall refer to broadly as the *shest'desiatniki* (men of the sixties) had their formative generational experience in the sixties. Their experience of the liberalisation of Khrushchev's Thaw and as witnesses to the Prague Spring deeply affected them. This generation became committed to a form of liberal socialism. They denigrated the totalitarian abuses of the Stalin era and strove for a 'return to Lenin' and the original ideas of the October Revolution, which they regarded foremost as inner-party democracy. The problem of Stalin, as expressed by Khrushchev in his speech to the Twentieth Party Congress, deeply affected these intellectuals. But in their search for the exculpation of Leninism from Stalin's practice, they returned to Leninist ideology to find the answers. This is where the 'new left' diverged from the *shest'desiatniki* and expressed new currents of thought. For the 'new left,' the problem of Stalin did not affect them, as they were of a different generation.

However, the disillusionment provoked by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the return of a repressive political environment under Brezhnev led to generally two courses of action amongst the *shest'desiatniki*. Some became disillusioned with the socialist project altogether, recognising the Leninist theories inherent in Stalin's practices and began to adopt a Westernising critique, openly dissenting against the Soviet regime. This group, which I have termed *pravoashchitniki* (rights defenders) dissented against the regime by illuminating the violations the Soviet government and the security forces committed against its own constitution and the human rights documents it had signed. This group appealed to the West and possessed an orientation verging on capitalist. The remaining *shest'desiatniki* buried their liberal convictions inward and publicly supported the ideological conservatism of the Brezhnev regime, while retaining their old convictions. It is some members of this generation who realised again their liberal convictions in the Gorbachev era and became heralds of Perestroika.

This thesis will take a generational approach to these groups. In chapter two I will employ Mannheim's theories of generations to illuminate the different strands of thought that separated the *shest'desiatniki* and *pravozashchitniki* from the 'new left.' While both groups (excluding the *pravozashchitniki*) were advocates of democratic socialism, they each had a different model for this socialism and drew inspiration from different thinkers; the same name was used to refer to quite different nuances of socialism. This was a result of their different generational experiences. Living under Stalin and through the Great Patriotic War and during the Thaw gave the *shest'desiatniki* an entirely different set of experiences to draw upon from those who had grown up in the society that had won the war against Hitler and had achieved the status of a superpower.

It is in the arena of Perestroika, that these generational conflicts between these two groups of democratic socialists played out. It is important to keep in mind that there was obviously unequal power relations between the two groups, the *shest'desiatniki* had become Gorbachev's top reformers, while the *neformaly* who were simply trying to influence democratisation at the grass roots. However, this thesis will argue that the different conceptions of democratic socialism elaborated by these two groups reflected their generational differences. The mass movements created by the 'new left' in the form of rallies, discussion groups, demonstrations, the publishing of critical media and their proposal for widespread forums for public participation in the political process demonstrated the emphasis on mass participation this group had, which contrasted with the more elitist conception of democracy put forward by Gorbachev, which reflected the influence the Leninist vanguard retained on the *shest'desiatniki*.

Chapter One – On the Shortcomings of ‘Civil Society’ as an Explanatory Concept for the Collapse of the Soviet Union: The *neformaly* as a Case Study.

This thesis will examine the history of the democratic socialist *neformaly* which were active during the era of Perestroika and contextualise the experience of these groups as a case study of the relevance and accuracy of the concept of ‘civil society’ to account for the collapse of communism.² It will specifically evaluate the experience of three broadly transitional groups: the Club of Social Initiatives (KSI) that formed at the end of 1986, which then became incorporated into the larger Federation of Socialist Social Clubs (FSOK) in August 1987, whose clubs later became affiliated with the Moscow Popular Front (MPF), a socialist coalition of groups organised in June 1988 to prepare candidacies for the elections to the Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference. These *neformaly* broadly supported Mikhail Gorbachev’s program of the democratisation of Soviet society and were concerned with vocalising the everyday concerns of Soviet people and encouraging the establishment of channels for mass political participation to facilitate the creation of a genuinely democratic socialist society and to eradicate the shortcomings and contradictions of Soviet socialism. In the form of grassroots activism, these *neformaly* attempted to create a dialogue between the masses and the official apparatus to communicate the demands and desires of the working class and broader Soviet society.

This thesis will firstly contribute to civil society scholarship and argue that the *neformaly* constituted a modicum of this embryonic ‘civil society,’ which came into existence in the Soviet

² The informal movements are generally referred to in this scholarship as *neformaly*. The word ‘*neformaly*,’ meaning, ‘informals,’ entered the Soviet vocabulary during Perestroika. It refers to all the different groups of people who became active in different of areas of social, cultural and political life. Despite their differing intellectual standpoints and their different activities, the feature they have in common is that they had not been incorporated into official ‘formal’ structures and were able to act independently.

Union and Eastern Europe largely during the era of Perestroika. The history of the *neformaly* challenges the effectiveness of the civil society concept as an explanatory narrative for the collapse of the communist regimes. The *neformaly* ultimately failed as an effective organ of civil society, because its political positions were effectively usurped by politicians within the official apparatus, which rendered the *neformaly* obsolete. The co-opting of the *neformaly* positions by the elites thereby transferred the power which had existed in this form of civil organisation back to the elites, who had by this time perceived of the benefits of a system transition and had a greater level of agency to exact change than the *neformaly*. It is outside the scope of this thesis to narrate these events and provide a full examination of the history of Perestroika.³ However, the history of the *neformaly* will be contextualised within this hypothesis, as it provides the most effective means to conceptualise the significance of the rise and decline of the *neformaly* within the wider historical context of Perestroika.

Within the existing scholarship which seeks to explain the reasons for the spectacular collapse of communism in the revolutions of 1989, and in the Soviet Union in 1991, the term, ‘civil society,’ is frequently understood as a useful concept to denote the process that wrought these changes. The concept of ‘civil society’ first emerged in its modern sense as a product of the Scottish Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, to distinguish autonomous forces that are independent of the state.⁴ It came back into vogue as an analytical concept to account for the events surrounding Solidarity in Poland and other grassroots movements independent of the state in the Eastern Bloc in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In this sense, ‘civil society’ can be

³ However, scholarship that I have found to have developed my understanding of Perestroika include: the work of Archie Brown for the significance of Gorbachev’s role, the work of Boris Kagarlitsky for insight into the *neformaly*; R.V. Daniels, *The End of the Communist Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1993) on the fall of the Soviet Union from a perspective of the whole Soviet experience; Graeme Gill, *The Collapse of the Single Party System: The Disintegration of the CPSU* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), as an account of the restructuring of the political system and Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratisation and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (London: Routledge, 2005) as an argument for the intellectual influence of dissidents.

⁴ Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: A Modern Library Chronicles Book, 2009), 8.

understood as a term to describe resistance to totalitarian rule and the conceptual binary of society versus the state.⁵ With the collapse of the communist regimes, ‘civil society’ rose from a framework to analyse the grassroots movements of the 1980s to a narrative to account for fall of communism and was offered as one of the most important causal factors to explain the collapse. Prominent scholars such as Romanian historian Vladimir Tismăneanu have argued that a structural decline took place in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of socialist society and the communist elites experienced a crisis of ideological legitimation.⁶ In these circumstances, the emergence of independent voices which pronounced alternative ideas influenced the demoralised elites, who were no longer supported by the threat of Soviet military intervention, and this facilitated a process which culminated in the collapse.⁷ Zbigniew Rau refers to a process whereby citizens who opposed the state by exercising their independent initiatives in the public sphere began to form the embryonic elements of civil society.⁸ Therefore, gradually this civil society challenged and overthrew the institutions of the state.⁹

However, this perception of the strength of Eastern European civil society can be largely located within the euphoria of the initial years after the transition. The subsequent weakness of civil society and dominance of post-communist society by the same elite challenged the validity of citizens’ organization and opposition to totalitarian rule as a framework for understanding the transition.¹⁰ Most notably, Stephen Kotkin has advanced the thesis that the civil society which existed prior to 1989 in the Eastern Bloc was insignificant and rather, the elite were the most

⁵ Vladimir Tismăneanu, ‘Preface,’ in *In Search of Civil Society: Independent Peace Movements in the Soviet Bloc*, ed. Vladimir Tismăneanu (New York: Routledge, 1990), vii.

⁶ Vladimir Tismăneanu in ‘The Collapse of Communism: Civil or Uncivil Society?’ Debate at Central European University, Budapest, 27 May 2009.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Zbigniew Rau, ‘Introduction,’ in *The Reemergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, edited by Zbigniew Rau (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 12.

⁹ Ibid., 16-17.

¹⁰ Petr Kopecký, ‘Civil Society, Civil Society and Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe,’ in *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics and Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Petr Kopecký and Cas Muddle (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

significant causal actors in the transition.¹¹ He argues that with the exception of Poland, the presence of a large-scale, well-organised opposition was largely illusory. The imagined presence of thousands of demonstrators opposing the regime in each country, which was most famously depicted by Timothy Garton-Ash,¹² is a construct of retrospective memory and is not a satisfactory causal mechanism. Kotkin argues that this retrospective memory is used to substantiate the narrative of the power of democratization and in doing so perpetuates the superiority of liberal democratic capitalism, while at the same time ingratiating a myth of resistance to communism, overpowering narratives of the conformity and pacification that took place under socialism.¹³

Kotkin counters the concept of ‘civil society’ by offering a narrative of the elites’ loss of confidence in their ability to rule and the absence of will amongst this group to defend the prevailing regime once transformation appeared a desirable alternative.¹⁴ He provides a multifaceted explanation that describes the failure of socialist economies, which had reached a crisis point by the 1980s. The politics of reform communism, as adopted by Gorbachev, were no longer an ideologically inspiring force in Eastern Europe, after the experiences of Hungary in 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. As a result there were no ‘Eastern European Gorbachevs,’ the leaders of these countries wanted to preserve their own power within the oppressive system that existed before the advent of Gorbachev. Ideology was no longer a motivating force in these societies. Once Gorbachev refused to use military force to uphold the socialist regimes, and these regimes faced this domestic economic and ideological crisis, the elites lost their belief in their ability to rule. Moreover, they opportunistically recognised the favourable position they

¹¹ Stephen Kotkin in ‘The Collapse of Communism: Civil or Uncivil Society?’ Debate at Central European University, Budapest, 27 May 2009.

¹² For example, refer to the work, Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of ’89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

¹³ Kotkin in ‘The Collapse of Communism’ Debate.

¹⁴ This argument is elaborated in Kotkin, *Uncivil Society*.

occupied if a transition occurred which would transfer state property into private hands.¹⁵ This group, who controlled state property, constituted hundreds of thousands of people, which rendered the numbers of oppositional groups insignificant.¹⁶ Thereby, Kotkin argues, the causal actors and processes were located within the elite and the hierarchies of official power rather than within the emerging civil society.

Hungarian historian Istvan R  v has challenged both the prevailing causal explanations of civil society and the primacy of the elite to account for the collapse of communism on epistemological grounds. He cites the problematic nature of applying retrospective narratives and overriding causal factors to complex events which perhaps defy a unifying narrative. He argues that the collapse of communism was unplanned and the complex relationship between cause and effect which precipitated the collapse was not consciously conceived by the contemporaries of the events.¹⁷ For this reason, it is difficult to attribute the dominant causation to either civil society actors or to the elites. Certainly, it is problematic to retrospectively provide fully-developed narratives to events, especially because few people perceived that the outcome of the collapse of the Soviet Union would be a result of their actions during Perestroika. However, close analysis of different individual actors and forces allows for greater substantiation of general trends that developed. The reconstruction of the past conceived by the historian may not fit into a unifying narrative or one proposed narrative may be taking place while other explanations, that may even be contradictory, are occurring simultaneously. The narrative that the elites were the dominant causal actors in the collapse must be placed alongside other explanations about the effect decades of stagnation had on the Soviet economy and the effect of reformist ideology as a causal factor and so forth. These explanations all occurred simultaneously and all must be

¹⁵ Kotkin in 'The Collapse of Communism' Debate.

¹⁶ Kotkin, *Uncivil Society*, 7.

¹⁷ Istvan R  v in 'The Collapse of Communism: Civil or Uncivil Society?' Debate at Central European University, Budapest, 27 May 2009.

substantiated before they can be accepted. In my thesis, I will substantiate the argument that the elites were more dominant causal actors in the collapse of communism than those that emerged from civil society.

While this civil society scholarship has heavily focused on Eastern Europe, it is also applicable to the Soviet case. This thesis will argue that in the Soviet Union civil society already emerged during Perestroika, before the transition to capitalism, as a result of Gorbachev's democratisation process. This process consisted of a number of developments that were led by Gorbachev from above with support from below, namely, the liberalisation of society to create an atmosphere where public discussion could take place freely and people could organise into political, cultural and social groups independently of the state, and vote in elections. By 1990 when this process of democratisation had begun to take on a life of its own and Gorbachev was, to a great extent, reacting to events rather than leading and was only one actor among many precipitants of change, he permitted the formation of independent political parties. These actions all created a burgeoning civil society. In addition to the emergence of the *neformaly*, in the liberalised conditions of Perestroika, independent-minded figures emerged from the media, artistic and academic spheres to radicalise democratisation; people such as the President of the Union of Theatre Workers, Mikhail Ulyanov, Len Karpinsky, the journalist of the newly liberalised newspaper *Moscow News*, and head of the Historical Archives Institute and emerging politician, Yuri Afanasyev. These intellectuals usually were conformist figures that occupied prominent positions under Leonid Brezhnev, but came to the fore as actors who expanded the limits of civil society during Perestroika. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the transition to a liberal capitalist society is better attributed to the elites' machinations and opportunism in perceiving the benefits of a power redistribution and private property oriented economy, when faced by growing anarchism and the faltering command economy. A diverse coalition became rallied around Boris Yeltsin. This coalition was made up of liberal activists who

had become, perhaps mistakenly convinced, that a capitalist economy would provide for a more democratic society with a better standard of living, and higher level members of the apparatus, who perceived the benefits they would receive and power they would be able to retain, if a turnover of state assets and altered power structure took place within a privatised economy.

The relevance of the concept of 'civil society' for the Soviet Union is not that society overthrew the state during Perestroika. Rather, alternate discourses were developed in the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era, within the broader intelligentsia of the 1960s and the later dissident movement, to pose alternate prospects for the development of the Soviet Union to the then-dominant state ideologies under Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. During Perestroika, Gorbachev began to promote ideas which had heretofore only existed within this unofficial milieu. This transfer of elements of discourse from the unofficial sphere into official state ideology is where this embryonic and miniscule civil society had an effect on the state. However, the events that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union itself were unintended by the progenitors of these ideas. Rather, as R  v has argued about the nature of history, the period of 1985-1991 was fuelled by complex causal relationships and many actors, especially Gorbachev, had to contend with unintended consequences produced by their actions. It was only when Gorbachev had lost control of the democratization process and the economy was collapsing, did the elite clearly perceive the benefits of a total system transformation. It is difficult to elaborate any foreordained plan to any actor within these tumultuous events of six short years which ended with the fall of the Soviet Union.

Chapter Two: Alternative Discourses in Soviet Society and the Emergence of the ‘Soviet New Left.’

The origins of the democratic socialist *neformaly* that became active in the era of Perestroika can be located in the emergence of a new generation of Soviet citizens who came of age in the late Brezhnev era. Within this generation, there were members who brought new ideas and new aspirations during the late 1970s and early 1980s to the so-called dissident movement that had come into existence in the Soviet Union in the post-Stalin era.¹⁸ This new generation of dissidents pursued a socialist program that emphasised the profound need for democratisation, while urging the deepening of the socialist character of Soviet society. They believed in the need to address issues that were relevant to everyday Soviet people. This partially represented a return to the debates of the *shest’desiatniki* that took place in the 1960s.¹⁹ However it was a departure from the dissident movement of the 1970s that had generally become thoroughly disillusioned with socialism and became divided into Westernising and Slavophil currents. The larger part of this movement of the 1970s had broadly adopted a Westernising program: they campaigned for human rights and attempted to compel the Soviet authorities to adhere to the rule of law by appealing to Western governments for public support. Because of the central emphasis on the defence of human rights in their dissident activity, this generation will be referred to as the *pravozašchitniki*, meaning defenders of rights and the law,²⁰ as they have been referred to elsewhere in the recent scholarship of the dissident movement. This chapter will place the

¹⁸ I take the term ‘dissident’ to mean an individual who engaged in public and articulated opposition to the Soviet regime.

¹⁹ The term *shest’desiatniki* refers to the ‘people of the sixties,’ who generally were members of the intelligentsia. This was adopted by the liberal intelligentsia to describe people whose formative political awakening took place in Khrushchev’s Thaw and who supported the liberal reform of Soviet communism. After the end of the Thaw, these people either drifted into dissent or quasi dissent, or made a rapprochement with Leonid Brezhnev’s conservative regime, publicly betraying their convictions, but privately holding on to them. Gorbachev is one of these *shest’desiatniki*.

²⁰ Refer to, for example, Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratisation and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (London: Routledge, 2005), 75.

intellectual development of the new generation of dissidents, which I have termed the Soviet ‘new left,’ as they referred to themselves, within the context of the alternative discourses that developed both within the liberal intelligentsia and the dissident milieu during the post-Stalin era. These alternative discourses encompassed various ideological, political, cultural and social representations of the reality of Soviet society and the outside world, which were contrary to the reality constructed by the ruling elite. Through the analysis of these discourses, I will challenge a prevailing paradigm that exists within the scholarship on the dissident movement: the portrayal of a united dissident movement which opposed a monolithic regime. Rather, I will argue that the dissident movement contained important divisions and continued to develop new alternative discourses according to the inclusion of new people in the movement, the changing domestic and international circumstances and the shifting of different factions with the ruling elite. This is important for the onset of Perestroika. These established discourses presented alternative constructions of reality to those which had prevailed in the late Brezhnev era, which were able to be drawn upon to create the process of change which occurred under Mikhail Gorbachev. Some of these ideas were seized upon by reforming factions within the ruling apparatus and the liberal intelligentsia and assisted the process of democratisation, but most importantly for our purposes, the ideas of the Soviet New Left provided a basis for the activism of the democratic socialist *neformaly* during Perestroika.

When addressing the historiography of the dissident movement, it must be recognised that much of the existing scholarship has been written in a ‘Cold War’ spirit. This means simplistically conceptualising the dissidents more or less within the totalitarian framework with the analytical binary of a group of heroic, democratically-inclined individuals facing the monolithic regime and a cowed, conformist population. For this reason, scholarship written from the mid 1960s to the end of the 1980s implicitly focused on the prospects of the dissident

movement to provoke open and popular resistance within Soviet society to the regime.²¹ Historians devoted attention to the so-called totalitarian apparatus used by the regime to suppress the dissident movement, focusing on the conduct of unfair trials, dissidents' incarceration in the labour camps and forced psychiatric hospitalisation.²² The activities of dissidents were often formulated as the exercise of moral opposition to a corrupt and dehumanising regime.²³ Apart from Western historians, reporters based in the Soviet Union and dissidents themselves published accounts of the dissident movement in circulated *samizdat* and published memoirs. These accounts often juxtapose the independent spirit and moral bravery of dissidents,²⁴ with the harassment from nameless, faceless, morally vacant KGB men, following the policy of a grey, authoritarian leadership.²⁵ The Soviet contemporary press represented dissidents as anti-Soviet, sick-minded, immoral parasites and liars and as agents of the Western powers, with vilification campaigns in the press to discredit the dissidents in the eyes of the

²¹ For example, the introduction to a 1970s samizdat anthology described the future task of the dissident movement to be 'to mobilize the masses,' in conditions where 'the Brezhnev regime resorts to the harshest measures used since Stalin's purges.' George Saunders, 'Introduction,' in *Samizdat: Voices of the Soviet Opposition*, ed. George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 44.

²² Refer to works such as: Sidney Bloch and Peter Reddaway, *Soviet Psychiatry: How Soviet psychiatry is used to suppress dissent* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

²³ In 2005 British historian Phillip Boobbyer published a book which argued the Soviet regime had lost its moral legitimacy and the dissident movement represented the attempt to restore a moral conscience to Soviet society. Refer to: Phillip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge, 2005).

²⁴ This image of the dissidents' moral superiority is established in the work of David Bonavia, a reporter for *The London Times* who worked as a correspondent in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, until he was expelled for his overzealous contact with dissidents. Bonavia recalls a conversation he had with an anonymous dissident, who said: 'Those first people who signed protests and stood out against the system in the late 1960s – like Pavel Litvinov, for instance – those were real heroes. In the West you have freedom of expression, so you may not understand this. But for a person brought up in this sort of society, with all the weight of propaganda and official pressure on top of him, to break through it all and still keep an independent spirit, needs a mind baked as hard as diamonds by that million tonne pressure.' Cited in David Bonavia, *Fat Sasha and the Urban Guerrilla: Protest and conformism in the Soviet Union* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973), 50.

²⁵ In his memoirs, academician and one of the most prominent members of the dissident movement, Andrei Sakharov described this harassment: 'Whenever I left the building, my KGB tails would shadow me. I came to know many by sight. When I walked in the woods I would occasionally come across a pair pretending to be lovers, and I more than once flushed an observer hiding behind a tree, who would then dash away. In 1981, after Lusia and I began taking drives around Gorky, one or often, two cars would follow, every so often cutting us off or trying some other stunt meant to intimidate. The KGB doesn't stint on public funds – the agents following us were rotated regularly.' Cited in Andrei Sakharov, *Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 526.

population.²⁶ The dissident movement was not a subject of official Soviet historical scholarship as it denied the proclaimed resolution of social contradictions presented in the designation of Soviet society to be ‘really existing socialism.’ Post-Soviet scholarship has contributed to the existing Western dialogue and enlarged the field of inquiry.

While not disputing the moral courage displayed by many members of the dissident movement and the fact that they underwent real persecution in the name of their ideals, nevertheless, scholars’ preoccupation with these static stereotypes of the dissident movement and the regime inhibits a detailed analysis of the everyday activity of the dissidents and the variation of outlooks and contributions. The stereotype of the dissident as a figure beyond moral reproach curbs the potential to deconstruct the phenomenon of the dissident movement and to place it in other contexts. However, scholarship has differentiated currents within the movement; edited compilations of samizdat coupled with historians’ analysis have distinguished the different trends, debates and concerns in the dissident movement, notably the controversy between the Westernising democratic movement and the Slavophiles through the course of the 1970s.²⁷ Though these works delineated diversity in the dissident movement, they were still published with the assumption that the dissidents were a free-thinking and courageous binary to the oppressive regime.

Accounts of the dissident movement written after the Soviet collapse have differed with regard to their interpretation of the agency the dissident movement possessed to influence change in the Soviet Union, notably the development of Perestroika. In a survey of the effect of

²⁶ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was subjected to a massive vilification after the foreign publishing of his history of Soviet repression, *The Gulag Archipelago*. He was vociferously attacked in the press, accused of being anti-Soviet, a traitor and a counterrevolutionary; citizens signed collective letters denouncing him. Cited in Alexei Klimoff, ‘Introduction,’ in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich: A Critical Companion*, ed. Alexei Klimoff (Illinois: North Western University, 1997), 36.

²⁷ For example, refer to: Mikhail Meerson-Aksenov and Boris Shragin (eds.), *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian ‘Samizdat’ – An Anthology* (Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1977) and Stephen F. Cohen (ed.), *An End to Silence: Uncensored Opinion in the Soviet Union from Roy Medvedev’s Underground Magazine Political Diary* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982).

dissent under communism for post-communist civil societies throughout the former Eastern Bloc, scholars Victor Voronkov and Jan Wielgohs commented that in the Soviet case, the dissident movement had almost no relevance for Perestroika. Voronkov and Wielgohs argued that the Soviet leadership heightened its repression of the dissident movement in 1980 after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the spectre of Solidarity as a powerful oppositional movement in Poland. Sakharov was exiled to Gorky in January of 1980 and virtually all other dissidents were arrested, exiled or emigrated, to effectively mute the movement.²⁸ They argue:

The political and social mass movement that emerged in 1987 had an entirely different character. It was created under circumstances that were changed wholly; viewed programmatically, organizationally and personally, it had few if any connections to the previous dissident movement.²⁹

Contrastingly, Australian historian Robert Horvath has argued that the dissident movement was important for defining public debate by providing modes of thought that could be appropriated by liberal reformers during Perestroika. As an example, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's critique of Leninist violence in *Gulag Archipelago*, which was widely read by the liberal intelligentsia surreptitiously in samizdat form, brought the history of Soviet repression into the public consciousness of the liberal apparatus and intelligentsia when considering reform during Perestroika. Horvath argues that while Solzhenitsyn was not directly referenced in many public discussions of the history of Soviet repression, nevertheless, his ideas were implicit.³⁰ The position that the dissidents' articulation of alternative discourses was important for the intellectual possibilities of Perestroika will be taken in this chapter.

There has been no comprehensive study of the Soviet 'new left' and its relationship to the earlier dissident movement or its relevance to Perestroika. This is because this group was forming at the same time that the older generation of *pravozashchitniki* were being effectively

²⁸ Viktor Voronkov and Jan Wielgohs, 'Country Studies: Soviet Russia,' in *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition*, eds. Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgohs (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2004), 105-106.

²⁹Ibid., 105-106.

³⁰ Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent*, 1.

suppressed at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s.³¹ It is this older generation which has been the focus of scholarship, whereas at the ‘new left’ are seen almost as a postscript of the movement, just before the onset of Perestroika a few years later. The significance of a younger generation of dissidents retaining socialist convictions has not really been explored, nor has their relationship to the advent of Perestroika been addressed, except cursorily and incidentally in works focusing on broader issues.³²

It is useful to consider the concept of generations as an approach to understand the different mentalities of the *shest'desiatniki*, the later *pravozashchitniki* and the ‘new left.’ The sociologist Karl Mannheim first identified the concept of generations as indispensable to understanding the social and intellectual structure of a movement.³³ Mannheim argues that individuals belonging to the same classes and generations are located in the same social and historical process and are thus contained within the same specific range of potential experience, through which they are predisposed to certain characteristic modes of thought and historically relevant action.³⁴ According to this framework, the historical process of de-Stalinisation in the Thaw was the formative experience of the *shest'desiatniki* and their collective response was support for a more democratic socialism. For the generation ‘stem’ that drifted towards dissent and became *pravozashchitniki* in the 1970s, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was a watershed for triggering their rejection of socialism. Another stem became complacent to the reaction against the liberalisation of the Thaw in the Brezhnev era and chose to be apolitical, but a part of this stem again embraced their ideas of the 1960s when they became enthusiastic supporters of

³¹ The distinction between the dissident ‘movement’ and the ‘new left’ as a ‘group,’ is that the dissident movement contained a series of subgroups (*Pravozashchitniki*, Slavophiles and of course the ‘new left,’ etcetera), while the ‘new left’ denotes a relatively unified current of thought.

³² Such a work which deals briefly with the democratic socialists of Perestroika is: Michael McFaul and Sergei Markov, *The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy: Parties, personalities and programs* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1993).

³³ Karl Mannheim, ‘The Problem of Generations,’ ed. Paul Kecskemeti, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 286.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

Perestroika.³⁵ Vladislav Zubok reaches similar conclusions and emphasises the prevalence of this second type, in his study, *Zhivago's Children* that traces the development of this generation, which he terms the last Russian intelligentsia.³⁶ He philosophises that the experience of this generation was 'above all about the slow and painful disappearance of their revolutionary-romantic idealism and optimism, their faith in progress and the enlightenment of the people...With the exception of a few courageous dissidents...the intellectuals and artists remained an intelligentsia-in-captivity.'³⁷

In contrast, the experience of the younger generation was very different.³⁸ Mannheim described the different state of mind encountered in a new generation, in contrast with the older cohort:

Any two generations following one another always fight different opponents, both within and without. While the older people may be still combating something in themselves or in their external world in such fashion that all their feelings efforts and even their concepts and categories of thought are determined by that adversary, for the younger people this adversary might be simply non-existent – their primary orientation is an entirely different one.³⁹

The 'new left' did not live under Stalin's rule as many *shest'desiatniki* did and came after the period of the Thaw, when the older generation was grappling with the legacy of the abuses that had

³⁵ Juliane Fürst, in her study *Stalin's Last Generation*, refers to the term *shest'desiatniki*, within contemporary scholarship to be a 'short-term phrase for the spirit of a period and a catch all for people who were, or consider themselves to have been, rebels in the short period of Soviet history when it was possible to rebel without losing life or freedom,' rather than the longer-term definition I have argued in support of here. Cited in Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet post-war youth and the emergence of mature socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

³⁶ Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2009), 20-21.

³⁷ Ibid., 357.

³⁸ It should be noted that Alexei Yurchak has studied the 'last Soviet generation,' those who came of age in the 1970s and 1980s, though his work is not especially applicable to the current study. He used an anthropological approach to understand the paradox inherent in the Soviet collapse: Soviet citizens did not expect it, but when it occurred, they found they had always been prepared for it. However, his study focuses to a greater extent on understanding the common experience of young Soviet people in the 1970s and 1980s. He does not really consider oppositional groups, as he was consciously seeking to depart from the usual binaries of oppression and resistance, repression and freedom, the state and the people, from which it is difficult to escape when considering the dissident movement and remaining relevant to the existing scholarship. Refer to Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever until it was no more: The last Soviet generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations,' 298-299.

occurred in the Stalin era. They were not present at the collapse of the idea of democratic socialism, as occurred during the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. They came of age in the relative stability of the Brezhnev era and never knew the mass repression of the earlier period. For this reason, they did not see the system of Soviet socialism itself as an opponent, as it was perceived by the *pravozashchitniki*, but only the parts of it which were affected by corruption and authoritarianism. This generation conceived of themselves as the ‘new left’ from the hours in the mid 1970s they had spent in coffee shops, clandestinely discussing the left-wing movements that were so prominent in the universities of Paris and the United States twenty years before.⁴⁰ Their affiliation with this Western new left of the 1960s denotes the new approach taken by this generation: their attraction to the ideas of the global left, rather than the search for a more liberal socialism within the heritage of Russian Marxism and their enthusiasm for the reform of socialism long after it had ceased to be popular among the *pravozashchitniki*. This generation also had approached the problem differently. They believed that once political conditions became less oppressive, likeminded people would share these points of view openly, these trends would become stronger and in this manner, these interests, ideas and concerns would be reflected in the broader political process.⁴¹ This contrasts with the more elitist conception of the *pravozashchitniki*, who conducted the dialogue for reform only between itself and the regime. The new left’s perception that a mass movement would be the best mechanism toward democratisation anticipated the formation of the *neformaly* during Perestroika. For this ‘new left,’ their formative experience would be the tumult of Perestroika.

The study of alternate discourses in Soviet society necessarily begins with the emergence of the *shest’desiatniki* in the period of Khrushchev’s Thaw in the 1960s. The policy of de-Stalinisation relieved the fear that had paralysed society during Joseph Stalin’s rule and led to

⁴⁰ David Remnick, ‘New Socialist Dissidents Urge Genuine Socialism,’ *Washington Post* 3 March, 1988.

⁴¹ Interview with Boris Kagarlitsky [‘new left’ dissident, leading figure in the MPF and present day historian], Moscow, May 5 2011.

public discussion of the prospective reform of Soviet society.⁴² However, Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 placed the policy of de-Stalinisation within confined limits of discourse.⁴³ The simplistic attribution of the crimes of the Stalin era to the figure of Stalin himself and his 'cult of personality' assuaged comprehensive attempts to understand how socialism could have enabled such large-scale repression.⁴⁴ The *shest'desiatniki* explored this question independently and approached it in several important ways. Firstly, information on the repression of the Stalin era and the disparity between the official Soviet ideological conception of reality and their interpretation of reality was brought into public discourse and committed to public memory in literary works. For example, literature written about the camps detailed the pervasive brutality that existed in the socialist system and the violence and disrespect for the human being that was perpetuated in the name of socialism, to reinforce the deep roots of Stalin's terror and destabilised the explanation that one man was responsible.⁴⁵ Secondly, when they accepted the fact that the 'cult of personality' thesis was not a satisfactory explanation for the Stalin phenomenon, they went further to question fundamental aspects of the Soviet system. They questioned the relationship between Leninist ideology and Stalinist practice. They asked whether a return to the socialism which had been developing in Lenin's time was viable and desirable, or whether authoritarian socialism could be reformed to adopt more democratic structures and political pluralism than had been imagined by Lenin, to reflect a liberal conception of socialism which adopted elements of Western bourgeois democracies.⁴⁶

⁴² Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1990), 59.

⁴³ Abraham Rothberg, *The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime, 1953-1970* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 7.

⁴⁴ Khrushchev's official explanation of the 'cult of personality' was an attempt to deflect attention from the present leadership who also held responsibility for those years, and to preclude real examination of the nature of the political system that was in place, which he headed. Cited in Boris Kagarlitsky, *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet state from 1917 to the present* (London: Verso, 1972), 7.

⁴⁵ Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, 112.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 157-158.

From these debates, the *shest'desiatniki* formulated reformist approaches, which were strains of alternate discourse, as they placed different emphasis on elements of Soviet history to that of the official narrative and countered the ideology proclaimed by official structures in the 1960s to envision a speculatively different development of the Soviet system. Émigré sociologist, Vladimir Shlapentokh, termed the two main reformist approaches as 'neo-Leninist' and 'technocratic.' Neo-Leninists did not question the political monopoly of the party or centralized control of society, but stressed the need to return to the inner party democracy of Lenin's time.⁴⁷ There were variations within neo-Leninists' attitudes to the desirability of the October Revolution and whether the developments of the Stalinist era should be accepted as fundamentally building the foundations of socialism, despite repressive distortions, or to reject this period as an aberration from socialism altogether.⁴⁸ Another prominent vision proffered by the intelligentsia was the power of science to resolve the contradictions of Soviet society. These technocratists advocated an elitist view of governing society, where professional experts would make all the most important decisions and scientific advancements would direct the political governance of society.⁴⁹ Both groups perceived the democratisation of Soviet society, in an elitist form, meaning greater public circulation of information and greater collective decision making to be the way forward and considered a more liberal variant of socialism to be desirable. However, these approaches were not realised and remained currents of alternate discourse, as the end of the Thaw restored conservative elements to the fore in the Brezhnev era and articulation of these views led to demotion or persecution.

During the Brezhnev era the alternate discourses elaborated by the *shest'desiatniki* transformed according to the changed political circumstances. The end of the Thaw and the censure of a permitted public sphere within which to elaborate unofficial discourse transferred

⁴⁷ Ibid., 150-151.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁹ Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, 153.

the dissemination of these ideas to the dissident sphere.⁵⁰ Samizdat became a preferred means for intellectuals to communicate their ideas to each other. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, neo-Leninism lost much of its popularity, as it confirmed for many the futility of the prospects for reform of Soviet socialism; it clarified for many that the Soviet leadership was resolutely opposed to reform of the current model.⁵¹ A strong tendency emerged to emphasise the Leninist roots within Stalinism.⁵² As such, socialist ideology became much weaker as an inspirational force among the intelligentsia.

The censure of a space for intellectuals to contribute in an independent minded public sphere forced the emergence of a dissident movement. The focus of the largest portion of the dissident movement in the 1970s was to compel the Soviet leadership to respect human rights and obey its own constitution and laws.⁵³ The Brezhnev leadership's ideological conservatism and the persecution of the dissident movement limited the potential for political protest to advocate major reform. Therefore, the *pravožashchitniki* iterated a critique of Soviet socialism that simply illuminated the contradiction between the avowed principles of Soviet socialism and the regime as it functioned in reality. This critique, discovered by the dissident mathematician Aleksandr Esenin-Volpin, centred on respect for the rule of law and specifically the ruling elite's recognition of the human rights granted in the Soviet constitution. In 1965, this critique first became public discourse when the dissidents assembled on Pushkin Square on Constitution day to protest for a fair trial of the arrested writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, holding placards reading 'respect the Soviet constitution.'⁵⁴ The critique was strengthened by the Helsinki

⁵⁰ Voronkov and Wielgoths, 'Country Studies: Soviet Russia,' 114.

⁵¹ Kagarlitsky, *The Thinking Reed*, 202.

⁵² This is reflected in the works of dissidents such as Vladimir Bukovsky and General Peter Grigorenko. Refer to Vladimir Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter* (New York: Viking Press, 1979) and Peter Grigorenko, *Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1982).

⁵³ See Chapter 5 'Mobilisation: The Expansion of Human Rights Movements,' in Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵⁴ Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent*, 74.

Accords signed by the Soviet Union in 1975.⁵⁵ This form of protest, the public exposure of Soviet human rights violations, de-legitimised the official discourse of the regime; the ruling elite maintained that the rights in the constitution were respected and advocated the superiority of Soviet socialism as a social system which promoted human rights and democracy. The dissidents created groups to monitor human rights abuses and samizdat periodicals were published to document conditions all over the Soviet Union; contacts with the West were important in these endeavours. The unwillingness of the Brezhnev leadership to engage in dialogue with the dissidents had convinced them a 'third party' was necessary to compel the elite to listen to their concerns.⁵⁶ Prominent human rights activists, Lyudmilla Alekseyeva expressed the logic of this appeal to the West:

The natural allies of the human rights movement were the publics of the countries of the free world, since their moral values coincided with the traditional values of Western democracies, and the organic pluralism and political neutrality of the human rights movement in the USSR placed it outside the struggle of political forces in the West, making it possible for the movement to be supported by both the left and right.⁵⁷

The West publicised information regarding human rights violations taking place in the Soviet Union and facilitated open circulation of dissidents' literature in the West. Moreover, this publicity shielded the dissidents from further human rights abuses by creating an international furore when a prominent dissident was arrested and created an embarrassing situation for the

⁵⁵ Svetlana Savranskaya, 'Unintended Consequences: Soviet Interests, Expectations and Reactions to the Helsinki Final Act,' in *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe*, eds. Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 188.

⁵⁶ In the early period of the Brezhnev era, the dissidents had submitted letters with suggestions for political reform to the leadership, which received no acknowledgement, bar occasional persecution of the authors. One such unanswered letter was written by the academician Andrei Sakharov, Roy Medvedev and Valentin Turchin, which argued that there was an urgent need for the democratisation of Soviet society in order to carry out necessary reforms and maintain successful scientific development – very much in line with the intelligentsia discourse of the 1960s, which was no longer possible to publicly enunciate. Cited in Andrei Sakharov, Roy Medvedev and Valentin Turchin, 'A Reformist Program for Democratisation,' March 1970, in *An End to Silence: Uncensored Opinion in the Soviet Union from Roy Medvedev's Underground Magazine*, Political Diary, edited by Stephen F. Cohen (New York: Norton, 1982), 317-327.

⁵⁷ Lyudmilla Alekseyeva, *Soviet Dissent: The contemporary movement for national, religious and human rights* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 336-337.

Soviet leadership, when they were called to account by Western leaders.⁵⁸ However, as previously noted, this movement gradually receded as its members were in prison, exile or emigration by the early 1980s.

The Soviet ‘new left’ that emerged at the end of the 1970s had different convictions and a different approach to the older generation of dissidents. They were critical of the older generation’s appeals to the West and perceived that this use of the West to publicise Soviet human rights violations was coupled with a desire for reform of Soviet society along capitalist lines.⁵⁹ This new generation desired the reform of Soviet society to take place within a socialist framework and therefore the Western inclinations of the older dissidents discredited them in their eyes. One of the leading figures of this ‘new left,’ Boris Kagarlitsky has argued that the older dissident movement had failed, and moreover perceived his own activity as a reaction to this failure. He believed it had failed because the dissident movement had not addressed real issues that were relevant to the mass of people. He argued that the goal of forcing the Soviet ruling elite to respect the human rights clauses it had signed and its own constitution was somewhat superficial, as democracy was not just adherence to procedures and institutions, but consultation with the population, and not only just between the leadership and the scientific and intellectual elite – an elitist conception that was implicit in the program of 1970s dissidents.⁶⁰

The generational difference between the ‘new left’ and the *pravoŭashchitniki* was strongly felt at the end of the 1970s. Kagarlitsky noted that the political activity of the ‘new left’ was considered to be atypical at the time. Atypical because it countered the mood of the previous generation and was new and entirely unexpected by the authorities. They did not expect the

⁵⁸ Natan Sharansky, *The Case for Democracy: The power of freedom to overcome tyranny and terror* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 132.

⁵⁹ Interview with Aleksandr Shubin [Renowned historian and leader of *neformal* group Obshchina during Perestroika], Moscow, May 4 2011.

⁶⁰ Interview with Boris Kagarlitsky.

spectre of socialist dissent, after the prominence of the Westernising current.⁶¹ Some observers had seen them as heirs to the *shest'desiatniki* and attributed them to be the final episode in the process that had begun in the 1960s, though many of the *shest'desiatniki* had become disillusioned members of the 1970s dissident movement and no longer associated themselves with those convictions, which led Kagarlitsky to believe it was rather a reaction *against* this movement.⁶² For the older generation, their formative years took place during the Great Patriotic War or Khrushchev's Thaw. Kagarlitsky noted how the older generation were 'fixed on the problem of Stalin, almost obsessed by it,' whereas he acknowledged because he had not lived through the Stalin crimes or the Thaw, he had a 'different psychology and cultural background.'⁶³ This propelled him to different forms of action.

The main figures who were to become the leaders of the left-wing *neformaly* groups shared common experiences of the 1970s and 1980s. They were typically students or young intellectual professionals who became engaged in left-wing dissident activity in their early twenties. All of the figures outlined here became acquainted in the Group of Young Socialists, a discussion group for an unorthodox socialist analysis of the social and political problems of Soviet history and present society.⁶⁴ They contributed to samizdat publications and faced persecution by the authorities in the crackdown on dissent in 1982, but were released after Brezhnev's death, between 1983 and 1985, to become important actors in the *neformaly* initiatives of Perestroika. Kagarlitsky (b. 1958) was a student at the State Institute of Theatre and Arts. At age twenty, in 1978, he became a contributor to the samizdat journal *Leyvi Povorot*. A year later he was a candidate for membership of the communist party, but the KGB discovered the 'anti-society' activities he was taking part in with *Leyvi Povorot* and he lost his prospective party

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Remnick, 'New Soviet Dissidents Urge Genuine Socialism'.

⁶⁴ Aleksandr Shubin, *Paradoxi perestroiki: upushchennyi shans SSSR* (Paradoxes of Perestroika: The Lost Chance of the USSR.) (Moscow: Beche, 2005), 126.

membership and was expelled from his studies. In 1982 he was arrested for his leadership in the Group of Young Socialists.⁶⁵ After signing a letter promising not to participate in further anti-Soviet activity, he was released in 1983. He became a leader and organiser of the Club of Social Initiatives (KSI) and a member of the organising committee of the MPF. He was elected as a deputy to the Moscow Soviet in 1990. Another figure, Gleb Pavlovsky (b. 1951) was a teacher. In 1972, when he was twenty-one he began to participate in a radical left-wing reading circle. He was a contributor to the samizdat journal *Poiski* in the mid 1970s, for which he spent 1982-1985 in exile.⁶⁶ He was another founder of the KSI. By 1987 he had adopted a liberal, anti-socialist position and was one of the founding members of the MPF and an organiser of the massive rallies at Luzhniki stadium in the summer of 1988. Grigory Pel'man (b. 1950) was a sociologist. He had studied under Tatiana Zaslavskaya, who was to become a prominent liberal commentator during Perestroika. Through Kagarlitsky, he made the acquaintance of Roy Medvedev, the well-known dissident Marxist historian, author of the monumental *Let History Judge*, a several hundred page documentation of Stalin's supposed distortion of Leninism. He also became a member of the organising committee of the MPF and was the creator of one of the *neformaly* groups *Perspektiva*. Finally, Pavel Kudyukin (b. 1953) was a history student of Moscow State University. While he was a twenty-year old student there, he participated in a satirical wall newspaper with A. Fadin and I. Dolutsky. Dolutsky was expelled from both the Komsomol and the university, while Kudyukin faced a Komsomol disciplinary committee and wrote an unsuccessful letter in defense of Dolutsky.⁶⁷ From 1977 to 1982, with A. Fadin and M. Rivkin, he edited the samizdat journal *Varianty*, publishing articles in support of 'socialism with a human face' and also wrote for *Levyi Pororot*. In 1982 he too was arrested for his participation in the Group of Young Socialists and released in 1983 after signing a letter promising not to engage in further illegal

⁶⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 133.

activity. In 1987 he was an organiser of the Perestroika club and the movement *Memorial*, which recorded the testimony of the victims of the Stalin era.

The behaviour of this new generation of dissidents prior to Perestroika had more in common with the activity of the *shest'desiatniki* than the *pravozashchitniki*. While samizdat was a phenomenon which emerged after the Thaw and was necessary in the more oppressive political conditions, the organisational forms taken by the 'new left' of private discussion groups echoed the *kompaniya* in the 1960s, which were private dinner parties of young intellectuals, where discussion of liberal reform took place.⁶⁸ This is a contrast to the 1970s, where the *public* nature of dissident activity was emphasised, which consisted of events such as vigils outside closed trials, formation of public groups to monitor human rights and rallies on Pushkin square advocating respect for the constitution.⁶⁹ Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, perhaps the two most famous dissidents of this period conducted their oppositional struggle openly, believing that they were 'living not by lies' as Solzhenitsyn admonished,⁷⁰ and acted as free citizens in an unfree society.⁷¹ The underground nature of the 'new left' activity reflected the loyal nature of their opposition. While they were critical of elements of corruption and authoritarianism in Soviet society, their opposition was socialist in character and they were proud of being Soviet citizens and did not think of appealing to the capitalist West, as had the earlier generation of dissidents.⁷² They found fault with aspects of the Soviet system, not the system altogether. This loyal nature of their opposition facilitated their enthusiastic, though critical, support for Gorbachev's reforms

⁶⁸ Lyudmilla Alekseyeva, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 84.

⁶⁹ Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle*, 203.

⁷⁰ In 1974 Solzhenitsyn outlined a code for honestly and publicly opposing what he perceived to be the immorality and lies of the regime. Cited in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, 'Live Not By Lies,' as printed in *The Washington Post* 18 February, 1974. Available [Online]: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/augustine/arch/solzhenitsyn/livenotbylies.html>; archived by the Augustine Club of Columbia University, 2001 [accessed 25 May 2011].

⁷¹ Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent*, 1.

⁷² Interview with Aleksandr Shubin.

and their contribution to the democratisation of Soviet society through organisation of the *neformaly* groups.

Aleksandr Shubin, one of the leaders of the *neformaly* group *Obschchina*, has outlined the experiences that brought him to support the positions of the ‘new left’ course. Shubin described the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s being an important bloc in his political consciousness, citing the conception that Mao Tse Tung was responsible for the decline of the international communist movement, though all was not right within Soviet communism also.⁷³ Under less dogmatic professors of Marxism during his university studies he became acquainted with third world revolutionary figures like Che Guevara and found them to be admirable, as well as the Narodnik movement of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia, at a time when the older generation of dissidents had repudiated revolutionary violence. He was critical, in a similar way as the older generation of dissidents, of corruption and authoritarianism within Soviet society. However, he designated ‘unjust branches of society,’ rather than the whole Soviet system itself being at fault.⁷⁴ He perceived the need for an organisation to restore socialism, which was the only social system capable of achieving democracy, because democracy could not be achieved without equalisation of economic status, to allow people to truly participate unfettered by this type of inequality.

Fundamental to this democratisation advocated by the ‘new left’ was the perception that an alliance must be forged with ordinary people.⁷⁵ These were ideas that had been rejected by the older generation of dissidents. They were more inclined to see the totalitarian possibilities of socialism, rather than its economic egalitarianism as providing a better basis for democracy than liberal democratic capitalist societies, because of their own experience in the Brezhnev era. In general, the great democratic socialist experiment of the Prague Spring and its destruction during

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Remnick, ‘New Dissidents Urge Genuine Socialism.’

the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had generally overcome this generation's socialist convictions. As Kagarlitsky said, 'the tragedy of the Russian intelligentsia of the seventies was that without having directly witnessed the victories of reformism, it was present at its collapse.'⁷⁶ The 'new left' did not have this ideological baggage.

The ideological discourse of the 'new left' was elaborated upon in the samizdat publications, *Varianty* and *Levy Povorot* in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both journals contained documents issued by the Italian communist party and translations of articles about Solidarity in Poland that had appeared in Western left-wing publications.⁷⁷ At this time, the Italian communist party (PCI) had adopted a Eurocommunist program, which rejected the application of Leninism to Western societies. Instead the PCI proposed the viability of the parliamentary road to socialism, and the construction of socialism while honouring so-called 'bourgeois' democratic institutions of the rule of law and the constitution. The PCI was engaged in polemics with the Soviet Union, which culminated in a split in 1982, when after the announcement of martial law in Poland PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer declared the October Revolution had 'exhausted its propulsive force' as a historically progressive movement.⁷⁸ The authors of articles in these samizdat journals considered this Western variation of democratic socialism to be of interest, as well as the party's open opposition to the Soviet method, but acknowledged that the West possessed its own political, social and economic conditions and they had theirs.⁷⁹ Therefore, these documents should not be considered evidence that the 'new left' proposed a Eurocommunist model for the Soviet Union, as they were accused of in the Soviet press.⁸⁰ Kagarlitsky in particular was critical of the Eurocommunists' theoretical argument that the

⁷⁶ Kagarlitsky, *The Thinking Reed*, 202.

⁷⁷ Julia Wishnevsky, 'More Details about "Socialists" Arrested in USSR Earlier this Year,' *Radio Liberty Research* (23 August, 1982): 3.

⁷⁸ Kevin Devlin, 'The PCI's "Third Way,"' *Radio Free Europe Background Report* 29 June 1982.

⁷⁹ Anonymous, 'O zhurnale *Levy Povorot*,' (About the Journal *Left Turn*) *Varianty* (1982): 1.

⁸⁰ Ned Temko, 'Soviet "Young Socialists" on Trial for Doubting Kremlin's Socialist Credentials,' *Christian Science Monitor* 14 February, 1983.

conditions in their societies permitted ‘an advance towards socialist transformation based on consensus and hegemony and not on coercion,’⁸¹ as had occurred in the Soviet Union where property had been forcibly expropriated and the non-proletarian classes actively persecuted in the 1920s and 1930s. Kagarlitsky argued in an orthodox Marxist fashion, that the state itself was an instrument of coercion controlled by the ruling class. Coercion could be altered under a democratic state, where class struggle would assume a form which was contained within a definite legal framework that was acceptable to all classes, but it could not be eliminated, as the wishful thinking of the Eurocommunists suggested.⁸² The Eurocommunists’ ‘parliamentary road to socialism,’ which blurred communism with social democratic positions, was explicitly rejected by Kagarlitsky. Unlike Lenin, he did accept that reformism contained real possibilities for progress, but unlike the Eurocommunists, and in line with Lenin, he believed the revolutionary struggle was indispensable:

History has confirmed the supposition that democratic socialism cannot come about as the result of gradual reforms, but it does not follow from this that reformist activity is useless. On the contrary, it is an essential stage in the revolutionary struggle, allowing the alignment of class forces to be altered and a new socio-political situation to be created. The Left must grasp the opportunities opened up by reformism while not forgetting the limited character of these opportunities.⁸³

It is useful to contextualise the engagement of the ‘new left’ with Eurocommunism with the ideological references observed by the *shest’desiatniki* in the 1960s. The primary frame of reference for the *shest’desiatniki* was the ‘return to Lenin’ and by 1968, the ideas of the Prague Spring. There was a strong feeling that Lenin’s ideology contained the program for the realisation of a more democratic socialism and that Stalin had deviated from this program with bureaucratic

⁸¹ The theoretical aspects of Eurocommunism were outlined in Spanish communist party leader, Santiago Carrillo’s work *Eurocommunism and the State*, which was very ill-received by the Soviet Union. Cited in Santiago Carrillo, *Eurocommunism and the State* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977), 77.

⁸² Boris Kagarlitsky, *Dialectic of Change* (London: Verso, 1990), 20.

⁸³ Ibid., 327.

distortions and mass terror.⁸⁴ The Western communist parties were not a source of inspiration at this time, as they were still thoroughly Stalinised. The pull that Lenin had over the *shest'desiatniki* meant that even other innovative Marxist thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci and György Lukács were not drawn influentially into the debate, to say nothing of social democratic positions, which remained in the disgrace that Lenin had confined them to.⁸⁵ However, the Prague Spring was to a great extent considered by the *shest'desiatniki* as the realisation of the democratic socialism they espoused. The Prague Spring represented steps away from Leninism, in the sense that the Action Program of the Czechoslovak communist party paid more credence to so-called 'bourgeois' democratic rights,⁸⁶ such as freedom of speech and assembly, which were not valued by Lenin. The Czechoslovak leaders also envisaged the creation of a national front, a plethora of political groups which represented various viewpoints (within a broadly socialist framework) and was designated to take part in and give input to creation of state policy.⁸⁷ This represented a departure from the Leninist thesis that the party was the vanguard of the proletariat during the period of proletarian dictatorship. Therefore, in interpreting the support of the *shest'desiatniki* for Leninism and the Prague Spring simultaneously, it must be said that one of the difficulties around Lenin is the extent to which people held up a romanticised notion of Lenin, while unconsciously departing from his actual doctrine. As the leader of the first socialist revolution

⁸⁴ This is contained in General Petr Grigorenko's program which he sent to a conference of international communist parties. He had come to the independent conclusion in the early 1960s that Soviet society had departed from Leninism and vigorously campaigned for a return to Lenin. However, in the 1970s he became convinced that Stalin had in fact faithfully carried out Lenin's ideas and became a leading member of the *pravozashchitniki*. Cited in Petr Grigorenko, 'To the Participants of the Budapest Conference,' in *The Political, Social and Religious Thought of Russian 'Samizdat'*, eds. Meerson-Aksenov and Shragin, 52-53, 55.

⁸⁵ It is well-known that Lenin was vitriolic in his opposition to social democracy, which meant Lenin's supporters considered social democracy in similar terms. Lenin's opposition to social democracy is well-demonstrated in his polemic against Karl Kautsky, one of the leading social democrats of the early twentieth century, who Lenin accuses of being a 'renegade' and 'lackey of the bourgeoisie.' Cited in: V.I. Lenin, 'The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,' available [Online]: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/oct/10.htm>; archived at Marxists' Internet Archive, 2002 [accessed 24 May 2011].

⁸⁶ 'Excerpts from the CPCz Action Program,' April 1968, available [Online]: <http://library.thinkquest.org/C001155/documents/doc13.htm>; archived at Think Quest; [accessed 24 May 2011].

⁸⁷ 'The Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Action Program,' April 1968, in *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, eds. Jaromír Navrátil et al. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998), 93.

and the founder of the Soviet state, he held a powerful psychological pull over communists.⁸⁸ However, the massive amount of work written by Lenin allowed for a certain elasticity in the interpretation of his views, which can be seen in dissident intellectual Aleksandr Ivanov's lamentation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia:

As Lenin said in 1921, 'The main thing is...to take maximum initiative, to show maximum self-reliance and maximum audacity.' One needs no special theory to see that this was the very thing the [reformist] Czechoslovaks set out to do, with greater audacity than anyone, in January 1968.⁸⁹

In this respect, Lenin's legacy was ambiguous. However, the abandonment of Lenin as a primary frame of reference for the 'new left' is established by their exploration of the ideology of the Western Left that constituted a conscious and determined departure from Leninism. This demonstrates the surpassing of Leninist ideology in the evolution that the 'new left' had made from the *shest'desiatniki*. The 'new left' contained the qualitatively different outlook of a new generation. The most important conclusion that resulted from this rejection of Leninism was the rejection of the notion of the Leninist vanguard; the idea that revolutionary change must be led by a small group dictating to the masses. The 'new left' were convinced that an organised mass movement was required to create a platform for the democratisation Soviet society, which is what occurred in the democratic socialist *neformaly* in Perestroika. These *neformaly* were not organised according to the Leninist structure of a centralised bureaucratic organisation headed by a central committee, but a free federation of democratically participating groups.

In 1982, a basic statement of the ideological orientation of the 'new left' was provided in the samizdat journal *Varianty*. The article abruptly stated, 'Socialism of the Soviet variety is not socialism,'⁹⁰ – a clear rejection of Lenin and the Stalinist legacy. In an analysis that echoed

⁸⁸ This was perhaps most apparent in Perestroika, where Gorbachev's reforms departed from Lenin, all the while when he was publicly declaring Soviet society's 'return to Leninism.' Cited in Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 119.

⁸⁹ Aleksandr Ivanov, 'Russia's Shame,' December 1969, in *An End to Silence*, ed. Cohen, 294.

⁹⁰ Anonymous, 'O Zhurnale *Levyi Povorot*,' 1.

Milovan Djilas' *The New Class*, the anonymous author argued that the absence of genuinely democratic institutions in Soviet society meant that state property became the collective property of a ruling oligarchy, which was analogous to capitalist property. Therefore, the nomenklatura constituted the exploiting class and was analogous to the bourgeoisie under capitalism. The author argued it was impossible to achieve efficiency in the economy while the Soviet bureaucracy remained unreformed. This focus on the problem of the bureaucratic dictatorship and the presence of the vast bureaucracy as a hindrance to the democratic participation of the masses in socialist society had been first fully perceived by Leon Trotsky in his *The Revolution Betrayed*, where he classified this growth of bureaucracy as the Soviet Thermidor and the Soviet Union to have become a degenerated workers' state.⁹¹ The problem was also recognised by the *shest'desiatniki*, though they were more inclined to consider the growth of the bureaucracy to be a Stalinist distortion rather than the outcome of the Leninist vanguard and centralisation of the party. The problem of the bureaucracy was also identified by Gorbachev during Perestroika and remained a central concern of the 'new left' until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the space of a few years after the late 1970s, the new left's clandestine discussions in coffee shops and in the private circulation of samizdat articles became public discourse during Perestroika. In 1985, the newly elected secretary Mikhail Gorbachev pursued an initially conservative reformist course of glasnost (openness) in administration to combat corruption within the bureaucracy to begin the resolution of the Soviet Union's deepening economic crisis.⁹² However, Perestroika began to gain a momentum of its own. By 1987, Gorbachev had set the Soviet Union on a course of democratisation, meaning genuine public participation in political

⁹¹ Leon Trotsky, 'Chapter 11 of *The Revolution Betrayed*: Whither the Soviet Union?' Available [Online]: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/ch11.htm>; archived at Marxists' Internet Archive, 22 April 2007 [accessed 23 May 2010].

⁹² David Stuart Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika* (London: Routledge, 1992), 10.

life in the form of elections and permitted spontaneous public activity.⁹³ His course of democratisation reflected both the seriousness of the economic problems encountered by the Soviet Union and the predilection for the liberal ideas akin to those of the *shest'desiatniki* that the progress reformers headed by Gorbachev advocated. The discourse of the *shest'desiatniki* had entered the apparatus in the form of Gorbachev's drive for a 'return to Lenin' and his attempt to incorporate political pluralism into the Soviet political system. Moreover, Gorbachev's drive for the creation of a law based state and respect for the rule of law was to some extent the appropriation of the discourse of the *pravozashchitniki* of the 1970s. In this way, these alternative discourses of the post-Stalin era became influential during Perestroika. However, while the entry of the ideas of the *shest'desiatniki* and the *pravozashchitniki* was an elitist phenomenon that came from above and became popular amongst the liberal intelligentsia, the democratic socialist mass movements headed by the leadership of the 'new left' were a grassroots phenomena created by popular agitation from below. Gorbachev's reforms had created conditions where the ideas of the 'new left' could be realised. This paved the way for the organisation of the *neformaly*. The debates that had taken place between the 'new left' in the late Brezhnev era provided the intellectual rationale for the formation of democratic socialist *neformaly*, which broadly supported Gorbachev's programs of reform, while possessing an agenda of its own, based on the expansion of democracy and the popular concerns of the masses, as debated publicly in the liberalised conditions of Perestroika. This new generation of dissidents, which succeeded the earlier *shest'desiatniki* and *pravozashchitniki* were to undergo their own formative generational experience in the years of Perestroika, which will be explored in the following chapter.

⁹³ Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Ideologies in the Period of Glasnost: Responses to Brezhnev's stagnation* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 138.

Chapter Three – The Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference of June 1988 as a Reference Point for the Competing Democratic Socialist Discourse of Gorbachev’s Reformers and the *Neformaly*.

The Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference was a decisive event in the history of Perestroika. It marked the clear elucidation of Gorbachev’s program for the democratisation of the Soviet Union through the reform of the political structures of power. Gorbachev announced that the democratisation of these power structures would take place through the redistribution of power from party structures to structures of the state and the establishment of elections to give popular legitimacy to the representatives, which took the form of the Congress of People’s Deputies the following year, in 1989. This vision of political reform marked an important turning point in Perestroika as an indication of Gorbachev’s commitment to fundamental democratic reform of the Soviet system. The proposed changes would quickly wrest power from the conservative bureaucracy to give party reformers greater agency, as well as allowing for non-party actors the possibility of being elected to publicly articulate their concerns.

For the *neformaly*, the conference was important because it allowed them to mature politically as they developed a position regarding the conference. The informal organisation that will be the focus of this chapter is the Federation of Socialist Social Clubs (FSOK), which was a broadly socialist coalition of several clubs, *Obshchina*, an anarchist-syndicalist group, Socialist Initiative, a democratic socialist group around Kagarlitsky, Club Perestroika, and environmentalist-minded groups *Lesnoi Narod*, *Al’yans*, *Alternativa* and *Planeta*, some youth communal internationalist groups and some international brigades.⁹⁴ FSOK convened meetings

⁹⁴ Shubin, *Paradoksi Perestroiki*, 149.

to discuss the communist party's officially proposed thesis before the conference and composed a 'popular mandate,' to be delivered by Rector of the Historical Archives Institute, Yuri Afanasyev, in hope of influencing the delegates at the conference. They held public demonstrations and began to create a popular movement. The conference eventually gave the activists within FSOK the impetus to form the broader, less ideologically homogenous movement, the Moscow Popular Front (MPF), in order for the *neformaly* to be able to act in a concrete manner as real agents of change, drawing on the experience of the powerful popular fronts in the Baltic States.⁹⁵ 1988 was a year where the power and influence of the *neformaly* steadily rose, as Gorbachev had created the conditions for a burgeoning civil society, where people were enthusiastic about the new possibilities for political participation that were present in this time of liberalisation and reform.

This chapter will contend that Gorbachev had appropriated many of the key ideas of the *shest'desiatniki* and the concern for the rule of law first articulated by the *pravozashchitniki*. While the history of Perestroika is a history of rapid change and for that reason Gorbachev's perspective cannot be described as static, by 1988 he had moved beyond superficial reform of the system to consider real transformation. The sources of the ideas that he drew upon to develop this momentum of change were located in the alternate discourses described in the previous chapter. Similarly, the ideas of the 'new left' became concretely realised in the program of FSOK and its approach to the Nineteenth Party Conference. The rejection of Leninist forms of organisation in favour of popular participation, which in anticipation of the conference, took the form of demonstrations, circulated petitions, public agitation at Pushkin square and democratically conducted meetings at the Palace of Youth all reflected the ideas of the 'new left' brought into practice in conditions which were derived from Gorbachev's liberalisation and his approach from above to aid the creation of civil society. In the different conceptions of

⁹⁵ Interview with Boris Kagarlitsky.

democratic organisation and the different ideological emphasis between Gorbachev's 'return of the *shest'desiatniki*' and the 'new left' it is possible to identify the generational difference these two groups and their different notions of democratic socialism.

The *neformaly* remains an under researched topic. Boris Kagarlitsky, whose biography was outlined in the previous chapter, was one of the foremost figures of the *neformaly* and contemporarily chronicled the history of FSOK and the MPF, from the Nineteenth Party Congress until after the fall of the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ His work emphasises that the *neformaly* were convinced that democratisation of Perestroika was not only a process led by Gorbachev from above, but that the evolution of the Soviet system towards a more democratic model also needed to be agitated and influenced from below. His work provides a narrative where the *neformaly* formed in 1987 and were able to gather mass support in the period 1988 to 1989, culminating in massive rallies MPF-led rallies at Luzhniki Stadium. However, he argues that by 1990 the *neformaly*, who had been originally been generally of a socialist character, became flooded with liberals who favoured a transition to capitalism. The members of the *neformaly* who had been popularly voted as representatives in the official power structure became isolated from their original supporters and rallied around the independent figure of Yeltsin, when it was not yet clear he intended to build liberal capitalism on the ruins of the Soviet Union. Therefore, Kagarlitsky sees the *neformaly* ultimately as a failure, as they were coopted by the official apparatus and the voice of democracy from below became insignificant. Aleksandr Shubin, who was a contemporary of the events as one of the leaders of *Obshchina* and also a professional historian

⁹⁶ He has written three books on the *neformaly* and the later development of these groups into nascent political parties within the context of the developments of Perestroika and later in Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation. Boris Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika* (London: Verso, 1990); *Disintegration of the Monolith* (London: Verso, 1992) and *Square Wheels: How Russian democracy got derailed* (New York: Monthly Press, 1994). His more theoretical work, *Dialectic of Change* (London: Verso, 1990) also contains some material on the MPF.

published a history in 2006 of the *neformaly*,⁹⁷ where he argued that the course of Perestroika could have been different if Gorbachev had split the communist party into a social democratic party and a conservative party, which would have created an openly progressive alliance and the socialist elements in the apparatus and the *neformaly* might have been more successful if they united to a greater extent.⁹⁸ He also notes that the activities of the *neformaly* concluded when it became possible to form political parties in 1990.

Within historiography, the Nineteenth Party Conference is presented as one of the milestones of Perestroika. It was eagerly anticipated by contemporary observers, the mass media and historians alike, who were fascinated by the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. The conference is located as a turning point where Gorbachev began to undertake radical reform within the narrative of Perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁹⁹ It is usually recognised as the precursor to the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989, as the conference is when Gorbachev declared his intention to create this body. In 1990, Baruch A. Hazan published the definitive work on the Nineteenth Party Conference, containing transcripts of the speeches at the conference, as well as a comprehensive analysis.¹⁰⁰ The conference has been generally categorised to be of importance as a stepping stone for greater change, rather than being conclusive in itself. This chapter will approach the conference as a case study to understand the different ideological nuances between Gorbachev's reformers and the democratic socialist *neformaly*.

⁹⁷ This work is: Aleksandr Shubin, *Predannaya Demokratiya: SSSR i neformaly 1986-1989* (Betrayed Democracy: The USSR and the Informals 1986-1989) (Moscow: Evropa, 2006). Unfortunately it did not arrive at CEU library in time for me to read it.

⁹⁸ Interview with Aleksandr Shubin.

⁹⁹ For example, this is recognised by Archie Brown. Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 178-179.

¹⁰⁰ Baruch A. Hazan (ed.), *Gorbachev's Gamble: The Nineteenth All-Union Party Conference* (Boulder: Westview, 1990).

The final body of historiography this chapter is engaging with is the ideology of Gorbachev his fellow reformers, especially Aleksandr Yakovlev. The ideology of Perestroika has not been an especially prominent topic of study, as it is often assumed by Western historians that economic factors were much more critical to the impetus for reform.¹⁰¹ Moreover, before Perestroika Western historians, in general, had assessed that ideology had long been succeeded by power relations as the guiding force in Soviet society and ideology was simply paid lip service as a legitimating factor of communist rule.¹⁰² The historiography of Perestroika and its ideology is enormous and this thesis cannot hope to even approach exhausting it, but it can be observed that historians have approached ideology as an indication of Gorbachev's shifting perspective; from his ideological proclamations it is clear that Gorbachev had approached reform decisively, yet cautiously in 1985, but had drifted to social democratic positions as reform became more fundamental by 1989-1990. Archie Brown has noted that while Gorbachev had used the term *demokratizatsiya* even as early as December 1984, at that time it did not have the same denotation as it had for him by the late 1980s.¹⁰³ Brown argued that this shift indicated that as reform proceeded, Gorbachev recognised that the system itself needed to be transformed to function as an efficient socialist society. Therefore, from this perspective Gorbachev's shifting ideological predispositions serve as an indication of the exogenous economic, political, social and international factors which influenced his outlook. Perestroika as the return of the liberal ideology of the *shest'desiatniki* of the 1960s has also been a framework posited by historians, which will be explored in this chapter.¹⁰⁴

There is a general consensus amongst historians that in the initial phase of Perestroika (1985-1986), the agency of Gorbachev as General Secretary was most decisive in the changes

¹⁰¹ Neil Robinson, *Ideology and the Collapse of the Soviet System: A critical history of Soviet ideological discourse* (Aldershot: E. Elgar, 1995), 3.

¹⁰² Jan Pakulski, 'Legitimacy and Mass Compliance: Reflections on Max Weber and Soviet-type Societies,' *British Journal of Political Science* 16(1) (1986): 48.

¹⁰³ Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 155.

¹⁰⁴ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 337.

taking place in Soviet society. In 1985, Gorbachev headed an authoritarian superpower where opposition had successfully been suppressed by his predecessors in a general crackdown in 1979-1980 in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the presence of Solidarity in Poland.¹⁰⁵ The agency of the communist party and its leader, the General Secretary was paramount. However, Gorbachev had recognised that the Soviet Union was beset by economic problems that were so monumental that their resolution required combined economic and political reform of the system to ensure the continued presence of the Soviet Union as the world's second superpower.¹⁰⁶ The democratisation of the system was necessary to build a mass base of support for Gorbachev's proposed program of economic reform, while creating channels for popular pressure that would insure the continuing re-vitalisation of the system and guard against stagnation in future.¹⁰⁷ The course of democratisation would compel greater responsibility of the political leaders to the people, to combat the strength of the conservative elements of the bureaucracy to oppose Gorbachev's reforms.¹⁰⁸ In this early stage of Perestroika, Gorbachev's democratisation included the appointment of liberal figures to high leadership positions; notably in the creative unions, such as the Theatre Workers' Union, Writers' Union and within the film industry.¹⁰⁹ In December 1986, he recalled the prominent *pravoŭashchitnik* Academician Andrei Sakharov from exile in Gorky; a strong indication of the course of liberalisation he was pursuing.¹¹⁰

This crusade towards the disempowerment of the corrupt Brezhnevite bureaucracy was one of the key aspects of what émigré sociologist, Vladimir Shlapentokh, termed 'liberal ideology.' In two studies published at the end of the 1980s, Shlapentokh evaluated the discourses

¹⁰⁵ Joshua Rubinstein, *Soviet Dissidents and their Struggle for Human Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 213.

¹⁰⁶ Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A historical interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 123.

¹⁰⁷ Alfred B. Evans Jr., *Soviet Marxism-Leninism: The decline of an ideology* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993), 194.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 194.

¹⁰⁹ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 162.

¹¹⁰ Martin McFaul, *Gorbachev* (Michigan: Longman, 1998), 64.

of the Brezhnev era intelligentsia *vis-à-vis* the ruling elite, based on the interests of the intelligentsia and their historical, sociological, moral and political interpretation of the reality of Soviet society. He identified one of the main trends of thought espoused by the critical, but by no means dissident, segments of the intelligentsia to be liberal ideology. He recognised that in the first years of Perestroika this liberal intelligentsia felt Gorbachev's reforms were completing this intelligentsia's own desired liberalisation of the Soviet system and appropriating the ideas that had formed within *shest'desiatniki* of the 1960s that had persisted in an unstated form in the Brezhnev era and were partially articulated by the dissident movement.¹¹¹ This liberal ideology, in the early stages of Perestroika, contended that the nomenklatura was responsible for the decline of the Soviet Union which had occurred during Brezhnev's stagnation.¹¹² This decline was twofold: class antagonisms had resulted from the nomenklatura's segregation from the rest of the population, in its appropriation of privileges and its faltering communication with the rest of society; secondly, the apparatchiks had not been able to fulfil the task of providing goods of a decent quality in all sectors of society, from the economy, to healthcare, to culture.¹¹³ This degeneration of the bureaucracy under Brezhnev had disenfranchised the intelligentsia, the workers and the peasants from the social climate in the Soviet Union.¹¹⁴ Moreover, liberal ideology identified that the declining economic and technological performance of the Soviet Union could be attributed to the oppressive intellectual atmosphere which existed in the Brezhnev era. With a lack of forums for open academic debate, society could not progress.¹¹⁵ This anti-bureaucratic sentiment was keenly felt by Gorbachev in his quest to restore the Soviet economy and in the liberal intelligentsia's own perception of the state of Soviet society. This

¹¹¹ Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The post-Stalin era* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1990), 156-157.

¹¹² Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Ideologies in the Period of Glasnost: Responses to Brezhnev's Stagnation* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 147.

¹¹³ Ibid., 148.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 147.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 161.

'liberal ideology' referred to by Shlapentokh can be seen as the application of *shest'desiatniki* thought applied critically to the Brezhnev period.

By designating the conservative elements of the party bureaucracy as an opponent to substantial economic and political reform and identifying the liberal intelligentsia as a key source of support for his program, Gorbachev carried out his program of democratisation with this basis of class support. In 1986 and 1987, there was a freer role permitted to media,¹¹⁶ critical works of film, theatre and literature were published,¹¹⁷ and the open expression of degrees of political criticism occurred without fear of persecution and greater amicable contacts with the West were established, with more opportunities to travel abroad. These were all policies beneficial to the intelligentsia, who were able to practice their occupations and engage in intellectual conversation in a freer atmosphere.¹¹⁸

British political scientist and Gorbachev specialist, Archie Brown has argued that the evolution towards the liberalisation of the Soviet system during Perestroika can be explained by the agency exercised by members of the intelligentsia who were working within high-placed party institutes of intellectuals in the Brezhnev era. Brown uses the term, 'institutional amphibiousness,' which he has borrowed from studies of the Chinese political system. X.L. Ding published an article analysing the practice of Chinese institutions; he argued, 'An institution can be used for purposes contrary to those it is supposed to fulfil and the same institution can

¹¹⁶ As an example, in February 1987 at a meeting with editors and other leading media figures, Gorbachev publicly reversed the attitude he had taken to the role of history in Perestroika. He made his famous declaration that 'there should not be any blank pages in either our history or our literature.' Cited in R.W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Era* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1989), 130-131.

¹¹⁷ For example, in mid 1986 the publication of Anatoly Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, which recreated the 1930s and depicted Stalin as a murderous, conniving figure. Cited in Joseph Gibbs, *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet media in the first phase of Perestroika* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 44.

¹¹⁸ Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, 157.

simultaneously serve conflicting purposes.’¹¹⁹ Ding recognised that institutions that were ‘set up by the communist regime for its own use,’ were ‘gradually coopted by critical forces for counter purposes, all the while keeping up the facade that they were still party-state institutions.’¹²⁰ Brown argues that the same phenomenon can be found in the Soviet case. Despite the repressive character of the Brezhnev era, many of the *shest’desiatniki* retained the liberal convictions they had developed in the Thaw, but they no longer publicly articulated them, as they were unwilling to cede to life as a dissident. Therefore, these people remained within the apparatus, and gave the appearance of ideological orthodoxy, while internally holding dissenting views. Brown argues that in the Brezhnev era, there existed institutes that were nominally orthodox but were in fact occupied by people retaining liberal views; this contradiction was what he termed as ‘institutional amphibiousness’ in the Soviet case. One such institute was the party journal of international communism, *Problemy mira i sotsializma* located in Prague. Many of the people who worked on this journal would become some of the most important political figures of Perestroika.¹²¹ The staff included future deputy heads of the Central Committee departments and aides or consultants to Gorbachev such as Georgi Shakhnazarov, Vadim Zagladin, Anatoly Chernyaev and Karen Brutents.¹²² Ivan Frolov, who was editor of *Problemy mira i sotsializma* from 1958 to 1964 and in the Perestroika era edited both the theoretical party journal *Kommunist* and later *Pravda* had been on the staff. Party intellectuals who were known as reformists, such as Yevgeny Ambartsumov, Aleksandr Bovin, Lev Delyusin, Merab Mamardashvili, Gennadyi Gerasimov, Yuriy Karyakin, Vladimir Lukin, Nikolai Shishlin and Aleksandr Veber had all also worked in Prague at this journal. These people all had worked in an environment where they regularly consorted with intellectuals from other more liberal-minded communist parties and as they were away from the

¹¹⁹ X.L. Ding, ‘Institutional Amphibiousness and the Transition from Communism: The case of China,’ *British Journal of Political Science* 24(3) (1994): 292. Cited in Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 161.

¹²⁰ Ding, ‘Institutional Amphibiousness and the Transition from Communism,’ 299. Cited in *Ibid.*, 161.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 162.

Soviet Union, they were in a more relaxed political atmosphere.¹²³ Despite the orthodox Marxist-Leninist tone of *Problemy mira i sotsializma*, these party intellectuals enthusiastically supported the Prague Spring and hoped for a similar liberalisation to take place in the Soviet Union, while feeling abject shame for the subsequent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.¹²⁴ As Brown noted, these intellectuals were people who were deeply affected by the crushing of a more liberal socialism in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but they did not cross the floor to the dissident movement. Though they did not demonstrate the courage displayed by many members of the dissident movement, nevertheless, the value of their position was eventually demonstrated during Perestroika. Once liberalisation came from above with Gorbachev, by remaining within the system, these *shest'desiatniki* and other inwardly liberal intellectuals were able to provide a mass base of support to Gorbachev's course, as a counterbalance to the Brezhnevite bureaucracy within the official apparatus.¹²⁵ The phenomenon was very important for the success of Gorbachev's ability to democratise Soviet society, because many of his reforms ran against the interests of the Brezhnev era bureaucracy.

Correctly, Brown has maintained that this process of 'institutional amphibiousness' counters the explanation of the civil society versus the state as a means to understand the democratisation of Soviet society. Gorbachev had created the preconditions of a liberalisation for civil society to begin to emerge by 1986-1987, as indicated by the presence of the *neformaly*. However, Gorbachev acted with agency from above to continue the pluralisation of Soviet society, rather than meaningful change being forced from below. This continuation of a course of socialist pluralism is what was set in motion at the Nineteenth Party Conference. This decision was taken from above by Gorbachev and supported by fellow liberal-minded party reformers,

¹²³ A.S. Chernaev, *Moya zhizn' i moe vremya* (My Life and My Era) (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1995), 225-236. Cited in Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World*, 162.

¹²⁴ Robert English, *Gorbachev: Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 112-113.

¹²⁵ Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World*, 163.

who emerged from within the ranks of Brezhnev era institutions to be given positions of influence under Gorbachev. The forum of the all-union party conference itself was tenaciously proposed by Gorbachev to fasten the pace of reform and coerce the unrepentant bureaucracy. He was reviving a long lost Bolshevik tradition, as the Eighteenth Party Conference was held in 1941. The practice of the party conference had been established under Lenin. It was an extraordinary party forum that convened in the intervals between regular party congresses to discuss critical political and economic issues that were too urgent to leave until the next party congress.¹²⁶ The original role relegated to the party conference, as indicated in the communist party statute,¹²⁷ was that the conference should serve as a party instrument to promote the enforcement of party policy. However, Gorbachev, it seems, intended to use the party conference to overcome the opposition to his reformist course and fasten its pace, rather than waiting for the next party congress.

The *neformaly* took a different perspective on the intentions of the conference. Kagarlitsky criticised the fact that the thesis of the party leadership in preparation for the conference did not contain any specific proposal and was in fact an abstract document.¹²⁸ This statement is generally correct. The document addressed the need to restructure the party in favour of rewarding prominence to progressive elements and to discourage ‘conservative bureaucratic mentalities.’¹²⁹ Openness and glasnost were referred to, specifically in relation to the discussion of Soviet history and the question of rehabilitations. The need to restructure the economy and hasten the pace of its reform was emphasised, as well as the encouragement of scientific and technological innovations to advance Soviet society.¹³⁰ Ideologically, the theses placed a strong emphasis on the return to Leninism and the political practices this implied. Specifically, this entailed

¹²⁶ Hazan (ed.), *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 3.

¹²⁷ ‘Chapter IV, Article 40,’ in *Rules of the CPSU* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 27. Cited in *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁸ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, 2-3.

¹²⁹ ‘Thesis of the CPSU Central Committee Plenum,’ 23 May 1988, in *Gorbachev's Gamble*, ed. Hazan, 78.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

restoration of democratic centralism within the party,¹³¹ and the reinvigoration of the call of the October Revolution, ‘all power to the Soviets!’ with ‘more power to the Soviets!’ – the redistribution of power from the party to the state structures, in keeping with Lenin’s formulation made near the end of his life, of the prospect of the bureaucracy alienating the population.¹³² This was the most specific proposal for achieving the changes proposed by the theses, but as Kagarlitsky criticised, the concrete means to realise this goal was not presented. However, importantly, the theses enunciated that it was, ‘not only citizens who bear responsibility before the state, but state that bears responsibility before the citizens.’¹³³ As will be addressed later in the chapter, this represents Gorbachev’s tacit acceptance of features of the critique of the *pravožashchitniki*. In another sphere, the theses urged the necessity of departing from ‘historically outdated stereotypes’ in the conduct of foreign policy.¹³⁴ While these statements are all abstract proposals, which were characteristic of party congress declarations of the Brezhnev era, and for this reason provoked the cynicism of the *neformaly*, it must be recognised that these proposals contain much of the *shest’desiatniki* views outlined in the previous chapter. The notion of a return to Leninism and the curtailing of bureaucratic influence, while buttressing popular communist elements; the technocratic argument that science and technology must be given the opportunity to freely develop to engender the advancement, efficiency and harmony of Soviet society; and the conduct of a foreign policy based on human principles were all previously advocated by the *shest’desiatniki*. In this way, the alternate discourses rose to prominence during Perestroika to effect the development toward civil society.

This development toward civil society is most strongly felt in the final statement of the theses. The theses articulated, ‘The CPSU central committee counts on the active participation of communists and all working people in the discussion. This will make it possible...to make well-

¹³¹ Ibid., 85.

¹³² Ibid., 88.

¹³³ ‘Thesis of the CPSU Central Committee Plenum,’ 91.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 92.

thought out decisions whose implementation will accelerate our resolute progress and make revolutionary structuring irreversible.’¹³⁵ This statement clearly illustrates Gorbachev’s intention to pluralise socialism and to draw civil participation into the decision making process. While this statement calls on specifically communist-minded participation, nevertheless, the ‘revolutionary’ nature of the restructuring suggests genuine change. The beginnings of civil society were encouraged from above.

However, at the grassroots level, this encouragement of civil society was far from apparent. The election procedures of delegates to the conference included party members from academic and scientific institutes. With the goal in mind of populating the conference with supporters of his Perestroika course, Gorbachev announced, ‘Our position is that it is the committed stalwarts of Perestroika, active communists, who should be elected delegates.’¹³⁶ However, the more radical delegates were subjected to the strong opposition of bureaucrats. This was the case for Yuri Afanasyev, the Rector of the Historical Archives in Moscow, who had been an enthusiastic and radical proponent of Perestroika. Afanasyev was another product of the ‘institutional amphibiousness’ of the Brezhnev era. He had worked in the national leadership of the Komsomol. He was a graduate from Moscow State University in the field of French historiography and had worked as an editor of the historical section of the party theoretical journal *Kommunist* from 1983 to 1986.¹³⁷ Afanasyev noted that the spectacle that he had witnessed in 1953, of people in the laneways near Red Square cheering over the death of Stalin had left him with an uneasy feeling and unanswered questions. While abroad in France, he had read émigré and dissident works, which had engrained his perspective that all was not right in the Soviet system, though he never expressed dissent.¹³⁸ However, at the beginning of Perestroika, he wrote to Gorbachev about the state of historical science in the Soviet Union, calling on him to end

¹³⁵ Ibid., 95.

¹³⁶ Hazan (ed.), *Gorbachev’s Gamble*, 13.

¹³⁷ David Remnick, *Lenin’s Tomb: The last days of the Soviet empire* (New York: Random House, 1993), 114.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 113.

restrictions and to open the archives of the party and the KGB. As a result, he was appointed as Rector of the Historical Archives Institute in 1986.¹³⁹ He used this position to radicalise the public discourse of Perestroika. In September 1987, he publicly argued that a new approach needed to be taken to historical education in schools, to dispel the Stalinist influence in high school textbooks that left students disillusioned and ‘nihilistic.’¹⁴⁰ He urged for the ‘full truth’ to be told about the Soviet past: the re-examination of the persecuted Old Bolsheviks Nikolai Bukharin and even Leon Trotsky and demanded public access to Western philosophies of history, to end Soviet intellectual isolation.¹⁴¹ This introduction of the call for historical truth in 1987 had helped to radicalise Perestroika at a time when liberalising initiatives were still emerging largely from the agency of Gorbachev. Therefore, Afanasyev had large-scale grassroots support and was popular nominated as a delegate to the conference.

There was a bureaucratic attempt to block Afanasyev’s election, but this provoked a strong reaction from FSOK, academics of institutes that had supported Afanasyev and the students, which was an indication of the civil society whose emergence was aided by the spectacle of the congress. *Moscow News* reported that the party meeting of the State Historical Archives Institute had voted 267-1 to send their Rector Afanasyev to the conference on 20 April. But on 20 May, in a meeting at Sverdlovsk’s district Party Buro not a single person supported his candidacy.¹⁴² Rather than calling a full session of the district’s party committee, the meeting took place behind closed doors for four hours and a different candidate was selected. As a result of this, as Kagarlitsky described, ‘A veritable revolt broke out.’¹⁴³ A stormy meeting took place composed of students and lecturers and a committee was formed for Afanasyev’s nomination to

¹³⁹ Ibid., 114.

¹⁴⁰ R.L., ‘Stalinist Ideas Cause Nihilist Youth, Historian Says,’ B-Wire 1 September, 1987.

¹⁴¹ T.L., ‘Soviet Historian Defends Purged Bolshevik Bukharin,’ B-Wire 9 September, 1987.

¹⁴² J.M., ‘Pro-Gorbachev Scholar Rejected as Party Conference Delegate,’ B-Wire 25 May, 1988.

¹⁴³ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, 3.

the conference.¹⁴⁴ Graduates from the institute collected signatures for petitions in support of Afanasyev from the libraries and institutions where they worked.¹⁴⁵ Students signed the petitions and even demanded a demonstration. On an interesting note, Kagarlitsky commented that the same emotions were felt by the institute's professors, but they pursued the same goal in quite a different manner. He notes that rather than engaging in public activity in the manner taken by the students, the professors appealed to find 'their own' people in the Central Committee to appeal to them to add Afanasyev to 'the list.'¹⁴⁶ The difference between the students' public display of their opinion and the professors' attempts to persuade those higher up in the hierarchy emphasises the ingrained generational difference which existed between those who had lived as adults in the bureaucratised Brezhnev era and their corresponding appeal to the bureaucracy to change matters from above, with the activism of the students who agitated for change from below. However, Afanasyev was elected, with the help of the professors' appeals to higher powers. Kagarlitsky concludes, that this negotiation that took place behind-the-scenes was contrary to the progress of democratisation, as it was essentially a backroom deal and inhibited open democratic practices and a precedent for future popular elections.¹⁴⁷

The discouragement of civil society initiatives from the apparatus was further reflected in the persecution of *neformaly* activism. The *neformaly* had first formed in the Spring of 1987, after the Articles 70 and 190 of the criminal code, referring to anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda had been amended.¹⁴⁸ These articles were favourites to persecute the dissidents under in the Brezhnev era. After Gorbachev's call for a more open dialogue in 1987, the Soviet 'new left' had begun to organise publicly. However, articles sharply critical of the *neformaly* were published in *Pravda*; several informal organisations were accused of using glasnost as a means to undermine

¹⁴⁴ T.L., 'Messaggero on Afanasyev's Exclusion from CPSU Congress,' B-Wire 19 May, 1988.

¹⁴⁵ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, 4.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁸ McFaul and Markov, *The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy*, 2.

communism in Soviet society and to spread anti-Soviet propaganda in Western media.¹⁴⁹ Kagarlitsky was mentioned by name and disgraced in *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* as a former party member who was expelled from the state institute of arts for anti-Soviet activity and had advocated the disruption of factory production teams.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the number of *neformaly* activists grew. *Obshchina* activist Aleksandr Shubin recalled that by mid 1988, Pushkin Square in central Moscow had become a sort of Muscovite 'Hyde Park' where people could come to discuss political matters, establish contacts, make speeches to other spectators and mass demonstrations could take place.¹⁵¹ Rallies were organised at Pushkin Square in preparation for the conference.¹⁵² However on 18 June, 1988 the usual Saturday demonstration on Pushkin Square was dispersed by the police. Demonstrators were detained and criminal proceedings were instituted against eleven members taking part.¹⁵³ The square was suppressed as a location of activism by the police.¹⁵⁴ It is clear that for the *neformaly*, the attempt to act on Gorbachev's rhetoric for the participation of citizens in public life was far from straightforward. This should be partially attributed to the obstinacy of the bureaucracy and the KGB, who rightly sensed that their interests were threatened by the course of Perestroika and also as a result of Gorbachev's hesitancy towards the independent and perhaps oppositional nature that forms of civil society could assume.

However, the Nineteenth Party Conference was in fact a milestone for the *neformaly* because they were able to discuss and dissect the CPSU platform and to develop their own response, raising their level of political organisation and independent activity. In early June 1988,

¹⁴⁹ Martin Walker, 'Pravda Lays Down the Law Against Political Rebels,' *The Guardian* 2 February, 1988.

¹⁵⁰ Kagarlitsky later sued and won. Cited in William J. Eaton, 'Soviet Papers Call for Controls on New Volunteer Groups,' *Los Angeles Times*, 4 February, 1988.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Aleksandr Shubin.

¹⁵² A passerby to a rally on 5 June, Aleksandr Fedorovsky, a philosophy teacher, noted that 'The large turn out at the rally shows that people are deeply concerned with the results of the Nineteenth Party Conference.' Cited in 'Soviet Citizens Nervously Testing Limits to Public Rallies,' B-Wire 5 June, 1988.

¹⁵³ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, 9.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

the authorities allowed FSOK to convene a meeting in the Palace of Youth, which the left-wing activists took as an indication of the changing attitude of tolerance towards the *neformaly*.¹⁵⁵ More than 300 people attended, who were generally in their twenties and thirties.¹⁵⁶ The speakers at the meeting addressed themselves not to the people, but to the leadership, in an effort to contribute their own advice on how to manage the state. This appeal to above had a negative effect on many members at the meeting. One participant who was an ideologue of the ecological movement, Yevgeny Shwartz, went as far as to say that he was ashamed both of the meeting and of his participation in it.¹⁵⁷ Within the five hour meeting FSOK adopted a platform which was a popular mandate for the Nineteenth Party Conference. The most contentious proposal of the meeting was the creation of a popularly elected President of the Soviet Union, who would be chosen by direct, secret ballot by all Soviet citizens, which would replace indirect elections of delegates who would then directly elect leading party figures.¹⁵⁸ The text which emerged from the meeting served as the public mandate for the Nineteenth Party Conference. This document was intended to signify the wishes ‘from below’ for the outcome of the conference and to present the voice of the people. It was given to Afanasyev to deliver. The proposal contained a comprehensive program of democratic demands: the freedom of the press, freedom of movement, the end of institutionalised discrimination on national or religious grounds, free elections to the Soviets at all levels and the reorganisation of the security organs.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵⁶ Andrei Ivanov, ‘Neformalye molodezhnye kluby obsuzhdayut tezisy konferentsii KPCC,’ (Informal Youth Clubs Discuss the Thesis of the Conference of the CPSU) *USSR Today* 9 June, 1988.

¹⁵⁷ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, 6-7.

¹⁵⁸ K.R. and L.G., ‘Political Clubs Thrash Out Platform for Political Changes,’ B-Wire 13 June, 1988.

¹⁵⁹ Kagarlitsky, *Farewell Perestroika*, 6-7.

Conclusion

The outcome of Perestroika was one not intended by either Gorbachev and his reformers or the *neformaly*. The Congress of People's Deputies of 1989, which was the most important result of the Nineteenth Party Conference demonstrated the real level of democratisation Gorbachev had achieved in his liberalisation of the Soviet system. However, the Congress' also demonstrated the protracted nature of this democracy and the Soviet deputies' inexperience in a democratic forum. One of the shortcomings of democracy is that it can lead to impasses of constant disagreement, protracted debate and slow progress toward resolutions. This is what happened in the Congress of People's Deputies. Moreover, critical to the experiment of Perestroika, the Soviet economy approached crisis point. The combination of economic deterioration and the seeming anarchy which Gorbachev had unleashed by 1990 and 1991 led to dissatisfaction of his leadership from both the right and the left and undermined his basis of support. The figure of Yeltsin, who was enthusiastically supported by many in the *neformaly* after his dismissal from the top echelons of the party became a new figure of democracy which the progressive *neformaly* began to rally around. For the MPF, the effect of economic crisis led many of its newer members to support liberal capitalism, rather than the democratic socialism the movement had originally espoused.¹⁶⁰ This rendered the organisation impotent for the cause of democratic socialism. However, the legalisation of political parties also led to the dispersal of the MPF and the other *neformaly* into political parties. Meanwhile, Yeltsin's prestige increased. As Kagarlitsky notes, he did not realise the danger of the figure of Yeltsin. At this time he was not perceived to be the leader who would countenance the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the construction of liberal capitalism in the Russian Federation.¹⁶¹ Within the party apparatus, members of the ruling elite had perceived the benefits to be derived from supporting Yeltsin and

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Aleksandr Shubin.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Boris Kagarlitsky.

the prospect of a power transfer. The approaching economic collapse of the command economy and the possibilities for the transfer of state property into private hands, for those who were in positions of power and therefore in the best place to accumulate this new property was an enticing prospect. Gorbachev's transformation of the system had created crises for the economy and society was approaching anarchy as the conservatives attempted the August 1991 coup and society began to spiral out of control. In these circumstances, the elites lost their inclination to maintain the system and affected a systemic transformation while they were still in the position to benefit. This result was a tragedy for the generations of the *shest'desiatniki* and the 'new left' who had concentrated their efforts on the construction of democratic socialism. However, to their credit, it was Gorbachev who from above had begun to create civil society in the Soviet Union. He drew upon and appropriated the alternate discourses elaborated in the post-Stalin era in order to create the liberalisation that occurred during Perestroika. For the democratic socialist *neformaly*, their legacy was more ambiguous. The MPF was flooded in 1990 by liberal capitalist supporters, diluting their original political intentions. Once they did manage to elect deputies to positions of power these deputies dissociated themselves from the *neformaly* they had come to power with and became associated with the movement around Yeltsin.¹⁶² As were their aspirations, the fate of Gorbachev and his reformers and the new left's failure were interminably linked; the failure of Gorbachev to successfully reform socialism reflected upon the project of the democratic socialist *neformaly*, who were unable to retain influence after the idea of socialism had become discredited in the Soviet Union in the period 1990 to 1991.

¹⁶² Interview with Kagarlitsky.

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