

**From Komsomol Activists to Underground Reformists: The
Leningrad Group *Kolokol*, 1954-1965**

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Abstract

In this thesis, I reconstruct the history of the group *Kolokol*, its formation, crystallization, and dissolution that took place in 1954-1965 in Leningrad. I examine the transformation of the group from Komsomol members that were mobilized by various Thaw-era campaigns, to underground publishers and distributors of their theoretically grounded Marxist critique of the Soviet political system, and finally to political prisoners. By organizing underground writing, publishing, and distributing activities, the group was playing at revolution. It is difficult to univocally define whether the group supported or opposed the Soviet system; nevertheless, their aspirations were reformist “from-within” the Communist ideology. The thesis will show the discrepancies between the group members’ and the KGB officials’ interpretations of the group’s actions that I consider as the two main agents in this conflict. I trace the process of investigation and analyze how the KGB officials categorized an informal group of close friends in terms of conspiratorial ‘anti-Soviet underground organization’, how they mastered the language of accusation and how they constructed the offense with which they charged the group.

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*“Our aim should be the all-inclusive engaging of toiling masses
in actual participation in the country’s government”.¹*

Introduction.

In this thesis, I will analyze ideas, actions, and backgrounds of the so-called group *Kolokol*. As the formation of the group and analysis of their writings will suggest, they not only defined themselves as a new type of intellectuals and leaders, but they also saw themselves as future party-theorists, ideologists, and political leaders that suited very well to Khrushchev's political agendas. They identified themselves as those future leaders who would overcome the hypocrisy of the official propaganda and remake Soviet society and its political system in such a way that it would fulfill its own claims and promises. In its theoretical positions, the group came to a conclusion that the Soviet Union was not a socialist country, but a kind of a state-capitalist system where bureaucracy constituted the ruling class. The discrepancies between the officially represented socialist cornucopia and the actual state of affairs that Soviet citizens experienced in their everyday lives pushed the members of the group *Kolokol* to question the system’s legitimacy and to demand reforms.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will argue that “resistance” is not a useful category of analysis. Instead, I will concentrate on the micro-dynamics of the state-group relationship, the group members’ identities, and process of the investigation by Soviet authorities. The Soviet authorities used the investigation and trial of the group to master the language of accusations, to legitimize their decision among the wider audience, and to “signal” the society about the border that separated “legal” activities in Komsomol Youth League and other Soviet institutions from “illegal”, “anti-Soviet” and “hostile” activities.

¹ “On the true and fictitious greatness of Lenin” (“O podlinnom i mnimom velichii Lenina”). The *Kolokol* magazine #23. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2. In this text, all the translations from Russian are my own.

In describing the process of the group formation, consolidation, and dissolution I will show their paradoxical transformation from loyal Komsomol members to underground reformists “from within” the Communist ideology. As I will show in the second chapter, the group participated in the Soviet youth mobilizing structures, then became publishers and distributors of their own literature, and finally they ended up as political prisoners. The group wrote a book titled *From the Dictatorship of Bureaucracy to the Dictatorship of Proletariat*, two issues of *Kolokol* magazine, and at least 4 different leaflets that they were continually distributing in the period 1963 - 1965. The group was formed in the context of the student milieu in Leningrad Technological Institute – an Institute where the Soviet technical intelligentsia was forming those who were supposed to be “pinnacles of the Soviet order”.² The documents suggest that members of the *Kolokol* group were part and parcel of this student milieu: reformist “from within” aspirations and the idea of free speech and open debates were welcomed by the students. The *Kolokol* group members were not alone in their intentions to engage in politics and to reform the local Komsomol organization.

The group members’ ideas that I analyze in the third chapter are quite close to Djilas’ *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist system*. All the documents suggest that they had not read this book when they wrote their texts, but they might have heard about it from other students in the Institute, for one of the students published in 1958 a poem called “Death to Bureaucracy!” that urged to overthrow the bureaucracy that the author of the poem considered a ruling class.³ Not accidentally, the KGB authorities claimed the Komsomol cell at the Institute responsible for the “lack of political education” among the students there. These developments frightened the KGB and forced them to blame the local Komsomol organization for bad quality of ‘political education’.

² Martin Malia, “What Is the Intelligentsia?” *Daedalus* 89, no. 3 (1960): 441–458.

³ Vladimir Uflyand, *Smert’ Burokratizmu. (Russian Poetry of the 1960s)*.
<http://ruthenia.ru/60s/ufland/burokrat.htm> (08.06.2017).

I will trace this transformation from the perspectives of the group members, those who wrote, produced and disseminated the group's ideas and texts, and the Soviet authorities, namely, KGB investigators, Komsomol officials in Leningrad, and local Party cell at the Technological Institute. The thesis will show the conflict between the group members' and the KGB officials' interpretations of the group's actions, the two main agents in this conflict. The group members understood themselves as devoted Communists who would restore true socialism; the group also self-fashioned as the nineteenth -- century Russian intelligentsia's circle, thus claimed their opposition to the state authorities. Chapter 4 will contribute to our understanding what techniques the KGB investigators used to categorize the group in terms of conspiracies and 'anti-Soviet hostile activities' and to construct an offence with which to charge the *Kolokol* group. The KGB investigators were seeking out conspiracy and secrecy in the similar way as investigators in 1920-1930s -- as David Shearer concluded in his book *Policing Stalin's Socialism*: "Police and security organs used their power not only to repress real and perceived political opponents of the regime. Officials categorized the population according to the level of threat they perceived from any particular group."⁴ The KGB officials classified the group as an "illegal anti-Soviet underground organization". Instead of co-opting the intelligentsia, the Soviet authorities prosecuted them as in nineteenth -- century Russia: nine group members were sentenced from 3 to 10 years of imprisonment and exile.

While analyzing the primary sources, I recognized a tension: the state-produced sources, the case documents, emphasize resistance while personal sources, memoirs, and other personal accounts, show support and even compliance with the Soviet system. Thus, I will go beyond the resistance narrative by combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, building on work from scholars like Steven Kotkin and his notion of Stalinism as Civilization,⁵ which

⁴ David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953* (Yale University Press, 2014): 437.

⁵ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, 1997).

argues that Soviet project, its ideology, and values were a collectively constructed entity by the state authorities and by Soviet citizens. These sources include the case documents of the *Kolokol* case that are to be found in Veniamin Iofe's Center Archive in St. Petersburg and in International Memorial Society in Moscow.

CHAPTER 1. Beyond the resistance narrative

In this chapter, I will present theoretical and methodological considerations that are relevant to this study. In the first part of this chapter, I will argue that the reason this group did not draw the attention of the scholars is the persistence of the resistance narrative, that privileged the Dissident Movement of the 1960s and 1970s among a wide variety of other kinds of the independent social activities. Moreover, I will maintain that the *Kolokol* group cannot easily be analyzed in terms of resistance or compliance. The second part of this chapter will highlight my methodological approach based on post-revisionist analysis of primary sources, that does not take them at face value, but considers them in relation to the historical context in which they were created. The third part of this chapter addresses terminological issues. Building on the groundbreaking works of Juliane Fürst *Stalin's Last Generation* and her understanding of the Soviet kompaniia, I will elaborate the terminology that helps understand the history of the group *Kolokol* and its members' prosecution in 1965. The group members appropriated and reinterpreted the Communist ideology that was propagated by the Khrushchev's government but also experienced influence from the Western leftist political thinkers, such as Djilas and Gramsci.

The *Kolokol* trial chronologically falls between two internationally known court processes of prominent intellectuals and writers, the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel in Moscow in 1965 – 1966, and Brodsky's trial in Leningrad in winter 1964. It seems that by prosecuting Brodsky, Sinyavsky and Daniel, and the *Kolokol* group in such a short timeframe – around 2 years - the KGB authorities intended to cover the full range of the intelligentsia, both technical and humanitarian. While the Brodsky's and Sinyavsky and Daniel's trials have been important in the history of this period for a long time after they took place, both within the Soviet Union and abroad, the *Kolokol* trial became an exception – it was completely disregarded for a long time by contemporaries in the 1960s as well as by the scholars today. I

suppose that this happened due to their ideas and ‘true Leninist’ style of expressions that seemed for the dissidents of the later period naïve and also due to the fact that they were young and drew on their experience in Komsomol, especially in contrast with Sinyavsky and Daniel who were already well-known writers at the time. This challenged the narrative of dissidents as brave and smart fighters with the regime that have been dominating the field until very recent years, and put into question Western representations of dissidents as self-consciously oppositional individuals, as those who were immune to propaganda with a critical stance towards the state. In Russia, this group has been neglected until the very recent years as an unimportant fact in comparison with the Dissident Movement for Human Rights.⁶

1.1 The resistance narrative in Soviet history

The prominent place of “resistance” in historiography⁷ suggests a deeper feature of history-writing: the binary visions of the Soviet history facilitate such terms as resistance and compliance, oppression and domination, official and unofficial culture. In this chapter, I intend to problematize this binary vision, and in doing this I can contribute to what some have called the resistance debate in Russian history, whose participants were Peter Holquist, Marshal Poe, and Michael David-Fox.⁸ The resistance debate tends to overemphasize resistance and opposition among the whole range of various responses to state power that could be observed. My case study of the group suggests that the binary opposition of “resistance” and “compliance” sometimes is not a useful interpretative framework in Soviet history because we cannot reduce the actions and ideas of the group *Kolokol* to this rigid scheme, as the second and third chapters of this thesis will indicate. Moreover, in the fourth chapter, I will show that the Soviet authorities tended to overemphasize resistance and

⁶ See Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kozlov, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Sergeĭ Mironenko, *Sedition: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev*.

⁷ Jochen Hellbeck, “Speaking out: Languages of Affirmation and Dissent in Stalinist Russia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 1 (2000): 71.

⁸ Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Marshall Poe, *The Resistance Debate in Russian and Soviet History*, vol. 1 (Slavica Pub, 2003).

conspiracy over compliance or other responses to the state power. The *Kolokol* case also adds to the widely accepted narrative of Soviet dissidents as a small Moscow-based group of prominent intellectuals, writers, and scientists, who bravely fought against the oppressive regime. This narrative excludes many manifestations of ‘resistance’ that does not fit this rigid schema, such as the group *Kolokol*. Thus, this study makes a more accurate characterization of the group *Kolokol* taking into account the social and political context of the Thaw era, thus, it complicates the resistance narrative. However, the majority of historians perceived the *Kolokol* group or similar groups in terms of ‘dissidents’, thus, making ahistorical generalizations of a variety of social activities in the Soviet Union, or as ‘underground groups’, in other words, replicated the state’s conceptualizations. I argue that this view is still very influential even though it does not provide useful analytical categories that help understand the phenomenon.

The “resistance” framework in studying various social responses to the state power during the Thaw was largely informed by Lyudmila Alexeeva’s instructive work on *Soviet Dissent*⁹, which covers all the social expressions that went beyond the state’s expectations and thus fell into a category ‘dissent’. She treats the Thaw years’ youth subcultures, and the *Kolokol* group among others, as a “preparatory phase” for the emergence of the Dissident Movement and thus as a marginal, unimportant types of ‘dissent’. In other words, it privileges the experience of the dissidents of the 1970s over other, earlier experiences. Anastasiya Konokhova¹⁰ defines the *Kolokol* group’s actions as the ‘dissidents of 1960s’. Moreover, she sticks to top-down approach and analyzes the group through the prism of the state authorities’ conceptualizations of the group’s actions, in terms of “successes” and “failures” of the

⁹ Liudmila Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Wesleyan University Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Anastasiia Konokhova, *Formirovanie Mirivozzreniia Sovetskoi Molodeji, 1953-1964 (na materialakh Leningrada i Leningradsoi Oblasti)* (SPB SU, 2015), https://disser.spbu.ru/disser2/disser/Konohova_diss.pdf (08.06.2016).

“ideological education”.¹¹ Robert Hornsby uses terms “dissent” and “compliance” to write a social history of the Khrushchev era dissent: “one of the most distinctive aspects was its diversity, both in its social origins of protesters and the behaviors they engaged in.”¹² But is it fruitful to apply the same analytical categories to such discrepant phenomena as public debates on Dudintsev’s book and various networks that published and distributed Samizdat? The resistance narrative tends to privilege the dissident movement and thus decontextualize the actual circumstances in which the *Kolokol* group was situated. Moreover, it implies a teleological perspective and tends to consider the group in terms of ‘preparatory phase’ for the dissident movement. In other cases, it replicates state’s conceptualizations and ignores the group members standpoint and agenda, and inclined in treatment the group in terms of ‘failures’ of political education and ideological control of the Soviet Komsomol and Party organizations, which also does not help us to understand the group in a larger context of the Thaw years. To my knowledge, the group *Kolokol* have not yet been a subject of historical inquiry from simultaneously top-down and bottom-up perspectives, although there is a number of studies that considered some aspects of the group’s history.

1.2 Methodological considerations

This study will use a different approach by looking at the *Kolokol* case in dynamics and from multiple perspectives of agents that were involved in the process. Thus, I build my methodological considerations on the post-revisionist school in Soviet history. An important methodological concern is the use of primary sources. Contrary to revisionists’ approach that treated the archival sources as “repositories of historical truth”¹³, the post-revisionist school pays much attention to reflect upon the role the primary sources play in the historical writing.

¹¹ Anastasiia Konokhova, *Formirovanie Mirivozzreniia Sovetskoi Molodeji, 1953-1964 (na materialakh Leningrada i Leningradsoi Oblasti)* (SPB SU, 2015), https://disser.spbu.ru/disser2/disser/Konohova_diss.pdf (08.06.2016).

¹² Robert Hornsby, *Protest, Reform, and Repression in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹³ Jochen Hellbeck, “Comment: Of Archives and Frogs: Iconoclasm in Historical Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 3 (2008): 720–723.

For example, “Rather than treating official Soviet documents as more or less reliable reflectors of social reality, Kotkin places them in the context of the socialist revolutionary agenda of the Bolshevik regime and views them as part and parcel of the Bolshevik system of rule.”¹⁴ Thus, I will take into account the importance of context in which the documents were created. Moreover, from the methodological point of view, it is crucial to reflect upon the role these documents played in a particular historical context, the people who created them, and what was their initial purpose. Following Kotkin’s and Hellbeck’s approaches¹⁵, I propose to see the archival sources not as objects but rather as actions: “No less than bureaucratic reports, memoirs, too, are not simply a “source.” They are an action. And, in the Soviet context, memoirs -- whether written within the Soviet borders or beyond -- became an action fraught with regime -- shattering implications.”¹⁶ It is also necessary to acknowledge that contrary to the revisionist school argument that it is the new primary sources that stand at the core of ‘paradigm shift’ in the field that influence the ‘way of doing science’¹⁷, the post-revisionists emphasize more a historians’ standpoint, research questions, and research agendas: “The writing of Soviet history continues to be more deeply conditioned not by the availability or unavailability of sources but by researchers’ worldviews and agendas, and the times in which they live, not to mention the tenure process and patterns of patronage.”¹⁸

Taking into account these critical remarks, I propose to tell the story of the *Kolokol* group from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives, thus, to combine state authorities’ and group members’ interpretations of the events. Moreover, I emphasize the importance of looking at both personal and state-produced sources as actions. They do not merely represent

¹⁴ Hellbeck, “Speaking out.”:80.

¹⁵ Stephen Kotkin, “The State—is It Us? Memoirs, Archives, and Kremlinologists,” *The Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002); Hellbeck, “Comment.”

¹⁶ Stephen Kotkin, “The State—is It Us? Memoirs, Archives, and Kremlinologists,” *The Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 49.

¹⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Revisionism in Soviet History,” *History and Theory* 46, no. 4 (2007): 77–91.

¹⁸ Kotkin, “The State—is It Us?”:36.

the reality, they create it. Basing on these assumptions, I will reconstruct the story of the group from many points of view. I understand all the periods of the group's activities as a process of conflicting interpretations between the KGB and Komsomol officials and the group members. This approach helps us to complicate our understanding of the Thaw context and youth subcultures for I propose to see the group's history in micro-dynamics and in a combination of various standpoints. It also sheds the light on the border of the legal activities within the Komsomol and Party organizations from 'anti-Soviet illegal' activities outside these structures, but it also helps to imagine the wide spectrum in between these two poles. By assessing simultaneously top-down and bottom-up perspectives and by using both state-produced and personal sources, I will also somehow diminish another bias -- the specificity of the Soviet system of information accumulation, which tended to register and control resistance and by this influenced the sources that can be found in Russian archives.¹⁹ It means that resistance narrative in Soviet history was very much a product of Soviet classifications and peculiarities of information gathering about its citizens that exclusively aimed at highlighting criticism and dissent.

1.3 How to go beyond resistance

Instead of using the terminology of the resistance debate, I draw on Sheila Fitzpatrick's conceptualization of the phenomena that the Soviet authorities classified as 'anti-Soviet underground organizations': "We are dealing, in short, with popular behaviors that in other cultures might be considered no more than normal subaltern grumbling and disorderly behavior"²⁰ that the Soviet authorities interpreted as sedition. My interpretation of the group's actions, namely, writing, publishing, and distributing of their own texts are based on the term 'playing at revolution' that Sheila Fitzpatrick²¹ proposed in her understanding of such groups. Thus, I understand the group's ideas and actions in terms of subversion rather than in terms of

¹⁹ Hellbeck, "Speaking out."

²⁰ Kozlov, Fitzpatrick, and Mironenko, *Sedition*:2.

²¹ Ibid.

resistance or compliance. The group members were students of Technological Institute in Leningrad, an old and still a prestigious academic institution in Russia, founded in 1828, after graduation they worked as engineers and scientists. They constituted a part of the Soviet technical intelligentsia, as Martin Malia argued²², “one of the three pillars of the socialist order ... all those who “toil” with their minds instead of their hands ... merely white-collar personnel of the state”²³, those, whom Stalin destined to serve the ‘Soviet experiment’. Vladislav Zubok²⁴ pointed at the subversive potential of the Soviet intelligentsia that was nurtured and educated within the Soviet system: “The beneficiaries of the Soviet enlightenment project, they were graduates of the best universities...and were destined to become the highly educated group that Stalin cynically called the Soviet intelligentsia. In reality, they were intended to be cadres totally loyal to Stalin’s agenda and the party line... The educated cadres trained for Stalinist service turned out to be a vibrant and diverse tribe, with intellectual curiosity, artistic yearnings, and a passion for high culture. This was the unintended result of the Stalinist educational system, the ideas of self-cultivation and self-improvement, and the pervasive cult of high culture that it propagated.”²⁵ In fact, as Benjamin Tromly²⁶ noticed, sometimes the students of the top Soviet universities became “loyal opponents of the regime”, or “revisionists”; they identified themselves as future party theorists and intellectual elites of the Soviet society; their public criticism of the party leadership was, in fact, a strategy to acquire power positions within the Soviet hierarchy, as he illustrates drawing on the example of a Leningrad student Mikhail Molostvov in the mid-1950s. In line with that, I will show that the *Kolokol* group identified themselves as future political leaders.

²² Malia, “What Is the Intelligentsia?”:443.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

The members of the group *Kolokol* were part of what Juliane Fürst has called ‘Stalin’s last generation’, for a generation here is understood as specific individual experiences of people of the same age cohort that historically situated in a distinctive social and political context that distinguish them from all other generations.²⁷ In line with that, Valery Ronkin, the leader of *Kolokol*, notices in his memoirs, “We were happier than our children. We sincerely cried when Stalin died, we were sincerely glad to see his denouncement. Everything was harder for the next generation. The majority ostentatiously distanced themselves from politics – Lennon became more important for them than Lenin.”²⁸ This quotation points at exactly the same characteristics of his generation that Fürst underlines, namely, the belief that they could fix the system “from within”. This feeling distinguished it from preceding and subsequent Soviet age cohorts: “It was a time when system and society confirmed their ideological commitment to the ideas of the Bolshevik Revolution, yet it was also a time when many people voiced great dissatisfaction with the system and began to search for new solutions.”²⁹

1.3.1 The Soviet *Kompaniia*

This study contributes to our understanding of the phenomenon of the Soviet *Kompaniia* that Juliane Fürst examines in her groundbreaking article “Friends in Private, Friends in Public: the Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* Among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s”³⁰ in which she used a binary private-public sphere. However, in this paragraph I propose the terms that might contribute to our understanding of *Kompaniia* in the Soviet context, drawing on the current study of the *Kolokol* group. Thus, I propose to analyze *kompanii* not through the lenses of private-public binaries, but through the prism of the

²⁷ Juliane Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 2010): 19.

²⁸ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003), 400-401.

²⁹ Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation*: 23.

³⁰ Juliane Fürst, “Friends in Private, Friends in Public: The Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* Among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s,” in *Borders of Socialism* (Springer, 2006), 229–249.

political sphere. In other words, I propose to emphasize the political dimension in the *kompania* of friends that became the *Kolokol* group. During the years of the group members' participation in Komsomol structures, they intended to reform the local Komsomol organization in the Institute, namely, to introduce public debates, free elections of the local Komsomol leadership, and the free speech, as the foundation of the *Kultura* newspaper³¹ shows. However, they did not succeed. I argue that the *Kolokol* group's withdrawal from the official Soviet structures happened due to absence of opportunities for political participation, for political here is understood in Hannah Arendt's sense: "To be political, to live in a polis, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence."³² The political realm, in her understanding, is the sphere where the equals meet to distinguish oneself from others through communication, free speech, and persuasion. It seems that this understanding fits the *Kolokol* members' aspirations, who established a *kompaniia* to pursue the same goals – they enjoyed debates, they produced and distributed their literature in order to persuade their acquaintances that the Soviet Union is not a socialist country. With the lack of alternatives of the Soviet political organizations, they created their own space that allowed them to create a kind of political sphere in Arendt's sense. This sphere cannot be analyzed in terms of private and public realm, because it was beyond the Soviet official structures, but at the same time it was not completely private, because debates, their attempts to spread their ideas among acquaintances, colleagues and even among the students they never met cannot be attributed to the private realm.

It also important to point at a subversive role of *kompanii* in the Soviet context – discussions among the group members forced to rethink the Soviet system and to formulate a theoretical critique of it. The members of the *Kolokol* group were not for or against the Soviet official structures – they simply ignored them. The *kompania* that later became the *Kolokol*

³¹ I describe the newspaper *Kultura* affair in the 4th chapter of this thesis.

³² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 2013): 26.

group constituted the world not within nor outside the Soviet structures – it was beyond them. Thus, I propose to analyze the group in the context of the Thaw years, because after the 1956 Khrushchev's Secret Speech that denounced Stalin, the outpouring of individuals' public opinions and public debates went far beyond the party leadership expectations, as Karl Loewenstein argues.³³ He maintains that the large groups of Soviet society misinterpreted the initial party leadership's message; the fast reaction from the state authorities was to reinforce the control over public debates and non-sanctioned public activities in order to prevent the delegitimization and even the collapse of the regime. I assert that the *Kolokol* group rose against this background; moreover, they experienced these perturbations in a young age – they were less than 20 years old at the time, and they were students at the Technological Institute.

These unintended consequences of Khrushchev's Secret Speech, and the *Kolokol* group was a part of these social developments, forced the Soviet authorities to rethink and transform their practices of prosecution. After 1956, the state authorities elaborated new classifications of non-sanctioned political activities and got rid of irrelevant terminology of the previous Criminal Code that supposed to punish for “counter-revolutionary activities”. In 1960, the new Criminal Code was introduced, and it reformulated articles on anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. It introduced Article 70, titled “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda”, which subjected to criminal proceedings those who produced “agitation and propaganda aiming at undermining the Soviet power, spread of slanderous thoughts that discredit the Soviet system and also spread and storage of such literature”³⁴ and Article 72 “organizational activity aiming at conduct of dangerous state crimes and also participation in

³³ Karl E. Loewenstein, “Re-Emergence of Public Opinion in the Soviet Union: Khrushchev and Responses to the Secret Speech,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 8 (2006): 1329–1345.

³⁴ Law of The RSFSR "On the Approval of The Criminal Code of the RSFSR". 27.10.1960. Article 70. Anti-Soviet Agitation and Propaganda. <http://zakonbase.ru/zakony/27-10-1960-ot-1960-10-27-ob-utverzhdanii/statja-70> (07.06.2016).

anti-Soviet organizations”³⁵. Moreover, the state intended to withdraw some activities of this kind from criminal prosecution. Since 1959 the state authorities decided to employ the practice of prophylaxis that decreased the number of criminal cases on “anti-Soviet manifestations”; it gradually substituted the “traditional” practices of the criminal penalty of the so-called “anti-Soviet manifestations.”³⁶ In 1961 the state introduced the practice of incarceration to mental hospitals.

1.3.2 Legal and illegal in the Soviet Context

This case study also contributes to the debates about how to understand categories of ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ in the Soviet context, and how the KGB organs surveilled the population and shaped the information they acquired. It will reveal another important aspect of the story – how the *Kolokol* group was prosecuted. A Soviet official, Major-General Malygin, in 1969 argued that “There are also instances when certain politically immature young people commit acts which would not seem to be illegal, but which, in their aggregate, may do great damage to our society...with ideologically harmful contents”.³⁷ The General argued for the superiority of ideological considerations before legal provisions: no sphere in the Soviet Union should be separated from ideology. The idea of rights functioned in the completely different manner in the Soviet context in comparison with contemporary understanding of law and rights, as Benjamin Nathans argues.³⁸

The studies of Samizdat made a great contribution of what legal and illegal meant under the state socialism. For example, Gordon Johnston applied the term “legality” and “illegality” to the spheres of “production, circulation, and consumption of Samizdat

³⁵ Law of The RSFSR "On the Approval of The Criminal Code of the RSFSR". 27.10.1960. Article 72. Organizational Activity that is directed to realization of dangerous state crimes, and participation in an anti-Soviet organization <http://zakonbase.ru/content/part/417328> (07.06.2016).

³⁶ Alexander S. Smykalin, “Ideologicheskii Kontrol’ i Pyatoe Upravlenie KGB SSSR,” *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 8 (2011).

³⁷ The Malygin’s argument was cited in Gordon Johnston, “What Is the History of Samizdat?,” *Social History* 24, no. 2 (1999): 115–133.: 123.

³⁸ Benjamin Nathans, “The Dictatorship of Reason: Aleksandr Vol’Pin and the Idea of Rights under Developed Socialism,” *Slavic Review*, 2007, 630–663.

material”.³⁹ Citing Darnton, he argues that the border that separates legal forms from illegal had been fuzzy under state socialism; the Soviet authorities were constantly changing the line that separates ‘illegal’ and ‘legal’ forms of literature, its production, and distribution. Under the circumstances of state’s control of the information flows, Samizdat, the “illegal” and “unofficial” literature is supposed to be outside these state-controlled systems of information. However, this line is never fixed. Although there are some topics that are strictly prohibited, others have more ambiguous and uncertain status. Moreover, the terms “illegal” and “unofficial” can only be defined only “against a shifting and highly politicized sense of the “licit” and “official””.⁴⁰ Rather than elaborate ahistorical schemes of defining of “legal” and “illegal” in states that attempt to establish the full control over the information flows, it would be more useful to historicize it and to trace the developments in the Soviet practices of defining of “legal” and “illegal”. Using these ambiguities in defining legal and illegal in the Soviet context, I propose to pay attention not only to written laws, but to the practices of investigation, because, as I will show in the fourth chapter, the KGB investigators had to construct the group as an ‘anti-Soviet’ conspiracy and to master the language that proves that the group’s actions were ‘illegal’. The categorizations of ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ were ambiguous and fluid; therefore investigators’ decisions to prosecute depended on the political situation and on the changing political course of the party leadership in Moscow.

³⁹ Gordon Johnston, “What Is the History of Samizdat?,” *Social History* 24, no. 2 (1999): 119.

⁴⁰ Gordon Johnston, “What Is the History of Samizdat?,” *Social History* 24, no. 2 (1999): 124.

CHAPTER 2. Playing at Revolution⁴¹: formation and crystallization of the group.

2.1 Formation of the *Kolokol* group.

The history of the group would be incomprehensible if we divorced it from the context of the so-called the Thaw era, state-inspired youth mobilization, and political and social blueprinting of the period. In the period of their early socialization, before engaging in the group, the group members actively participated in the forms of youth mobilization that Soviet authorities provided and encouraged, namely, in Komsomol constructions, in Virgin Lands campaign in Kazakhstan, and in Komsomol Patrol Guard that maintained the order on the streets of Leningrad. I will argue that the group *Kolokol* rose against this background, moreover, this background and the group members' sincere devotion to the Thaw ideas somehow facilitated their reformist aspirations and critical stance towards Soviet system. After their attempts to reform the local Komsomol cell and to establish more democratic structures have failed, they started to gradually withdraw from the Soviet mobilizing structures. They engaged in the informal friendship ties with former members of the Komsomol Patrol Guard.

The youth mobilizing campaigns of the Thaw era are indispensable parts of the *Kolokol* group history. The state's concern with the youth and its education was especially vivid in the Thaw years. Youth within the Soviet system designated a social category from 14 to around 30 years old - people of this age could become Komsomol Youth League members. In fact, it was the Soviet authorities' main organization that mobilized youth. In the 1950s, the group members became students in Technological Institute in Leningrad. As students and members of the Komsomol Youth League, they actively and voluntarily engaged in the structures of mass participation that the Soviet power created.

⁴¹ Kozlov, Fitzpatrick, and Mironenko, *Sedition*.

In 1954, the future group leader, Valery Ronkin, moved to Leningrad to study at the department of organic chemistry at the Technological Institute. The same year, Khrushchev announced the Virgin Lands Campaign in Kazakhstan and Siberia. Since this year, the Komsomol Youth League mobilized thousands of students every year during the summer vacations to work on Virgin Lands and on Komsomol constructions far away from their homes. The idea was to instill Communist values into the young minds by providing them with an experience of collective work.⁴² The future *Kolokol* group members participated in such campaigns. In Virgin Lands, the future group members saw economic inefficiency and waste, bad working conditions, the poor villages that got nothing from the Virgin Lands campaign, the unqualified administrators governed the working process, irrationalities, and poor organization.⁴³

In the same year, 1954, he engaged in the Komsomol guard patrol at the Institute. The Soviet Youth League had to mobilize students to keep the order on the streets and to protect the population from homeless people, alcoholics, and other forms of delinquency. According to the group leader, the initial idea of the authorities was to facilitate the voluntary participation of the students in this campaign. He and his friends were among the tiny minority of students, who agreed to participate.⁴⁴ The future members of the *Kolokol* group met there.

These experiences provided them with the opportunity to acquire leading positions in the local Komsomol Youth League cell at the Institute. Their aspirations as local Komsomol leaders were to reform the structure, to implement a more democratic form of decision-making within the cell and to exclude people who did not behave properly, for example,

⁴² Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia: Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴³ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003).

⁴⁴ Ronkin Valery, *Kolokol*, Materials of the Conference on Samizdat: 25 years of the independent press (Memorial, St. Petersburg, 1993).

alcohol abusers. They wanted to abolish rituals and to introduce practices of free debates and free elections of the leaders in these official Soviet structures. However, they did not succeed. Ronkin describes it in his memoirs: “We tried to return the Komsomol its true outlook. In our Komsomol Patrol Guard, we had almost done this. Once we decided to seize the power in the Komsomol organization at our Technological Institute. I and one my friend were elected to the local Komsomol Committee. I have become the assistant secretary of the Committee of political work. My first action was to cancel political information meeting. I argued that those who are interested in reading press can do it themselves, but I did not want to hear the political news that is being narrated by obedient girls, who have nothing to do with politics. I do not want to do anything for the sake of checkmarks in reports. In the next year, we excluded 6 guys from the Komsomol because of alcohol abuse”.⁴⁵ Their Komsomol patrol guard had a conflict with Komsomol organization over the control of the brigades.

In the late 1950s, they started working in factories and scientific institutions as engineers, and this experience increased their discontent with the Soviet system. The group leader, Ronkin, was responsible for the launching of factories as a professional engineer. However, he found out that the bureaucrats’ decisions were more important there than those of engineers, and that the bureaucrats did not care about the quality of production, safety techniques, working and living conditions of the workers. The reports and deadlines were more important the workers’ lives and factories’ output. He also faced the irrationality of the Soviet economy and misalignment between various offices. For example, “In Ufa, I saw the planned economy in action. The factory had been under construction. But the factory’s HR office was already functioning. Factory and its workers had received a plan for the delivery of waste metal (“metallolom”). Some workers had it. Others did not because the factory was completely new and nothing was broken so far. But no one could avoid the plan. The second

⁴⁵ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003), 120.

group of workers started stealing the waste metal from the first group. After that, the first group hid it. Then the second group started to steal new pipes and other factory's new equipment. They ended up stealing completely new tram rails. Their chief worker received gratitude from the authorities because they even exceeded the number of kilos of waste metal. The first group received reprimands".⁴⁶

After few years of collective fighting with petty criminals at the Komsomol Patrol guard, the future group members became friends and established a very close friendship ties; they called it *kompania*, or circle of friends. The group emerged within the official Soviet structure, but it was completely informal. These close friendship ties and trust between the participants of the group helped them to establish a large network of people who distributed their reformist literature. The group *Kolokol* was numerous: KGB investigators interrogated 140 people⁴⁷ that in one way or another were involved in the group's activities. According to the case documents, at least 55 people⁴⁸ participated in distribution and discussion of the group's writings. However, the investigating authorities identified nine people, who most actively engaged in such a conspiratorial production and distribution of texts and leaflets; later all of them were put on trial in 1965 in Leningrad, namely, Valery Ronkin, Sergey Khakhaev, Valeria Chikatueva, Veniamin Iofe, Vadim Gaenko, Valery Smolkin, Ludmila Klimanova, Sergey Moshkov, Boris Zelikson.

2.2 Crystallization of the group: *kompaniia*

The participation in the Soviet youth mobilizing structures and shared experiences that the group members had in common, were crucial for the group formation. The establishment of a trustful relationship between the group members, the formulation of the

⁴⁶ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003), 140.

⁴⁷ Resolution on the extension of the investigation period in the case and the content of the accused in custody. 02.09.1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁴⁸ Letter to the Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee of the CPSU Comrade Tolstikov. 20.11.1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

group's political agenda, their common interests in politics, and close friendship ties made a ground for a large network that produced, distributed, and discussed their literature. It was a huge *kompania* of friends that consolidated while they were studying at the Technological Institute. Ronkina describes it as a circle of close friends, who often met in an informal environment and discussed various topics, including political ones. "When we did all this [production and distribution of literature], long before the trial, we discussed that we should maintain conspiracy, that we should not celebrate New Year together...because we were like an organization... nevertheless, we traveled together, had friendship ties."⁴⁹

The group members had strong friendship ties that they called '*kompaniia*'. Various personal accounts of the group members suggest that they spent much of their leisure time together. The group members went backpacking, or *tourizm*, they celebrated holidays together. «The core participants of the Komsomol patrol guard were close friends. We had conversations between the lectures in our university, then we started to celebrate various occasions and holidays together, we went backpacking [tourizm] together, and also participated in Komsomol constructions and in Virgin Lands campaigns."⁵⁰ A few years later, some group members married each other: "In the end of April, the first 'patrol guard' marriage happened. Nina Kotova became Nina Gaenko. We counted 10 spouses that met in patrol guard."⁵¹

2.2.1 Gender relations: revolutionaries' wives, then prisoners' wives

The friendship and family ties were crucial in keeping the group together. It is important to review the gender relations within the group because this aspect contributes to our understanding of the *kompaniia* – the members of the *Kolokol* group were united not only by friendship ties but also with family bonds. Gender relations in the group are of particular

⁴⁹ Interview with Ronkina I.T. Interviewer: Chuikina S. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Ronkin Valery Efimovich.

⁵⁰ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003), 72.

⁵¹ Ibid. 123-124.

interest because they played a major role in the group's consolidation. After the trial, these family ties provided reasons for mutual support and solidarity between the group members from both sides of the barbed wire. To some extent, the way the men and women distributed their responsibilities in the group, and the way the investigating authorities treated the group members, had a similar pattern: men treated as leaders and ideologists, as those who responsible for these actions, while women were considered mere performers and even victims of the male members' 'propaganda'. The male group members wrote texts and acted as theoreticians and as the group leaders, they gave instructions to female members of the group, how to produce and where to distribute the literature. Investigators had the same idea with regard the role of women in the group's actions.

The group consisted of both men and women, and the core male group members were married, and their wives helped them to produce and distribute the group's literature. Nina Gaenko, the wife of Vladimir Gaenko, and Irina Ronkina, the wife of Valery Ronkin, describe the role that the wives played in the group's activities, and their behavior after their husbands was put in prison, in a similar fashion.⁵² Nina Gaenko's accounts⁵³ suggest that she became supportive of the group's ideas under the influence of her friends – Vladimir Gaenko, Valery Ronkin, and Sergey Khakhaev. She met the group members in the Komsomol patrol guard at the Institute. After the long conversations with the group members, she became more critical towards the Soviet power; the group members formed her opinion because she felt that she had not enough knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and could not "theoretically" support or criticize the Soviet power. She identifies the group members as the true "defenders of communism".

⁵² Interview with Gaenko N.S. Interviewer: Chuikina S. 20.04.1994. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Gaenko Vladimir Nikolaevich; Interview with Ronkina I.T. Interviewer: Chuikina S. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Ronkin Valery Efimovich.

⁵³ Interview with Gaenko N.S. Interviewer: Chuikina S. 20.04.1994. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Gaenko Vladimir Nikolaevich.

Her husband started to participate in the group's activities in 1963, he did not write texts, but he actively engaged in printing; he became the "chief producer" of the printed texts. Khakhaev, Smolkin, Ronkin, and Iofe wrote those texts. The group members loudly dictated the text to those who typed it using typing machine. The people on the streets could easily hear it. Nina Gaenko also helped to print and distribute the documents. She complains that she had no free time for this work because she was pursuing her doctoral degree in chemistry and had a baby. She wanted to write political texts, as her husband and male friends. She read Krupskaya's texts and planned of writing a paper about child rearing. The idea of the text was the following: "How dramatically our practices of child rearing have changed comparing with ideas that Krupskaya elaborated. She knew how to educate our children, but what we have now? Children get sick, and their tutors are happy about that because their salary does not depend on the number of children. Formality, heartlessness."⁵⁴ She had a draft of this paper in her home, and the investigators did not find it during the flat search.

Investigating authorities hesitated to attribute any responsibility to wives and did not intend to put them into prison regardless the degree of their engagement in the group's actions.⁵⁵ Possibly, they did it because they had small children (Gaenko and Ronkina, for example). However, they prosecuted two women, who were not married and did not have children, Lyudmila Klimanova and Valeria Chikatueva, and gave them the mildest sentences in comparison with the male members, 2 and 3 years of imprisonment. They helped in distributing the literature, Chikatueva was a responsible for the magazine's design – she made a copy of Herzen's magazine *Kolokol* cover. After their release from prison, Chikatueva married Khakhaev. After the trial and imprisonment of their husbands, the wives were expelled from the doctorate program (aspirantura), were fired from their working places, or

⁵⁴ Interview with Gaenko N.S. Interviewer: Chuikina S. 20.04.1994. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Gaenko Vladimir Nikolaevich.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

were switched to another, less desirable working place within the same organization. Irina Ronkina claims that the group members and their close acquaintances from the Institute remained friends many years after the trial. Irina Ronkina asserts that before and after the trial the wives (or brides) and also two main witnesses, Alla Sokolova and Vladimir Shnitke, met often in informal outlook and discussed what to say to interrogators and the details of the trial, how to help the imprisoned group members.⁵⁶

2.2.2 Production and dissemination of the literature

The underground reformist group, a friendship *kompaniia*, united around the political agenda that the group's literature expressed, and around production, discussion, and distribution of their texts. Later on, these activities provided a basis for the investigating authorities to claim the group an 'anti-Soviet underground organization'. Thus, the practices of production and dissemination of the group's literature are essential for our understanding of the group's activities.

There were several layers of participation in the group. There were two leaders -- Ronkin and Khakhaev, who wrote the majority of the texts and organized the production and distribution of the literature; they encouraged others to participate. They were also main ideologists. The second layer included those who participated in producing and distributing of the literature on continuing basis, some of them have been engaging in the group's action from 2 to 4 years, for example, Vladimir and Nina Gaenko, Veniamin Iofe. The third layer constituted those who once or twice participated in the production of the literature, or showed it their close friends and acquaintances, for example, Boris Zelikson. The fourth layer consisted of those, who read the literature or received it from one of the group members.

⁵⁶ Interview with Gaenko N.S. Interviewer: Chuikina S. 20.04.1994. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Gaenko Vladimir Nikolaevich.

In 1958-1961, the group members were rethinking their self-identification and ideas. They established an underground reformists group that produced and distributed theoretically-grounded critique of the Soviet power in their book *From the Dictatorship of Bureaucracy...*, a magazine *Kolokol* and the leaflets. They also organized political discussions in their close and small group. During 1963-1965 the group members distributed their book *From the dictatorship of bureaucracy to the dictatorship of proletariat* among at least 88 people in 10 regions of the Soviet Union, from Leningrad to Vinnitsa in the Ukraine, from Kemerovo in Western Siberia to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.⁵⁷ Their attempts to distribute Samizdat texts are also quite specific: they intended to enlighten people of the same social background, of the same age and of the same experience as their own. They thought that only Soviet young people who were not spoiled by Stalinism could sincerely engage in restoring socialism⁵⁸, on other words, they addressed ‘Stalin’s last generation’.

One of the group members allowed the group to gather secretly in his flat, where they stored facilities for printing and materials that they acquired illicitly through social connections. In order to produce their texts, the group members used a typewriter, carbon paper, hectograph that they made themselves, and gelatin. They obtained all the materials by creatively using the system, namely, facilities in their workplaces, and various networks of friends and relatives. They also took copies by using a photographic tape and photo-offset lithography. Once they decided to make the production of Samizdat texts more efficient and to create a hectograph, which could make more copies at once than the typewriter or photographic tapes. They found out information about the techniques of producing and distributing the uncensored literature from the Soviet books for children that they had read at school. One of such books was A.G.Golubeva’s “The Boy From Urzhum” published in 1953.

⁵⁷ Correspondence between regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov. 1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁵⁸ Leaflet “Comrades! Now you are going to Virgin Lands.” Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

However, it was not useful, because it described how to make a tool for hand-written texts. They went to a second-hand bookseller and found an old craftsman's manual of the 1920s. By using this description, they managed to make a hectograph that allowed to make copies of typewritten texts. However, the gelatin was a crucial component, and the group members needed it to start the mass production of their illegal literature. A group leader, Ronkin, was working at a scientific institute at the time, and he legally ordered the gelatin from the Institute. He changed the title of his research project in order to justify the usage of this material. Ronkin managed to obtain one kilogram of gelatin. According to the case documents, they created at least 100 copies of their texts.

Their background as leaders in the local Komsomol cell at the institute helped them to plan and to accomplish their mission. Once they distributed leaflets among the students' train that was going to the Virgin Lands. They produced and distributed at least 80 leaflets and wrote, in the beginning, the following: "Dear students, comrades! You are going to the virgin lands to work. You want to be of service for your country. You are not indifferent people. In virgin lands, as everywhere in our country, you will see many problems that our newspapers would never uncover: mismanagement, lies and deception, slapdash attitude towards people".⁵⁹ They bought several issues of the magazine *Ogonek*, several chess boxes, and Domino, issues of Lenin's book *State and Revolution*. In Lenin's book, they highlighted sentences, which were concordant with their views. They placed the leaflets into the boxes with the games, magazines, and Lenin's brochures, and on the day of the departure of a Virgin Land student train, they distributed the boxes at the train station saying they were gifts from the Komsomol City Committee. There was no time for opening the boxes before departure. Criminal investigators started the investigation immediately. Komsomol Youth League

59 Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine "Pamyat"*, 1981. Archive Memorial Moscow.

officials announced via radio that everyone was obliged to pass the leaflets to the carriage where authorities were traveling. They managed to get only 41 leaflets.

These two cases show the important aspect of the circulation of their self-made texts. Main sources of information for the group members were the Soviet official press and literature where they found out how to produce such texts. When the group members gave a text to someone, they lost any control over its reproduction and distribution -- Some people distributed it independently from the group members. They found out that their texts were in Tajikistan only during the trial.⁶⁰ This group was functioning in the early years when Samizdat was not well-known as an alternative source of information. Thus, the group members did not know any other similar groups and by 1965 did not read any Samizdat texts.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine "Pamyat"*, 1981. Archive Memorial Moscow.

⁶¹ Interrogation protocols suggest that the group members received Milovan Djilas' *The New Class* in June 1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

CHAPTER 3. Ideas and self-identification: revolutionaries in form, reformists in content

It is impossible to understand the group's goals, motivations, and self-identification⁶² without analyzing their texts. They reveal the group's ideas and its rationale. Although the group's aspirations were reformist 'from within' the Communist ideology that they understood more broadly than Marxism-Leninism, because they also draw on Western socialists' ideas⁶³, the group members used a specific language that emphasized revolution and class struggle. It was specific "Bolshevik" language⁶⁴ they knew well and to which they were accustomed. The most important idea of the group was that the Soviet Union was not a socialist country, but a form of what they have called "bureaucratism"; this idea pushed them to go beyond the Soviet official structures and to spread their reformist ideas. In their writings, they considered socialism as a future of the world, as the most "progressive" political system. The official discourse of the Thaw years represented the Soviet Union as the most progressive and advanced country in the world. Although, the group members argued in their texts that the Soviet system, in fact, was not progressive enough and proposed their own vision of the truly socialist state with which the Soviet Union did not comply. They were especially interested in the lack of democracy in the Soviet Union and the lack of economic prosperity. In line with the Thaw agenda of bringing back the 1920s and restore the 'Leninist principles' of true socialism, they proposed the interpretation that after Lenin's death the Soviet Union deviated from the way to socialism. They associated a socialist state with

⁶² Rogers Brubaker criticized 'identity' as an analytical concept that is too broad and proposes to use the term 'identification' and 'self-identification' that are derived from verb and that refer to distinctive social and historical context, it is also free of connotations that are usually linked with the concept 'identity': Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

⁶³ In their texts, they cite Lenin, Stalin, Plekhanov, Marx, Gramsci, Rousseau, J. Bernal, English physicist and sociologist of science, Engels, and Leon Blum.

⁶⁴ The idea was elaborated in Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Univ of California Press, 1997).

democracy and a multi-party system (and they acknowledged that it exists in the capitalist West), and consumerism, namely, the “satisfaction of all spiritual and material needs of the Soviet citizens” and equal distribution of consumer goods under socialism. They were in favor of planned economy. The style of their writing, their ability to “speak Bolshevik”⁶⁵ and various quotations from the classics, Marks, Lenin, Engels, even Gramsci suggested that they used the language of the Soviet authorities. In their writings, they represented themselves as the new revolutionaries; they tried to reproduce the actions of the pre-revolutionary Bolshevik party and considered their theoretical text as the main contribution to the new revolution. They identified themselves as new socialist theoreticians, who read all the main texts and who could enlighten other Soviet citizens. They envisioned their future revolutionary organization through the prism of the Soviet representations of the Bolshevik party before the October revolution.

3.1 Re-revolutionize the workers’ state: the book *From the Dictatorship of Bureaucracy to the Dictatorship of Proletariat*

In the book, the leaders of the group *Kolokol* elaborated their own understanding of progress and a kind of Marxism-Leninism modernization theory that was obviously inspired by the official discourse of the 1960s Soviet Union. In the introduction, Ronkin and Khakhaev wrote: “In our book we wanted to show that like the French philosophers’ promises of the “kingdom of the reason” had turned to the “kingdom of the money”, the Communist party’s promises of the “happy kingdom of socialism” had also failed, and developed into the domination of the new exploitative class that we call bureaucracy”.⁶⁶ Thus, they concluded that the Soviet Union was not a truly socialist country, because bureaucracy developed into a new exploiting class. The group explained that Soviet society was not equalitarian because of

⁶⁵ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (University of California Press, 1997).

⁶⁶ Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

the privileged status of the nomenklatura. “Their privileged position is very visible. It is based not only on big salaries, it is also huge rewards and bonuses, flats, longer vacations, possibilities to obtain deficit goods, to acquire services at closed restaurants and hospitals.”⁶⁷ They claimed that the basis for the inequalities in Soviet society lied in the fact that one class had privileged access to consumer goods, services, and higher incomes because it accumulated the “material and spiritual goods” of Soviet society and formed a “privileged minority.” In their texts, they represented socialism as the highest stage of a society’s development for the Soviet Union should undertake reforms to attain socialism.

In the introduction, they explained why they wrote this book: the book pointed out the “enormous amount of lies and hypocrisy in the Soviet reality”⁶⁸ and discrepancies between the official discourse and everyday life in the Soviet Union. In the first chapter, they explained why the Soviet Union was not a socialist country; in their view, it constituted a new form of governance that they call “bureaucratism”, where all the resources, all the coercive apparatuses, and all the economic resources were concentrated in the hands of bureaucracy, not in the hands of the “people”. In the second chapter, they argued that bureaucratism as a form of government was spreading around the world; first it has set up in the socialist countries, but soon it would take power in advanced capitalist countries and in the “young states that recently gained their independence.”⁶⁹ They considered bureaucratism as a quite progressive form of governance because it was more similar to socialism than the capitalist democracy. In so doing, they justified the expansionist policy of socialist states by considering it a kind of civilizing mission: bureaucratism “did not intend to enslave other peoples, in one way or another. Sometimes such states integrated the neighboring states (Baltic countries joined USSR, Syria joined Egypt), violently or not, but they did not intend to

⁶⁷ Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁶⁸ Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Delo *Kolokol*. Introduction. F. 52, op.2.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

enslave or oppress these peoples.”⁷⁰ In the third chapter, they explained, why an attempt to establish socialism in the Soviet Union failed; the distortions of socialism along with the lack of democracy and establishment of the personality cult were inevitable: “Due to the absence of a strong class of proletariat that could not take the power and to retain all the achievements of the revolution, the establishment of a very strong state [with personality cult] was inevitable.”⁷¹ In the fourth chapter, they explained why the bureaucracy was an exploiting class. They also show, how and why the Soviet official ideology lied: “Soviet official economists tried to claim that the main aim of our bureaucratic state (they call it socialism) is ‘to satisfy all the material and spiritual needs of the toiling masses’, which is incorrect”⁷² because of the shortages in the supply of consumer goods. They also showed why the multi-party system was better than a one-party system; they also pointed at the first signs of discontent with the political system among the young people. In the fifth chapter, they elaborated on the Cold War context. The sixth chapter the group described how the ‘true socialism’ should look like. They proposed to eliminate the state and to establish a system of communes. They argued that the socialist state, which they called the ‘dictatorship of proletariat’, should look like Lenin described it in the book “The State and Revolution”. They even put a Lenin’s phrase in the epigraph to the book “We are committed to a republic that does contain no permanent army and no police (the total armament of the people should be instead) and no bureaucracy, that now benefits from the lack of accountability and big bourgeois salaries. We stand for elections and accountability of all the bureaucrats and for the proletariat payment for them.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Chapter 3. Delo *Kolokol*. Introduction. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Chapter 4. Delo *Kolokol*. Introduction. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁷³ Lenin Vladimir. The State and Revolution, citation in Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

In the seventh chapters, they came to a conclusion that the Soviet system was incapable of establishing a highly developed economic system (they called it ‘productive forces’). In the end, they proposed a plan for a new revolution. “We need to start our work from revolutionary propaganda among all the classes. We need to uncover the lies and hypocrisy of the bureaucratic propaganda and to teach the people to disguise the class stratification of the system.”⁷⁴ Their plan was to enlighten people and to explain to them how to build true socialism, then to arrange various underground revolutionary organizations. The network of these underground organizations would seize power and reestablish the system. They argued that the elections should be competitive and free, that the authorities should be accountable, that factories, plants, and local Komsomol cells should be self-governed by the workers. Thus, their claims were quite similar to the model of socialism that was implemented in Yugoslavia.

To sum up, the group intended to show that the Soviet state was not, in fact, a true socialist state because it did not satisfy its own declared standards. They argued that the political governance of the Soviet Union is outdated. In the book, they argued that the Soviet state represented themselves as “free state of people”, but, in fact, it was a state where the dominating class of bureaucracy possessed all the power and privileges -- “The dictatorship of bureaucracy in our country a long ago has ceased to be progressive ”¹². However, they supposed that the ‘bureaucratic’ political system was better than a capitalist one because it was closer to socialism, more equal and had a ‘progressive’ planned economy. Nevertheless, they insisted that the political system of the Soviet Union lagged behind the technical and social development of the society. They cited the official documents of the Khrushchev era that promised the achievement of communism in 20 years. They represented the citizens as

⁷⁴ Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictatury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Chapter 4. Delo *Kolokol*. Introduction. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

consumers, who depend on all the goods and services from the state, and the state as a provider of goods and services to the population.

3.2 Technocratic self-identification

The *Kolokol* group argued that the technical intelligentsia, especially engineers, would constitute the new revolutionary vanguard: “The masses of engineers are concentrated in scientific and research institutes. They are also proletariat. This new proletariat that includes also technical intelligentsia, has become a pivotal economic player of modern society a long time ago. This particular class is destined to the role of grave-digger of the bureaucracy.”⁷⁵ It was in line with Lenin’s idea of leading vanguard that would lead masses to a new revolution and new social order. In their texts, the group members identified themselves as a “Communist revolutionary opposition sharing the view of Marxist-Leninist theory of class struggle and proletarian revolution.”⁷⁶ To prove that they were not against Soviet power, they wrote, “The dictatorship of the proletariat is the greatest progress in the history. It is the only path that opens the borderless possibilities for the material prosperity, abundance, and all-encompassing spiritual growth of the all toiling people in the Earth.”⁷⁷ This example illustrates that they were supportive of the main ideas of Khrushchev’s Thaw official discourse, however, they wanted the state to fulfill its promises.

The group formed a distinctive self-identification – the group members in their personal accounts emphasized that the group came together around their activist position of ‘not indifferent’ people and their intentions to reform the Soviet system ‘from within’, according to the principles that it officially declared but failed to implement. These considerations helped them to separate themselves from the majority of their peers. “It was not just a cheerful *kompaniia*, it consisted of non-indifferent people, who worried about what

⁷⁵ Ronkin Valery, Khakhaev Sergey. Ot Dictarury Burocratii K Dictature Proletariara. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

is going on, who wanted to do anything to improve [the situation]. We thought that everyone is responsible for our country and should prevent the emergence of another personality cult... there were many people around us, who lived for themselves, they wanted to earn money, to organize their daily life, their homes. It was not important for us; the main concern was to make life good for everyone.”⁷⁸

3.3 The *Kolokol* Magazine (1963-1965).

In 1963-1965 the group produced and distributed the *Kolokol* magazine. The idea of the magazine titled *Kolokol* was inspired by the XIX-century émigré from the Russian Empire and socialist Herzen, who also named his magazine *Kolokol*. The group *Kolokol* managed to publish two issues of the magazine, #23 and #24. They used these numbers to complicate the process of investigation -- they thought that the potential investigators would attempt to find other issues of the magazine, and it would complicate the process of identification of the authors.⁷⁹ In the magazine, they not only criticized the Soviet government’s policies, but also proposed their own project of how the socialist system should look like. Thus, they acted as future political leaders that were destined to reform the Soviet Union and to build “true socialism”. In the magazine, they paid much attention to the following topics: internationalism and civilizing mission of the Soviet Union in the Cold War context, de-Stalinization, and an urgent need to restore democracy according to Leninist principles. In the magazine, they discussed the international context of the Cold War and especially the emergence of new socialist countries in the “backward countries in the East”.⁸⁰

As in all their writings, they considered themselves as future politicians who would restore internationalism and support socialisms all over the world. The important source of

⁷⁸ Interview with Ronkina I.T. Interviewer: Chuikina S. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Ronkin Valery Efimovich.

⁷⁹ Ronkin Valery, Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003).

⁸⁰ Magazine *Kolokol*, “On the so-called non-capitalist way of development”. (“O nekapitalisticheskoy putirazvitiya”) . The *Kolokol* magazine #24. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

their hesitations with the Soviet power was the existence of many different socialisms that had various conflicts with the Soviet Union, such as China, Albania, and Yugoslavia. They also expressed anxiety about the future of internationalism. In the piece “On the so-called non-capitalist way of Development” (“O nekapitalisticheskom putirazvitiya”) they argued that new socialist countries’ leaders had chosen socialism to acquire more power and more privileges; like in the Soviet Union, the bureaucracy has become the ruling class there. In the text titled “On Proletariat Internationalism,” (“O proletarskom internatsionalizme”) Valery Ronkin argued that the Soviet authorities abandoned the internationalism principle in Soviet foreign policy. They wrote that “the bureaucracy immediately forgets about the world proletariat’s interests if they contradict bureaucracy’s own needs.”⁸¹ Drawing on the examples of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Soviet support of the Nasser’s regime in Egypt, he supposed that the bureaucracy had done nothing to support Communist movements in such countries as Egypt and instead of this supported “dictatorships”. The group’s intentions as future socialist leaders were to “fight against all the manifestations of chauvinism and nationalism. We know that workers all over the world pursue similar goals: to fight against exploiters – feudal rulers in Afghanistan, the bourgeoisie in West Germany and Italy, bureaucracy in the USSR, China, and United Arab Republic. We will fight for solidarity among world proletariat and for true internationalism.”⁸²

Sergey Khakhaev, the author of the paper on “The first steps of the new government” (“Pervyye shagi novogo pravitel’sstva”) mentioned three major problems that the Soviet authorities faced in the mid-1960s: first, the legitimacy of the regime had been shrinking; second, the planned economy was ineffective and in deep crisis, third, the split in the world Communist movement created a crisis of socialism. The group supported planned economy and considered it the most progressive form of economic organization, but it also welcomed

⁸¹ Magazine *Kolokol*, “On Proletariat Internationalism,” (“O proletarskom internatsionalizme”) . The *Kolokol* magazine #24. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁸² Ibid.

discourse on economic reforms initiated by Kosygin: “abandonment of centralized planning system of the whole agrarian sector is a progressive measure, but it easily can become a fiction if the bureaucracy remains on its place in government”.⁸³

The *Kolokol* group had a very controversial opinion about Lenin’s ruling style and his contribution to establishing of socialism in the country. They supposed that Lenin’s actions as a political leader contradicted his theoretical assumptions, but he had to deviate from his theory because of Russia’s backwardness that did not allow radical reforms. However, the bureaucracy of the 1960s was also to blame, because it also deviated from Leninist principles: “It is clear for everyone that the deeds of our bureaucracy blatantly contradict Lenin’s ideas. The bureaucracy is using his writings to legitimize its actions, but it distorts them and takes them out of context. Due to specific historical circumstances, Lenin’s political decisions could not conform to his theoretical propositions and ideas... as the head of the country and the party, he was a creator of new, progressive and the only possible at the time society that was far away from true socialism. Lenin perceived such contradictions as his personal tragedy. The system that was built in our country has nothing to do with socialism, the human’s ideal political system”⁸⁴ – wrote Valery Smolkin in the text titled “On the true and fictitious greatness of Lenin” (“O podlinnom i mnimom velichii Lenina”). As a future politician, he proposed two main reforms that were to be fulfilled to attain socialism: first, the establishment of national elections of officials, second was that officials’ salaries should not exceed the level of average worker’s salary (“proletarian salary for officials”). In the text “A fluctuation or a turning point?” (“Lavirovanie ili povorot?”)⁸⁵ Ronkin expressed the fear that the new wave of “terror and illegality” and “Stalinist methods of government” were possible

⁸³ “The first steps of the new government” (“Pervye shagi novogo pravitel’sstva”). The *Kolokol* magazine #23. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁸⁴ “On the true and fictitious greatness of Lenin” (“O podlinnom i mnimom velichii Lenina”). The *Kolokol* magazine #23. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁸⁵ The *Kolokol* magazine #23. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

due to bureaucratic rule. Thus, one of the most important political tasks for the group was to explain their analysis of the characteristics of bureaucratism, as they called it, and the analysis of the form it took in the Soviet Union. In another article, they claimed that they supported a multi-party system that they envisioned as the only party system that leads to democracy. They argued that democratization of the bureaucratic system of the Soviet Union – their main aim – was impossible without the political opposition and a multi-party political system.⁸⁶ It seems that their adherence to the multi-party system was connected with their devotedness to the ideas of free expressions of opinion and unrestricted public debates. Nevertheless, these ideas went far beyond the Marxism-Leninism ideology and Lenin's ideas with regard to democratic centralism of the 1920s.

The two most provocative texts appeared under the title "Who governs the country?" and were devoted to biographies of Kosygin and Suslov. The author, Valery Ronkin, described Kosygin's biography this way: "Perfectly aware that he came to power due to new wave of terror, which wiped out old party members and brought into government impostors like Kosygin, he not only refused to fight against 'the violations of Lenin's norms', but even encouraged such deviations. After Stalin's death, his love of Stalin disappeared and he welcomed the uncovering of the personality cult".⁸⁷ Ronkin criticized Suslov in a very similar fashion in the next issue of the magazine. In conclusions, he ended up accusing them of supporting Stalin's personality cult and conformism during the Great Terror. Moreover, the *Kolokol* group evaluated these party officials in moral terms, accusing them of being hypocritical people who had no communist consciousness.

⁸⁶ The *Kolokol* magazine #23. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

⁸⁷ "Who governs the country?" The *Kolokol* magazine #23. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

CHAPTER 4. Process of Investigation: legal system serves for political ends

When analyzing the documents that the investigating authorities have created, it is very important to treat them as official representations - the state authorities had to construct, to fabricate the group as a conspiracy, and then justify the decision to put them on trial. State authorities' conceptualizations are of pivotal importance for our understanding of the *Kolokol* case because it affected the participants' understanding of their own actions and self-identification after the trial. The process of investigation shed light on how the KGB investigators made important decisions with regard to who is to blame, who is a witness, how to classify the group's actions and how to legitimize the decision to put the group on trial. The Soviet legal codes, as chapter 1 demonstrates, were used for political ends. Therefore, I consider the immediate decisions of the KGB investigators, local Komsomol officials, and Party officials in Leningrad – they all were far more important than the actual legal procedures and the written laws.

Consequently, the 4th chapter will trace the process of investigation. The part “Arrest and Trial” will show what aspects of the group's actions were important for the investigators and what types of evidence they needed to charge the group with an offense; it will also shed light on the trial. The subchapter on “Criminals and insincere witnesses” will discuss why some group members were classified as criminals, while others were treated as witnesses. The subchapter “Who is responsible” will address how the investigating authorities attributed responsibility. The paragraph on the *Kultura* affair sheds light on reasons why one offender, Boris Zelikson, who had nothing to do with the group, was convicted as a group member: it will also highlight the group members' experience around 1956 when they participated in the Soviet structures that mobilized youth.

4.1 Arrest and trial.

The investigating authorities started the home searches on June 12, 1965. This day, the investigators conducted around 30 home searches.⁸⁸ First, they aimed to find all the printing facilities and all the printed literature. That was *corpus delicti*. KGB investigators were also interested in the literature that the group members read. During the interrogations, they tried to identify what kind of Samizdat text the group members read; they managed to reveal that the group members received right before their arrest, in spring 1965, Milovan Djilas' book *The New Class*.⁸⁹ The group's ideas were very similar to those of Milovan Djilas that he outlined in the book *The New Class* and to Leon Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*. However, there is no evidence that the group read Trotsky's texts. At the trial, the group claimed that their ideas were original because investigators tried to accuse them of plagiarism.⁹⁰ The investigators also requested the list of the books that the group members received from libraries. During the interrogations, the KGB investigators tried to reveal the whole network – all those people, who read the book, and especially those, who showed the book to other people.

The KGB officials gathered many documents that positively characterized the group members, among them were reference letters from their workplaces and from the Institute. The investigating authorities were particularly interested in the group members' biographies that indicated their achievements and good conduct. For example, Lyudmila Klimanova "finished school with a gold medal, then she was a disciplined student at the Institute who perfectly coped with her studies. In the first year, she was a Komsomol organizer and was well regarded by her classmates. She was characterized as a politically educated and honest

⁸⁸ Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine "Pamyat"*, 1981. Archive Memorial Moscow.

⁸⁹ Interrogation protocols. *Delo Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2

⁹⁰ Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine "Pamyat"*, 1981. Archive Memorial Moscow.

person”.⁹¹ The same document asserts that another group member, Veniamin Iofe “has got good grades; he is a talented researcher. He knows several languages, translates from French, German, and English. He has worked in the Komsomol Committee, and has participated in Komsomol constructions every year.”⁹² The police guards responsible for the house checking in one of the group leader’s places, Sergey Khakhaev, found various awards and letters of gratitude from the Soviet authorities, for instance, a certificate of a worker of Communist labor, an honor badge for the “Development of virgin lands”, and a gratitude from the city patrol guard headquarter⁹³. Thus, the investigating authorities had to put in prison the people that were characterized in very positive terms with regard to both their professional achievements, their devotedness and activism in Komsomol, and their moral qualities. This was an important problem for the investigators. They acknowledged this in their correspondence: KGB reports show that the group members’ fellow students, colleagues in factories and scientific institutions, and even local party activists at the Technological Institute, where all the group members with the exception of Sergey Moshkov had been studying from 1954 to 1959, expressed sympathy and trust to the group members and disagreed with the KGB’s accusations⁹⁴, or they took up a neutral position, or they supported the group’s ideas - no one came to KGB to denounce the group. KGB investigating authorities worried about this fact and even thought of legitimating their decision, for example, by organizing a public trial of the group.⁹⁵

The trial was held on 12-26 November 1965.⁹⁶ Right before the trial, the Soviet authorities destroyed the whole press run of the book *Komsomolia Tekhnologicheskogo*

⁹¹ Inspection record. September 1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Statement of evidence inclusion, 13.09.1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2

⁹⁴ Letter to the regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov, 20.12.1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid:278. The information about the *Kolokol* trial is available only in personal sources.

released in 1959. The book was devoted to the anniversary of the local Komsomol cell in the Institute. It mentioned the names of the underground group's members with honor and gratitude since they had been activists in the local Komsomol organization few years before the trial. During the trial, the most confusing fact for the authorities was that the group's main book *From the dictatorship of bureaucracy to the dictatorship of the proletariat*, an "anti-Soviet document that discredits the Soviet system"⁹⁷ ended up with a quotation from Marx's book *The Communist Manifesto*. The citation stated, "Let the dominating classes from all the countries shudder before the forthcoming Communist revolution!"⁹⁸ Veniamin Iofe's account also suggests that during the trial the investigating authorities revealed a bunch of documents and evidence that positively characterized the group members in terms of personal qualities, their activism in Soviet youth structures, and in their professional achievements – "From the newspaper text about Gaenko, who dragged away the gasoline barrel from the fire and numerous letters of gratitude for participation in the Komsomol patrols and in Komsomol constructions, to certificates of scientific discoveries and published articles."⁹⁹ These positive characterizations of the group members as good Komsomol members and conscious Communists "did not affect the severity of the sentence, but conditioned complete silence with regard to this case by the official propaganda."¹⁰⁰

The group members in their personal sources give discrepant guesses about how the KGB investigators found them. Nina Gaenko considers that because the group members dictated the texts to each other and discussed the content loudly in the flat that was on the first floor of a building, some people might have heard their conversations. The KGB officials made an audio recording of their conversations in the courtyard before the arrest.¹⁰¹ During

⁹⁷ Delo *Kolokol*, Fond Iofe, St.Petersburg. F. 52, op.2.

⁹⁸ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003), 168.

⁹⁹ Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine "Pamyat"*, 1981. Archive Memorial Moscow.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ronkin Valery, *Na Smenu Dekabryam Prikhodyat Yanvari* (Memorial:Zvenia, 2003): 193.

the flat search, they found the transcript of Brodsky's trial.¹⁰² Soviet authorities deemed the actions of the group members as illegal.¹⁰³

4.2 9 prisoners and 46 witnesses

This part will show that the investigators had to decide how large they wished the group to be and how to underplay its significance. In fact, they wanted the group not to seem big, but to evaluate the actual number of participants for their internal purposes. The investigators had to construct what they called 'anti-Soviet illegal organization', and it was up to them to decide, how many people this 'organization' needed to be included. Thus, we can consider the final decision of investigating authorities – those, who defined the fate of the group members – as an important political document of the period that might designate a framework for the following treatment of such groups and actions. Obviously, the investigators were hesitant to declare that the group was large – they had to punish those who crossed the boundaries of what was allowed, and at the same time, they could not put on trial everyone who was engaged in the group's actions – it would have undermined the legitimacy of the Soviet system in Leningrad. The engagement of more than 55 people had important political consequences. Allegedly, even the group leaders did not know the actual number of the group members, a number of those people, who participated in the distribution and discussion of the literature. They simply could not control its distribution after they gave it to their acquaintances and colleagues. The latter could even go to KGB and denounce them. Nevertheless, nobody went to KGB to denounce the group.

According to correspondence between the secretary of the city committee of the KPSU, V.S. Tolstikov, and Head of the City Department of KGB, Shumilov, dated November 1965 in the final stages of the investigation, 9 group members were out on trial, and 46 people

¹⁰² Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine Pamyat*”, 1981. Library of Memorial, Moscow.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

were classified as ‘insincere’ witnesses.¹⁰⁴ The investigators use the word ‘insincere’ to emphasize that a witness told the investigators things that they did not want to hear, did not denounce other participants, who distributed and read the group’s literature. The case documents suggest that during the investigation that took place from June 1965 to December 1965, the number of witnesses was steadily growing, and by September 1965 it exceeded 45 people. Two group members, Veniamin Iofe¹⁰⁵ and Irina Ronkina¹⁰⁶ noticed that the investigations authorities could easily put on trial more than 9 persons, and initially they intended to incarcerate 10 people, but later on, they changed the status of the 10th suspect, Vladimir Shnitke, and decided to treat him as a witness. The document stated that “Ronkin, Khakhaev, and other participants were trying to realize their criminal plans by distributing hostile documents and their slanderous ideas among the wider public in order to ideologically brainwash them to hate the Soviet power. They did not face any rebukes and even met like-minded people. Some of the witnesses were members of Komsomol Youth League and CPSU, they neglected their Communist responsibilities and disregarded the Soviet laws. Nobody reported to the party or other Soviet offices. Moreover, some of these individuals were not sincere enough during interrogations and tried to disguise their crimes by pointing at the group members’ accomplishments, or by hiding their anti-Soviet documents.”¹⁰⁷ They blamed those who did not denounce the group, while the investigators hesitated to blame everyone in ‘criminal anti-Soviet activities’, thus they argue that the witnesses were not against the Soviet authorities, but they just were not ‘conscious enough’. The investigators represented a group in such a way that it could involve a small number of people not to show

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine Pamyat*”, 1981. Library of Memorial, Moscow.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Ronkina I.T. Interviewer: Chuikina S. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.1. Delo Ronkin Valery Efimovich.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to the regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov, 19.11.1965. P.4. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

that many people were opposing the authorities. They blame them for the lack of responsibility.

In fact, investigating authorities treated these 46 people as witnesses. However, they helped to distribute and to store the literature, or hid printing facilities, or helped to print and to distribute texts. Investigators had enough evidence to put all of them on trial. For example, one of them, Dmitry Grivenko, took the book to Tashkent and even intended to bring a duplicating machine from Hungary to the group. Some of them even organized the collective reading of the literature, for example, Mikhail Balstvinnik. Alla Sokolova read the group's book and "expressed consent to render assistance in these illegal activities. From January to June 1965, she kept a typing machine in her flat, it was used to make anti-Soviet documents. She participated in the distribution of underground magazine *Kolokol*. In April 1965, she personally delivered 4 issues of *Kolokol* to the defendant Klimanova."¹⁰⁸ Vladimir Shnitke "had been brainwashed for a long time by Ronkin and Khakhaev in a hostile way towards the Soviet power. They aimed to engage him in their organized anti-Soviet activities. In 1964-1965 he participated in producing an illegal newspaper... he took the above mentioned program to an expedition and then to an official business trip. During the interrogations, he tried to diminish the public menace of these criminal activities ...he did not evaluate these actions in a politically proper way and was insincere."¹⁰⁹ The investigating authorities claimed other group members 'irresponsible' and 'brainwashed' to show that the majority of group members did not enter the group consciously and by their own decision, but were just victims of the group leaders. This helped them to diminish the size of the 'organization' and to represent the *Kolokol* group as, in fact, its two leaders' undertaking. Then, the document reveals the long chain of people, who read and then gave the texts to someone else. This is the

¹⁰⁸ Letter to the regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov, 19.11.1965. P.4. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

evidence that these 46 people, who were classified as “witnesses”, in fact, could have been classified as “criminals” if investigating authorities decided to do it. The KGB reports on the social moods among the colleagues and acquaintances of the group members suggest that they had support among various groups: workers, engineers, and former students of the Technological Institute.

4.3 Who is responsible?

In fact, investigating authorities claimed that only two group members – the two leaders – were responsible for the group’s actions, ideology, and negative influence on other people. According to the document, the rest engaged in the group’s actions by “mistake” due to the lack of knowledge and political awareness; they were represented as victims of their “hostile ideological brain-washing” and manipulation. The documents claimed that “Ronkin and Khakhaev became close friends during their student years at the Technological Institute, in 1961 due to their common anti-Soviet convictions, they entered into criminal conspiracy and actively engaged in organized anti-Soviet activities in order to influence in ideologically hostile way the consciousness of their acquaintances and other individuals in various regions of the country. They and their co-conspirators produced and distributed anti-Soviet documents that discredited the Soviet political system ... and they formed a huge networked organization that planned to violently overthrow the Soviet power. It consisted of individuals who were ideologically brainwashed into being hostile towards the Soviet authorities.”¹¹⁰

According to the classifications, the two group leaders were responsible for “ideological indoctrination” of other group members. In August 1965, something changed in the investigation because new interrogations were undertaken by the authorities, the same people were interrogated several times. However, the case attracted Moscow authorities’

¹¹⁰ Letter to the regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov, 19.11.1965. P.4. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

attention, and Procurator Blinov who was in charge of RSFSR Procuracy arrived¹¹¹. Shnitke, one of the group members, initially was taken as a suspect but then was released. Gaenko and Ronkina argued that the investigators knew that “wives” were to blame also, and that they knew everything about the group’s actions and that they took part in its activities, but they for some reason did not put them on trial. Thus, the investigators decided how many people they could convict and to put on trial because of some hidden considerations.

The KGB attribute responsibility not only to the two group leaders while representing others as victims of their ideological manipulation, “ideological brainwashing” that was successful due to other participants’ lack of ideological training and immaturity. In fact, eventually, the Komsomol Youth League cell was also declared responsible for the “low quality of political and ideological work.”¹¹² They classified the group’s ideas as “reactionary revisionism” that was simply “wrong”. In the conclusion, the document argues that in the Leningrad Technological Institute the organizational and political work was of a very low quality because the majority of “the group participants and their allies studied or worked there”. The document also argues that after reading the group’s texts and after interrogations investigating authorities realized that there was “the lack of knowledge of the Marxist-Leninist theory, especially the Marxist philosophy and political economy.”¹¹³ The document also blamed the professors of the Institute for a “lack of personal responsibility for the results of their activity”¹¹⁴, for the bad quality of teaching of Marxism-Leninism, bad quality of work of party and Komsomol organizations at the Institute, low levels of “ideological and moral education.”¹¹⁵ Thus, by depriving the majority of the group members of agency and capability

¹¹¹ Peskov Valery, *The Kolokol Case, Samizdat Magazine “Pamyat”*, 1981. Archive Memorial Moscow.

¹¹² Letter to the regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov, 19.11.1965. P.4. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Letter to the regional KPSU secretary in Leningrad oblast comrade Tolstikov from the Head of the KGB Leningrad oblast Department Shumilov, 19.11.1965. P.4. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

of independent decision-making about their life and tastes, they managed to represent the group smaller than it actually was.

4.4 Boris Zelikson and the *Kultura* affair

Although it took place in 1956, the *Kultura* affair is an important part of the story that reveals a pivotal aspect of the investigation -- it shows the role of KGB investigators, who not merely tried to investigate and to uncover but, more importantly, to create the ‘underground organization’ that never existed. It showed the intentions of investigators to make their own version of the group and to punish an individual for his misconduct in the past, even though he did not take part in the group’s actions. Thus, the *Kultura* affair has a direct relation to the process of investigation. The main personality in this affair was Boris Zelikson, who was put in prison in 1965, together with 8 members of the Kolokol group. The link between Zelikson and the group can be traced back to 1956 when he and the group members acquired leading positions in the local Komsomol cell at the Technological Institute. They had much in common – they intended to reform the local Komsomol organization ‘from within’ by allowing free debates and free elections of the local Komsomol leadership.

In February 1965, the public readings of Khrushchev’s Secret Speech were organized. As soon as March 1965, Boris Zelikson was elected the secretary of the Komsomol Committee at the Institute. A witness noticed¹¹⁶ that it was almost impossible because Zelikson was not a party member¹¹⁷, he was Jewish, and he did not have any letters of recommendation from the Komsomol Youth League authorities. The elections were competitive. He won a high position within the local Komsomol cell. One of his initiatives was a student wall newspaper titled *Kultura*. Initially, the institute authorities supported the

¹¹⁶ Dimitrin Yuri, On the Newspaper *Kultura*, Materials of the Conference on Samizdat: 25 years of the independent press (Memorial, St. Petersburg, 1993).

¹¹⁷ Case document also indicates that Zelikson was not a party member. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

initiative.¹¹⁸ Dmitry Bobyshev, one of the co-authors, suggests that Zelikson's idea was to publish papers about art, where authors could express their own opinions, "not those prescribed from above."¹¹⁹ The editor-in-chief was Leonid Khanukov. Zelikson as a secretary of the Komsomol Committee managed to attract students to contribute to the newspaper; some of them even knew Brodsky and Akhmatova.¹²⁰ Some contributors to *Kultura*, students of the Technological Institute, later became important artists: Evgeny Rein, Anatoly Naiman, Dmitry Bobyshev. The newspaper included several thematic blocks: publicist writing, cinema, literature and poetry, paintings, music, theater, ballet, nature, and humor. Zelikson was in charge of the humor section. According to Bobyshev's accounts, the texts were very challenging with regard to the style and absence of citations of Marxism-Leninism; they did not refer to Socialist realism.¹²¹ The newspaper discussed foreign artists, for example, Rein published a paper on Paul Cezanne, Naiman published a review of one Belgian film. These papers played an important role in the *Kultura* affair. The first issue of this wall newspaper was brought into public before approval of the censors; but later on, a censorship commission approved the newspaper's content with only one exception.¹²² This exception was a paper titled "Good Uflyand"; it supported a young poet, a student in Technological Institute, who experienced an outrage from the Leningrad authorities. The paper contained short excerpts from Uflyand's poetry.¹²³ It is also important to notice that in 1958 Uflyand wrote a poem "Death to Bureaucratism" ("Smert' Buracratizmu"). This hint might suggest that Djilas' ideas somehow were well-known to students of Technological Institute. He wrote: "I, as any of 100

¹¹⁸ Dimitrin Yuri, On the Newspaper *Kultura*, Materials of the Conference on Samizdat: 25 years of the independent press (Memorial, St. Petersburg, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Bobyshev, Dmitry. I zdes': Vospominania ob Akhmatovoi, Naimane, Reine, Brodskom (Moscow: Vagrius-Plus-Minus) <http://ahmatova.niv.ru/ahmatova/vospominaniya/bobyshev-ya-zdes/donos.htm> (08.06.2017)

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Excerpts from the transcripts of the Frunze Komsomol Bureau meetings about B.Zelikson and the *Kultura* newspaper. 13.08.1965. Case documents. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Bobyshev, Dmitry. I zdes': Vospominania ob Akhmatovoi, Naimane, Reine, Brodskom (Moscow: Vagrius-Plus-Minus) <http://magazines.russ.ru/october/2001/4/bob.html> (08.06.2017).

my friends hate to death the bureaucrats that we eventually will denounce”. Probably, the Djilas’ ideas somehow penetrated the social milieu of students in the Technological Institute; it seems that the *Kolokol* group just expressed a widespread opinion that rooted within this student social milieu. The case documents also support this observation.

There is one more important entanglement with Brodsky’s trial, Yakov Lerner, who published articles to denounce *Kultura* in 1956 and to reprove Brodsky in 1964. The Hungarian Revolution started on October 23. Three days later, on October, 26 Yakov Lerner, who in 1964 would become a notoriously well-known party activist by its publication that initiated Brodsky’s affair, published an article *On the newspaper Kultura* in a newspaper *Technolog*. This paper contained the following phrases: “I think that the newspaper *Kultura* should not enlighten its readers, but it should be an active disseminator of the party’s ideas with regard fighting with manifestations of alien ideas, points of view, and moods. Editors should not forget that socialist ideology, its principles, Marxism-Leninism, still prevail in our country. However, in the first issue of the newspaper, the editorial board slanders on our reality and orients our students in a wrong way. It covers a range of topics with regard to foreign art: cinema, paintings, music.”¹²⁴ It also accused Zelikson, a party’s representative, in the expression of support to the authors. Later, The Soviet newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published an article *What are the intentions of Comrades from Technological Institute?*

After these publications, the local Institute authorities swiftly changed their attitude towards the newspaper. The closure of the newspaper accompanied the accusations that it was “ideologically harmful”¹²⁵. Two people from the editorial board suffered from the sanctions: Evgeny Rein, a future famous Russian publicist, was excluded from the Institute; Boris

¹²⁴ Bobyshev, Dmitry. I zdes’: Vospominania ob Akhmatovoi, Naimane, Reine, Brodskom (Moscow: Vagrius-Plus-Minus) <http://ahmatova.niv.ru/ahmatova/vospominaniya/bobyshev-ya-zdes/donos.htm> (08.06.2017)

¹²⁵ Excerpts from the transcripts of the Frunze Komsomol Bureau meetings about B.Zelikson and the *Kultura* newspaper. 13.08.1965. Case documents. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

Zelikson was put in prison for 9 years after the *Kultura* affair as a member of the *Kolokol* group.

It seems that Zelikson's mistake was not the launch of the newspaper *per se*. The problems emerged when he refused to "change his opinion" about the newspaper's content and to recognize his and his comrade's ideological fault. The Committee of Komsomol Youth League at the Institute decided to launch the newspaper *Kultura*; later, the commission of the Komsomol Youth League of the same Technological Institute classified it "ideologically harmful". The *Kultura* affair affected the party organization at the Institute, party activists, and its authorities. At the party meeting, one of the participants reported: "We observe bad sentiments. They say that the only good thing that emerged in our institute was the newspaper *Kultura*, but it was closed. Students discuss that the secretary of the Komsomol organization Zelikson was fired because he told the truth to the authorities."¹²⁶ Some participants of the meeting argued that the newspaper was "apolitical and anti-Soviet." Lepilin, the secretary of the party committee at the Institute, argued that "In our university, some cases of wrong apolitical statements took place, during the Komsomol meetings and in newspaper *Kultura*. In the 1st issue of the newspaper, there were lots of wrong manifestations. In the main paper, they wrote that last 10-15 years in our art they observed stagnation, clichés, and escapism from real life. It also contained a statement that our youngsters disliked art. This is all wrong. The second text ... argued that everything that is bad is good, and everything that is good is a counterrevolution. The third article cited a Polish magazine that futurism and impressionism are not bad."¹²⁷ In the Bureau of the Leningrad regional committee (Obkom) of the CPSU, a participant described: "In April a student Naiman by the order of Zelikson made a report for students about the culture of a young person. He tried to prove that Marxism-Leninism is

¹²⁶ Excerpts from the transcripts of the Frunze Komsomol Bureau meetings about B.Zelikson and the *Kultura* newspaper. 13.08.1965. Case documents. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

nothing more than a mere movement. Our professor does not properly resist such statements. In some papers in the newspaper, there are obvious mistakes, tendencies, and statements that support the bourgeois ideology.”¹²⁸ Another participant even concluded that the newspaper manifested “deliberate or unintentional insinuations against our social and political system. During the affair, the newspaper *Kultura* became well-known abroad, because it was mentioned by Voice of America and BBC in their radio programs.”¹²⁹ The Party Committee blamed itself for missing important mistakes made by the editorial board of the newspaper that to some extent remains us the practices of ‘self-criticism’. Party committee reviewed the newspaper before publishing, but forbade just one paper that was devoted to Uflyand’s poetry. They allowed publishing of all other papers. Zelikson provoked harsh reprimands and fierce criticism after he insisted that all the papers should be published, even the one that was prohibited. Thus, he refused to practice ‘self-criticism’. One document, dated 1956, argued that “this year the Komsomol Committee decided to launch the newspaper *Kultura*. Its goal was to popularize the achievements of classic Russian, Soviet, and world culture...the Party Committee and Institute’s administration harshly criticized the first issue of the newspaper. Some members of the committee, especially Zelikson, did not understand this criticism and due to this was expelled from the position of secretary. Later editorial board and committee implemented all the Party Committee’s instructions.”¹³⁰

The *Kultura* affair affected Zelikson’s life dramatically in 9 years -- the investigators formulated their accusations based on the documents and evidence that took place 9 years before the *Kolokol* trial that dealt with completely different issue – the *Kultura* affair. All the group members were accused under the two Criminal Code articles, #70 (“anti-Soviet

¹²⁸ Excerpts from the transcripts of the Frunze Komsomol Bureau meetings about B.Zelikson and the *Kultura* newspaper. 13.08.1965. Case documents. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

¹²⁹ Dimitrin Yuri, *On the Newspaper Kultura*, Materials of the Conference on Samizdat: 25 years of the independent press (Memorial, St. Petersburg, 1993).

¹³⁰ Excerpts from the transcripts of the Frunze Komsomol Bureau meetings about B.Zelikson and the *Kultura* newspaper. 13.08.1965. Case documents. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

agitation and propaganda”) and #72 (“participation in an anti-Soviet organization”), except Boris Zelikson, who was accused under article #70. It is very indicative because Zelikson did not have any close relationships with the group. Investigating authorities indicate that he read the group’s book and showed it to approximately 15 people and discussed it with them.¹³¹ Alexander Daniel, who met Ronkin and other group members in prison, also writes in the introduction to Ronkin’s memoirs¹³² that Zelikson had nothing to do with the group.¹³³ Those people, who actively participated in the group’s actions did not receive harsh punishment and were classified as witnesses, while Zelikson, whose misconduct was relatively less serious, was incarcerated.¹³⁴

The case documents suggest that Boris Zelikson’s main fault was not participation in the group, nor the distribution of the materials – in the focus of the investigators was another episode – the *Kultura* affair. Moreover, the *Kultura* affair and Zelikson show important entanglements with Brodsky’s trial, thus it links the group to a wider context of 1964-1966 and prosecutions of some types of behavior. This affair also sheds light on the social moods of the Technological Institute and argues that the group Kolokol were products of the broader Technological Institute social milieu that advocated free speech and free public debates, and was critical to the Soviet system. One poet – a student in the Institute published a poem titled “Death to Bureaucratism” (“Smert’ Buracratizmu”) in 1958. This might suggest that the students in Technological Institute might have heard about Djilas’ ideas in the late 1950s. Probably, the *Kolokol* group articulated a widespread opinion in student milieu.

¹³¹ The decision to prosecute B.M. Zelikson. 16.08.1965. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2.

¹³² Daniel’ Alexander, Jizn’ I sud’ba-2: inzhener-khimik Valery Ronkin. Introduction to the book Ronkin Valery, Sochineniia, Nablyudeniiia, issledovaniia, razmyshleniia. (SPb: Zvenia, 2012). <http://www.cogita.ru/a.n.-alekseev/andrei-alekseev-1/zhizn-i-sudba-2-inzhener-himik-valerii-ronkin> (08.06.2017)

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Case documents. Delo *Kolokol*. Fond Iofe. F. 52, op.2

4.5 Recapitulation of Kolokol

After the trial, the group members radicalized and entered the huge dissident networks that maintained communication between the political prisoners and those who remained free. The nine former group members went to prison in Mordovia, where they became acquainted with prominent dissidents, such as Alexander Daniel, and other political prisoners, for example, Latvian and Ukrainian nationalists. In the 1970s they returned from the prison and exile and settled in the small town in 100 km away from Leningrad. They continued their activities and started to call themselves as dissidents.

Conclusions

This thesis reconstructed the history of the Leningrad group *Kolokol* over the period 1954-1965 from two perspectives, top-down and bottom-up. Using the personal sources of the group members and analysis of the group's literature, I showed how the group members gradually transformed from the Komsomol members that wanted to reform the local Komsomol cell, to friendship *kompaniia* that maintained strong informal relationships with each other, then to the *Kolokol* group that wrote, printed, and distributed its own literature, and finally to political prisoners. I also used state-produced sources, case documents, to reconstruct the process of investigation that the KGB investigators undertook. In fact, the KGB officials fabricated the group as a conspiracy and managed to represent the group as a small conspiratorial 'anti-Soviet underground organization'; at the same time, they revealed the names of more than 50 people, who participated in the group's activities, those, who printed, distributed, and discussed the group's texts.

The analysis of the group's texts, a book, magazine, and leaflets, showed that their aspirations were reformist "from within" the Communist ideology as they drew their analysis not only on Marxism-Leninism but also on Western Marxists. They identified themselves as future politicians and ideologists and appropriated the official ideology of the Thaw era that represented the Soviet Union as the most progressive political system and announced the return to the Leninist ideas of the 1920s and to restore "true socialism". As a group, they printed and distributed their literature, a theoretical critique of the Soviet system that argued that the Soviet Union is not a socialist country because the class of bureaucracy seized the state power and constituted an exploiting class. Their writings urged to establish a large network of underground organizations that would serve as a basis for new revolution that would overthrow the bureaucracy and to establish a true socialism that eliminates the state. They envisioned true socialism as a system of communes.

The thesis also emphasizes the discrepancies of KGB officials' and group members' interpretations of the group actions, for the group members represent the group as a friendship *kompaniia*, while KGB investigators were seeking out conspiracies and 'underground anti-Soviet organizations'. The KGB investigators implemented a two-fold task – to represent a group as a small conspiratorial organization and to create a stable organization out of a fluid friendship *kompaniia*, and at the same time to uncover as many participants of the large network of people, who produced, disseminated, and read the literature as possible. This combination of top-down and bottom-up perspectives was informed by my approach to sources that I interpret as actions.

This thesis aimed to go beyond the resistance narrative that tends to overemphasize resistance and opposition among the whole range of various possible responses to state power. I argue that the resistance narrative tends to exclude the *Kolokol* group from the debate because it does not fit the binaries of resistance and compliance that have dominated this interpretative framework. I aimed to complicate our understanding of what we got used to label "resistance" by providing a detailed analysis of the transformation of the *Kolokol* group and of the process of the group formation, consolidation, and dissolution.

This research opens up a number of possibilities for future development of the topic, but here I want to highlight one possible direction that I am especially interested in. This case study sheds light on the emergence of the Dissident movement in the mid-1960s and the members of the group *Kolokol* might be considered as one of the typical biographical trajectories for the dissidents. My hypothesis is that the Soviet authorities in the 1950s commenced Destalinization, and in doing this they facilitated, even encouraged the emergence of reformist thinking during the 1960s, and, by the 1970s, the authorities helped shape a new collective identity, that of the Soviet dissidents. Soviet investigating authorities created the terms like "anti-Soviet opposition" and "resistance" out of reformist groups similar

to *Kolokol*. People to whom these classifications were applied, gradually internalized this legal discourse. I hypothesize that the dissidents appropriated and reinterpreted the state's conceptualizations. I suggest that this thesis provides a relevant methodological approach because the combination of personal and state-produced sources would allow tracing when the phenomenon of Soviet dissidents emerges and how it evolves, both in legal terms and public discourses, official and unofficial. The integration of top-down and bottom-up perspectives allow tracing the emergence of collective identification of dissidents as a multi-actor interaction process.

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