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**Introduction:**  
**the Kremlin's grip: new geopolitical and cultural  
histories of Central and Eastern Europe**

***Richard McMahon & Jonathan Murphy***

*Introduction*

Over two decades ago, the Soviet imperial system collapsed, transforming not only the central and eastern European region (CEE<sup>1</sup>), but also the writing of its history. The articles in this issue, prepared from papers delivered at the May 2012 Irish Association for Central and Eastern European Studies (IARCEES) conference at University College Cork, exemplify two key changes.<sup>2</sup> First, most use the tools and methods of history to study the Cold War period. As long as the Cold War was an active conflict, scholars relied most heavily on the methods of political science to analyse it. As CEE has had the good fortune to be shunted from the centre of the global geopolitical stage however, political scientists have migrated to other issues while historians have moved in to mine the newly opened archives of former communist dictatorships. As three of the articles in this collection (by Peter Duncan; Katrin Van Cant and Idesbald Goddeeris; and Paolo Sorbello and Ludovico Grandi) show, historians have also been emboldened to examine elements of the period since the communist bloc collapsed in 1989, bringing the Cold War to an end.<sup>3</sup> Just like contemporary scholarly accounts of

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Eastern Europe* was widely used during the Cold War for the European part of the Soviet Bloc. After 1989, this was increasingly divided terminologically into *Central Europe* and *the Balkans*. Criticism that both these terms are politically loaded has helped shift usage towards the supposedly more neutral *East-Central Europe* and *South-East Europe*, plus CEE as an umbrella term that also includes what is now called the *former Soviet* or *CIS* region. This controversial naming history produces some perverse outcomes. The Cold War *Eastern Europe* was quite often applied to the nominally independent Soviet satellite states alone, which are close to Europe's geographical centre, and could exclude the Soviet Union, which forms most of Europe's eastern half but is rarely referred to as *Eastern Europe*. Duncan quotes Vladimir Putin in 2000 as claiming that Russia was 'part of West-European culture'! *East-Central Europe* is meanwhile never complemented with its logical partner, a German-centred *West-Central Europe*.

<sup>2</sup> J. Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Partially free elections were held in Poland in June, Eric Honecker fell in East Germany in October followed by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Velvet Revolution took place in Czechoslovakia in November and Ceausescu's regime ended in Romania in December.

the Cold War, these studies exploit currently available sources of evidence such as media reports and interviews.

A second major change is that the majority of articles here deal with the relationship between the Soviet centre and the CEE countries it ruled. The collection therefore contributes to a wider move in Cold War scholarship towards examining smaller powers.<sup>4</sup> Until 1989, this was a rather minor concern of Cold War Studies, which focussed heavily on the relationship between the superpowers. When the internal politics of the Soviet Bloc were considered, it was usually through the prism of Kremlinology, which attempted to interpret the opaque outward manifestations of the secretive Soviet leadership. It was widely presumed, especially in the Stalin period up to 1953, that the 'Eastern European' satellites slavishly followed the political and cultural directives of Moscow. However, the Soviet system's collapse clearly illustrates the complexity of this relationship in at least two ways. Firstly, the satellite regimes refused to follow Gorbachev's reformist lead. Secondly, this was a reciprocal relationship.<sup>5</sup> The 1989 revolutions responded to Moscow's withdrawal of effective military support from Eastern European communist regimes. However the rejection of Soviet rule in these countries had a profound impact on the implosion of the Soviet Union itself in December 1991. Not least, it escalated ethnic tensions, particularly in the Baltic States where they had long simmered.

Since the fall of communism, CEE scholars have been able to engage much more fully with the wider academic world to examine the politics and societies of this region.<sup>6</sup> Of the seven authors in this collection who examine Soviet relations with satellite societies, four are from the region. The result is a rich exploration of the ways in which the Kremlin shaped subject countries in the Soviet image, but also of how local cultural particularities and political traditions obstructed, disrupted or deflected this project.

The authors in this volume who examine the post-Cold War period continue to pay great attention to relations between Moscow and its former satellites. Van Cant and Goddeeris study Polish, Slovak and Ukrainian memories of Soviet domination. Although Duncan's main focus is on Russian relations with Western Europe and the United States, CEE, including ex-Soviet republics, remains a key site of interaction between Russian and Western foreign policies. Ukraine inevitably features prominently in Sorbello and Grandi's study of Gazprom, Russia's state-owned gas company, as an autonomous foreign policy actor. These two authors argue that Gazprom sees CEE, including Russia's so-called 'near abroad', as a gateway to energy-thirsty Western Europe and has worked hard to obtain a strong position in these regions. Alexandra Gerota contends that although Moldova's long-term

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<sup>4</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, 'The Cold War: What Do "We Now Know"?', *American Historical Review* vol. 104 no. 2 (1999) 51.

<sup>5</sup> Vladimir Tismăneanu, *The devil in history: communism, fascism, and some lessons of the twentieth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 195.

<sup>6</sup> Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, 2004, *The Soviet Union and the Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1954: A Documentary Collection* (Washington: NCEER, 2004), iii.

integration into the EU seems likely to depend on its own political will, the country's future viability, much like its history, is tied to Russia's relations with Europe. The novelty of exploring CEE countries other than Russia is therefore tempered by an important continuity. All the articles give a prominent, and often central role, to the issue of the Kremlin's projection of power. This is true even of Rayla Tadjimatova's article, the only one to consider an entirely Soviet subject matter and to examine the pre-Second World War period. She discusses how the ideological line set by the Soviet cultural leadership still affects interpretations of the artistic legacy of Evgeny Vakhtangov, an important Moscow theatre director.

The articles of this collection focus on two main issues. One of these, diplomacy and geopolitics, was the central preoccupation of pre-1989 Cold War studies. The second main focus, on culture, has more recently challenged this centrality of geopolitics.

### *Geopolitics*

Three articles examine key episodes that bookend the Cold War geopolitical relationship between Moscow and its satellites. Božena Cierlik examines how the USSR established control over the region in 1944-48, Jonathan Murphy focuses on how it maintained this control by crushing the Prague Spring in 1968 and Patryk Pleskot demonstrates the key role of Soviet influence right up to 1989.

Cierlik's article outlines how the Soviets carefully constructed bilateral arrangements and exploited the strategic circumstances of the Second World War to achieve their strategic aims of territorial expansion and what she describes as an 'external imperium' in East Central Europe. From July 1941, the Soviet Union had a 'two-track' policy towards Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. It accommodated British sensibilities by opening diplomatic relations with the respective governments in exile while recruiting potential collaborators from the region and training them at the Comintern School near Moscow. From the outset, the most important issue for the Kremlin was that the British and US governments should recognise its territorial expansion since 1939. As Cierlik highlights, the Red Army's control of CEE thus enabled the fulfilment of short term goals during the war while laying foundations for the long-term goal of dominating the region. The Soviets achieved this pattern of multi-dimensional subordination in 1944-48 on the basis of bilateral political, economic and military agreements, which established a system of international relations in the ECE and subordinated each country's economy to Soviet economic needs. The character and timetable of the imposition of Soviet rule depended on the degree of strategic, political and economic importance of each country for the Soviet Union.

While recognising a role for the geopolitical factors that most scholars use to explain the Soviet decision to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968 meanwhile, Murphy explicitly shifts his explanation towards issues of communication. This places a new emphasis on personal relationships, especially between the Czechoslovak and Soviet communist leaders, Alexander Dubček and Leonid Brezhnev. He argues that although they were initially well disposed towards one another and strongly wanted to

reach an accommodation, understanding foundered on their different personal understandings of how far the Soviet bloc would permit reform to proceed.

Like Murphy, Pleskot challenges traditional analyses of a Soviet bloc crisis. Overshadowed by the tragic events at Tiananmen Square, the Solidarity-led roundtable negotiations in Poland in June 1989 and subsequent peaceful transition to the first freely elected postcommunist government only briefly caught the world's attention. It was instead the fall of the Berlin Wall in the following November that came to epitomise the transformation and unification of Europe. Pleskot's broad perspective, based on Polish and Western sources, addresses an important gap in studies of the international context of Poland's rapid political transformation during 1989. He demonstrates that in their negotiations with the Solidarity trade union, the Polish communist authorities exploited real and imagined Western concerns about the Kremlin's possible reactions.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, much of the literature on the 1989 events in CEE centres on the impact of Soviet foreign policy, regarding international political attitudes as secondary to Soviet issues. This overlooks just how uncertain the early post-Cold War European continent was and how far the independently transitioning Central European states moved beyond Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's vision of reforming the bloc to move closer to the goal of European integration under the EU and ultimately NATO.<sup>8</sup>

Western governments widely welcomed Solidarity's victory in the June 1989 elections, but according to Pleskot, it also made them more cautious in their support for the movement. They worried that the scale of its success might fatally weaken the reformist camp within the Communist Party and disrupt the compromise reached at Round Table talks. This might pave the way for a power grab by more extremist elements, escalating social and international tensions. It might even provoke a Soviet invasion, despite Gorbachev's July 1989 suggestion that the Brezhnev doctrine could be abandoned and his declaration that 'the social and political order... is entirely a matter for each people to decide'. While Gorbachev believed that Soviet acceptance of Solidarity as a legitimate political player in Poland would have a moderating effect on its behaviour,<sup>9</sup> Pleskot shows that Western leaders supported Jaruzelski's communist government to "maintain balance", keep the process of democratisation

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<sup>7</sup> Related works from Poland include: Paulina Codogni, *Wybory czerwcowe 1989 roku. U progu przemiany ustrojowej*, IPN: Warsaw 2012; Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988–1989*, Arcana: Cracow 2004; Paweł Kowal, *Koniec systemu władzy. Polityka ekipy gen. Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w latach 1986–1989*, IPN-ISP PAN: Warsaw, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Polish efforts to transform diplomatic relations with a rapidly unifying Germany are part of this unrecognised transformation. See Murphy, Jonathan, "Ending Cold War Divisions and Establishing New Partnerships: German Unification and the Transformation of German-Polish Relations" in Jana Braziel & Katharina Gerstenberger (eds) *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 105-126.

<sup>9</sup> A.S. Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End Of the Cold War* (Cambridge UP, 2008), 170.



within what were then considered safe boundaries and ensure what they perceived as a gradual, secure transformation, in which Solidarity would take the role of a constructive opposition.

The three articles in this collection that deal with the post-Cold War period all focus on geopolitics. Sorbello and Grandi discuss the progressive concentration of power in the hands of Gazprom and question the perception by many political, academic and journalistic figures of Russia's gas monopolist as a foreign policy 'weapon' in the hands of the Kremlin. Gazprom rose to power along with Vladimir Putin, who declared in 2004 that it represented the Government's domestic and international interests. The authors however argue that although its links with the Kremlin, in both the domestic and international spheres, are extremely close, they are also very complicated. They maintain that over the past ten years Gazprom has evolved into an autonomous power oligopoly within the Russian power structure. The authors use the TNK-BP case and negotiations surrounding the South Stream natural gas pipeline to demonstrate that Gazprom fights for its own market objectives, by influencing Russian foreign policy and building relationships with other multinational energy companies. Strong declarations from Gazprom have for example interfered with Putin's attempts to build friendly relations with the Ukrainian government. The authors identify signs of a tug-of-war between the gas giant and the Russian government for the past five years.

Duncan argues that at least for now, the West remains Russia's central foreign policy preoccupation. He underlines constants in this relationship, such as Moscow's preference for bilateral relationships, concern for state sovereignty and preoccupation with great power status. However he argues that Russia has largely been reactive, modulating its Western policy in response to in its own shifting domestic economic and political fortunes and the oscillation of successive American presidencies between pragmatism and idealism. Despite exceptions such as the supply of Western occupation forces in Afghanistan across Central Asia, most elements of the Russo-Western relationship have some significant connection with CEE. Discussion of nuclear disarmament has for example become intertwined with American plans for missile defence sites in Poland and the Czech Republic and planning for Russian energy supplies to the EU stirs controversy in transit countries like Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic States.

Most directly, the Putin regime has made little effort to hide its assumption that former Soviet republics should remain in its sphere of influence. Gerota for example discusses Russian diplomatic efforts to bring about a bilingual "Russian-Moldovan" state that would not assume a Romanian identity and would remain bound to the Russian Federation by bilateral agreements. Pro-European Moldovan parties oppose this project, claiming that it aims in reality at imposing a Russian protectorate, further Russification and the effective annexation of Moldova by its breakaway pro-Russian territory of Transnistria. Gerota however considers whether the country, and perhaps Ukraine and Belarus also, might find an intermediate position between what she terms the European and Russia 'empires'. They would be militarily neutral, economically close to Russia and under flexible Russian influence, but would seek political inspiration in the European democratic model and develop

cooperation with European countries. The prospect of European integration might meanwhile serve as an incentive for Transnistria to reintegrate into Moldova. By offering Russian speakers European-style democracy and the norms of European ethnic minorities rights, the new republic might even offer a successful model which ethnic Russians or Ukrainians could re-export to their mother countries and could nourish cooperative Russian-European relations.

### *Culture*

As access to communist archives has transformed Cold War history, scholars in the field have progressively broadened their research beyond their traditional preoccupation with diplomatic history. As in scholarship of international history more broadly, they focus increasingly on culture and related issues such as society and gender.<sup>10</sup> Since the 1980s, culture has become a key focus of historical work, influenced by the broad linguistic and cultural turns in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>11</sup> Cultural history built on 1960s and 1970s social history, which in turn drew on sociology to widen the historical gaze from diplomatic and political elites to the general population. While social history, often influenced by Marxism, examined how past societies were structured, cultural history borrowed from anthropology to study ideas and cultural symbols.

Marxist stress on the central role of ideology has given Cold War historians their own distinctive route into cultural concerns. For Western analysts, a key controversy has always been whether Cold War decisions were influenced more by ideological values and received ideas about the nature of the world, or a rationally calculated contest for geopolitical power and material interests.<sup>12</sup> Since the Cold War began, Western scholarly opinion has oscillated between arguments that Soviet leaders, including in their policy towards CEE, were motivated by realist defence of the Soviet state or by communist dogmas, such as a commitment to world revolution.<sup>13</sup> The 'New Cold War history' since 1990 has brought a renewed emphasis

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<sup>10</sup> Westad, 'three (possible) paradigms,' 552. Leffler, 'What Do" We Now Know"?', 501. Ronn Pineo, 'Recent Cold War Studies,' *History Teacher* vol. 37 no. 1 (2003), 85.

<sup>11</sup> Annabelle Littoz-Monnet & Richard McMahon, 'Cultures of defining culture: EU cultural policy in the context of the study of culture', in Richard McMahon (ed.), *Post-identity? Culture and European Integration* (London & New York: Routledge 2013 – in press).

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Roberts, 'The Cold War as history,' *International Affairs* vol. 87, no. 6 (2011), 1475.

<sup>13</sup> Leffler 'What Do" We Now Know"'. Pineo, 'Recent Cold War Studies,' 81. Roberts, 'The Cold War as history,' 1477-78. Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, 5, 23.

on ideology<sup>14</sup>, but has often broadened it from the strict sense of an elaborated political programme, to include the historical accretion of ways of thinking and acting within specific societies. Several works, including the best-known reassessment of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis' 1997 book, *We Now Know*, recognise elements of the inherited traditions of tsarist imperialism in Soviet behaviour towards CEE.<sup>15</sup> Odd Arne Westad extends the meaning of Soviet ideology to embrace 'Russian traditional perceptions of themselves and others' and 'Soviet experience in international affairs', while Zubok and Pleshakov link Soviet communist thought with 'traditional Russian messianism and the Orthodox Church's stress on justice'.<sup>16</sup>

In this volume, Gerota argues that the official Soviet ideology and constitutional structures of multinationalism concealed a continuation of an historical Russian expansionist policy to destroy Moldova's national identity. The working class was paramount for Marx and Lenin, and their revolutionary project was aimed at uniting the proletariat from all countries. Their specific national characters were doomed to disappear in the socialist melting pot. However, as Gerota points out, both men supported the self-determination, independence and autonomy of national peoples as a means to break down the colonial empires that opposed their international proletarian revolution. Gerota uses the case of the Republic of Moldova to shed light on this contradiction: after it became a Soviet socialist republic, its population suffered from both ideological and anti-national repression, more far-reaching and destructive than traditional Russian methods of colonisation, since these new strategies were aimed at achieving the new 'Soviet man.'

Gerota also stresses ideological continuities from communist times into the present, particularly criticising the enduring legacy of Marxism-Leninism in Moldova. Vladimir Tismăneanu identifies this throughout CEE. He recently termed Marxism's culpability 'an essential question of modern historical self-understanding' in the region. Duncan identifies Soviet and even tsarist continuities in post-communist Russian politics, including authoritarianism, the cultivation of spheres of influence in CEE and a foreign policy centred on great power *Realpolitik*. He also notes the emergence of a civilisational political camp in Russia, which consciously connects culture with international politics. It draws on Samuel Huntington's internationally influential *Clash of Civilisations* argument that politics is driven by multinational cultural identities such as the West, the Orthodox world and Islam.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Communist archives encourage this renewed focus on ideology. See for example Vojtech Mastny, 'Did NATO Win the Cold War-Looking over the Wall,' *Foreign Affairs* no. 78 (1999), 180.

<sup>15</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29-31. Leffler 'What Do "We Now Know"?', 503.

<sup>16</sup> Odd Arne Westad, 'Russian Archives and Cold War History,' *Diplomatic History* vol. 21 (Spring, 1997) 264-66. Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War, From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge (Mass.) & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 2-3. Leffler, 'What Do "We Now Know"?', 511.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 72 no.3 (1993).

Naimark and Gibianskii and Connelly agree that the increasingly divergent courses of communism in different bloc countries were 'path driven', or shaped by prior history.<sup>18</sup> Naimark for example argues that despite not having an ideologically-driven agenda in Eastern Germany, the Soviets 'bolshevized the zone... because that was the only way they knew how to organize society'.<sup>19</sup> Murphy in this volume adopts a constructivist approach, arguing that statesmen interpret the international system on the basis of shared understandings of how the system works. If understandings change, so might the system itself. He therefore stresses that the crushing of the Prague Spring cannot be understood without examining the perceptions that leaders held and how they were expressed. The different Russian and Czech political traditions, concerning what was acceptable in politics, may therefore have contributed to misunderstandings between Dubček and Brezhnev. They interpreted the implications of the Prague Spring differently, even if both shared the goal of one-party rule.

Ultimately, it may be no more possible in arguments about causation, to disentangle *Realpolitik* from ideology as ideology from culture. Evidence from Soviet Bloc archives convinces many Cold War scholars that ideology mattered very much for the communists but did so in 'synthesis' with geopolitical *Realpolitik*.<sup>20</sup> In this volume, Murphy's treatment of the role of ideology in Soviet bloc responses to the Prague Spring exemplifies this synthesis. For bloc leaders, the salient ideological issue in 1968 was the Party's leading role and whether Dubček's concessions to reform would ultimately embolden the population to throw off communist government, offering an example to their own restive populations. The Prague Spring therefore threatened the Warsaw Pact with, as Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko put it, 'complete collapse'. Gerota meanwhile highlights that the Soviet Union emerged in 1923 as a compromise between Marxist doctrine and material interests.

Contributors to this collection mainly opt for one of two approaches to culture. Following the pioneering work of Pierre Nora in France in the 1980s, memory studies, which examines how people remember or commemorate particular episodes in their history, has become particularly prominent in the decades since 1989 in disciplines like anthropology as well as in history.<sup>21</sup> One important stimulus to this rise of memory studies has been the aggressive Soviet programme of interpreting the past in terms of a communist teleology. Vacin reports for example that the Czechoslovak communists established Gottwald's mausoleum at a site linked with the Czech Hussites, connecting a group with an important role in Czech nationalist histories with communist accounts of revolutionary history.

Tadjimatova's piece on the *avant-garde* theatre of interwar Moscow contributes to the post-communist retrieval of alternative pasts. She locates her work among a

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<sup>18</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, 19. Connelly, *Captive University*.

<sup>19</sup> Leffler 'What Do We Now Know?', 517.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 501 & 508. Roberts, 'The Cold War as history,' 1477.

<sup>21</sup> Sabina Stan, 'De la nostalgie à l'abjection: La mémoire du socialisme à l'épreuve de la transformation postsocialiste.' *Ethnologies* vol. 27 no.2 (2005) 79-80. One prominent historical work is Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

broader scholarly reexamination of early Soviet culture, which is reinterpreting the legacy and roles of artists. This had to await the end of communist autocracy, under which art interpretation was a deeply ideological matter, with important consequences for artists' careers. Artistic reputations were therefore manipulated for various instrumental purposes. Tadjimatova for example argues that in order to protect the studio that Vakhtangov had built up, his students deliberately misrepresented his fantastic realism approach as compatible with the officially sanctioned style of socialist realism. This however encouraged portrayals of Vakhtangov, including in the West, as a secondary figure in theatre history, intermediate in style between his two great influences, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Konstantin Stanislavsky. Tadjimatova argues that recognising Vakhtangov's true originality should restore him to the first rank of artistic figures.

Katrin van Cant and Idesbald Goddeeris's article in this volume meanwhile examines Central European historical memories of Russia after the Cold War. Their analysis of periodicals demonstrates that memories of Russia are of crucial importance in the nation building projects of post-communist Poland and Ukraine, though far less significant in Slovakia. Their research also reveals rapid changes in historical representations of Russia following 1989, particularly in Poland. This comparative study contributes to a growing and diverse literature which charts the (re)construction of representations of the national past (and changes through time) beyond national borders. It demonstrates that the simplified popular perception of the 'all-hostile memories' of Russia and the Soviet Union in former East Block countries requires closer scrutiny. In contrast to the majority of studies within the field of representations and memory studies meanwhile, the article's focus is not on (new) visualisations and monumentalisations of the past, but instead on textual representations in the press. They show that although relatively neglected in representation studies, the press is a vital site for popularising and debating history and forming 'popular historical consciousness'.

Dobrouvka Olšáková and Ludek Vacin represent the other main approach to culture in this volume, examining how Central European communists adopted and adapted Soviet scientific practices. This highlights that the cultural legacy of these dictatorships is not just memory or the nostalgia for DDR consumer goods in East Germany and just about everything Soviet in Russia, but also unnoticed continuities. Vladimir Tismaneanu observes that communism generated a 'flourish of ritualistic behaviour rather than sentimental attachment'.<sup>22</sup> As Václav Havel notes in his seminal work, *The Power of the Powerless*: 'this dictatorship of the ritual' makes power anonymous:

Individuals are almost dissolved in the ritual. They allow themselves to be swept along by it and frequently it seems as though ritual alone carries people from obscurity into the light of power...The automatic operation

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<sup>22</sup> Tismaneanu, *The devil in history*, 154.

of a power structure thus dehumanized and made anonymous is a feature of the fundamental automatism of this system.<sup>23</sup>

Olšáková can therefore point to the ability of the authoritarian Czechoslovak communist state, though deeply unpopular, to shape elements of genuinely popular culture.

Leading historians identify science and especially technology as key factors in the Cold War, representing both superpowers as promoting rival schemes for the technological regulation and wholesale transformation of both society and the physical world.<sup>24</sup> Olšáková in this volume agrees. She points out that Marxism was developed as a self-consciously scientific analysis of political economy, but also that scientific technology was expected to prove communist economic and military superiority over the West, provide communist citizens with the materialist good life and offer a vital tool in the ideological combat against religion, the main competing truth-producing discourse. She studies the establishment of societies for the popularisation of science, following the Soviet model, in the people's democracies in the 1950s and 1960s. The Soviets had a particular interest in popularising science. It supported the communist agenda of serving and educating the masses and helped to develop a technologically advanced economy on a broad base. When the popularisation societies were first established however, Olšáková stresses that their main aim was propaganda rather than scientific education. The lecture series they organised drew huge numbers and the 'people's academies' and other colleges they set up in the 1960s were equally successful. Vacin meanwhile details the funerary arrangements in 1953 for the Czechoslovak communist leader Klement Gottwald. Employing the mix of analysis and lavishly detailed description that exemplifies cultural history, he invites readers into the tiny scholarly community of embalmers who preserved the bodies of Soviet Bloc leaders and details their strange scientific procedures.

#### *Culture, resistance and geographical differentiation*

The Sovietisation of Central European societies, and especially the degree of Eastern bloc unity and Soviet control, has become a key historical research topic, informing new archival research.<sup>25</sup> Concepts of culture play an important role in this major debate. Connelly describes a widespread understanding, dating from the 1950s, of the uniformity of the Stalin-era Soviet bloc.<sup>26</sup> Moscow micromanaged Sovietisation up until Stalin's death in 1953, dictating the senior personnel of governments and parties and sending experts to rig elections, organise show trials, set up Soviet-style cultural

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<sup>23</sup> Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2009), 34-5.

<sup>24</sup> Westad, 'three (possible) paradigms,' 556.

<sup>25</sup> Pineo, 'Recent Cold War Studies,' 81. See also Olšáková, this volume

<sup>26</sup> Connelly, *Captive University*, 1.

institutions, reform currencies and act as bodyguards for communist leaders.<sup>27</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii describe the response of CEE 'partners' as 'almost mechanical', accepting and expecting to be instructed.<sup>28</sup> In this volume, Olšáková and Vacin similarly represent Central European satellites as fairly slavishly following Moscow in scientific fields. Not only were science popularisation bodies based on Soviet models for example, but very often their names were simply translated and Soviet educational materials were imported directly. In Vacin's account meanwhile, the Soviet doctors who preserved Lenin and then Stalin export their expertise to fraternal states. Many details of Gottwald's funeral and mausoleum followed Soviet models precisely and Soviet embalmers were very definitely in charge of their Czech counterparts. They carried out the embalming and the more sensitive maintenance tasks, only delegating relatively minor work to the locals.

Micromanagement eased somewhat after Stalin but never ceased entirely. Moscow insisted that the people's democracies follow the Kremlin's post-Stalin 'New Course'.<sup>29</sup> It was Moscow that mandated looser political control over science popularisation and a return to more local traditions on questions like the renaming of popularisation societies in 1956-57. Gottwald's cremation and the closure of his mausoleum in 1962 followed the removal of Stalin's corpse from display. As Murphy's piece shows, Moscow remained intensely suspicious of locally led reform initiatives, once again lowering the bloc's political thermostat after the Krushchev Thaw. As Pleskot demonstrates, even the overthrow of communism in 'Eastern Europe' responded to Gorbachev's abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine.

The balance of power between cultural diversity and forced homogenisation in the Soviet Bloc remains in dispute.<sup>30</sup> Connelly challenges the view of writers like Grzegorz Ekiert that different local crises caused post-Stalin divergence among the people's democracies, arguing instead that unsuppressed differences among them were the cause of divergent elite behaviours during these crises.<sup>31</sup> Connelly says that just a few country studies have examined local resistance as a reason for differentiation among Stalinist societies.<sup>32</sup>

Access to detailed primary sources is helping to create a more nuanced picture of Soviet influence. Olšáková locates her research within a growing scholarship of the 'multiple 'takeovers' in various fields' that reproduced the 'multi-faceted' Soviet system throughout CEE, undermining earlier understandings of it as a uniform monolith. Colleagues have investigated elements of Sovietisation in fields such as the

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<sup>27</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, iv, 17, 29-30 & 39-43

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 45.

<sup>30</sup> Anne Applebaum refers to arguments made in the 1970s and 1980s that downplayed the totalitarian nature of Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a crude and imprecise term, *Iron curtain: the crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956* (New York: Doubleday, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Connelly, *Captive University*, 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

university system,<sup>33</sup> school curricula,<sup>34</sup> biological sciences,<sup>35</sup> the art world,<sup>36</sup> computing<sup>37</sup> and women's organisations.<sup>38</sup> Research increasingly suggests that Soviet allies and communist subject peoples were far more autonomous and proactive than previously suspected.<sup>39</sup> Even in the late 1940s, CEE communists diverged from Moscow's line, if only in their greater enthusiasm for revolutionary adventurism. The East German communists rather than the Soviets were thus the main drivers of crises over Berlin. The Tito-Stalin split of 1948 and the related purging of Władysław Gomułka in Poland demonstrate how serious resistance could be.<sup>40</sup> Political divergence built on the distinctiveness of CEE societies from the Soviet Union. Both Olšáková and Murphy for example note the DDR's special situation as half a state, intensely sensitive to developments in West Germany. The two Germanies disputed the legacy of pre-war German popularisation organisations and the east worried about CIA-founded popularisation meetings in the west. Public opinion placed a serious check on Soviet control, most clearly in the mass protests and political crises of East Germany, Poland and Hungary in 1953-56.<sup>41</sup> In Vacin's account, popular resentment forced the communists to tread carefully, for example by keeping the Soviet role in the embalming of Gottwald secret.

Scholars emphasise the role of cultural difference in the resistance to Sovietisation. Research on Soviet experts, sent to the people's democracies, highlights the particular difficulties they met in reproducing Soviet models in the field of culture.<sup>42</sup> Olšáková says that the strength of religion in Poland probably prevented the Kremlin from insisting on an atheism-promotion institute there. The communist authorities meanwhile assessed that many East German scientists would simply have nothing to do with an organisation for political education. Vacin argues that the decision to embalm Lenin was taken in a specifically Russian Orthodox cultural context and tailored to the religious sentiments of Russian peasants. Not only was

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Teresa G. Wojcik, 'When Curricular Objectives Collide: The Official, Enacted, and Experienced Curricula in Schools During the People's Republic of Poland (1952–1989),' *Curriculum Inquiry* vol. 40, no. 5 (2010).

<sup>35</sup> Piotr Köhler, 'Lysenko Affair and Polish Botany,' *Journal of the History of Biology* vol. 44, no. 2 (2011).

<sup>36</sup> Maruška Svašek, 'The Politics of Artistic Identity: the Czech Art World in the 1950s and 1960s,' *Contemporary European History* vol. 6 no. 3 (1997).

<sup>37</sup> Petri Paju and Helena Durnová, 'Computing Close to the Iron Curtain: Inter/national Computing Practices in Czechoslovakia and Finland, 1945-1970,' *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* vol. 7, no. 3 (2009)

<sup>38</sup> Basia A. Nowak, 'Constant Conversations: Agitators in the League of Women in Poland during the Stalinist Period,' *Feminist Studies* vol. 31 no. 3 (2005).

<sup>39</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, 46-47. Pineo, 'Recent Cold War Studies,' 82. Connelly, *Captive University*, xi.

<sup>40</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, 37

<sup>41</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, 46-47.

<sup>42</sup> Connelly, *Captive University*, 7.



Czechoslovak society much more urban and secular, but its religious traditions were different. Vacin's account of Prague communists importing Russian funerary practices demonstrates their close dependence on Moscow, but the public reaction illustrates the power of cultural difference. Ultimately, Gottwald's mausoleum was closed because Czechs found this 'Oriental' or 'Byzantine' tradition ridiculous, joking for example that the embalming had failed and that Gottwald's corpse was rotting.

### *Conclusion*

The articles in this edition of *Irish Slavic Studies* show that scholars have been able to add a great deal to the study of Russian and Central European studies since the fall of communism in 1989 and subsequent opening of previously closed archives. Duncan, Sorbello, Grandi and Gerota show that the Kremlin still strives to maintain itself as a global geopolitical actor. As it has since the time of Peter the Great, it sees control over its immediate European neighbourhood as an important part of this. The other articles in this volume suggest the continuity of these aims from the Soviet past. Though Russia's global status has diminished greatly since the Cold War, the central role of Russian power in the articles collected here suggests that Kremlin power also still grips the imagination of historians of CEE.

Many of the authors in this volume identify continuities from the communist or even pre-communist past, in memories, received ideas or the practices they inform. This collection also suggests the continuing influence of cultural, political and socio-economic differentiation within CEE, including within the historical profession. Participation in the project, and to a lesser extent in the IARCEES conference that gave rise to it, is heavily weighted towards those ex-communist countries that lie closest to north-west Europe. Naimark and Gibianskii report a similar geography to the opening of formerly secret communist state archives.<sup>43</sup> Declassification proceeded most quickly and thoroughly in the former East Germany, encouraged no doubt by West German funding and norms. It was followed by Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, but only gradually by more distant countries like Bulgaria. Russian archives were opened briefly in 1991 and many were quickly closed again. This spatial pattern of scholarly collaboration thus appears to closely reflect the broader geographies of political engagement with the West, adoption of Western-style democracy and free markets and accession to the EU and NATO.

The studies in this volume of complex interchange between geopolitics and culture suggest that regional differences in day-to-day cultural practices may shape broad geopolitical alignments like these, just as much as they shape them. To take an example from the historical profession, the success of information access in post-communist countries depends not just on funding, but also on a cultural shift in government that places importance on openness, in contrast to secrecy.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Naimark and Gibianskii, *A Documentary Collection*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Ivan Greenberg, *The Dangers of Dissent: The FBI and Civil Liberties Since 1965* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 214.



# **Part 1**

## **Geopolitics**

## **A master plan? Overview of Soviet foreign policy toward East Central Europe**

***Bozena Cierlik***

Soviet policy towards East Central Europe was a part of Moscow's overall policy towards Europe. The strategic aims were not different – territorial expansion and broadening of the Soviet sphere of political influence. Soviet aspirations in this regard were driven by political arrangements and the strategic situation vis-a-vis Germany on the battlefield. One of the first examples of this policy was the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and its secret protocol that divided Eastern Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union. This exhausted the opportunities for territorial expansion based on agreement with Hitler's Germany, not only in Poland but also in Baltic republics and Finland.

From 1940 the Kremlin started to consider a change in its ECE policy due to the breakdown of Soviet-German cooperation. As the concept of the status quo defined by the treaty with Germany became redundant the idea of rebuilding the Polish political state as a Soviet republic, started to look more appropriate at the time.<sup>1</sup> Why? Firstly, the removal and destruction of the Polish intelligentsia had been quite successful. Secondly, the Soviet Union had successfully applied its full policy of terror and deportations in its newly acquired territories. Thirdly, the Polish question was now seen in a different light after mid-1940. From 1940, there appeared to be the potential for a Polish military formation, which could be used within the Red Army to fight in Europe, as well as the 'education' of a group of Polish communists in Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> This re-evaluation (or change) in Soviet policy concerned all the ECE. The idea of using communist activists to change the international (and especially European) situation now appeared to have potential as was between Soviet Union and Germany grew more likely. The process of training a national communist group started in Comintern School in Pushkino near Moscow<sup>3</sup>.

The outbreak of the Soviet-German war brought other modifications in Soviet foreign policy regarding the ECE. From July 1941 Soviet Union had 'two-track'

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion about the idea of Poland as the Soviet republic or Soviet-dependant state see: Zencykowski T., *Dwa komitety 1920, 1944. Polska w planach Lenina i Stalina. Szkic historyczny*, (Warsaw, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Preparation for the formation of the Polish division within the Red Army had been considered by Lawrentij Beria since 10 October 1940. For more see: Kumaniecki J. (ed.), *Stosunki Rzeczypospolitej z panstwem radzieckim*, (Warsaw, 1991), 240-245.

<sup>3</sup> See: Toranska T., *Oni*, (Warsaw, 1989), also Slusarczyk J., *Stosunki polsko-sowieckie 1939-1945*, (Warsaw, 1993).

policy towards Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup> To accommodate British Stalin opened diplomatic relations with their respective governments-in-exile. However, he also continued the consolidation and training of communists groups<sup>5</sup> and, there was a considerable lack of cooperation with the governments-in-exile.<sup>6</sup> This new concept regarding the ECE was partially revealed by Stalin during talks with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden in Moscow in December 1941.<sup>7</sup> The most important issue was British and US acceptance of territorial changes from 1939-1940. Stalin demanded recognition of Soviet Union's western borders from 1940 including parts of Finland (Petsamo region) and Romania (Danube delta), and the establishment of Soviet military bases (land, air and navy) in Romania. Regarding the Polish question, there was to be no return to the pre-September 1939 borders agreed in the 1921 Riga Treaty. The future Polish-Soviet border was to be based on the Curzon line, a demarcation line proposed by the British in 1919 that approximated the Ribbentrop-Molotov line set on 28 September 1939. Stalin surprised the British government with a comprehensive plan for the ECE. This entailed the division of East Prussia between Poland and Soviet Union; pre-Munich borders for Czechoslovakia<sup>8</sup>; division of territories inhabited by Romanians and Hungarians; pre-war borders for Yugoslavia plus parts of Adriatic coast with Trieste and Fiume; rebuilding of Austria and Albania as independent states; correction of Turkish-Bulgarian border to accommodate Turkey and no change in Greece. The Soviet Union demanded a special role in decision-making process regarding future political reorganisation of ECE. Stalin did not oppose of the concept of a federation in ECE and his plans left some room for possible changes.<sup>9</sup>

From 1942, the Soviet Union's work on the future of the ECE was carried out by the Foreign Affairs Peoples Committee<sup>10</sup>, which was established to develop the global aims of the Soviet Union's foreign policy during and after the Second World War. On 28 January 1942, the Politburo established a commission to deal with future

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<sup>4</sup> 18 July 1941 Soviet-Czech agreement; 30 July 1941 Sikorski-Maisky agreement; 19 July 1941 discussions with Yugoslavia.

<sup>5</sup> Polish Radio T.Kosciuszko, Gen. Z. Berling; K.Gottwald in Moscow since March 1939. Later School moved to Kuznarenko near Ufa and trained all nationalities – Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Romanian, Hungarian, German, French, Spanish, Chinese and Korean. See: *Dokumenty i materialy do historii stosunkow polsko-radzieckich*, (Warsaw, 1973).

<sup>6</sup>Raczynski Edward, *W sojusznicy londynie. Dzienniki ambasadora Raczynskiego*, (London, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> Eden A., *Pamiętniki 1938-45, vol.2*, (Warsaw, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> There was no demand yet for incorporation of Bessarabia.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Dokumenty i materialy do historii stosunkow polsko-radzieckich, vol.7*, (Warsaw 1973).

<sup>10</sup> Solomon Lozowski was the head of this committee. See: "Zamiatsya podgotovnoy budushevo mira". *Istochnik. Documenty russkoy istorii*, 1995, no4 (17).

political systems in ECE, Europe and Asia.<sup>11</sup> It had sub-sections responsible for future reparations (a Finance Economic Committee) and a political committee to deal with Soviet borders. But the most important goal was to establish a position of international dominance capable of deciding the future politics and economics in the Baltics and Black Sea. The political and strategic situation in 1942-43 helped to enforce the Soviet concept of the ECE. The focus remained achieving British and US acceptance of the Polish-Soviet border of 1941, or at least their acquiescence as Stalin demanded recognition of the Soviet Union as a superpower with deciding voice.

The British and Americans abandoned the idea of a federation of states in the ECE during the Moscow conference in October 1943.<sup>12</sup> Molotov and Stalin always saw this concept as another *cordon sanitaire* to isolate Soviet Union from the rest of Europe. The Soviet argument that governments-in-exile were too detached from the situation on the ground and could not therefore decide about the political future of people behind the war lines, proved persuasive. Poland was central to Soviet plans since a Poland dependent on Moscow opened the shortest route to Germany and Europe. In addition, the loss of sovereignty by the biggest country in the ECE would help to subordinate the rest of the ECE countries. Moreover, Moscow was fully aware how difficult it would have been to negotiate territorial changes after the war if Poland was a sovereign country. The Polish government in exile and Polish army under General Wladyslaw Anders serving under British command were obstacles preventing the creation a territorially trimmed Poland dependent on the Soviet Union for its security. The discovery of the Katyn massacre of Polish officers in early 1943 allowed Stalin to sever his relationship with the Polish government-in-exile.<sup>13</sup> The alternative communist government became a growing reality, particularly after the Red Army victory at Stalingrad, as Stalin saw the communist organisation of Polish Patriots and Polish People's Army serving under the Red Army as the best solution. Katyn gave Stalin virtually a free hand to make his own political arrangements on the ground. However, he had prepared for this opportunity in several ways. After the evacuation of the Anders-led forces from the Soviet Union, he recruited a second army with Soviet officers of Polish origins. He sponsored the setting up of the communist underground in competition with the Home Army (AK). Finally, he organised the nucleus of an alternative Polish government from the many communist functionaries

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<sup>11</sup> With Molotov, A. Wyszynski, W. Diekanazov, S. Lozowski, A. Sobolev, J. Suric, K. Umanski, J. Warga; Diekanazov and Suric were responsible for the ECE section. See: Protocol 36 in: *Zamiatsya*, 116-117.

<sup>12</sup> Churchill and Roosevelt came up with the concept of federation of states in 1941. See: Kaminski K., "Rzad RP Stanisława Mikołajczyka wobec konferencji ministrów spraw zagranicznych Wielkiej Brytanii, ZSRR i Stanów Zjednoczonych w Moskwie". *Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne* (1997), vol. 2, 70-74.

<sup>13</sup> Cienciała A., Lebedeva N.S., Materski W., (eds), *Katyn: A crime without punishment*, (New Haven, 2007), also *The Crime of Katyn. Facts and Documents*, (London 1965).

and leftist intellectuals resident in the Soviet Union who had been politically schooled by his own apparatus.<sup>14</sup>

Soviet position regarding the rest of the ECE was defined during the victorious Red Army offensive. Eden advocated the setting up of the European Advisory Commission (EAC) during his visit to Moscow in October 1943, but with no second front in Europe it was in the interest of the Soviet Union to delay talks as much as possible. One example was the Polish question: – during the Moscow conference Molotov informed the British and Americans about the Polish military division<sup>15</sup> fighting with the Red Army and accused Home Army and government in exile of inactivity. Molotov and Stalin were open to re-establishing Polish-Soviet relations, but only on Moscow's terms.

Another important step in the Soviet position towards the ECE was its political pact with Czechoslovakia in December 1943 on security and future political and economic cooperation between both countries<sup>16</sup>. This could be seen as a new (and developing) element in unilateral Soviet policy in post-war Europe. This type of political-military pact threatened the weaker partner's sovereignty and marked a significant decline in Czechoslovak standing. The document contained a so called 'Polish clause', with the possibility for a third country to join. Bilateral agreements were to form a base for the definition of legal and international relations between the Soviet Union and the ECE countries after the Second World War. This further facilitated Soviet domination, as the system of bilateral agreements was applied only to the eastern part of Europe.

Stalin's delay tactics became increasingly obvious at the Teheran conference (28 November-1 December 1943). He accepted Churchill's initiative for the Allies to grant *de facto* recognition for all territorial gains made by the Soviet Union in 1939-40. Stalin also supported the British move to officially recognise Josip Broz Tito's Partisans as part of the allied forces. This greatly helped to strengthen Tito's position internally and internationally. From the beginning of 1944 Stalin held a more defined stance towards the ECE. The plan put forward by Ivan Maisky (Soviet Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs) in his note from 11 January 1944 was more detailed - repeating earlier claims for the Curzon line and Petsamo, while adding the Sakhalin, Kuril Islands, and military bases in Romania and Finland.<sup>17</sup> There was more detail

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<sup>14</sup> See: Zawodny J.K., *Death in the forest. The story of the Katyn Forest massacre*, (Notre Dame, 1962).

<sup>15</sup> With Polish General Zygmund Berling. See: *Documents on Polish –Soviet relations 1939-45*, vol.2,(London 1965), 65-70 or Berling Z., *Wspomnienia. Z lagrow do Andersa*, (Warsaw 1990).

<sup>16</sup> Kaminski M.K., "Polityka Benesa a problem polski-sowieckich stosunkow politycznych", *Przegląd Historyczny* (1997) no.2, 282-83.

<sup>17</sup> Woroszyłow Commission established on 4 September 1943. See: "Zaniatsya podgotovkoy buduschego mira", *Istochnik. Dokumenty russkoy istorii* 1995, no.4, also Pechatnov V.O., "The Big Three after World War II: New documents on Soviet thinking about post war relations with the United States and Great Britain". Working Paper no 13, *Cold war International History Project*, (Washington D.C. 1995).

regarding Czechoslovakia and Poland. Maisky saw Czechoslovakia as a stronger partner for the Soviet Union<sup>18</sup> with its future regime forming a base for Soviet influence in the ECE. The Maisky plan thus dealt not only with borders, but also the political systems within European countries.

In the first half of 1944, Moscow's plans became more expansive as the Red Army approached the pre-1941 Soviet borders. It became increasingly apparent that recognition of the Soviet Union's territorial gains would not fulfil Soviet imperial aspirations. The time was ripe for defining the 'external imperium', a system of dependent countries in the territories between the Soviet Union and Germany, from Scandinavia to Turkey.

From May 1944 Soviet policy towards Poland moved to the phase of implementation with the establishment of the National Unity Committee (KRN)<sup>19</sup> and the creation of the 'Polish marionette government that could broaden its political base'<sup>20</sup>. It was the beginning of the Soviet policy of *fait accompli* in Poland and in the rest of the ECE, with a legal framework of bilateral agreements between the Soviet Union and the ECE countries that needed to be subsequently accepted by Britain and the US. In June 1944 the Soviet offensive created new strategic and political situation in the centre of the eastern front by crossing the river Bug line and entering what Soviet Union considered as Polish territory. The PKWN established on 22 July 1944 was an instrument to apply Soviet foreign policy in Poland in strategic terms, in addition to legitimising the Red Army's stationing on Polish territory and affirming the Polish-Soviet border. From the legal point of view all decrees signed by PKWN were not valid because the PKWN was not recognised internationally. It had been set up by the Soviet Union while, Britain and the United States continued to recognise the Polish government-in-exile in London as the sole official government. Therefore the establishment and recognition of the PKWN by the Soviet Union *de facto* but not *de jure* – this would only come in January 1945 - created the impression of two political centres in Poland. The Polish-Soviet agreement was only signed in 1945 and was similar to the one with Czechoslovakia. Both agreements declared in Article 1 that all aspects of war, including administration, in Polish and Czechoslovak territories were in the hands of the Red Army High Commander – Stalin.<sup>21</sup> Article 7 recognised that all Polish citizens were now under jurisdiction of the Soviet Union<sup>22</sup>, thus enabling the liquidation of all organs of the Polish underground state and Home Army (AK) under the pretext of securing the Red Army's victorious march to Berlin. This decision had

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<sup>18</sup> Gottwald was still in Moscow. See: Mikołajczyk S., *The pattern of Soviet domination*, (London 1948), also Woodward L., *British foreign policy in the Second World War*, (London, 1971), 15.

<sup>19</sup> With Marian Spychalski and Edward Osobka Morawski; See: Kersten K., *The establishment of Communist rule in Poland*, (Berkeley 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Kirkor S., "Rozmowy polsko-sowieckie w 1944". *Żeszyty Historyczne* (1972), no22, 41-56; also Kirkor S., "Rozmowy delegacji PKWN i KRN z przedstawicielami rządu RP na emigracji". *Ż Pola Walki* (1984) no4.

<sup>21</sup> *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-radzieckich*, vol.8, (Warsaw, 1971), 158.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 159.



immense strategic importance since the destruction of the legal representation of the Polish government in exile meant that it had no real political influence in the country leaving the PKWN as the only administration in place. This establishment of 'facts on the ground' strengthened the Soviet position when negotiating with Churchill and Roosevelt to resolve Polish question. PKWN involvement allowed the Polish communists to take real control with the help of the Red Army. In the long term it allowed the NKVD to be withdrawn from Poland to engage in other territories in ECE.

In August 1944 Stalin started one of the biggest military operations in the Second World War, – the Jassy-Kishyniov offensive.<sup>23</sup> This led to a new strategic and political *status quo* in Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Albania and Austria. Romania, the second ECE country invaded by the Red Army, demonstrated that Stalin's plans and methods were similar for all the ECE with the replacement of the legal government with a Soviet-backed one, although technically Stalin could not occupy countries that were part of the anti-Hitler coalition. Romania lost some of its territories to the Soviet Union in 1940, but unlike Poland retained its independence. For the Soviet Union it was a 'window to the Balkans' and therefore, like Poland, it demanded special attention and entitlements in the post war settlement. By September 1944, the Red Army had full control of Romanian territory and acted as its representative on the Allied Control Commission.<sup>24</sup>

Bulgaria was the only satellite country not at war with the Soviet Union and its government was conducting talks about withdrawal from the war.<sup>25</sup> Moscow decided to pursue a different model to enable the Soviet Union to set up its own framework for bilateral relations. The Soviet version of the peace treaty was proposed on behalf of the Allied Control Commission by the Soviet Military Command.<sup>26</sup> Bulgarian treaty terms differed from the Romanian terms but in reality all international relations were under the control of the Soviet Union. Bulgaria preserved its territorial integrity but was politically and economically under Soviet control and had to pay unspecified war reparations, since only the Soviet Military Command represented Allied Commission in Bulgaria. The Red Army's entrance into Bulgaria without prior consultations with the Allies opened the road to the Balkans and Greece and indeed confirmed that the Soviet Union was determined to pursue its own political plan in the ECE based on a *fait accompli*. Compared to Romania, Soviet dominance in Bulgaria was not easily

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<sup>23</sup> Under command of General Rodion Malinowski and Fiodor Tolbuchin

<sup>24</sup> Stalin's plans were at first disturbed by Satanesco military coup, but soon the Red Army occupied Bucharest and the government was replaced by the communist group from USSR – Anna Pauker, Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu. Molotow demanded 'minimum conditions' in Romania and the treaty was signed 12 September 1944. See: Kastory A., *Pokoj z Rumunia, Bulgaria i Wegrami w polityce wielkich mocarstw (1944-47)*, (Rzeszow 1981), also see *FRUS* 1944, vol4, 240.

<sup>25</sup> In Cairo and Istambul. See: Jackowicz J., *Traktat pokojowy z Bulgaria*, (Wroclaw, 1981).

<sup>26</sup> It was signed on 28 October 1944. *Published documents in Sovietsko-bulgarskie otnoshenia 1944-48. Dokumenty i materialy*, (Moscow, 1969).

established. Moscow had to negotiate favourable conditions for the Soviet presence in the country in the face of British opposition and reluctant US acquiescence.<sup>27</sup>

In September 1944, Tito asked the Soviet Union for military help in Serbia<sup>28</sup>. The Soviet-Yugoslav political agreement signed on 28 September differed significantly from the Polish and Czechoslovak treaties. For the first time, Stalin agreed to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Yugoslav territory. Unusually, this agreement was based on the strong position enjoyed by Tito's Partisans. Each of these three agreements had a different purpose. The presence of the Red Army in Poland and Czechoslovakia was to strengthen the communist presence in each country and enable them to govern. Additionally, in Poland it was aimed at destroying the strongest underground state in Central Europe with its internationally recognised government and genuine public support. The agreement with Yugoslavia concerned only military operations on its territory and was to help with military operations in Hungary. The Red Army had no decisive role in the political development in Yugoslavia. In Poland and Czechoslovakia the Soviet Union's military presence was a decisive factor in their sovietisation.

The Red Army crossed the Hungarian border at the end of September 1944 and Communist Committees were set up with communists from Moscow. The Hungarian National Liberation Front accepted the necessity of good relations with the Soviet Union. The only difference in opinion with Britain and the US lay in the functioning of the Allied Control Commission. Hungary followed Bulgarian model of Soviet control, but only until the end of the war. This excluded any non-Soviet role in deciding the future of Bulgaria or Hungary.

Between July 1944 and January 1945 the Soviet Union achieved most of its political goals in the ECE. Bilateral agreements laid the legal foundations for Soviet control of political and socio-economic life. Stalin did not encounter substantial resistance from Britain or the US in the execution of his plan to dominate the ECE and all Soviet territorial demands were accepted. By February 1945 the Soviet policy of domination was relatively easy to implement. Although the war was still in progress the fate of Germany and its allies was effectively decided. In addition, Roosevelt wanted to commit Stalin to enter the war with Japan and he therefore compromised at the Yalta conference in February 1945 to accommodate him.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, political pacts with Poland and Yugoslavia<sup>30</sup> set up legal and international foundations for political and military dependence.

In Czechoslovakia the agreement from December 1943 only guaranteed a Soviet presence during the war, but by January 1945 it proved possible to influence the government of Edvard Benes to accept the Soviet proposal for the reorganisation

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<sup>27</sup> Koseski A., "Bulgaria w polityce wielkich mocarstw 1944-47" in Balcerak W., (ed), *Polska – Bulgaria przez wieki XVII-XX*, (Warsaw, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> Commissar Korneyev stressed that cooperation with Tito would help military operations and strengthen political position of communist Partisans

<sup>29</sup> *FRUS*, Malta and Yalta 1945, 667-71.

<sup>30</sup> April 1945. See: Djilas M, *Wartime*, (New York-London 1977); text in *Wnieszynaya politika Sovietskovo Sojusa*, vol3 (Moscow, 1952), 176-177.

of the government-in-exile to include Czech communists, making the Red Army presence in Czechoslovakia all but inevitable. Allied Forces were prevented from crossing the Czeske Budejovice-Laba and Veltava line thus excluding an Allied presence in Czechoslovakia.<sup>31</sup> The liberation of Prague along with nearly all Czech territory by the Red Army only served to strengthen the position of the Czech communists. The Czech president and government in Kosice were isolated and unable to maintain contact with London or the rest of Moravia and Bohemia. The Soviet Union tried to prevent setting up of diplomatic corps in Prague alluding to unstable military situation. The principle of mutual recognition was not applied to the British and American diplomats despite Soviet diplomats receiving such consideration in France and Belgium during the on-going military campaign in the West. Eventually Churchill successfully rebuffed Stalin but only after a Soviet presence in Czechoslovakia was established.<sup>32</sup>

The process of rebuilding after the Second World War began with the Potsdam conference of July-August 1945. Stalin achieved most of his goals in relation to Germany and the ECE as Britain and US did not take away any of the 'spoils of the war' or seek to diminish Soviet dominance. But Stalin was unable to ignore the British or Americans entirely; he still had to consider the internal political situation in the ECE countries and the weak position of communist parties there (with the exception of Yugoslavia). The Polish case was no longer as important, as the Polish communist government was recognised by Britain and the US. In 1945-46, Germany appeared to be the most important problem: Britain and the US did not show any great interest in the ECE where both had largely come to terms with the Soviet domination. The only opportunity left was the democratic elections in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania. However, by then the Soviet Union had effectively transformed its policy of economic exploitation into a long-term policy of planned economic dependency<sup>33</sup>. Joint venture enterprises and economic treaties thus created the legal framework for Soviet economic domination of the ECE.

Between 1946 and February 1948 there was steady unification of 'the Eastern bloc' and building of a Soviet 'external imperium' with the consolidation of a Soviet political, ideological and military presence and steady transfer of power to communist officials. Elections held during this period removed coalition governments and created a legal framework for a departure from Yalta and any formal Allied influence in the form of bilateral peace treaties. The meeting of nine European Communist parties in southwest Poland at Szklarska Poreba on 22-27 September 1947 formalised the concept of a coordination centre in the form of unified communist block policy.<sup>34</sup> The only obstacle was the political situation in Czechoslovakia but it was promptly

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<sup>31</sup> For more see: Kaminski M.K., *Polska i Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych i Wielkiej Brytanii 1945-48*, (Warsaw, 1981).

<sup>32</sup> *FRUS* 1945, vol 4, 457-460.

<sup>33</sup> See: Kersten K., *The establishment of Communist rule in Poland*, (Berkeley 1991). Also Bartoszewicz H., *Polityka Związku Sowieckiego wobec państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1944-48*, (Warsaw, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> See: Turlejska M., *Zapis pierwszej dekady 1945-54*, (Warsaw, 1972).

## *A Master Plan?*

resolved when Benes accepted creation of new Czechoslovak government with Klement Gottwald at its helm.

## *Conclusions*

An analysis of Soviet foreign policy regarding East Central Europe allows us to define long and short-term goals. The guiding principle throughout was the establishment of a Soviet sphere of dominance. The countries of East Central Europe had to be isolated from any connections with the West and governed by communist parties dependent on Moscow. The development of this policy and preparation ahead of implementation was visible from the end of 1940. Imposition of Soviet policy occurred in tandem with the Red Army's march through the ECE territories, following a policy of *fait accompli*. To aid this process, the Soviet Union sought to establish itself in a privileged political position in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. It created a legal framework for control by the Soviet occupying forces, thus giving Moscow control of government-creation and the establishment of legislative bodies. This process was repeated in Allied countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland by bilateral agreements, signed on 8 May and 27 July 1944 respectively. According to these agreements, all power during the war was in the hands of Soviet High Commander, Stalin.

The Red Army's control of the ECE enabled the fulfilment of short-term goals during the war in addition to establishing the foundations for long term Soviet domination. Stalin used fear of German aggression in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Yugoslavia to convince them to enter into political and military bilateral agreements. These agreements became the foundation for the ECE relationship based on economic treaties that subordinated country's economy to Soviet economic needs. The Soviet leadership developed a form of indirect rule in the ECE by controlling each country's internal policy through communist parties in the provisional governments. The Red Army and NKVD played an important role in the process, together with Soviet advisers in the army, security apparatus and key ministries. From 1944, the Soviet Union implemented a policy of *fait accompli* with some British and American acquiescence. Yalta fulfilled Stalin's expectations as it confirmed Soviet western borders with Poland and strengthened the provisional government (PKWN). According to Soviet intentions, it also dealt with the reorganisation of Polish and Yugoslav provisional governments. The Paris Peace Conference between 29 July and 15 October 1945 was a perfect example of the degree of dependency in the ECE countries, with Polish, Yugoslav and even Czechoslovak delegations sheepishly following Soviet directions. The Marshall Plan and Truman doctrine forced Stalin to correct his policy towards the ECE, but not to change it entirely, since Soviet-Western cooperation was already in decline by 1946. This marked a further acceleration of the 'sovietisation' of the ECE.

After the war there were ever diminishing opportunities to establish democratic governments in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. Much depended on Churchill and Roosevelt's stance, but Soviet political and economic domination

met little resistance from either leader. In any case, diplomatic protests were futile in the face of Soviet expansion. Although Churchill showed more determination during Soviet negotiations with Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, Soviet diplomacy still managed to force its point of view. From 1946 the US and Britain began to lose interest in the ECE thus allowing Stalin to accelerate process of subordination of the ECE. Elections in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria were far from democratic. Falsified results allowed communist parties to dominate parliaments and form governments enabling the full transfer of power to the respective communist parties. At the same time the Soviet Union transformed its policy of economic exploitation into a long-term policy of economic dependency with economic treaties and joint venture enterprises, thus beginning the consolidation of the Eastern Bloc.

During the September 1947 conference in Szklarska Poreba a doctrine of division between the communist and western world and a unified policy for the eastern bloc was announced. Poland, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, saw the elimination from political life of all non-communist political parties by terror or administrative methods. The coup in Prague in February 1948 marked the last phase in process of Soviet control of the ECE. In March 1948, political agreements with Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary marked the end of the process creating legal foundations for Soviet political and military control. Thus the long-term goals of Soviet domination of the ECE were accomplished between 1944 and 1948. The pattern of establishing Soviet control was of multi-dimensional subordination. It was similar in all countries and based on a bilateral relationship – political, economic and military. Indirect control within each ECE country was based on Soviet diplomats and advisers supervising local communist parties. The Red Army and NKVD took an active part in the implementation of Stalin's plans and controlled it. The only difference lay in the speed and degree of dependency in each of the ECE countries. The character and timing of Soviet rule depended on the degree of strategic political and economic importance for the Soviet Union.

# **Sovietisation and Russification in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (1944-1991) and their consequences for today's European geopolitics**

*Alexandra Gerota*

This article examines the Sovietisation and Russification in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic from 1944 until 1991 and its consequences for today's European geopolitics. The Kremlin still considers Moldova to be in its exclusive zone of influence while the region's slow progression towards democracy and its fascination for the authoritarian post-Soviet model including repression against political opponents makes the EU reticent. Yet the Republic of Moldova represents an exception in this eastern landscape through its self-stated European orientation. In the long term, Moldova's integration into the EU appears likely, and will mainly depend on its own political will. The republic's history has been divided between Romania and Russia, but its future and its viability will mainly depend on the Russia-EU relations. This article represents a synthetic case study of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic and the changes that defined its time within the USSR. These changes were driven by Marxist-Leninist ideology, and thus specific political, economical, demographic strategies were employed in order to modify the structure of this territory. This article also explores some of the consequences of these strategies that should be taken into account in modern day geopolitics.

## *An Overview*

After 1944, repressive policies toward ethnic Moldovans (Romanian speaking population) was not only the result of the Russian style imperialism restored by Stalin, but also the consequence of Marxist-Leninist ideology with regard to nations in general. These are among the historical factors that led to the Transnistrian conflict that continues today at the gates of Europe. Thus, in order to highlight some of the main drivers of Soviet geopolitics after the October Revolution it is necessary first to examine the Marxist-Leninist nationalities doctrine. This is one of the fundamental principles of communist totalitarianism and can help to explain the situation created at the eastern borders of the EU and the current challenges troubling the region.

When Nicolae Ceausescu became first-secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in 1964, Romanian communists started to follow a nationalist trend, pleading autonomy within the Soviet block, and thus attempted to bolster the rights of Moldovans living in the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, without affecting their own good relations with the Soviet Union.

Within this trend, some of the Romanian historians, living in their home country or in exile<sup>1</sup>, wanted to draw the attention of the West to the Romanian speaking population on the left bank of the Prut river, i.e. Moldova; however, they could not afford to take the risk of openly criticising either the Cold War balance of power, nor the communist doctrinal orthodoxy, as this would have made of them possible targets for repression.

Thus, they tried to convey subtle messages, by re-editing, for example, the works of Marx on Bessarabia's<sup>2</sup> annexation by the Russian Empire, something the author judged as an injustice.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of de-Stalinization, they chose to take Marx and Lenin at their word regarding self-determination and pretended to find in them their main ally; it was said that Stalinism rehabilitated the imperialist and colonial ideology of the tsars and distorted Lenin's views. Lenin, for them, was the fiercest enemy of imperialism (including Russian imperialism), and actually intended to found a democratic Soviet federation that national republics would have been free to leave (self-determination). They considered that Stalin's condemnation in 1956 should have included his nationalities policy and be followed by a return to Leninist teachings on nationalities.

They further argued that Lenin never pushed for Russification, on the contrary, he defended since 1913 self-determination and equal rights for all the nations composing the Russian Empire, including the right to independence, and, along with Marx, condemned Russian Tsarist imperialism, for whose revival Stalin should have been held responsible, as he was the one who encouraged Russian patriotism during the Second World War in order to foster resistance against the Nazi invader. Furthermore, Stalin should also be blamed for encouraging Russian nationalism and condemning non-Russian nationalism, under the cover of proletarian internationalism. This approach is close to the revisionist intellectual trend launched in the early seventies in France and arguing that it was possible to get back to the communist ideals of the early days from which Stalin had diverted, also by giving up the economic dimension of Marxist theories.

For Marx, group loyalty and identity were exclusively determined by economic factors, and not by blood ties, a notion that had no place in classical Marxism as a basis for drawing political borders. Despite this theory, neither Marx nor Lenin felt restrained from manipulating national aspirations in order to further *the world*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One example is the work of George Ciorănescu, *Basarabia, pământ românesc disputat între est și vest*, (București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2001), first published in the late Seventies

<sup>2</sup> Bessarabia was the name bestowed by the Russians on the area between the Prut and Nistru (Dniestr) Rivers by the Russians at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The territory corresponds to the current Moldova Republic or the eastern part of the historical region of Moldova, whose western part is currently in Romania, delimited by the Carpathian Mountains in the West and the Prut river in the east

<sup>3</sup> In George Ciorănescu *Basarabia, pământ românesc disputat între est și vest*, (București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2001), 30

<sup>4</sup> Italics added by author for emphasis.

revolutionary movement; thus Lenin developed a strategy to manipulate nationalism into the service of Marxism.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore necessary to analyse the relationship between Marx, Lenin and Stalin's writings on this question and their strategic decisions. To ascertain the continuity between them would help prove that the nationalities policies implemented under Stalin, Soviet expansion after the Second World War and during Cold War, and "Stalinism" itself, were not a specific, isolated period or doctrine of deviation from communism, but a logical outcome of Marxism-Leninism. The case of Moldova demonstrates that self-determination was supposed to remain a theory to enhance the democratic image of Marxism and was never put into practice by those dedicated to this doctrine – Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and their successors.

### *Marxism-Leninism and the National Question*

As a general rule, in order to correctly understand communism, one must never confuse strategic means with ideological purposes and pay attention to the ambiguous finality they declare, since an apparent contradiction between them is often the case; but since ambiguous texts and public stances (meant to have political effects) may lead to mistaking one for another, the strategy of political alliances is not to be considered relevant for the analysis of the political project of the communist parties everywhere.

Even if Lenin was the most doctrinaire of all prominent Russian Marxists, he was also the most flexible in his choice of means of implementing his doctrine. He intended to manipulate the national movements emerging in various parts of the Russian Empire as a weapon for fighting the established order and for that reason he refused to adopt the negative attitudes of the leftists Bolsheviks, and he came much closer to the position of the "rightists", by making possible a direct appeal to the nationalist sentiments among Russian minorities for the purpose of winning their support against autocracy. So he asserted that, when it was useful, socialists should support nationalist movements, though never forgetting that such support was conditional and temporary.<sup>6</sup> That was the main reason for including in the party program a statement concerning the right of all nations to self-determination.

In the summer of 1913, Lenin defined what he understood by the right to self-determination. However, this was a political self-determination, that is, as the right to separation and creation of an "independent government."<sup>7</sup> Carried to its logical conclusion such this slogan would inevitably lead to the break-up of Eastern Europe into a conglomeration of petty national states. How could this have been reconciled with the international character of Marxism, with it striving for the merger of states and the disappearance of national borders?

The entire Bolshevik national program was thus designed to win nationalist sympathies through generous offers of national self-determination. Lenin stressed the

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<sup>5</sup> Walker Connor *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, (Princeton New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1983) 93.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 94.



need to properly interpret this statement as in its deep signification (ideological finality) it was in no way contradictory to the general principles of Marxism: Social Democracy...has as its fundamental and principal task to assist the self-determination, *not of peoples or of nations, but of the proletariat of every nationality*. We must always and unconditionally strive toward *the closest unification of the proletariat of all nationalities*, and only in individual, exceptional cases can we advance and actively support demands for the creation of a new class state or the replacement of one state's full political unity by the weaker federal bond.<sup>8</sup>

Lenin always denied the very existence of "national culture" and labelled those who espoused such concepts victims of "bourgeois" or "clerical propaganda". He certainly never admitted the existence of such a phenomenon as "psychological national make up" and, along with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky continued to believe that national identity and the fight for national independence, in all its aspects, was essentially a phenomenon of the capitalist era and destined to vanish with the demise of capitalism itself. Like Marx and Engels, he viewed them as a transitory occurrence whose disappearance the socialists should help speed. Culture to Lenin could have only a class character. "Only the clericals and the bourgeoisie can talk of national culture, the toilers can talk only of an *international culture of the universal worker movement*."<sup>9</sup> Lenin considered that it was a fault to strive artificially to preserve those ethnic differences *which capitalism was already sweeping away*.

Like most Marxists, he desired the eventual transformation of the Russian Empire into a national state, in which the minorities would and adopt the Russian tongue, not for the Russian language in itself, but for the idea that it is the sole possible language that would melt peoples in the Russian geographical sphere of influence into one, as a vector of proletarian internationalism. By creating equal opportunities for all national groups, and by removing the main causes of national hostility, oppression and persecution, proletarian democracy would pave the road for a supra-national world system of government and an international culture of the socialist era. And only then could economic factors (meaning proletarian revolutions) have a free field to accomplish their centralizing unifying task unopposed by nationalities.

Both Leon Trotsky's and Stalin's actions contradicted this theory; the former intervened in Ukraine and Poland as commander of the Red Army while the latter signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and annexed parts of Central Europe. For both, Lenin's theory only served as a pretext and a bridge for ideological expansionism. Ultimately, their actions demonstrated that they would not wait for the proletarians to decide for international unification, and that, whenever reality contradicted Marxist "scientific" predictions, they were ready to use force to make reality adapt to their vision, while continuing nonetheless to claim that the result was spontaneous, natural and freely achieved. As Stalin noted in 1921:

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<sup>8</sup> V.I.Lenin, "Works", XVI, Moscow, 1935, in Richard Pipes *The formation of the Soviet Union: communism and nationalism (1917-1923)* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954), 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 40-43.

And inasmuch as we are concerned with colonies which are in the clutches of Great Britain, France, America and Japan, inasmuch as we are concerned with such subject countries as Arabia, Mesopotamia, Turkey, Hindustan...the slogan of the right of peoples to secession is a revolutionary slogan, and to abandon it would be playing into the hands of the Entente.<sup>10</sup>

Marxists owe their major successes more to this strategy of military and strategic intervention than to either the popular appeal or the predictive accuracy of Marxian ideology. Thus, as paradoxical as it may seem, the history of Marxism in practice indicates that nationalism has been a key force in facilitating the success of the antithetical system of internationalism.

Even Stalin granted that the approach would appear “contradictory” and “paradoxical” to those uninitiated in the ways of Marxian dialectics. In 1930 he likened Lenin’s national policy to the Marxist view concerning the withering away of the state (the state had to be firstly reinforced in order for it to eventually disappear):

It may seem strange that we, who are in favour of the *fusion of national cultures in the future into one common culture (both in form and content), with a single, common language*, are at the same time in favour of the blossoming of national cultures at the present time, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. ... It may be said that, presented in this way, the question is “self-contradictory.” But is there not the same sort of “self-contradiction” in our treatment of the question of the state? We are in favour of the withering away of the state, *yet we are at the same in favour of strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents the most powerful and mighty of all forms of state power* that have hitherto existed. The supreme development of the power of the state, with the object of preparing the way for the withering away of state power - such is the Marxist formula. Is that “self-contradictory”? Yes, it is “self-contradictory.” But this contradiction is a living thing, and it is a complete reflection of Marxian dialectics. ...The same must be said of the formula of national culture: the blossoming of national cultures (and languages) in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, with the object of preparing the way for their dying away and fusion into a single, common, socialist culture (and a single, common language) in the period of victory of socialism all over the world.

Whoever has failed to understand this peculiarity and this “self-contradictory” nature of our transitional times, whoever has failed to understand this dialectical character of historical processes, is lost to Marxism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I.V.Stalin, “Marxism, Selected writings”, in Connor, 106.

<sup>11</sup> I.V. Stalin (1930), “Marxism and National, Colonial questions” in Connor, 203.

Lenin reasoned that as the policy of equality dissipated the antagonisms and mistrust that had previously estranged nations, those human units would naturally move closer together. The process of coming together would continue until a complete blending was achieved, and a single identity had emerged.<sup>12</sup> Marxist-Leninists differentiate their approach to the national question by noting that the process of blending together is fully voluntary, devoid of any element of coercion; and that, far from being a device for absorbing people into the state's dominant group, the blending process in a Marxist state leads to the creation of a totally new identity, a new socialist person, who, in the case of the Soviet Union, came to be called "Soviet man."<sup>13</sup> Forcing peoples to live in permanent presence of two different cultural, linguistic systems can make the two identities invalid as the two cancel each other out. The resulting mindset is neither Romanian, nor Russian, not even Moldovan, but instead is a "*homo sovieticus*" one - that of individuals alienated from any feeling of national and cultural belonging.

Lenin's plan for achieving homogeneity by encouraging cultural distinctiveness is a typical example of the manipulation force of Marxist propaganda and the alienation of specific cultural patterns when put at the service of internationalist propaganda, since pretending to have one great identity that includes them all equates to having no identity at all. Asserting a fact in order to convey a message that is its exact opposite, and imposing by force this false assertion on people's conscience, willingly destroys the individuals' capacity for acknowledging reality.

#### *The Moldovan case*

After October 1917, Bessarabia became autonomous and in 1918, the National Council, elected a legislative body representing all social categories and nationalities living on the eastern Moldovan territory, this legislative body in turn voted with a majority for reunification with Romania.

When the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) was founded in 1921 it was instructed to work for the transfer from Romania to the Soviet Union of this region, populated principally by Romanians. As a result, the RCP was declared illegal by the Romanian government in 1923.

During 1924 a campaign was launched by the Comintern, which stated at its Fifth Congress held in the spring of that year, "that Bessarabia has a right to self-determination."<sup>14</sup> A resolution pledged the party to support secession for the workers and peasants of Bessarabia "who lived in liberty in the first period of the Russian Revolution and at present groan under the boot of the Romanian dictatorship [and who are] striving for national revolution and union with the USSR." This is a good

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<sup>12</sup> Connor, 201.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> George Ciorănescu, *Basarabia, pământ românesc disputat între est și vest*, (București, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2001), 189.

example of how communist propaganda could create enemies and impose invented dialectics, following ideological purposes or the political goals of the moment.

On what basis could national self-determination be applied to the population of Bessarabia, whose chief demographic component was Romanian? This paradoxical use of the notion of national self-determination to bring about the division of a nation was made possible by simply asserting that the Romanian speaking population who lived in the area of Bessarabia was in fact not Romanian at all. Since for Marxists national identity was merely a “bourgeois construction”, it is obvious that they had no qualms about deconstructing and reconstructing it according to “the interest of the international proletariat.”<sup>15</sup> The solution came in the course of October 1924, when Moscow announced the creation of a Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) in an area immediately adjacent to Romania (on former Ukrainian territory on the left bank of the Dniester). Given the Soviet practice of assigning ethnic designations to such political units, this action in effect constituted official recognition of the existence of a Moldavian nation. The RCP acknowledged its recognition of such a nation at its next and fourth congress; it was therefore “obligated to support by all means the struggle of the masses of workers of Bessarabia for unification with the MASSR.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, an artificial conflict situation was created and a dialectical narrative invented thereby enabling the Red Army to claim the role of “liberator from Romanian oppression” in 1940, when invading Moldova following the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Given Stalin’s perception of the strategic value of ostensibly independent, ethnically designated (but not founded on an ethnic majority) political units along the Soviet Union’s external borders, MASSR was evidently created to act as an emotional magnet for the inhabitants of the Bessarabia region, as well as a base from which to launch propaganda and other forms of activity designed to bring about Bessarabia’s return.

When the Soviets, assured of German acquiescence by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, first retook the area by ultimatum in 1940, they rejected the Romanian government’s plea that the political allegiance of the people be determined by plebiscite. And when Soviet forces reoccupied the area in 1944, the will for self-determination was again not heard. The Soviets had achieved their goal by military conquest rather than through “Moldavian nationalism.”<sup>17</sup>

In the case of Moldova, the misleading character of the theory of self-determination as understood by Marxist-Leninist politicians becomes obvious as a cover for an ideological imperialism at the service of the “world proletarian revolution”. Nationalist strategic propaganda did not match with reality in the case of Moldova. In order to achieve “international unity of the proletariat” they followed, starting with 1919 and each and every time the international situation allowed it, the same strategy: military invasion or military support.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 178.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 179.

*Experimenting creation of new national and political identities*

The creation of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, an irregular strip of land on former Ukrainian territory on the Eastern bank of the Dniestr river, was driven by expansionist tactics, in the framework of the global striving of the Comintern.

Even if it had reduced dimensions and only a vague Moldovan character, the newly invented Moldovan Soviet autonomous Republic (which was to become the framework for the future Transnistria) represented a political and propaganda tool in order to keep open the issue of Bessarabia until its eventual annexation, which had become an obsession of Moscow's during the inter-war period. In addition, the new state also served to keep a constant pressure on the Romanian state. In the event of major international changes, the MASSR could also have been used as a gateway to the Balkans.

The historical heritage of the Transnistria region is different from Bessarabia's, since the former has seen the arrival of Russian colonists in 1792, sooner than the latter has (1812); moreover, Slavic languages speakers (Ukrainian or Russian) outnumber Romanian speakers.

Between 1924 and 1940, Russification policies were tested on Moldovan population on the left bank of the Dniester. Entirely composed of Russians, the Transnistria administration employed repression methods, such as forcing through torture many Moldovan professors and students to declare being members of a fictional organization called the "Moldovan Fascist Youngmen Organization" which supposedly carried-out counter-revolutionary activities.

One of the main occupations of the MASSR Soviet intellectual elite was the creation of a Moldovan language different from Romanian, arguing that Romanian literature was suffering from French influence, making hard to understand, especially for peasants. In line with this thinking, a "Moldovan grammar" book was published in 1930 in Tiraspol, resulting in the creation of an artificial language, making up words that nobody ever used, on the basis of Russian morphologic patterns.

Transnistria has thus played a crucial role in the later forming of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic. In exchange for the Transnistrian territory, three counties of southern Bessarabia, along the Black Sea Coast (the so-called Boudjak region), went to Ukraine in 1944, as well as the northern Bucovina region. A similar measure had been taken in Central Asia, where the new frontiers of local republics were not made according to ethnic boundaries, triggering the discontent of the populations concerned.

Territorial reorganization made by Stalin in 1944-45, cutting Eastern Moldova from Black Sea access and at the same time, attaching Transnistria to it, has proven to be a destructive strategy for the coherence and viability of the current Moldovan state. This drawing of boundaries, as well as the loss of Bessarabia by Romania, had been acknowledged with the signature of the Paris Treaty (10<sup>th</sup> of February 1947). Moreover, the Helsinki Accords (1975) stipulated that the boundaries status could not be violated either by military force or military dissuasion. In this geopolitical scheme,

eastern Moldova was a border country, the gateway to the Balkans, therefore a highly strategic region during Cold War.

In actual fact, the new division and organisation of territory and boundaries was a measure designed to increase the pace of russification in Eastern Moldova. By destroying the historical unity of the eastern Moldovan territory, Moscow wanted to put the local population under pressure, in order to denationalize it more rapidly, make a separation from the Soviet Union more difficult, secure Soviet access to the Danube by giving it to a trustworthy socialist republic (Ukraine), and transform the Moldovan republic in a new geographical entity deprived of access to the Black Sea coast. Soviet geopolitics and anti-national Marxist-Leninist ideology are among the main causes for the frozen conflict and the democratic and economic backwardness that linger today at the eastern border of the EU. Destroying ethnic frontiers in order to destroy national and cultural identity was a method to prevent the existence of a cultural space confined to its own territory; this led to a forced miscegenation and a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society artificially created and imposed on native inhabitants.

*De-nationalization methods after 1944*

The language issue has been crucial for the construction of a new national identity as well as for the enforcement of communist totalitarianism.

The “new Moldovan identity”, on the right bank of the Dniester, has been imposed on the basis of the principle of a language different from Romanian, based on the Transnistrian Moldovan dialect and neglecting literary standards of the Romanian language. The official Soviet position is that the people of Bessarabia are not Romanians but Moldovans, who have their own Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union. Romanian identity was presented as dangerous, always associated with fascism, and, later in the 1980s, with poverty.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, a campaign was launched in favour of the Russian language, “the language of the most culturally and technically developed people of the world.”<sup>19</sup> Cyrillic alphabet was introduced to replace the Latin one, with the goal to cut off Moldovans from their Latin identity. However, Soviet propaganda stated that the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet did not suppose subordination to Russian culture, but it represented “the most acceptable and rational form of development for the national culture, a sign of friendship towards the Russian people and a proof of international unity of the *Soviet people*.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Russification and Sovietization were two faces of the same coin. Since 1944, Soviet efforts concentrated on the creation of a new Moldavian nation distinct

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<sup>18</sup> Octavian Țicu, “Moldovenismul sovietic și politicile identitare ale URSS în RASSM și RSSM (1924-1991)” (333-355), In Sergiu Musteață, Igor Cașu, (Eds.), *Fără termen de prescripție. Aspecte ale investigației crimelor comunismului în Europa* (Chișinău, Cartier, 2011), 348.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 340.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 341. Italics added by author for emphasis.

from the Romanian one, by imposing Russian language and trying to assimilate the local population. These were the same methods employed under the tsars, but added integration into Soviet structures, which amplified the first two. Let us analyze below some of the methods employed and the results obtained.

*State and economic structures*

The government and the communist party of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) did not defend the interests of the Moldovan population, but rather its complete Russification. In spite of being a federal state, the Soviet Union was highly centralized, and the governments of the republics were merely instruments in the hands of the central government, and deprived of the most important powers of government.

In Soviet Moldova there were two kinds of ministries: “union” departments, whose ministers were the Soviet Union ones and exercised their mandate through a deputy resident in the capital, Chişinău and “republican” departments, whose ministers were named by the Moldovan supreme Soviet. The latter were of less importance and Moscow had control of Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Justice, Trade, Agriculture and Industry.

In the MSSR, Moldovans obtained a number of governmental positions but the much coveted civil servant positions were given to Russians, who were given priority in such areas. Soviet leaders argued that there was a lack of skilled employees among the Moldovan population in order to explain the Russification of the republican administration. In reality, Moldovans were not given the opportunity to integrate into the civil service, and if they did, it was only for inferior positions.

The Soviet state was in fact, the state of a unique, unitary, disciplined, and centralizing Party, reigning over all administrative divisions. In the Soviet republics, local Communist Parties were subordinated to the Soviet Union Communist Party, an even more powerful Russification tool than the republican governments. Communist Party and republic administration leadership were entrusted almost exclusively to Ukrainians or Transnistrian natives, who were less likely to act in favour of Romania, for example Leonid Brezhnev was the first secretary of the Moldovan Communist Party from 1950 to 1952. The key position of chief of the Moldovan section of the KGB was never occupied by a Moldovan (like in Romania during the hard years, 1948-1964), always by Russians or Ukrainians who were tough, trustworthy, career policemen, who organized mass arrests and deportations of the Moldovan bourgeois, intellectuals and peasants from Bessarabia.<sup>21</sup>

The new employees, coming from the USSR, settled mainly in the urban areas. This led to a more rapid Russification of cities and towns than in the countryside. It is well known that cities have always been the main centres of de-nationalization; urban Russification is also notable in the Central Asian republics, where urban centres are growing following industrialization with Russians as the main component of their

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<sup>21</sup> Ciorănescu, 209.

population. In Soviet Moldova however, industrialization facilitated the penetration of Russian colonists into the countryside. The MSSR was designated an agricultural region and industries were exclusively specialized in processing farming products such as canned fruit, vegetables and meat which were exported to the whole of the USSR.

*Ideological repression according to class principles*

During the first occupation of Bessarabia (28th of June 1940 - 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1941), the Soviets started the deportation of the local bourgeoisie, as well as of those who had been involved in the Romanian political life at national level. The number of Romanian citizens transferred from Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina to the USSR during this period is estimated at 25,000.<sup>22</sup>

The second deportation wave started as soon as 1944, when the Soviet army again took control of the Eastern Moldova territory; this time, Moldovan collaborators and nationalists were targeted in a great scope operation, under the pretext that “Nazi invaders” had left behind armed groups of “nationalists and other criminals” while withdrawing to “jeopardize the construction of socialism, to lead anti-Soviet propaganda and terrorize the population.”<sup>23</sup> On the territories freed by the Soviet army, Soviet authorities declared they were engaged in “fighting those enemies”, as well as “bourgeois nationalist ideology”, in order to eradicate “organized crime.”<sup>24</sup>

The third wave of deportations, in a less brutal manner, but equally effective, began in 1955. The social category most affected was peasantry as authorities invoked economic reasons and the necessity to cultivate Siberian lands. The deportation of the Moldovan peasants, under the euphemistic name “planned transfer”, had been organized under apparently attractive conditions and designed to attract volunteers to colonize Siberia. However it was obvious that the purpose of this disguised deportation was not purely economic, since, while Moldovan peasants were displaced to Astrakhan, Rostov and Kazakhstani regions, inhabitants of these regions “migrated” to Moldova. It can hardly be argued that Moldovans would have made a better yield working on Cossacks’ lands compared to their own land in Moldova. The purpose of the transfer of Moldovan peasants was in reality to reduce their number in their home region, in the framework of the general Soviet nationalities policy that aimed to dismantle Baltic, Caucasian and Asian ethnic groups.

The fourth deportation wave was launched in 1964 and was aimed at the Moldovan educated youth. Young high school and college graduates were scattered throughout the whole Soviet Union, Central Asia and Far East. Those who refused the jobs proposed to them lost their right to practise, and were relegated to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 216.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



unqualified workers positions.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneously, Russian physicians, lawyers, engineers etc. were transferred to Moldova by the regime.

Finally, there existed a fifth form of deportation, those of young Moldovan workers, sent to different Soviet building sites for voluntary work, such as the “Togliatti” plant on the Volga which manufactured automobiles under Fiat license.

The first stage of colonization was the rapid and massive implantation of the Soviet administration: Soviet state civil servants, communist party activists, political police and army officers and employees took the place of the majority of civil servants who immigrated to Romania or had been deported by the new masters of the province. A second wave of 250,000 people (recruited among Slavic nations of the USSR) replaced between 1946 and 1953 Moldovan “collaborationists” and “nationalists” previously deported to the Soviet mainland.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike anywhere else in the Soviet Union, the de-nationalization process in the Moldavian SSR has been twofold. On the one hand, a “Moldovan” identity, different from the Romanian one, was promoted, and, on the other, Soviet authorities strove to destroy even this constructed identity, by trying to subvert it to the Russian one. This process followed both the “affirmative action” principles, and the hard line of the destructive Soviet policy of nationalities which included terror and repression, and whose goals were de-nationalization, creating an anti-Romanian feeling, collectivization and industrialization.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, like the other territories annexed by the USSR on the eve and the aftermath of the Second World War, Bessarabia suffered from the most repressive anti-national policies in order to eliminate each and every “agent of the Romanian bourgeois nationalism” (in the words of the official propaganda), also keeping in mind the necessity for the Soviets to thoroughly secure their state’s Western border region.

Soviet “modernization” was carried on through internal colonization, a method aiming at deliberately modifying the ethnic make-up of the local population. The creation of the Soviet “Moldovan” identity was more than an anti-national policy, it characterises the essence of the entire totalitarian experiment in the Moldovan SSR. With regard to national culture, the Soviet nationalities policy implied aggressively putting forward national identity, while, simultaneously, specific national creeds and usual social and cultural practices were undermined and uprooted. Thus, the regime allowed national elites to claim ethnic specificities and the existence of a distinct ethnic group, while, at the same time, worked hard to dramatically counter their capacity to mobilize or oppose Soviet rule, and tolerated them, as long as non-Russian ethnic groups did not address political demands to Moscow on the basis of the national principle. Thus, communist official propaganda could claim that nationalities that were part of the USSR were recognized in their right to be different, while in practice everything was done to annihilate those differences. The envisaged result was not necessarily ethnic uniformity, but the suppression of the ethnic origin as a principle for national organization, replaced by a citizenship based on ideology: a Soviet citizen,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 220.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 225.

<sup>27</sup> Tîcu, 336.

even if Moldovan born was, at the same time, communist, therefore Russian, and not simply Russian or Romanian. Russians were considered to be the people of the new egalitarian society, heralds of the communist doxa; that is how Marxist-Leninist ideology produced a Soviet imperialism, superposed over tsarist, traditional Great-Russian imperialism and methods of colonization.

“Homo sovieticus” was supposed to be of modest origins, a self-same citizen, not coming out of the crowd, yet isolated within, transparent (accessible to control coming from “above”), resistant to any elite or original ideas or habits, having reduced needs (basic, « rational » survival necessities), « built to last », flexible and not affected by changes, easy to manage to the point of becoming impersonal.<sup>28</sup> By the same token, the Moldovan “homo sovieticus” was supposed to be anti-Romanian and hostile to anything coming from Romania, convinced that he is different, prone to indoctrination, having an inferiority complex towards Russians/Russian speaking population, and proud to belong to the great Soviet superpower.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of Soviet demographic policies of the past, the current ethnic composition of the Republic of Moldova is rather heterogeneous: alongside with 3 million Moldovans (Romanian speaking), Ukrainian, Russian, Bulgarian and Gagaouz minorities account for one third of the total population (about 900,000 Russians, 250,000 Ukrainians and 100,000 Gagauz).

The majority of the difficulties Moldova encounters today in its efforts to achieve democracy and European integration are, to a great extent, a result of the Soviet communist period. However, several features are crucial: the urban educated population is Russian or Russian speaking, white-collar and key positions in economy are held by ethnic Russians/Russian speaking persons. Above all, industrialization is superficial and Moldova remains a rural, agricultural country with the main industrial and power-producing utilities (80% and 40% of the GDP in 1990<sup>30</sup>) concentrated by the Soviet powers in Transnistria and Tiraspol, where the majority of the population is Russian speaking. In addition, Moldova has a less skilled labour force and has been less developed than the average former Soviet territories.

Beyond these profound disparities between an industrialized border region and a mainly agricultural country, the Moldovan economy still suffers from the consequences of the rigid planning and narrow specialisation of the Soviet era, in addition to from a strong dependency on energy suppliers in the eastern market.

*The situation since 1991: Moldova, a failed state?*

Despite the decades of Soviet policies and propaganda aimed at creating a Moldovan identity, different from the Romanian one, during the first years after independence the idea of reunification benefited from strong support within the Moldovan

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 353.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 354.

<sup>30</sup> Florent Parmentier, *La Moldavie à la croisée des chemins*, (Paris, 2003), 80.

population, even if, in the end, this did not lead to unification, but, paradoxically, to the construction of a Nation-state, namely The Moldova Republic.

Slavic languages speaking populations in Transnistria are a local majority. They demand that their region continues to be a part of the USSR or Russia. According to 2005 statistics, the Transdnstrian population is composed of 31.9% of Moldovans, 30.4% Russians and 28.8% Ukrainians, that is approximately 300,000 Romanian speaking, 250,000 Russian and 200,000 Ukrainian speaking inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of the nineties, in the face of centrifugal movements for independence in the national republics Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia encouraged and supported the autonomy of local minorities: Russians in Ukraine and Moldova, Abkhazians and Ossetians in Georgia, Armenians in Azerbaijan. This had the effect of setting populations against each other and involving the Russian army to “arbitrate” the conflicts. The Transnistrian conflict is thus not isolated within the former USSR, but joins the “international of secessionist republics”<sup>32</sup> who proclaimed their independence from the newly independent states.

In 1991 the self-proclaimed “Pridnestrovian” republic was formed, following a referendum through which it refused to abide by the Moldovan laws and pretended to endorse exclusively the Soviet ones, a stance jeopardizing the independence of the young Moldovan republic. It is therefore obvious that the reasons for the secession were mainly political and only secondarily ethnic, since the presence of Russian/Ukrainian speaking population within the Transnistrian power circles is predominant. Through the secession, Transnistria proved its attachment to the Marxist-Leninist ideology that determined its creation. Once again, its role was claimed to be resisting Romanian fascism and imperialism, defending the rights of the “proletariat” and of minorities. The clear implication remains that when the Moldovans claim their non-Russian, non-Soviet identity, Romanian fascism and imperialism is to blame. The continual appeal to this type of propaganda makes it hard to imagine that Russian-speaking population would easily accept becoming a minority within a Moldovan state and speak the state language of the majority, that is, Romanian.

Thus, problems of a more rapid or slower transition towards democracy and market economy through privatization and foreign investments are directly related to the presence of former communist, Russian speaking elites in positions of political and economic power both in Moldova and Transnistria. In common with the entire international community, Russia does not recognize Transnistria as an independent state; however, the troops of the 14<sup>th</sup> Soviet army are stationed on its territory since the secession. This is illegal given that Moldova’s constitution stipulates that is a neutral state and therefore could not have authorised such a presence. The Russian army’s involvement in the dormant Transnistrian conflict is clearly shown by the presence of many of its officers in the repressive apparatus (police, army, home affairs,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 25.

and intelligence services), the modern weapons and equipping of Transnistrian volunteers.<sup>33</sup>

The Moldovan SSR has been a place of experimentation for the Soviet “near neighbourhood” doctrine as the 14<sup>th</sup> army had the mission to intervene in the Black Sea and Balkans regions. The deceased Russian General Alexander Lebed, its chief commander declared that Transnistria was “the key to the Balkans”, and it thus became clear that Russia would not allow Moldova’s reunification with Romania and therefore would not retreat from this piece of territory as it refuses to let go of its military, political and economic influence on the region.

*Mafia and politics in a pseudo-state*

The secession of Transnistria deprives Moldova of the biggest part of its industrial resources and causes a massive loss of revenue through corruption and criminalisation of economic activity. Thus the Transnistrian problem remains a major cause for Moldova’s economic weakness and a key issue for its viability as an independent state and for regional stability. Transnistria can be likened to a pseudo-state, as it does not have an institutionalized administration, like most pseudo-states, it is financed through networks of arms, drug trafficking or money laundering. Thanks to the fusion between political elites and the Mafia, this piece of land has successfully integrated into international networks of organized crime. Corruption present in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine acts as a barrier to change in the region. The economic activity in Transnistria depends almost exclusively on the much-diversified “Sheriff” company, directed by one of the former president Igor Smirnov sons, the other being in charge of the customs.<sup>34</sup> The company contributes to 30% of the state budget, the other resources coming from sales of the stocks of weapons held by the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army. The plants inherited from the USSR, whose value is estimated at 2 billion US dollars, supply weapons for conflicts, from the Balkans to the Near East.<sup>35</sup>

Transnistrian propaganda has strived to create in the collective imagination a state with a specific identity, endowed with a historical mission, to fight against the Moldovan and Romanian enemy which is supposed to represent, more widely, NATO and Western imperialism. This constant image is imposed by the mass media.<sup>36</sup> The self-proclaimed Moldovan Transnistrian Republic (MTR) appears to be a living museum of the Soviet era, with an authoritarian regime holding power only through ideological and repressive structures and the fear it inspires in its citizens.

Transnistrian leaders are related to Russia’s conservative political forces and rely on the KGB files transferred to Tiraspol (the largest city) in August 1989 when they need to put pressure on the constitutional regime.<sup>37</sup> Transnistria’s industrial

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 84.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 112.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 11.

companies and technological advancement are due to Russian support, allowing it to sustain a viable economy. As it is a crossing region for energy streams and the main communications to Russia, Transnistria is able to impose an embargo. It also has supporters on the right bank of the Dniester and has obtained huge concessions from the power in Chisinau (Moldova's capital), despite its repressive methods and the elimination of any opposition, as exemplified by the imprisonment of the Moldovan MP Ilie Iliascu in Transnistria for many years clearly showed.<sup>38</sup> According to Florent Parmentier, all concessions made by Chisinau to Transnistrian leaders such as recognition as legitimate partners in talks with the implication that they represent the majority of the Transnistrian population and tolerating regular infringements on Human Rights only delay the solution of the conflict.

The MTR anti-constitutional regime is thus supported by influential political groups from the Russian federation: by civil servants, policemen, servicemen who earn their living through their activity within the state structures; by criminal networks who use different methods of tax evasion, smuggling and other economic crimes on the Transnistrian territory; by businessmen, journalists, politicians and other influential persons on the right bank, who are involved and benefit from these practices, or for ideological reasons; by influential persons from the Moldovan State apparatus who are blackmailed by the Security Ministry from Tiraspol thanks to the KGB files or even with the help of information supplied by the Russian Federal Service of Security.<sup>39</sup>

In order to avoid representing a permanent menace on a weak and scarcely viable Moldovan state, but also for the EU who has to deal with the risk of destabilisation coming from a failed state at its borders, the MTR criminal and authoritarian elites should be expelled from the Moldovan republic. A first step has been made in February 2003 with the interdiction of the presence on the EU countries territory of several key members of the above-mentioned group.<sup>40</sup>

#### *Possible solutions to the frozen conflict*

The main danger for Moldova (and, implicitly, for the EU) is its own inability to carry out state missions and to ensure its security in the face of organized crime, migration, and interference of any kind, environmental hazards and international isolation. Given the situation, only further engagement from the international community can truly help cope with these threats, as Moldova has been oscillating between European integration and post-Soviet inertia.<sup>41</sup>

Besides economic breakdown, Moldova's main problem is territorial reintegration. Moldova concentrates political efforts at the expense of economical and

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 115.

<sup>39</sup> Institutul de Politici Publice (ed.), *Aspecte ale conflictului transnistrean*, (Chişinău, Ştiinţa, 2001), 5.

<sup>40</sup> Parmentier, 93.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 134.

democratisation reforms and the Transnistria issue is a factor of inertia, because of its contagious criminality and its will to destabilize the power in Chisinau. The settlement of this conflict seems thus to be a necessary condition for the rehabilitation of the Moldovan economy.<sup>42</sup> However, while everybody agrees the conflict must end, views diverge on the means to get to an agreement.

Moldova, being a recognized sovereign state, cannot be denied the principle of territorial integrity; the Parliament of the republic alone is entitled to pronounce a decision on Transnistria's status. Several types of solutions are possible: the reintegration without conditions of this territory into Moldova, either by political or military means, although this appears less likely in the short and medium term; autonomy status within a unitary state; creating a confederation of states with equal rights; Moldova becoming a federal state; giving up ownership of Transnistria.

In this framework, the OSCE proposed in July 2002 to negotiate an agreement that would make Moldova become a two (or three, with the Gagaouz region in the south) region federal state. Such an arrangement would guarantee Russia's influence on this federation through Transnistria.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, President Vladimir Putin's diplomatic efforts have always moved towards the reintegration of the secessionist region into the Republic of Moldova, on condition that it becomes a bilingual "Russian-Moldovan" state, does not assume its Romanian origins and remain bound to the Russian Federation by bilateral agreements.<sup>44</sup> However, this "federal" scenario is strongly opposed by pro-European Moldovan parties who struggle to pass democratic reforms and claim that this proposal aims in reality at further Russification of all Moldova and, if applied, result in the annexation of Moldova by the MTR, thus imposing a Russian protectorate on Moldova. Putin's plan reveals Russia's direct interest in imposing a federalist solution on Moldova at the expense of a unitary state. Again, the same question arises as at the moment of the secession: on what basis can it be considered that Transnistria has the right to be autonomous, since all ethnic groups living in its territory are also present in Moldova?

Building a federal state has also become difficult since federalism has been discredited by its abusive, ideological application by the communist regimes and by the consequent failure of the Soviet, Czechoslovakian and Yugoslavian federal states. Furthermore, the choice of federalism as a solution to the Transnistrian conflict would represent a confirmation in present times of the historical injustice that the Eastern Moldova territory had to suffer in the twentieth century. The official cause for the Transnistrian secession was claimed to be the presence in Chisinau of the defenders of "pan-Romanian nationalism," nevertheless, in previous years the voices calling for reunification have been less vocal, and Moldova has become an independent state, respectful of the rights of minorities, as shown in its management of the Gagaouz issue.<sup>45</sup> This evolution could lead to a speedy compromise, if that is the will of the leaders of the self-proclaimed republic; but it appears doubtful that they will be willing

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 213.

<sup>43</sup> Institutul de Politici Publice (ed.), 32.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

<sup>45</sup> This refers to the region of the Moldova Republic that has acquired autonomy.

to advance towards a political solution, given that the status-quo best suits their interests.

The unitary state, as supported by the EU, appears to be the best solution. For the moment, the main intention remains ensuring that Transnistria benefits from all the reforms adopted by the Moldovan state and uses them in order to contribute to its democratization, in addition to informing the public about the economic advantages of European integration and changing the EU and NATO's image as the "enemy". The prospect of European integration could thus serve as an incentive for the reintegration of the Moldovan territory. What are the chances for Moldova to become a viable, democratic, multinational state, with a civic nation and Romania, as spoken by the majority of its citizens, enshrined as official language?

Nation-states are built on two pillars, the feeling of belonging to a group, that is, national identity on one hand, and patriotism, on the other, that is, allegiance to the State. For a multinational state to be viable, its citizens must find not only diversity valuable, but also those ethnic and cultural groups with whom they are sharing the country. In addition, the success of a multinational state depends also on the degree to which different ethnic groups identify themselves with a common history, set of values, or political project. The outstanding question perhaps is whether the Russian speaking population, previously the leading nationality within the Moldovan Soviet Republic and currently an important part of the economic and political elites, is ready to share this position and acknowledge its status as a minority by adopting Romanian as the national and communication language?

Since former elites are ready to accuse democratic change as the cause of ethnic discrimination when their dominant position is threatened, a unitary Moldovan state can only be viable once it is rid of this conservative thinking. However, the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict will not take place without the democratisation, the demilitarization and the decriminalization of the region, a process that cannot be accomplished without the cooperation of all stake-holders, that is, the Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the EU.

Even if the territory of the MTR is democratised and reintegrates the Moldova Republic, the Russian levers of influence on this small state would remain powerful. Groups that currently hold political and economic power in Transnistria (mostly of Russian and/or Ukrainian citizens) would still hold the ownership of industries and companies such as Sheriff, energy production and transportation, even if they were removed from the state apparatus. In Moldova's case, in order to help the reunification with the secessionist region, the European Union is defending the solution of a multi-ethnic state, that would eventually become a member of the EU, while serving as a bridge in Russian-European relations, thanks to the Russian speaking population which would represent almost 25% of the total population if reunification was achieved.

A European integrated Moldovan republic including Transnistria would be a territory where it would be possible to experiment with cooperative Russian-European relations. Furthermore, it would offer the Russian speaking population the chance to live under European-style democracy and the norms of European ethnic minorities rights. This could become a success story and a model that ethnic Russians or

Ukrainians would perhaps become keen in exporting to their mother countries. At the same time, in the field of political ideas, ethnic based national states are not the prevailing pattern anymore. Rather, the ideology of multiculturalism is predominant, and the ethnic origins notion is no longer the basis for the formation of a sovereign independent state. However, in the case of Moldova, this theory and the strategic solution that derives from it tend to leave aside the historical realities that remind us that demographic policies and all Soviet policies in the region in general have been arbitrary and ideology based. One should, perhaps, remember that Transnistria was originally part of Ukrainian territory, and has never belonged either to the historical principality of Moldova, or to the Bessarabia region, under the Tsarist Empire. The military annexation of Ukraine under Lenin and Trotsky, and the situation created by the Soviet power and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact were contrary to international law. Even if this frontier status quo has been recognized by all communist bloc states in 1975 with the Helsinki Accords, it can be argued that governments of that time were not democratically elected and therefore did not represent their peoples' will. Therefore, the idea that current decisions should strive to repair the damages of historical injustice and abuses should be taken into account.

However, the Moldovan prime minister has denied in his 2011 declarations that Moldova is seeking to reunite with Romania since his country needs European aid and support to re-launch its economy and resolve the frozen conflict with Transnistria. In turn, Romania also has claimed it does not envisage a reunification given that it does not have the economic capacity to integrate the Moldovan territory. The settlement of the conflict is key to ensure the stability of the region; however, a solution to the current secession crisis can only be found if the problem is treated at an international level. This depends on Moldova's relations with its neighbours and on their geopolitical strategies related to Moldova's integration in the European space.

After analysing Moldova's integration perspectives in the European space, the dependence of this state on the former USSR is clear. The need for a rapprochement with the EU on one hand and its dependence on Russia on the other is a relevant contradiction that explains the difficulties Moldova is confronted with in building a viable state. Ultimately, Moldova's viability depends on the relations between the two continental empires. For the small republic, the EU appears as a substitution "empire", Moldova being the new "limes", a peripheral region where, as a European protectorate, democratic values have to prevail in order for it to eventually become a buffer state. The future of the European enlargement will determine Moldova's destiny.

Three scenarios can be imagined: Moldova signing a formal European partnership treaty, but remaining under Russia's economic and political influence; a new EU statute for the "new neighbours" - Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova - in which case, Moldova would become an European "in between", militarily neutral, economically close to Russia, but looking for the political inspiration in the European democratic model (this associate "scenario" takes in consideration the will of both "empires" with the three countries remaining under flexible Russian influence while developing cooperation with European countries); or finally, Moldova can decide that since, unlike Belarus and Ukraine, it belongs to the EU Stability Pact, and since its



majority culture brings it close to Romania, it can integrate into the EU, while keeping to play a bridge role with Russia. The former Soviet empire could then find its post-imperial identity in its economical development and appeased relations with Europe. In this light, Russia's rapprochement with Euro-Atlantic organisations makes the RMT a useless relic of totalitarianism, and the contribution of the EU at the settlement of the conflict would bring substance to the Russian-European partnership.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, in order to better understand the regional configuration, the relations between Ukraine and Romania and the controversial frontiers issues have to be taken into account when talking about "5+2" peace negotiations format. Recently, Ukraine has been showing its interest in Transnistria's northern counties that are inhabited by an ethnically Ukrainian population.<sup>47</sup> From this point of view, its interests in the region are opposed to Moldova's and Ukraine may hope that Moldova gives up its reintegration views in order to claim its historical rights on this geographical space. Consequently, both Russia and Ukraine are directly interested in Transnistrian territory and cannot therefore be considered as impartial and objective mediators in the negotiations.

### *Conclusion*

In the field of political ideas, in its demographic and territorial consequences, in the future of EU's enlargement, the ghost of Marxism-Leninism still lingers in Europe. The Soviet Union, as it emerged in 1923, was a compromise between doctrine and reality: an attempt to reconcile the Bolshevik strivings for absolute unity and centralization of all powers in the hands of the party, with the recognition of the empirical fact that nationalism did survive the collapse of the old order. It was viewed as a temporary solution only, as a transitional stage to a completely centralized and supra-national, worldwide Soviet state.

Since cultural or ethnic identity did not exist for Lenin, neither should political autonomy. Consequently he repeatedly condemned federalism as economically retrogressive and cultural autonomy as tending to divide the proletariat. It is clear therefore that Lenin neither desired nor expected the right of national self-determination, in the sense in which he had defined it, to be exercised<sup>48</sup>, since he asserted that to advance the right to separation did not mean to preach for actual separation. Thus the multinational structure of the Soviet population was a purely formal feature of the Soviet Constitution.

The subsequent crisis that shook the Communist Party over the national question in the early 1920's, and the Communist confusion over the persistence of national antagonisms in the Soviet Union were due to the inability of the Communists to recognize the flaw in their class interpretation of world events. As a consequence,

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 199-201.

<sup>47</sup> Institutul de Politici Publice (ed.), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Pipes, 45.

both of Marxist-Leninist anti-identity ideology and Soviet-Russian expansion policies during the last 50 years, the eastern Moldovan territory has suffered forced populations blending, abusive population displacements, an artificial reorganisation of the frontiers which did not reflect the ethnic structure of the population, repressive modifications of the language structure and interdiction to use national language, in addition to an economical specialisation of territories according to the interest of the central government and not of local population. Those measures were aimed at destroying the population's national identity and must be taken in a Marxist-Leninist ideological context, although they also represent also the achievement of historical Russian expansionist policy on this territory.

In the long term, Moldova's integration into the EU seems to be likely, and will mainly depend on its own political will, but its future and its viability will mainly depend on the Russia-EU relations.<sup>49</sup> Ironically, Moldova's European integration could be triggered by its general acknowledgment as a failed state that is impossible to rebuild. In that case, a break-up of the current republic could be envisaged, with the Bessarabia region going to Romania, while the status of Transdnistria, Boudjak and Boucovina regions would wait for further settlement. The challenge for EU foreign policy is thus to seek global solutions concerning South-Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean countries and post-Soviet states together with Russia, to ensure the latter does not feel isolated. Russia, in turn, has to be involved in a global partnership, which would neutralize its fears, favour its modernization and a better respect of Human Rights. Moldova's future remains open, but, just as Russia's, it will be undoubtedly related to the European Union.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 137.

# **Underpinning or undermining Communist rule? Soviet-Czechoslovak discourse and the 1968 Prague Spring**

*Jonathan Murphy*

## *Introduction*

From after the Kremlin's decision to invade Czechoslovakia in August 1968 until the fall of communism in 1989, scholarship focused on the geopolitical dimensions that supposedly pushed the Soviets to intervene. Explanations focusing on the Soviet Union's natural interest as a superpower and fear of a collapse of the Warsaw Pact all centre on Soviet alarm that Czechoslovakia was moving closer to West Germany (FRG) and thus undermining the very existence of East Germany (GDR), long considered by the Soviets to be the linchpin in the entire East European security system. Such accounts view ideological concerns as little more than a mask for Soviet intentions: maintaining its buffer zone in Eastern Europe against Western invasion.<sup>1</sup> While geopolitical concerns were certainly a factor, as this article outlines, Czechoslovak foreign policy remained explicitly pro-Soviet and did not hint at defection.

The opening of Eastern European archives for scholarly research since the collapse of communism has challenged this geopolitical perspective.<sup>2</sup> Historians now broadly maintain that ideological perceptions were central to the Kremlin's belief that

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<sup>1</sup> See for example F. Stephen Larrabee, 'Soviet Policy toward Eastern Europe: Interest, Instruments and Trends' in Robbin Frederick Laird and Erik P. Hoffmann, eds. *Soviet Foreign Policy in a Changing World* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1986), 531 and more recently Adrian G. V. Hyde-Price, *The International Politics of East Central Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 144.

<sup>2</sup> Until 1989, Western scholars were only able to write based on the Czechoslovak press, documents hurriedly published in 1968 by Czechoslovak scholars in a compilation known as 'The Black Book,' and a collection of documents about the role and activities of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. A few copies of 'The Black Book' reached the West, where Robert Little translated and edited the collection in 1969. The original Czech edition appeared in photo-offset copies. Contrary to popular belief, this 'Black Book' was not written in reply to the Soviet *On Events in Czechoslovakia*, also known as the 'White Book.' See Robert Little, *The Czech black book* (London: Pall Mall P., 1969); Rok šedesátý osmý: v usneseních a dokumentech (Prague: ÚV KSC, 1969); M. Mark Stolarik, 'Introduction,' in M. Mark Stolarik, ed. *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968: Forty Years Later* (Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2010), xvi; Henderson, Gregory, ed. *Public Diplomacy and Political Change: Four Case Studies: Okinawa, Peru, Czechoslovakia, Guinea* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 310.

the Prague Spring was heading towards a restoration of western-style democracy in Czechoslovakia and have shifted their attention to how the decision to invade emerged within the Soviet elite.<sup>3</sup> However, this shift in focus to why Soviet leaders felt threatened, neglects an alternative approach, namely the relationship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders. This article contends confusion and miscommunication between the Czechoslovak and Soviet leaders, and especially between Leonid Brezhnev and Alexander Dubček, also matters, alongside geopolitics and ideology. Both men misread each other's intentions, preferences and strategies because they came from different perspectives. However, the greatest part of the blame falls on the Czechoslovak First Secretary and his supporters, who did not want to reveal their true motives and played a dangerous game of delay and deception with the Kremlin and Czechoslovakia's Warsaw Pact allies. Even after forty years of scholarship, the Prague Spring's exact political character remains as obscure to historians<sup>4</sup> as it was for the Soviet Politburo during the crisis. Although the interaction between Brezhnev and Dubček is normally listed amongst the many possible factors in the Soviet decision to invade, only Kieran Williams's 1997 work *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* explicitly set out to give it pride of place as a central concern.<sup>5</sup> Materials made available since the publication of Williams' work suggest that the relationship fully deserves closer scrutiny and greater prominence.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the Prague Spring of 1968, Dubček and Brezhnev found themselves in a complicated embrace: Dubček was as much beholden to the Soviet Union as to the rising aspirations within Czechoslovakia which his reforms had unleashed, while Brezhnev rejected the argument that the Czechoslovak Communist Party was winning public support and therefore strengthening its position. This was a relationship never tested at a time of crisis and, as this article outlines, Dubček's answers to concerns expressed by the Kremlin were a source of deep anxiety in Moscow. Dubček's quiet, unassuming manner did not cool passions, but conversely had the opposite effect as he put off choices that only became harder. Both the Kremlin and Dubček himself believed he had a duty and responsibility to the system that vaulted him to power. Despite Brezhnev's growing concern that the Czechoslovak Communist Party no

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<sup>3</sup> Viewing events through a bureaucratic political paradigm, Jiri Valenta argued in 1979 that the decision to invade arose from a bargaining process between the leaders of the most important Soviet bureaucracies, each of whom held a somewhat different view of the Czechoslovak crisis. However, Dmitrii Volkogonov gave no indication of any such power struggle, bureaucratic pressure, or coalition formation based on his access to Brezhnev's private papers and Politburo records. Valenta subsequently revised his argument in 1991 in light of new evidence. See Kieran Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30, 31, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Ouimet, 'Reconsidering the Soviet Role in the Invasion of Czechoslovakia: A Commentary,' in Stolarik, ed., *The Prague Spring*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly Jaromír Navrátil, *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998).

longer seemed to be in control of the reform movement, he continued to counsel prudence until the opportunity to replace Dubček arose. Meanwhile, Dubček does not appear to have fully understood how serious the warnings he received were. In many respects, it is possible to see how Soviet hesitation convinced Dubček that there was no serious Soviet intention to take action. However, as the exchanges cited in this article demonstrate, this was partly because Brezhnev and the Politburo found it increasingly difficult to gauge Dubček's true intentions. Paradoxically, the more meetings were arranged and promises made, the less clear the situation became for both sides. Brezhnev carefully guided proceedings at the Politburo and assumed chief responsibility for bilateral contacts with Dubček. He moved from implicitly supporting Dubček in December 1967 to accusations of counter-revolution in a matter of months because of a dramatic loss of faith in Dubček's effort to underpin communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, Dubček firmly believed that Brezhnev's ambiguity gave him enough leeway to enact reform and always maintained that he could not have foreseen the Soviet invasion.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, Moscow cleared away uncertainty by invading in August 1968, demonstrating that communist satellite states only had limited sovereignty and that any lapse in the Communist party's monopoly of power could result in military intervention.

*Geopolitics: Preserving Communist Power*

Brezhnev's first concern when disputes began within the Czechoslovak Communist Party was to prevent it from escalating into a public quarrel that would expose the myth of monolithic communist power in Eastern Europe.<sup>8</sup> His meeting with Dubček in December 1967 did not auger well for candid Soviet-Czechoslovak dialogue. Only one side, in this case Dubček, offered any real discussion. Brezhnev's visit was at long-time Czechoslovak First Secretary Antonín Novotný's request, to help him fend off attacks from a reform faction that included Dubček; in October, Dubček accused Novotný of pursuing 'inappropriate methods of political leadership' and argued that 'a great deal must be improved and changed in practice.'<sup>9</sup> Brezhnev privately concluded that Novotný was in the wrong and proceeded to sound out Dubček at length, without, however, endorsing any solutions to the economic and political problems that Czechoslovakia faced.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, the posts of first secretary and president of Czechoslovakia were separated and in January 1968, Dubček emerged as party leader with Novotný remaining as president. This was not entirely unwelcome in the Kremlin where Novotný's personal objection to the ouster of Nikita Khrushchev in

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander Dubček and Jiri Hochman, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubček* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 128.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, 63.

<sup>9</sup> Navrátil, 13-15.

<sup>10</sup> Dubček, 122.

1964 had not endeared him to the new Soviet leaders.<sup>11</sup> All appeared to be satisfactory when Dubček assured the Kremlin of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's continued commitment to the socialist camp during a two-day visit to Moscow in January 1968.<sup>12</sup>

Although Brezhnev and Dubček shared the goal of securing Communist rule, Brezhnev appeared during the December 1967 meeting to be more concerned with the interests of the ruling Party bureaucracy. By contrast, Dubček strongly believed that the Czechoslovak Communist Party's continued control would benefit from a degree of political liberalisation and reformed socialism in order to bring about economic reform.<sup>13</sup> Dubček was trapped by economic and social pressures as the Stalinist economic programme, developed in the Soviet Union as a crash industrialisation programme for poor peasant countries, had been particularly disastrous for Czechoslovakia, which already had a strong industrial infrastructure and well-educated urban population.<sup>14</sup> In 1963, Czechoslovakia's economy had collapsed, an economic calamity unparalleled at that time in Central and Eastern Europe. Novotný had accepted the need to take drastic measures, and in September 1964 the Central Committee accepted the principles of market-orientated economic reform. However, the half-measures finally approved at the 13<sup>th</sup> party congress in June 1966 yielded mixed results and led to infighting within the Czechoslovak Communist Party that ultimately resulted in Novotný's downfall.<sup>15</sup> The Prague Spring thus began as essentially a programme for urgent economic reform, which involved built in brakes on political reform. Despite this, it was quickly overtaken by a rank-and-file push for faster and broader changes and by the wide support these changes received from the general public.

Dubček and his colleagues should have anticipated at least some of these pressures: Czechoslovakia was the only communist nation with a strong democratic tradition and, inevitably, calls for economic reform in the 1960s became a call for greater democratic reform too. The Party could propose a programme of reform, but it still had few answers to the problem of what to do with non-party members who were increasingly demanding to be accepted on equal terms.<sup>16</sup> The spontaneous support and sympathy Dubček and other communist reformers enjoyed from the public was something none of them had ever experienced before, since the only kind of support they had ever known had been organised from above.<sup>17</sup> However, the

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<sup>11</sup> Some authors contend that Brezhnev held a grudge against Novotny, see Nikita Petrov, 'The KGB and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968,' in Stolarik, ed. *The Prague Spring*, 146-7.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, 66

<sup>13</sup> Dubček, 122.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, Christopher S. Allen, & Stephen Hellman *European Politics in Transition* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2008), 409.

<sup>15</sup> Ivan Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137.

<sup>16</sup> Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), 90.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 95.

Prague Spring was essentially an internal Party struggle, with reform or revisionist communists prevailing in protracted conflicts with the former Novotný bureaucracy. Anti-communist dissident, playwright, and future Czechoslovak President Václav Havel labelled reform communists as ‘anti-dogmatics’ and described them as a better alternative than the aging Novotný bureaucracy but people who nevertheless had their limitations and were almost as challenging to deal with since they still viewed developments and reform in strictly ideological terms.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, a majority of the population were non-communists, that is to say, they were not members of the Communist Party and therefore second-class citizens, since all important positions were held by Party members and all decisions of consequence were made by the party behind closed doors.<sup>19</sup>

As the Czechoslovak Presidium began the process of abolishing censorship at the start of March 1968, and especially after it emerged that one of Novotný’s protégés, General Jan Šejna, had plotted a military coup against the reformists in December 1967, the Czechoslovak press began to print demands for Novotný’s resignation from his post as president. Šejna had used his position as the head of the party network at the defence ministry for self-enrichment and subsequently defected to the West, a rare breach of Czechoslovak security.<sup>20</sup> Over 4,500 letters and petitions were addressed to the party leadership demanding Novotný’s resignation.<sup>21</sup> When Novotný stepped down on March 21 it aggravated Soviet anxiety as Dubček failed to consult with the Kremlin on the matter of Novotný’s successor. The incident was a key factor in the Soviet decision to convene the Dresden meeting of the Warsaw ‘Five’ leaders two days later, to put pressure on the Czechoslovak leadership. Not only did Novotný’s fall signify the loss of a conservative voice, but the Kremlin believed that Soviet influence in general was at stake.<sup>22</sup> As was evident in late 1967, the Politburo was never well disposed towards Novotný and it was the procedure rather than the result that angered the Politburo. If Dubček was unwilling to consult with the Kremlin about the fate of such a prominent figure as Novotný, it appeared to bode ill for the dozens of other pro-Soviet officials in Czechoslovakia who were more cautious about the Prague Spring reforms and were being ousted from their positions in the Czechoslovak Communist Party, military command and internal security network. To those in the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Williams, 69-70. Šejna proved a valuable defection, providing details of Soviet support for guerrilla training camps in Cuba, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and elsewhere and wrote a sensationalist book, *We Will Bury You*, in 1982. See Jon B. Perdue, *The War of All the People: The Nexus of Latin American Radicalism and Middle Eastern Terrorism* (Virginia: Potomac Books, 2012), 29; Robert Vincent Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla: World Revolution and Counterrevolution in 1968* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996), 201.

<sup>21</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the twentieth Century* (Routledge, 1994), 327.

<sup>22</sup> Ouimet, 18.

### *Underpinning or Undermining Communist Rule?*

Kremlin, this threatened to escalate into a much wider purge which would remove all traces of Soviet influence in Czechoslovakia.<sup>23</sup>

Dubček believed that by allowing Novotný to fall and installing reformists he could rebuild public confidence in the Party's goodwill and good intentions, thus underpinning communist rule in Czechoslovakia.<sup>24</sup> However, the Kremlin was now deeply worried about where these same reforms might lead. KGB Chairman, Yuri Andropov, expressed the greatest alarm during a meeting of the Politburo the same day as Novotný's downfall, drawing a direct comparison with events in Budapest in 1956 when, as Soviet ambassador, he played a key role in coordinating the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution. He argued that the Czechoslovak reformers would invariably begin to demand the introduction of Western-style democratisation before long, just as occurred in Hungary.<sup>25</sup> When the spectre of military intervention was tentatively raised for the first time by Ukrainian Party Leader Petro Shelest, Andropov was strongly in favour, but no consensus along such lines was reached at this early stage.<sup>26</sup> Brezhnev also likened the situation to the changes that occurred in Hungary just prior to the 1956 revolution. He claimed that events in Czechoslovakia were 'moving in an anti-Communist direction,' expressing dismay that so many 'good and sincere friends of the Soviet Union' had been forced to step down.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, he preferred to prevaricate and seek further clarification, so, with the Politburo still convened, he picked up the phone and called Dubček. Although he expressed satisfaction with Dubček's assurances that 'we will be able to manage the events which are occurring here'<sup>28</sup> he soon called for the Dresden meeting of Warsaw Pact allies in order to move from signalling Soviet discontent to making clear demands for action to prevent the reforms going further.

### *Turning to the West*

From the outset, Dubček did not attempt to set firm boundaries against Soviet interference in Czechoslovak affairs, thus opening the door for further Soviet interventions. This was most likely a tactic by Dubček to try to mollify the Soviets as they became increasingly suspicious of his actions. In February 1968, he readily accepted Brezhnev's interference with the text of his speech on the anniversary of the

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<sup>23</sup> Kramer, 'The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine' in Vladimir Tismaneanu ed., *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion and Utopia* (Central European Press, 2011), 306-7.

<sup>24</sup> Dubček, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Ouimet, 260.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (1st ed. New York: Basic Books, 1999), 252.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Kramer, 'The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion in Historical Perspective,' in Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Peter Ruggenthaler, eds. *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 40.

<sup>28</sup> As cited in Ouimet, ,19.



February 1948 communist takeover of Czechoslovakia.<sup>29</sup> Dubček downplayed the incident in the Czech version of his autobiography, stating that he only removed two innocuous paragraphs at Brezhnev's request. However, as Michael Kraus notes, Brezhnev demanded the deletion of six substantial paragraphs and Dubček willingly obliged.<sup>30</sup> The final version of the speech was significantly less critical of Dubček's predecessors, any of the innovative formulations about foreign affairs that would later come to plague Czechoslovak-Soviet relations were removed entirely, and it did not signal any notable departures in the Czechoslovak Communist Party's policies.<sup>31</sup>

Although he never considered leaving the Warsaw Pact or threatening Soviet security, Dubček sought to reinvigorate the economy through improved trade relations with the West, something Brezhnev vehemently opposed at Dresden.<sup>32</sup> Dubček's open advocacy in his February speech of the establishment of normal relations between all countries of Europe, regardless of their social systems, alarmed Soviet leaders and was interpreted as a direct reference to the FRG.<sup>33</sup> After Romania unilaterally established diplomatic relations with the FRG in early 1967, the rest of the Warsaw Pact states resolved not to do likewise until Bonn met a number of stringent conditions.<sup>34</sup> The prospect of improved economic and political relations between Czechoslovakia and the FRG without forcing any concessions from Bonn caused alarm in the GDR Politburo, which believed the GDR had more to lose from such a prospect than any other bloc state. GDR leader Walter Ulbricht hoped that by opposing the Prague Spring reforms he could forestall any change in Czechoslovak policy toward Bonn and exploit events to prevent any Soviet decision to seek closer relations with the FRG.<sup>35</sup> In a major speech at the end of March, GDR Politburo member Kurt Hager openly condemned Czechoslovakia and made clear that any links with the FRG would only serve Bonn's aim of 'subverting the socialist countries from within, of dividing them, and especially of isolating the GDR.'<sup>36</sup>

#### *The Dresden Turning Point*

The Dresden meeting on March 23 marked a new urgency on the part of the Soviet Union, GDR, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria to take action lest the reforms in Czechoslovakia get out of hand and spread. Yet both Brezhnev and Dubček

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<sup>29</sup> Michael Kraus, 'The "Prague Spring," Revisited' in Stolarik, ed., *The Prague Spring*, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Navrátil, The speech is contained in Ibid. 51-4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>33</sup> Karen Dawisha, *The Kremlin and the Prague Spring* (California: University of California Press, 1984), 18.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Kramer, 'The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion in Historical Perspective,' in Bischof, et al, eds. *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, 129.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Dawisha, 31.

concealed their true motives and intentions. Brezhnev disguised the meeting as one devoted to economic consultations, despite János Kádár's warning against deceiving Dubček about the true nature of the meeting. Kádár, leader of the Hungarian Communist Party, was more conciliatory concerning methods, favouring a smaller forum that excluded Bulgaria and the GDR. This would allow more constructive opportunities to impress on the Czechoslovak leadership the need to change course, and reduce the possibility of an outright condemnation of the Prague leadership's erroneous ways.<sup>37</sup> Dubček claimed after 1989 that he was unaware of the true intentions behind the meeting<sup>38</sup> but Csaba Békés, the founding director of the Cold War History Research Centre in Budapest, argues that the evidence shows that Dubček consciously accepted Brezhnev's idea of disguising the meeting as an 'economic forum.' It appears likely that Dubček simply chose not to inform his colleagues in the Czechoslovak delegation, hence their shock in Dresden when they realised the trap into which they had fallen.<sup>39</sup> Dubček was initially reluctant to commit to attending the meeting, telling Brezhnev that he was going to speak to Kádár first. However, he then changed his mind and named Dresden as a possible venue because, as he claimed, he had never been to the GDR. In light of the GDR leadership's hostility to the Prague Spring, this seems curious to say the least. It is possible that Dubček adopted the 'economic forum' smoke screen and suggested Dresden in order to defend himself from international and national criticism. However, critics could claim that he had caved in to pressure to participate in a meeting whose main object was to assess the internal situation in Czechoslovakia.<sup>40</sup>

Ulbricht outlined the true agenda in his opening remarks, explaining that the assembled leaders wished to learn about the 'plans of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia' and the status of its 'Action Programme' which was in effect the Prague Spring manifesto.<sup>41</sup> Dubček admitted that the situation needed addressing, but stressed that the party could best manage the situation through non-coercive measures.<sup>42</sup> Brezhnev remained unimpressed, asking 'What does the Politburo mean by "liberalization of society"? For 25 years you have been building socialism. Have you not had democracy until now? Or how else should this be understood?'<sup>43</sup> He proceeded to attack the planned Action Programme, although he admitted that the Politburo did not have any details. Mixing threat and encouragement in equal measure, he implored Dubček to 'change the course of events

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<sup>37</sup> Csaba Békés, 'The "Prague Spring," Hungary and the Warsaw Pact Invasion,' in Stolarik, ed., *The Prague Spring*, 208.

<sup>38</sup> Dubček, , 141.

<sup>39</sup> Békés, 'The "Prague Spring," Hungary and the Warsaw Pact Invasion,' in Stolarik, ed., *The Prague Spring*, 208.

<sup>40</sup> Csaba Békés, 'Hungary and the Prague Spring' in Bischof et al, eds. *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, 381-2.

<sup>41</sup> Navrátil, 64.

<sup>42</sup> Williams, 71.

<sup>43</sup> Navrátil, 64.

and stop these very dangerous developments.’ He made clear that he, and the other parties present, could not remain indifferent to developments in Czechoslovakia.<sup>44</sup>

*Failing to Understand*

Despite the clear warnings at Dresden, Dubček failed to understand the deep concern his Warsaw Pact allies felt at developments in Czechoslovakia. Even retrospectively in his memoirs, he argues that the significance of the Dresden meeting was greatly exaggerated, despite acknowledging that Brezhnev was flanked by several marshals and generals of the Red Army, an unusual arrangement that he acknowledges was undoubtedly meant to intimidate.<sup>45</sup> Subsequent Politburo meetings and consultations with other Warsaw Pact allies centred on the need to gauge and interpret Czechoslovak strategies and plans. The Czechoslovak leader had vigorously defended the abolition of censorship at Dresden, maintaining that it was wrong to confuse views expressed in the press (and what he argued at the time was a very selective reading of it at that) with the policy of a state.<sup>46</sup> Although he acknowledged that there was complete disagreement at the meeting, he took the absence of any a joint declaration or set of conclusions to indicate that this was more a slap on the wrist.<sup>47</sup> However, the Dresden meeting was the starkest sign yet that the Prague Spring reforms were deeply disconcerting for Czechoslovakia’s five Warsaw Pact allies. Even the US Embassy in Moscow believed that the Prague Spring reforms threatened the Warsaw Pact and had serious implications for the Soviet Union itself.<sup>48</sup> It estimated that the Dresden meeting was intended as a first warning of further Soviet economic and psychological pressure to bring Czechoslovakia back in line.<sup>49</sup> Later, *Pravda* argued in an August 22 editorial that the Dresden meeting had been called out of deep concern at the ‘atmosphere of disorder, vacillations and uncertainty’ that was beginning to take shape within the Czechoslovak Communist Party itself.<sup>50</sup>

With Dubček vague about his ultimate objective, none of his anxious neighbours quite knew where the reforms would lead. No member of the Czechoslovak delegation accepted the criticism at Dresden. They persuaded their Warsaw Pact allies to omit any mention of the need for ‘decisive steps’ against ‘revisionist, anti-socialist elements’ in Czechoslovakia and concealed the true nature of the summit from the Czechoslovak public. Moreover, the Czechoslovak Central Committee proceeded to approve the Action Programme, and elect a new Presidium, president and government in the belief that this was the best way to put reform-minded communists

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>45</sup> Dubček, 141.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 142.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth N. Skoug, *Czechoslovakia’s Lost Fight for Freedom, 1967-1969: An American Embassy Perspective* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 79.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Dawisha, 38.

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fully in charge of the Prague Spring.<sup>51</sup> In hindsight, the Action Programme stood little chance of satisfying both domestic and foreign concerns. Soviet fears were real; Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko predicted no less than the ‘complete collapse of the Warsaw Pact’ as a result of the Action Programme.<sup>52</sup> Much to the frustration of the Politburo and his Warsaw allies, Dubček prevaricated in providing concrete detail and delayed or accelerated decisions in an effort to survive and manage conflicting demands from within and outside Czechoslovakia.

The Action Programme for political reform mirrored all the conflicts and contradictions Dubček faced, despite his post-1989 assertions that it addressed ‘almost all the basic problems.’<sup>53</sup> He understood that there were some limits on reforms. He considered changing the Czechoslovak National Assembly from a rubber stamp to a genuine legislature, where some opposition was permitted, much like the reforms Mikhail Gorbachev attempted in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Despite this, non-communist participation remained undefined in these plans and the Communist Party would still have had the leading role in society since there was no question of a multi-party democracy. In the last weeks of the Prague Spring Dubček held out the promise of political freedoms, ‘declaring that freedom of speech was indispensable to a modern economy and arguing that authority should derive from knowledge and expertise rather than party affiliation.’<sup>54</sup> In private however, he simultaneously assured Brezhnev, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin and Ukrainian Party Leader Shelest that the new electoral law would be rigged to guarantee the party a majority in parliament, and if all else failed, the Communist Party would use force to protect its ‘leading role.’<sup>55</sup>

### *Growing Differences*

Initially, Brezhnev appeared content to air his misgivings at Dresden and allow events in Czechoslovakia take their course without serious intervention from Moscow, but the Czechoslovak decision to proceed with the Prague Spring reforms caused deep frustration and a change in tone. On April 11, in the second of his six letters to Dubček, Brezhnev spoke of his concern at developments in Czechoslovakia and ‘revisionists and hostile forces...seeking to divert Czechoslovakia from the socialist path.’<sup>56</sup> Brezhnev proceeded to telephone Dubček when his letter was delivered on April 14 to gauge his reaction and to request talks between the two sides. While the Soviet leader seemed content at this point to remain friendly and not to hold Dubček

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<sup>51</sup> Williams, 72.

<sup>52</sup> Ouimet, ‘Reconsidering the Soviet Role in the Invasion of Czechoslovakia’ in Stolarik, ed., *The Prague Spring*, 22.

<sup>53</sup> Dubček, 147.

<sup>54</sup> Kesselman et al 409.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, 77, 101; Dubček, 149.

<sup>56</sup> Navrátil, 98.

personally responsible for the dangers he highlighted,<sup>57</sup> there were sharp exchanges during the resulting meeting on May 4-5 in Moscow, with pronounced disagreements. Brezhnev now alternated between encouraging action and threatening to offer 'assistance.' He warned that counterrevolutionary forces were 'raging in full force' and that Politburo members 'have the impression that all that could be done is not being done.'<sup>58</sup> He again attacked Dubček's plans at length, particular his aim to attract investment from the FRG, stating that other socialist countries (namely Romania)<sup>59</sup> had experienced 'such "help," and then they didn't know how to cope with the consequences.'<sup>60</sup> In late March and early April the Czechoslovak border guards had dismantled a series of barbed wire and electric fences along the border with the FRG.<sup>61</sup> Brezhnev revealed the gulf in perceptions between himself and the more European-orientated Dubček, expressing the Politburo's genuine fear that the Czechoslovak army and security forces would be weakened by the 40,000 tourists travelling daily from the FRG. He estimated that at least half were Americans or West German spies who had previously supplied arms to the counterrevolutionaries in Hungary.<sup>62</sup>

After the other members of the ruling triumvirate, Kosygin and Nikolai Podgorny (chair of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet) had spoken to reemphasise Brezhnev's main points, Brezhnev came to the crux of the matter, namely, what was to be done. Here he unambiguously called on the Czechoslovak Communist Party to clearly state what line it would pursue to combat the dangerous phenomena he had identified: 'it is incorrect to make concessions and to be reformists; one must truly serve the cause of the party of which you are members... You must find within yourselves the necessary unity, courage, and willpower. We are ready to offer our support. And if we all [members of the Warsaw Pact] help you, that will be powerful support indeed.'<sup>63</sup> Behind closed doors, Brezhnev condemned the April Action plan again at the May 6 Politburo meeting as 'opening possibilities for the restoration of capitalism in Czechoslovakia.'<sup>64</sup> Although there was some disagreement regarding the best solution, there was unanimity that the reforms must be stopped.<sup>65</sup> A

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 124.

<sup>59</sup> FRG trade with and loans to Romania began in January 1967, the same month they established diplomatic relations, and the two countries signed an economic cooperation agreement in August 1967. The West Germans had a major interest in the status of the German minority in Romania, and in later years a secret arrangement was established with payments from the FRG for each German allowed to emigrate from Romania.

<sup>60</sup> Navrátil, 118.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 122.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 124.

<sup>64</sup> Ouimet, 'Reconsidering the Soviet Role in the Invasion of Czechoslovakia' in Stolarik, ed., *The Prague Spring*, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

majority of the Politburo preferred to pressure Dubček into re-imposing censorship over the mass media, silencing critical intellectuals, and removing the bolder reformers within the party.

This advice was wholly incompatible with the aspirations of a Czechoslovakian public that was energised by the prospect of real and lasting reforms. Dubček therefore increasingly played for time. In June, he failed for the fourth time to respond immediately to a Soviet invitation to talks. For the Kremlin leadership this created what Williams calls ‘an image of a leader held hostage in his own country (by the media and public opinion), willing to oblige his Soviet friends yet afraid to do so in public.’<sup>66</sup> Dubček states in his memoirs that he sought to postpone one meeting with Brezhnev in order to reduce tensions,<sup>67</sup> but it is clear that by procrastinating he was in fact exacerbating the situation and allowing the Politburo to believe that events were eroding communist rule. A series of Warsaw Pact training manoeuvres in Czechoslovakia subsequently began on June 20 in an attempt to intimidate the Czechoslovak leadership and population and encourage what Brezhnev termed ‘healthy forces.’<sup>68</sup> Brezhnev then summoned Dubček on July 5 to a summit of Warsaw Pact leaders. A letter from the Soviet Politburo arrived shortly afterwards but the chairmanship of the Central Committee in Prague rejected Czechoslovak participation, either because the letter was written in such a rude manner that it angered even the conservatives or due to fears of another dressing-down similar to the Dresden meeting.<sup>69</sup>

Despite Dubček’s request that the Czechoslovak-Soviet exchange of letters should be kept out of the public domain, the Kremlin published its response with great publicity in the Soviet Union, in a further sign of its growing disquiet with the pace and direction of Czechoslovak-Soviet dialogue. The Soviet letter asked:

Comrades, can you not see this danger? Is it possible to remain passive under the circumstances and to confine yourselves to declarations and assurances of loyalty to the cause of socialism and commitments of alliance? Can you not see that counterrevolution is seizing one position after another from you? And that the party is losing control over the course of events and is retreating further and further under pressure from anti-communist forces?<sup>70</sup>

There was little of the usual ‘unity of views’ at the final meeting between the two sides from July 29 to August 3 at the Czechoslovak border town of Čierna nad Tisou, but rather a *quid pro quo* where the Soviets would withdraw troops in return for a

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<sup>66</sup> Williams, 86.

<sup>67</sup> Dubček, 161.

<sup>68</sup> Jan Rychlík, ‘The “Prague Spring” and the Warsaw Pact Invasion,’ in Stolarik, ed. *The Prague Spring*, 45-6.

<sup>69</sup> Slavomir Michalek and Stanislav Sikora, ‘August 1968 as Seen from Bratislava’ in Stolarik, ed. *The Prague Spring*, 79.

<sup>70</sup> Navrátil, 236-7.

reassertion of control over the mass media, re-imposition of the guiding role of the Communist Party in society, and the removal of certain reformist leaders from their positions.<sup>71</sup> Brezhnev warned Dubček, 'If you deceive us once more, we shall consider it a crime and a betrayal and act accordingly. Never again would we sit with you at the same table.'<sup>72</sup> Dubček had done much to damage his credibility by irritating his Warsaw Pact allies in Dresden and subsequently dragging his feet. The Čierna meeting was supposed to be his moment of clarity, with pledges to restore the authority of the Communist Party and guarantee the policies of 'proletarian internationalism' in state politics. Yet, within a week of the subsequent Bratislava summit Brezhnev was complaining to Dubček that the terms of the agreement were not being met<sup>73</sup> and the Politburo concluded by mid-August that military intervention was unavoidable.

For the first seven months of 1968 Brezhnev used the differing approaches of the 'Five' Warsaw Pact leaders to keep the Czechoslovak leadership under pressure: Polish leader Władysław Gomułka and Ulbricht held the harshest views, while Kádár's more conciliatory approach facilitated Brezhnev's attempts to rely on 'comradely persuasion' as well as coercion.<sup>74</sup> Brezhnev was content for Ulbricht and Gomułka to take the lead in criticising Dubček. Fearing the effects of the Prague Spring on domestic stability, the GDR leadership remained at the forefront of those bloc leaders who were encouraging the Soviets to halt the reform movement.<sup>75</sup> Ulbricht was afraid that East Germans would call for similar reforms and that workers would again rise in anger as they had done in Berlin and Magdeburg in 1953. Gomułka also feared political 'spill-over' from the Prague Spring since he had been weakened domestically and become more dependent on the Soviet Union. He feared that he might not survive any further unrest after public demonstrations in March, which demanded reforms like those in Czechoslovakia, had ended in rioting. Thus, he was 'one of the first bloc leaders to imply that events in Czechoslovakia were having a negative effect on the bloc as a whole.'<sup>76</sup> The Polish government made a strong official complaint following two large student demonstrations outside the Polish embassy in Prague on May 1 and May 3, which expressed support for Polish students and protested against the forceful anti-Semitic campaign under way in Poland.<sup>77</sup> By late May, Gomułka was informing Moscow that Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania might form a secret alliance to break away from the socialist camp. On July 5, 1968, the Polish leader even raised the idea at a meeting of the Polish Politburo that Poland might invade Czechoslovakia on its own in order to halt the reform process. Naturally, this was impossible without Soviet permission, but Poland's leadership were

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<sup>71</sup> Ouimet, 28.

<sup>72</sup> Dawisha, 263. For the entire conversation see Navrátil, 345-56.

<sup>73</sup> Ouimet, 30-31.

<sup>74</sup> Navrátil, 64.

<sup>75</sup> Dawisha, 30-31.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 27-28.

<sup>77</sup> Navrátil, 118.

happy to contribute the largest non-Soviet contingent to the invasion force of August 21, 1968.<sup>78</sup>

Kádár also feared a socialist ‘Little Entente’ consisting of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania. He believed that Slovak nationalism was directed against Hungary.<sup>79</sup> In Czechoslovakia itself, ethnic Ukrainians began to agitate for the recognition of their national rights, something that appalled Moscow since it might encourage nationalists in Ukraine and provoke a serious internal crisis within the Soviet Union.<sup>80</sup> Kádár also had reasons to be apprehensive since Czechoslovak reforms might revive memories of 1956, but remained the most confident that Dubček could manage events. At Dresden, Gomułka called on the Czechoslovak delegation to ‘draw conclusions from what happened in Hungary,’ warning that Czechoslovakia’s allies would not permit a counterrevolution to succeed.<sup>81</sup> At Čierna, Kosygin was happy to be explicit about the Soviet and Warsaw Pact geopolitical concerns, asking rhetorically ‘What are we to think: where is your border and where is our border, and is there a difference between your and our borders? I think that you, Comrade Dubček and Comrade [Oldřich] Černík, [Czechoslovak prime minister during the Prague Spring] cannot deny that we together have only one border – the one that abuts the West and separates us from the capitalist countries.’<sup>82</sup>

#### *Understanding Dubček’s Intentions*

The hesitant Soviet response during the final weeks of the crisis was due to a continued confusion surrounding Dubček’s aims and the growing pressure to act before the Czechoslovak Communist Party held an extraordinary congress the following month. Soviet units were withdrawn on August 3 when representatives from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the GDR and Czechoslovakia met in Bratislava on the basis of the agreement reached at Čierna, only to return on August 21 with the armies of five Warsaw Pact countries to rapidly occupy Czechoslovakia. Gomułka, Ulbricht and Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov all expressed scepticism when Brezhnev reported the results of the Čierna meeting to them. None felt that they could trust Dubček and all supported taking more direct action.<sup>83</sup> The Kremlin convened the final meeting at Bratislava to bring Dubček into line with a Kremlin-drafted document on socialist unity and communist party development. The joint declaration adopted included the right of each party to determine its own road to socialism in accordance to the ‘specific national features and conditions’ as Dubček had insisted, but also enshrined ‘the common international duty of all the socialist countries’ to undertake the ‘task of supporting, consolidating, and defending these

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<sup>78</sup> Stolarik, ‘Introduction,’ in Stolarik, ed. *The Prague Spring*, xxiv.

<sup>79</sup> Williams, 114.

<sup>80</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2005), 442.

<sup>81</sup> Navrátil, 67.

<sup>82</sup> Ouimet, 29.

<sup>83</sup> Navrátil, 309.



gains.<sup>84</sup> This was one of the main objectives according to the post-August 21 justification for the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In the absence of any firm understanding of Dubček's intentions, it was feared, perhaps with some justification, that conservatives would be forced from the Czechoslovak Central Committee, thus presenting a different and more complex situation. Dubček tried to convince Brezhnev that the removal of personnel requested at the Čierna meeting could only occur at the next Central Committee plenum in late August or early September. But Brezhnev warned him that the time had come for decisive action. If Prague could not take the necessary measures then Moscow would be forced to take matters into its own hands.<sup>85</sup> Behind the scenes, Vasil Bil'ak, Dubček's ideological chief in Slovakia, had been in contact with Brezhnev during the Bratislava meeting to make an 'urgent plea for intervention and comprehensive assistance.'<sup>86</sup> Bil'ak was elected as first secretary in Slovakia in the wake of Dubček's rise to power and was well aware of divisions with Moscow thanks to his attendance at Czechoslovak-Soviet meetings. Since May 1968, he had spoken out against the Prague Spring reforms. In a telephone conversation with Brezhnev, the Slovak suggested that Dubček was incapable and in any case unwilling to bring the situation under control. Other likeminded officials convinced the Soviet Ambassador Stepan V. Chervonenko that in the event of the Red Army intervening, they could 'guarantee' that a majority could be found to form a government. Chervonenko forwarded this to Moscow as a realistic assessment. However, once again, a key Czechoslovak-Soviet exchange undermined rather than underpinned communist rule as the Soviet ambassador's report erroneously gave the anti-Dubček group more credibility than they merited.<sup>87</sup> Czechoslovak public opinion had been seriously misrepresented by the conspiratorial group and after the invasion, the process of reversing the Prague Spring reforms, euphemistically termed 'normalisation,' was carried out by Gustáv Husák, not by Bil'ak or any of the group which had appealed to Moscow for help.

### *Conclusion*

This article offers a new narrative of the discussions that culminated in the crushing of the Prague Spring. It emphasises issues of communication, heightening their importance as an explanation for the outcome, alongside the more widely recognised geopolitical and ideological factors. Moscow viewed Czechoslovak demands for reform in the late 1960s with trepidation and uncertainty from the outset. The Politburo was more concerned with the Czechoslovak Communist Party's loss of monopoly control than with military security, as had been the case during the 1956

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 326.

<sup>85</sup> Ouimet, 'Reconsidering the Soviet Role in the Invasion of Czechoslovakia,' in Mark Stolarik, ed. *The Prague Spring*, 31.

<sup>86</sup> Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente, 1950-1991* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 97.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

invasion of Hungary. Throughout the eight-month crisis, a lack of communication and miscommunication perpetuated the crisis, starting with Dubček's failure to consult with the Kremlin regarding Novotný's successor. This directly precipitated the Dresden meeting on March 23, not because there was sympathy or support for Novotný, but because the Kremlin feared that Soviet influence in general was at stake. Dresden also marked a new urgency on the part of Czechoslovakia's Warsaw Pact Allies to limit the Prague Spring reforms, lest they spill over. However, with Dubček remaining vague about his ultimate objective, none of his anxious allies quite knew where the reforms would lead. Increasingly, the Czechoslovak leader continued to prevaricate in providing concrete detail and delayed or accelerated decisions in an effort to survive and manage conflicting demands from within and outside Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Communist Party increasingly found itself in a schizophrenic situation as it both sympathised with and feared the rising expectations in society. It drew support from society, without fully understanding its rising aspirations. It wanted to reform quickly, yet it also wanted to slow things down.<sup>88</sup> The result, much like it was for Gorbachev in the Soviet Union during the late 1980s, was that the reformers were always following developments rather than providing direction. This was a source of anxiety for a Communist Party leadership that was accustomed to having a very clear perspective on what was happening and what course should be taken, and, as this article contends, a source of mistrust for Czechoslovakia's Warsaw Pact Allies.

The Brezhnev-Dubček relationship, much of it conducted face-to-face or over the telephone, had never been tested at a time of crisis and from the beginning, Dubček never attempted to set firm boundaries against Soviet interference in Czechoslovak affairs. This opened the door for further Soviet interventions, at a time when he was faced with various internal pressures to press on with reforms. These pressures were mostly of Dubček's own making, as demonstrated by the demands for Novotný's resignation from his post as president following the Czechoslovak Party's decision to lift press censorship. While Czechoslovakia's Warsaw Allies fully appreciated the full danger of the Prague Spring, Dubček does not appear to have fully understood how serious the warnings he received were. It was clear to him that Soviet criticism was aimed at restricting or abandoning aspects of his reforms, however, he continued to believe that these criticisms were not clearly articulated, leaving him free to guess how far the Kremlin wanted him to retreat.<sup>89</sup> In the long run, his attempt to adopt a 'economic forum' smoke screen for the Dresden meeting did not allow him to escape international and national criticism for allowing this Soviet interference in Czechoslovak domestic politics. While the Prague Spring began as an essential programme for urgent economic reform with built in brakes on political reform, it was quickly overtaken by a rank-and-file push for even faster and broader changes and by the wide support these changes were receiving from the general public. Despite Brezhnev's calls for clarity, Dubček increasingly failed to respond immediately to Soviet invitations to talks, exacerbating the situation and

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<sup>88</sup> Havel, 95.

<sup>89</sup> Dubček, 176.

allowing the Soviet Politburo to believe that events were eroding communist rule. On the Soviet side, demands for clear, unambiguous action were increasingly rude and public, provoking greater resistance from the Czechoslovak side. There was a dichotomy of interests: Dubček was as much beholden to the Soviet Union as to rising aspirations within Czechoslovakia which the Prague Spring had unleashed, while Brezhnev rejected the argument that the Czechoslovak Communist Party was winning public support and therefore strengthening its position. Dubček created what *Pravda* accurately termed an ‘atmosphere of disorder, vacillations and uncertainty.’<sup>90</sup> Brezhnev’s calls for Dubček to clearly state what action would be taken to correct the situation were never answered to his satisfaction. Ultimately, Dubček had done too much to damage his credibility by irritating his Warsaw Pact allies in Dresden and subsequently dragging his feet. This article thus argues that poor communication was a key factor leading to the August 1968 Soviet and Warsaw Pact invasion that crushed the Prague Spring. Paradoxically, the invasion itself represented a crystal clear statement, communicating Soviet intent. This ensured stability, keeping any further reform movements in Eastern Europe within the parameters of the ‘Brezhnev doctrine’. This message remained clear until Gorbachev’s government replaced it with the ‘Frank Sinatra’ doctrine in 1989, communicating to the satellite states that they could at last ‘do it their way’.

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<sup>90</sup> Dawisha, 38.

**Defining the unknown:  
Polish transformation of 1989 in the political  
discourse of Western authorities.**

**Patryk Pleskot**

Without doubt, the Polish political transformation, initiated in February 1989, was overshadowed by the concerns over the Soviet reaction. The Polish structural changes had begun earlier than in the other countries of Eastern Europe. This pioneering endeavour, however, carried a heavy price, bringing about a state of extreme anxiety and insecurity. The Polish authorities were able to use these sentiments in their struggle to retain the power they held for so long by emphasizing the threat of Soviet repercussions. Significantly, the Solidarity leaders were very apprehensive about these exaggerated threats and Western politicians subsequently adopted this cautious attitude.

Following the Polish worker strikes of 1988, Western diplomats were beginning to realise that the Polish Communist authorities would be forced to make concessions to the opposition. The events which took place in the entire Soviet bloc, including the mass protests on the streets of Prague in January 1989 and the decision of the Hungarian Communists to allow for a multi-party system to become established in February of the same year, only served to reinforce this belief. For the above reasons, the Western embassies in Poland – especially the US, British and French ones – intensified their interactions with Solidarity activists, organizing numerous conferences, banquets and discussion forums. The objective of these meetings was to find out what a compromise between the Party and the opposition might look like.<sup>1</sup> The pace of the changes that took place in the People's Republic of Poland from the beginning of 1989 had nevertheless come as a surprise to the Western countries. Both Moscow and Washington struggled to adjust their strategy to this new and unprecedented state of affairs. The breakthrough events of the "Autumn of the Peoples" resulted in a phenomenon which was both unusual and rather unexpected: the dividing lines between the Polish government and opposition which hitherto shaped the views of the Western diplomats became blurred. The opposition was gradually rising to power, making numerous visits abroad and, significantly with respect to certain issues such as the economy, began to adopt the same viewpoint and proposals as the Communist authorities. For the West, the Solidarity movement was beginning to take the position of an active player in the ruthless game of international relations. At the same time, the commencement of dialogue between the Polish

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) Archives [hereinafter referred to as AIPN], 1585/3900, Day report: diplomats and correspondents of capitalist states, 28 VIII 1988, 74–76.

Communist regime and the Solidarity movement fostered the development of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of Poland and Western democracies, despite the prevailing mood of uncertainty – even anxiety – as to the way the future would unfold.

*Round Table talks (February-April 1989)*

Throughout 1989, Washington – the most significant player for both the Communist government and Solidarity – was attempting to adjust its strategy to the rapidly shifting political situation in the People's Republic of Poland. In his memoirs, George Bush referred to this strategy as that of a “responsible catalyst”<sup>2</sup> for democratic change, economic reform, and opposition rights, etc. In this case, “responsible” meant intending “to avoid confrontation”. In reality, the US diplomatic strategy in the first six months of the Bush administration, commencing in January 1989, is considered to be a passive and conservative one by some researchers. This relative detachment could have been the result of the fact that the changes taking place in Poland – the commencement of dialogue between the authorities and the opposition in February 1989 and the subsequent decision to allow them to participate in the governing process – were proceeding just as Washington would have wanted them to; the long-standing objectives of the US Eastern European policy were thus becoming a reality without any intervention on its part. Furthermore, in the very first months of his tenure, Bush requested that Ronald Reagan's policies be thoroughly revised. The resulting preoccupation with the process of shaping the concept of their future strategies meant that US diplomats could not devote as much resources to analysing the events taking place in Poland at that time. This fact caused a certain irritation among Washington's allies within NATO. There is still disagreement among researchers and witnesses of the era as to whether this newly adopted stance in US policy was merely the result of a certain impotence and lack of ideas on how to react to the upheaval taking place within the Eastern Bloc, or perhaps a sign of a deliberate strategy. Contrary to popular belief, Bush's policies were not a simple extension of those of his predecessor. In terms of foreign policy, he chose to adopt a softer stance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bush, George, and Brent Scowcroft, (1998) *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 117.

<sup>3</sup> The first of these two views is supported, among others, by the Reagan-era secretary of state George Shultz, directing his criticism in particular at the disorientation on the part of the CIA, James A. Baker, as well as Robert Gates, albeit in an inconsistent manner [Shultz, George P., *Turmoil and Triumph. My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner, 1993), 864; Baker, James A., *The Politics of Diplomacy. Revolution, War and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York: Easton Press 1995), 68; Gates, Robert M., *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 449, 460–461, 483]. A less critical view on this administration can be found in: Rice, Condoleezza, and Philip Zelikov, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed. A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Hutchings, Robert L., *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*

The decision to commence the Round Table talks held during the dramatic session of the Central Committee between 1988 and 1989 was welcomed by Washington, although its enthusiasm was definitely of a cautious variety. Washington's first reaction appeared on January 23, 1989 in the form of a statement made by a White House spokesperson. This stated that the US administration preferred to wait and see how the events in Poland would develop, although the US Ambassador in Warsaw, John R. Davis, was attempting to convince his political masters that the negotiations were bound to succeed. In response to the onset of talks between the Communist authorities and the opposition forces, Bush announced the commencement of work on the financial aid programme for Poland. Such a statement amounted to no less than a total reversal of the former policy of economic sanctions, although these declarations were yet to be followed by specific action. As the Round Table talks continued and an agreement seemed to draw closer, US Ambassador Davis was beginning to make bolder proposals to his superiors in Washington as regard the further steps to be taken. He believed that an agreement "would bring Poland closer to genuine democracy than any of us could ever have expected. [...] This could bring about the breakthrough that we have been striving to achieve for 40 years, perhaps even longer". Contrary to his own assurances that his country does not engage in interventionist policies of any kind, he triumphantly announced that: "we have played a key role in making these negotiations happen."<sup>4</sup> The Department of State took a more restrained stance. Henryk Szlajfer, a Polish opposition activist, observed, "the fear that events would spin out of control was deeply entrenched in the consciousness of American leaders and political strategists".<sup>5</sup> Since decisive economic reform was still nowhere in sight, the idea of financial aid for Poland was seen with scepticism in

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(Washington: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). The soft stance adopted by George Bush is emphasized, among others, by George Shultz (Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 1138).

<sup>4</sup> Cyphertext message no. 2310/I from Washington, 13 II 1989. In Szlajfer, Henryk, ed., (2008) *Ku wielkiej zmianie. Korespondencja między Ambasadą PRL w Waszyngtonie a Ministerstwem Spraw Zagranicznych, styczeń–październik 1989* [Towards great change. Correspondence between the People's Republic of Poland Embassy in Washington and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January—October 1989] (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2008), 64–65; Cyphertext message no. 2891/I from Washington, 23 II 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 70–71; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Department, 6 II 1989. In Domber, Gregory F., ed., *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”. Korespondencja Ambasady USA w Warszawie z Departamentem Stanu, styczeń–wrzesień 1989* [Towards the triumph of Solidarity. Correspondence between the US Embassy in Warsaw and the State Department, January – September 1989] (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2006), 66–69; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 7 III 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 115–119; AIPN, 0449/53, vol. 2, Note of the People's Republic of Poland embassy in Washington from the meeting with a group of members of the US House of Representatives, 10 III 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 88–90.

<sup>5</sup> Szlajfer, Henryk, "Introduction". In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 12.

Washington, even though the agreement made on April 6 which concluded the Round Table talks was considered a positive outcome. It was understood that the change of position with respect to Poland could no longer be delayed. On April 5, Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman, issued a statement in which he declared, *inter alia*, that: “seven years ago, Americans have lit their candles in support of liberty for Poland in the hope that the darkness of repression would one day disperse. Today, the Solidarity movement signed Agreements that will allow it to operate legally once again and to take the place it deserves in the Polish public life”. On April 7, Bush made a reference to the situation in Poland during his press conference, stating that the Polish Round Table talks were a positive event.<sup>6</sup>

On April 17 – the day on which the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” was made legal once again – Bush made a far more significant speech in Hamtramck – a district of the city of Detroit populated mostly by Americans of Polish descent. He announced a new programme of US policy for Poland, divided into eight items. Under this “Polish package”, the People’s Republic of Poland would be admitted into the American Generalized System of Preferences in international trade, US investments in Poland would be covered by an insurance system and an intergovernmental agreement on private economic activity would be concluded. Additionally, businesses would be encouraged to buy out Polish debts, developments would be made in the field of educational, training and cultural activities and efforts would be taken to facilitate the settlement of Polish debts with respect to the Paris Club (the members of which were creditors of the People’s Republic of Poland).<sup>7</sup> He referred to the Round Table Agreement as a historic, breakthrough achievement that constituted a great opportunity for Poland. In his words, this agreement bore the testimony of the “unbreakable spirit of the Polish nation”, the “strength and wisdom of [Solidarity leader] Lech Wałęsa”, but also of the “realistic approach of general Jaruzelski” and the “spiritual leadership of the Church”. The only thing that was missing was the promise of greater loans, something that was a deep disappointment to the Polish authorities. Furthermore, Bush stated that the aforementioned eight-part programme would only be implemented if reform was allowed to take root and if the obligations assumed during the Round Table talks were complied with. In the brief directive of May 8 entitled “Actions to Respond to Polish Roundtable Agreement”,

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<sup>6</sup> Message of the State Secretariat to the US embassy in Warsaw, 11 III 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu “Solidarności”*, 120–122; Radiotelegram no. 228 SL. 980 from Washington, 5 IV 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 91–92; Telefax from Washington, 7 IV 1989; Cyphertext message no. 558/II from Washington, 7 IV 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 102–103.

<sup>7</sup> Janicka, Barbara, Herman-Łukasik, Anna and Szczepanik, Krzysztof, eds., *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski. Informator Tom I: Europa 1918–2006* [Poland’s diplomatic relations. Informer Vol. I: Europe 1918 – 2006] (Warsaw: Askon, 2008), 182; Message of the State Secretariat to the US embassy in Warsaw, 17 IV 1989. In *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”...*, 170–173; Cyphertext message no. 1032/II from Washington, 17 IV 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 112–114.

Bush reiterated his views on the subject.<sup>8</sup> But in spite of all the limitations involved, the speech from April 17 demonstrated that the US government had finally decided upon a shift in its diplomatic stance towards Poland and had given the Polish people a helping hand – if only conditionally and to a limited extent. In London, the commencement of Round Table talks was greeted – as everywhere in the West – with satisfaction and widespread support. On February 10, this position was expressed in an official statement of the British government. The unprecedented nature of the Polish experiment was acknowledged. The British outlook on the future was optimistic, although only cautiously so, as the Polish ambassador in London Zbigniew Gertych emphasized. In a less official capacity, the Foreign Office noted the lack of proportion between political and economic reforms that was already evident at the negotiation stage. This was a notable change in stance – where before the most important Western countries would withhold economic aid due to insufficient level of democratic reforms, now it was placing an increasing emphasis on the problem of absence of economic change. The compromise achieved through the Round Table Talks was considered by UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as “a very serious step in the right direction” which, however, needed to be “reaffirmed in everyday political practice”. The Foreign Office added that the most significant achievement of the agreement is the legalization of the political opposition that forms “a fundamental principle of democracy”.

It also stated, however, that Solidarity had to prove its loyalty and constructive approach.<sup>9</sup> A wait-and-see attitude had therefore prevailed. Where once, everyone had waited for the Round Table talks itself, now all significant decisions would be suspended until the contemplated elections had taken place.

At the beginning of 1989, the relations between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany had also intensified. This, however, did not mean that the traditional causes of tensions between the two countries, such as the activities of the so-called German “revisionists” and the status of the German minority in Poland, would no longer matter. As a consequence, the visits of Bush or French President François Mitterrand that took place in 1989 in Poland were set up reasonably quickly and efficiently; a similar visit by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl faced a growing number of problems and delays. At the time of the “Autumn of the Peoples”, the FRG diplomats were also forced to take into account another issue which, to them, was still

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<sup>8</sup> Domber, Gregory F., “Solidarity’s Coming Victory: Big or Too Big. Poland’s Revolution as Seen from the US Embassy,” Accessed June 11, 2012, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20010405>; Cyphertext messages no. 1031/II and 1032/II from Washington, 17 IV 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 112–116.

<sup>9</sup> The Archive of the Ministry of International Affairs (MSZ) [hereinafter referred to as: AMSZ], Incoming messages – London, 24/91, vol. 12, Cyphertext message no. 2268/I from London, 13 II 1989, 64–63; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 3864/I from London, 14 III 1989, 113–112; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 589/II from London, 11 IV 1989, 153–152; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 638/II from London, 12 IV 1989, 157–158; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 805/II from London, 21 IV 1989, 183b–183a.



a top priority: the increasingly complex situation in the German Democratic Republic and the possibility of unification between the two German states, which was now becoming more and more likely.

In January 1989, Communist PM Mieczysław Rakowski arrived in Bonn. On February 9, during a meeting with secondary school students from Poland, Kohl spoke favourably of the commencement of the Round Table talks. It was, in his view, the evidence of a political fresh start in Poland without which economic growth would never become possible. Officially, however, neither the FRG government nor any German political parties made any statement in connection with the onset of talks. The wait-and-see attitude that had already appeared elsewhere was adopted once more. Nevertheless, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs had, in the course of its contacts with the Polish embassy in Cologne, made indirect references to the fact that it was at the initiative of the FRG that the European foreign ministers issued a statement on February 14 in Madrid welcoming the commencement of negotiations. The Round Table Agreement itself was considered a historic event. The responsible approach to politics on the part of both the opposition and the Communist authorities drew universal praise, although everyone waited for the agreement to be fully implemented and for the People's Republic of Poland to finally embrace democracy. On April 4, at the time where the final Round Table talks were taking place in Poland, Kohl met with Mitterrand. The announcement made following that meeting was laconic at best. The only things it contained were promises as well as words of appreciation and support for the Polish experiment. What everyone was waiting for, however, were its results.<sup>10</sup>

In Paris, the overall mood was not dissimilar. Following the commencement of the Round Table talks, French politicians made numerous assurances of their support for the changes that were taking place in Poland. Prime Minister Michel Rocard called the Round Table experiment “optimal and courageous”, while Roland Dumas, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, noted the breakthrough in mutual relations, as evidenced by the preparations for the visit of Mitterrand to Poland, scheduled for June 1989. The significant interest in the results of the Polish experiment, however, was accompanied by fears of increasing radicalism, both on the part of Solidarity and the Polish United Worker's Party. Kohl and Mitterrand's joint statement, although hardly specific, was unique in that it ended a long period of differences in the policies of both governments with respect to the Jaruzelski regime and the Solidarity movement, even though it brought no detailed proposals for the future. In the middle of April, during his visit to Warsaw, Dumas expressed the “satisfaction of France that Poland embarked upon the journey towards democracy ... owing to the wisdom and courage

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<sup>10</sup> Bingen, Dieter, (1998) “Helmut Kohls Polenpolitik”, *Die politische Meinung* 349 (1998): 30; AMSZ, Incoming messages – Cologne, 24/91, vol. 10, Cyphertext message no. 2240/I from Cologne, 10 II 1989, 108–107; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 2569/I from Cologne, 17 II 1989, 125–124; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 2353/I from Cologne, 13 II 1989, 114–113; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 620/II from Cologne, 12 IV 1989, 316–315; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 730/II from Cologne, 13 IV 1989, 317.

of the Polish government and the leaders of the Solidarity movement”.<sup>11</sup> It was the first open statement of support that equally praised the ruling party and the “second” Solidarity. The dividing lines between the government and the opposition were beginning to blur. As regards other countries, the role of Italy in the events of 1989 was rather limited. The same applies to the Vatican, which was not as active in an official political capacity as it had been at the time of introduction of martial law in Poland. At the same time, it continued to operate – at least to some extent – through the Polish Episcopate, which had successfully taken upon itself the function of mediator in the talks held between the authorities and the opposition.

In the first half of the year, the diplomatic interactions between Warsaw and the Holy See were dominated by the final negotiations concerning the complete normalization in mutual relations. The events taking place in Poland at that time acted as a catalyst for this process, with both parties being prepared to make concessions. Both Rome and the Vatican welcomed the onset of the Round Table talks with genuine satisfaction. The Pope urged for an agreement to be reached as soon as possible, in the atmosphere of moderation and solemnity. The considerate approach of both Wałęsa and Rakowski was praised, with emphasis being placed on the mediatory role of the Polish Catholic Church. Additionally, it has been pointed out that the Soviet government expressed a certain amount of support for the reforms taking place in Poland – the first-ever interview with Wałęsa in the Soviet press, which appeared at that time, was seen as an important move – up to then Solidarity’s leader was systematically criticized by Soviet propaganda. On April 5, political circles in both Italy and the Vatican emphasized the historic significance of the Round Table Agreements and their importance for Europe as a whole. Concerns were expressed at this stage as to the future of the Polish model of governance (and, in the wider perspective, the Soviet model).<sup>12</sup>

The significance of the changes taking place in Poland was also been noted in other countries and international institutions. In February 1989, René Falber, the Swiss minister of foreign affairs, arrived in Warsaw, accompanied by his Swedish counterpart, Sten Andersson. At the beginning of March, a European Parliament delegation made a visit to Poland, while the Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens

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<sup>11</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – Paris, 24/91, vol. 17, Cyphertext message no. 2457/I from Paris, 15 II 1989, 111; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 2460/I from Paris, 15 II 1989, 112; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 4129/I from Paris, 17 III 1989, 175–174; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 4002/I from Paris, 15 III 1989, 167–166; Gebert, Konstanty, *Magia słów. Polityka francuska wobec Polski po 13 grudnia 1981* [The magic of words. French policy with respect to Poland after December 13, 1981] (London: Aneks, 1991), 83–85. The broader proposition that the events of the European Autumn of the Peoples have resulted in the reinforcement of cooperation between Western states within NATO and the EEC requires further research.

<sup>12</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – Rome, 24/91, vol. 19, Cyphertext message no. 1747/I from Rome, 2 II 1989, 97; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 327/II from Rome, 6 IV 1989, 273–272; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 640/II from Rome, 12 IV 1989, 295–294.

visited between March 28 and April 2. It was also at the beginning of March that the Council of Europe (membership of which the People's Republic of Poland sought to obtain) granted the European Human Rights Award to Wałęsa. The EEC issued a special announcement on the Round Table Talks on April 6. In May, Alois Mock, the vice-chancellor and head of the ministry of foreign affairs of Austria, arrived in Cracow with an unofficial visit.<sup>13</sup>

The most significant of all reactions of international institutions to the Round Table talks came from the NATO North Atlantic Council session on the situation in Poland held on April 14 and convened by the US. The session was opened by Thomas Simons, a US State Department official, who emphasized the immense significance of the Round Table Agreement for both the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Poland and the relations between East and West. This agreement became an unexpected "triumph of political responsibility and wisdom of all political groups in Poland" and – even more importantly – a triumph of "endurance, courage and wisdom of the Solidarity movement". Simons noted that April 5 marked the end of an era for Western diplomacy in its relationship with Poland. For many years, promises of economic aid were made in exchange for liberalization. Activists of the Solidarity movement made increasingly frequent calls for this aid to be provided. And now, as "the Round Table ushered them [Poles] closer to democracy and further away from communism which we know and which we have always stood against", the time had come to consider the realization of these promises – doing otherwise would result in a loss of credibility. Likewise, Simons also remarked: "we have no interest in economic relations which only serve as a crutch for the inefficient economies of Eastern Europe".<sup>14</sup> In spite of all its limitations, this statement could be considered as a breakthrough moment in the approach of western diplomacies with respect to Poland as well as the very first attempt at an international response to the new reality that emerged in this country, putting into practice the long-standing demands of the West which mostly concerned the legalization of the Solidarity movement and the commencement of economic reforms. The discussions that followed this presentation concentrated on preparing a unified NATO response to the Round Table Agreement. It was generally agreed that since the People's Republic of Poland had, to a significant

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<sup>13</sup> Janicka, Herman-Łukasik, Szczepanik, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski*, 27, 416, 426; The „Solidarity” Archives (Gdańsk), the Helsinki Committee in Poland no. 1, Press announcement, 3 III 1989, unsigned; Cyphertext message no. 2854k of the Press and Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 IV 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 81–82; Message from John Kornblum to the State Secretariat with respect to the North Atlantic Council debate concerning the response for Poland, 14 IV 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 161–169; AMSZ, Incoming messages – Rome, 24/91, vol. 19, Cyphertext message no. 2431/I from Rome, 15 II 1989, 123.

<sup>14</sup> Message from John Kornblum, deputy US representative with NATO, to the State Department, concerning the speech of Thomas Simons made during the North Atlantic Council session, 14 IV 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 151–160.

extent, decided to comply with the demands of the West, a clear response was now necessary. However, no agreement was reached as to the form thereof, and therefore no specific actions were defined at that stage.<sup>15</sup>

*Parliamentary elections campaign in Poland (April - June 1989)*

Once the Round Table talks came to an end, Poland plunged into campaign fever, with foreign diplomats watching anxiously. As the June elections drew closer and the campaign began to radicalize, the strategy adopted by the Western states with respect to both the Solidarity movement and the Communist authorities began to shift as well, taking on a fascinating new direction of softer rhetoric and offering a few turnarounds along the way, some of them rather unexpected. This tendency is perfectly demonstrated by the US government's approach. US Ambassador Davis had a profound understanding of the situation in Poland. As early as April 19, he predicted a significant victory for Solidarity candidates and a total failure of the governing party. On June 2 he made a very accurate estimate of possible election results, suggesting that the Communist party might count on a few seats in the Senate at most. In the same message Davis also stated, however, that a total victory of Solidarity candidates could result in a "radical defence reaction on the part of the regime", caused by a "legislative and constitutional crisis" as well as shock stemming from the failure at the polls. He was concerned about the possibility of the reformist camp within the Party – its reputation compromised by the election fiasco – being obliterated, which could lead to another "military coup d'état" or even "civil war". In the ambassador's view, the opposition was not yet prepared to take power, while the Communists were not yet prepared to let it go.<sup>16</sup>

The rapid developments in Poland thus caused deep concerns within the US government. The enthusiasm stirred by democratic change rapidly gave way to consternation and fears that the compromise reached at the Round Table talks may now be disrupted. In the slightly exaggerated view of American historian Gregory F. Domber, Washington – alarmed by the radical new turn of events and fearing the

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<sup>15</sup> Message from John Kornblum to the State Secretariat with respect to the North Atlantic Council debate concerning the response for Poland, 14 IV 1989 . In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 161–169.

<sup>16</sup> National Security Archive [hereinafter referred to as: NSA], NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 19 IV 1989, unsigned; Ibid. Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 2 VI 1989, unsigned; Ibid. Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 2 VI 1989, unsigned; Ibid. Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 19 IV 1989, unsigned; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 19 IV 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 179–187; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 18 V 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 220–225; Domber, *Solidarity's Coming Victory*; Garlicki, Andrzej, "Rozgrzane łącza," [Communication overload], *Polityka* 45 (2009).

possibility of chaos and the potential reactions of Communist die-hards and Soviet extremists which might ensue – withdrawn from its previous role of “responsible catalyst”, transforming into a “reluctant inhibitor”.<sup>17</sup> As George Bush recalled: “I did not want to encourage a violent upheaval which could spin out of control”.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of May, Jacek Kuroń, one of the leaders of Solidarity, arrived in the US. During his meeting with Bush he urged the president to provide financial support to his “ruined” country – a request which was in line with the proposals raised by the Communist authorities.<sup>19</sup> In his conversation with Simons he mentioned what he termed as a vicious circle: The West, in his view, withheld the aid until the economic conditions in Poland stabilized, which, however, would only be possible if foreign capital began to flow in. Simons remained unconvinced; he decided to wait, following the approach he had taken with the Polish government officials. He emphasized that the United States “have no set recipes” and that “the Poles from both camps exhibit a tendency to imagine that America has resources of mythical proportions”; nevertheless, “no manna shall fall from the heavens”. Three weeks later, another opposition leader followed in Kuroń’s footsteps – this time, it was Bronisław Geremek. He held numerous meetings, including sessions with the officials from the US administration. He stated that he arrived in the US to bolster the campaign efforts there; as far as financial issues were concerned, his stance also mirrored that of the Communist government. “If there’s democracy, there’s aid” – summed up *Gazeta Wyborcza* (The Electoral Gazette), a new, independent Polish daily newspaper, referring to the economic talks held by Geremek.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, on May 3, the Americans decided to express their unequivocal approval of the invitation sent to Bush by Jaruzelski at the beginning of the year. July was agreed upon as the month of the visit.<sup>21</sup> The position of the Western states with respect to the issue of economic aid – an issue that was considered paramount by both Solidarity and the Communists – did not differ greatly from the stance adopted by the US at that time. The pace of change in Poland astonished and troubled the British government and the greatest cause for concern was the possible Soviet reaction. London declared that the relationship with the opposition would strengthen, but there was to be no meddling in

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<sup>17</sup> Domber.

<sup>18</sup> Bush and Scowcroft, 50.

<sup>19</sup> “Kuroń u Busha,” [Kuroń meets Bush] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 8, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> “Będzie demokracja, będzie pomoc,” [If there’s democracy, there’s aid] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 24, 1989; Message of the State Secretariat to the US embassy in Warsaw, 21 IV 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 199–202.

<sup>21</sup> Urgent note of the under-secretary of state in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the visit of president George Bush in Poland, 3 V 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 122–124; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 4 V 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 205–206. During the same month secretary of state James A. Baker has visited Moscow, making a rather vague declaration of the intent to move beyond the policy of containment, see Gorbachev, Mikhail, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 501.

the internal affairs of the People's Republic of Poland and the possibility that the prevailing mood may become more radical still caused much anxiety.<sup>22</sup>

The Germans remained equally cautious, although some Bundestag deputies, mostly members of the SPD, raised funds for the electoral campaign of the Solidarity movement.<sup>23</sup> The comments made by the French government in relation to the Polish election campaign were similarly restrained, which does not mean that these events generated no interest or that no praise was uttered with respect to the announcement of elections and the legalization of Solidarity. The role played by the Soviet Union was also appreciated in Paris; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its contacts with the Polish embassy, made subtle enquiries as to whether the mounting crisis in the Soviet Union (including ethnic tensions) might hinder *perestroika* and cause the “highly advanced democratization processes in Poland” to grind to a halt. On May 10, 1989, Wałęsa received the Council of Europe award in Strasbourg. His visit was highly publicized by the mass media that elevated it to an event of considerable significance. The leader of Solidarity, both during the meeting with Council commissions and in the course of the press conference, emphasized the significance of the Round Table talks and the onset of democratic change as well as the role of Solidarity in these events. In line with the priorities of the government of the People's Republic of Poland, he pointed out the need for the West to support Poland economically and he even expressed his full support for Gorbachev.<sup>24</sup> In these times the Solidarity leaders were aware of the West's caution and were therefore keen to present a moderate face. Between April 19 and April 22, 1989, a delegation of Solidarity representatives (led by Lech Wałęsa, Bronisław Geremek and Tadeusz Mazowiecki) visited Rome and the Vatican. Although this particular visit was related to the matters of the Catholic Church and the trade unions, it is worth noting that for the first time since 1982 the delegates no longer represented the illegal Solidarity movement, but an officially operating “electoral party”. The arrival of the Polish delegates placed the Holy See in a delicate position: on one hand it did not want to anger the Communists during the election campaign in Poland, on the other hand – it wanted to bolster the moderate wing of the Solidarity movement in its confrontation with the critics amongst opposition activists. It was perhaps for the above reasons that the Pope made a snap decision to grant an audience – just before the meeting with the Polish delegates – to

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<sup>22</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – London, 24/91, vol. 12, Cyphertext message no. 1768/II from London, 2 V 1989, 209; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 3012/II from London, 24 V 1989, 250

<sup>23</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – Cologne, 24/91, vol. 10, Cyphertext message no. 2644/II from Cologne, 18 V 1989, 485; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 4207/II from Cologne, 16 VI 1989, 606

<sup>24</sup> “Europejska nagroda dla Wałęsy,” [European Prize for Wałęsa] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 10, 1989; AMSZ, Incoming messages – Paris, 24/91, vol. 17, Cyphertext message no. 816/II from Paris, 14 IV 1989, 261–260; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 2389/II from Paris, 12 V 1989, 314–313.

Józef Czyrek, a member of the Politburo who had arrived in Rome with a message from Jaruzelski.<sup>25</sup> And so the campaign moved into the papal chambers.

*June: The electoral shock*

It may come as a surprise to learn that the overwhelming victory of the Solidarity movement in the semi-democratic parliamentary elections in June met with mixed reactions among Western diplomats. One should not forget that the Polish elections happened at the same time as the student massacre on the Tiananmen Square in Beijing on June 3 and 4, 1989. These two antithetical events epitomized the dawn of a new reality that transgressed the boundaries of the Cold War. Between the first and the second round of the elections (14 – 16 June) the French-Polish relations of the Communist era reached a symbolic climax marked by the visit of Mitterrand. Since Poland was gripped by election fever at the time, this event failed to dominate the public attention. The French president made efforts to mitigate the consequences of the electoral failure of the governing party, praising its wisdom and responsibility. And while at an earlier stage he made indirect remarks which questioned the sense of the post-Yalta order in Europe, for example at the conference held in May to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Council of Europe, now he was primarily concerned with the possible loss of stability on the continent, which prompted him to toughen his stance. He was reluctant to have any dealings with the Solidarity movement whatsoever, declining an interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, although he did meet with Wałęsa in Gdansk and laid flowers at the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers. In general, his comments on the Communist authorities were more favourable than those on the opposition.<sup>26</sup> This was perhaps the result of his “limited confidence” tactics with respect to Poland and the uncertainty as to the international geopolitical situation. Mitterrand’s cautious stance exemplified the new political approach adopted by most Western states in response to the overwhelming success of Solidarity in the June parliamentary elections. There was a mixed reaction to the electoral results from the international diplomats. The fact that the opposition succeeded was well received, but the scale of that success that gave rise to concerns. There were fears of a severe political crisis, an escalation in both social and international tensions and perhaps even Soviet invasion, despite the fact that Gorbachev had suggested that the Brezhnev doctrine could be abandoned in July 1989 during his visit in Strasbourg. Thus there was a shift in the approach taken by Western diplomats from open support for the

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<sup>25</sup> Frybes, Marcin, *Dziękujemy za solidarność = Merci pour votre solidarité!* [Thank you for the Solidarity!] (Warsaw: Instytut im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2005), 102/103; AMSZ, Incoming messages – Rome, 24/91, vol. 20, Cyphertext message no. 642/II from Rome, 12 IV 1989, 297; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 1228/II from Rome, 20 IV 1989, 334–333.

<sup>26</sup> “Rada Europy: otwarcie na Wschód,” The Council of Europe: opening to the East], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, May 10, 1989; Mérétić, Gabriel, *Noc generała* [The night of the general] (Warsaw: Alfa, 1989), 87–88, 258.

Solidarity movement, to a more cautious wait-and-see attitude. Soon, calls for moderation emerged, and there were even cases where support was given to the Communist government in order to “maintain the balance”. As Domber points out, the US government (and with them, the remaining NATO member states) started to inhibit Solidarity's rise to power, defending the terms of the Round Table Agreement that they perceived as a guarantee of gradual, secure transformation.<sup>27</sup>

As it witnessed the defeat of the government and the resounding success of the opposition, the US administration began to fear that the Solidarity movement, drunk with power, might want to take complete control of the country. These projections remained concealed beneath official and semi-official comments of respect for the election results that, on the surface, emphasized the crucial significance of this moment and the immense success of Solidarity. In addition, a certain anxiety lurked beneath the official expressions of exhilaration. Responding directly to the results in the first round of Polish elections, Bush stated “Poland has taken a turn towards freedom and democracy”.<sup>28</sup> On June 5, Margaret Tutwiler, spokeswoman for the State Department, described these election results as a “historical step” towards democracy while Davis wrote of a “deafening blow to the current government”. At the same time, however, he proposed to the State Department “since it is both in our interest and in the interest of Solidarity that reform-oriented factions within the Party are not eliminated [...], giving way to the hardliners who have opposed the Round Table, I would insist that Radio Free Europe and Voice of America avoid any forms of ridicule with respect to what is, it must be admitted, a trick.” This solution perfectly illustrates the ambiguity in the approach adopted by US diplomats and the rather unconvincing idea to save the national electoral list comprising of Communist leaders that had failed to attract the sufficient number of votes.<sup>29</sup> Thus, both the Solidarity leaders and the US government lent a helping hand to the Communist top brass. In the weeks that followed, the squabbles over the election of Jaruzelski for president, which had been informally agreed upon between the two sides, gave rise to a significant amount of concern. Paradoxically, the US government now started to support the Jaruzelski candidacy, fearing that his defeat might lead to the collapse of the fragile equilibrium that had emerged following the Round Table talks.<sup>30</sup> This resulted in a remarkable situation where the US government, which in 1981 had severely condemned General Jaruzelski's rise to power, was now, eight years later, lending him discreet support in his march towards the presidential seat. This support

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<sup>27</sup> Domber, *Solidarity's Coming Victory*; Hutchings, *American Diplomacy*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> “Zachód o wyborach w Polsce,” [The West on the Polish elections], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 6, 1989..

<sup>29</sup> Cyphertext message no. 3601/II from Washington, 5 VI 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 141–142; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 6 VI 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 251–254; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 7 VI 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 255–257.

<sup>30</sup> NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 6 VI 1989, unsigned.



manifested itself in tangible and rather unusual ways. On June 22, Davis held a lunch with unspecified Solidarity leaders. In the course of the talks that ensued, he demonstrated how the presidential vote could be quietly manipulated so that the general could be successfully elected in the end.<sup>31</sup>

Despite these ambiguous tendencies, the Bush visit took place as planned between July 9 and July 11, 1989. The visit was a new and symbolic beginning in Polish – US relations.<sup>32</sup> During his stay in Poland, the president held private talks with both Wałęsa and Jaruzelski. In Warsaw he laid flowers at the Umschlagplatz, while in Gdansk he paid tribute to the defenders of the Westerplatte and visited the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers, where, despite the efforts of the Communist authorities, he made a speech, accompanied by Wałęsa. He concentrated on the issues of democratization, human rights and the peaceful reintegration of Europe, declaring his support to the Polish reforms. With respect to the economic issues – which were of the greatest importance to the Poles – Bush still maintained the cautious stance first formulated in Hamtramck. During his historic speech during the joint session of the Sejm and Senate both Wałęsa and Jaruzelski took their seats in the first row. One week later, Jaruzelski was elected president by a majority of one vote. Bush's visit played a crucial role in this development as he urged the general to run for the presidency in the course of his meeting at the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw. Domber opined that this was in fact Bush's main objective.<sup>33</sup> Directly after his visit to Poland, Bush travelled to Hungary and then to Paris to attend the G7 session that was of immense importance to the Poles. Even if the visit to Poland was no breakthrough in itself, it formed the basis of important decisions that were adopted in Paris. Speaking to the representatives of the world's wealthiest states, Bush called for financial aid and debt restructuring for both Poland and Hungary. His allies approved

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<sup>31</sup> Domber, *Solidarity's Coming Victory*; NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 23 VI 1989, unsigned; Statement of the position of the United States during the NATO Political Committee session concerning the situation in Poland, 22 VI 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 267–269; Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 28 VI 1989. In In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 279–286.

<sup>32</sup> “Mówi prezydent Bush,” [President Bush speaking] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 3, 1989.

<sup>33</sup> Dalos, György, *Der Vorhang geht auf. Das Ende der Diktaturen in Osteuropa* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009); Domber, *Solidarity's Coming Victory*; “Zachód o wizycie Busha,” [Western comments on the Bush visit], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 10, 1989; NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 27 VI 1989, unsigned; Mérétik, G. Noc generała..., 244, 258; Frybes, *Dziękujemy za solidarność*, 104; Message of the State Secretariat to US embassy in Brussels [sic], 2 IX 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 385–391; Urgent note of the minister of foreign affairs on the visit of president George Bush in Poland, 19 V 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 130–136; Cyphertext message no. 0-607/III from Washington, 13 VII 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 174–176; Urgent note of the minister of foreign affairs on the visit of president George Bush in Poland, 18 VII 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 177–197.

this initiative and launched an international coordinated aid effort for Poland and Hungary. The G7 initiative was quickly taken over by the EEC. On July 17, EEC Foreign Ministers approved an urgent food aid programme for Poland and Hungary for the various ministers in charge of agriculture to implement. Furthermore, foreign ministers reached an agreement to place an emphasis on the interdependence between aid and the democratization of social and political life, a constant dogma of Western diplomacy.<sup>34</sup> In spite of this, a new era of economic and financial relations between Poland and the West was already beginning as evidenced by the Paris EEC summit held in November 1989, where it was decided, inter alia, that a stabilization fund for Poland would be established.<sup>35</sup> The shock of the June elections came only a few days before the visit of Jaruzelski to Belgium on July 9 – 10 and London on July 10 – 11. The British diplomats perceived the election results as a resounding success for the Solidarity movement. In a special statement, the Foreign Office declared: “for the very first time, the Polish parliament will have an authentic opposition. We hope that this amounts to a decisive first step towards democracy”.<sup>36</sup> The defeat of the Communist authorities was considered to be the result of deep frustration within Polish society. Just like in Washington, however, there were fears of radicalism, and therefore Solidarity leaders were praised for their moderate rhetoric and emphasis was placed on the need to uphold the stipulated compromise and the evolutionary nature of the changes which were about to take place. In short, Solidarity was urged to take upon the role of a constructive opposition.<sup>37</sup>

It should come as no surprise that these issues were bound to surface in the course of the general’s visit, which proceeded as planned despite the elections. Journalists asked the general about the future of Poland, in particular, the Polish United Worker’s Party and his own plans. It was still too early for the general’s presidency to be treated as the primary issue in the talks with British hosts. When Jaruzelski announced that he would not run for president at the beginning of July, British diplomats were both surprised and concerned. According to Ambassador Gertych, the election victory of the general was considered the crucial condition for the success of the Polish reforms. The subsequent positive election results were therefore well received and seen as another step away from the previous political

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<sup>34</sup> Message of the State Secretariat to the US embassy in Warsaw, 25 VII 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 325–329; see Cyphertext message no. 0-868/III from Washington, 19 VII 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 198–200; AMSZ, Incoming messages – London, 24/91, vol. 12, Cyphertext message no. 0-992/III from London, 21 VII 1989, 341–340.

<sup>35</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – Paris, 24/91, vol. 18, Cyphertext message no. 0-2421/IV from Paris, 22 XI 1989, 758–757.

<sup>36</sup> Janicka, Herman-Łukasik, Szczepanik, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski*, 43, 492; “Zachód o wyborach w Polsce,” [The West on the Polish elections] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 6, 1989.

<sup>37</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – London, 24/91, vol. 12, Cyphertext message no. 3799/II from London, 8 VI 1989, 279; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 4190/II from London, 15 VI 1989, 286.

impasse. On July 22 a special message was sent to the new Polish president by Thatcher, in which she expressed her satisfaction and best wishes for the future. Once again, the Solidarity movement received praise in London for its realism and moderate approach.<sup>38</sup>

French diplomats perceived General Jaruzelski's presidential odyssey in a similar manner. Both before and after the July G7 summit, the French urged the election of the general, citing the support of Bush, Mitterrand and Gorbachev for his candidacy. Diplomatic pressure was also exerted on the Solidarity movement. Geremek, who arrived in Paris at the personal invitation of President Mitterrand to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French Revolution, expressed Solidarity's views concerning events in Poland. He was favourable towards the general's candidacy and strongly reiterated calls for financial aid. It is perhaps hard to imagine twenty years later that French and Western diplomats perceived Jaruzelski as a man who could ensure that the situation remained stable and that the process of democratization would be kept within what was then considered safe boundaries.<sup>39</sup>

In comparison with the strategy adopted by the British, the Americans or the French, the course of action adopted by the Germans lagged far behind, as indicated by Kohl's reluctance to make a visit to Warsaw. The German reaction to the remarkable results of the elections – much like in many other countries – was ambiguous. The progress made in the field of politics was appreciated in Bonn where a government spokesman referred to the election victory of the Solidarity movement as “a resounding success which is bound to foster the further development of the democratic process”, although concerns were raised over the future of economic reform in the light of the electoral defeat of the party in power. At the beginning of July, a number of Solidarity delegates led by Geremek made a visit to Bonn. They met with Kohl, among others, who refused to make any unequivocal statement even in the presence of his guests.<sup>40</sup> The relations between the People's Republic of Poland, Italy and the Vatican took on rather different shape, although even there the Solidarity movement's victory gave rise to a certain amount of anxiety. Some diplomats who

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<sup>38</sup> AMSZ, Cyphertext message no. 0-364/III from London, 8 VII 1989, 217–216; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-1039/III from London, 24 VII 1989, 344–343; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-1298/III from London, 28 VII 1989, 351.

<sup>39</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – Paris, 24/91, vol. 17, Cyphertext message no. 0-591/III from Paris, 13 VII 1989, 478–477, Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-691/III from Paris, 15 VII 1989, 485–482, Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-1770/III from Paris, 8 VIII 1989, 550–549.

<sup>40</sup> Bingen, *Helmut Kohls Polenpolitik*, 31; “Zachód o wyborach w Polsce,” [The West on the Polish elections] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 6, 1989; “Szczebel rządowy?,” [Government level?] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 6, 1989; Reiter, Janusz, “RFN chce nam pomóc,” [West Germany wants to help] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 7, 1989; AMSZ, Incoming messages – Cologne, 24/91, vol. 10, Cyphertext message no. 3973/II from Cologne, 12 VI 1989, 588–587; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-339/III from Cologne, 7 VII 1989, 673–672; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-470/III from Cologne, 11 VII 1989, 680–679.

made unofficial remarks concerning the “excessive success” that could demolish the new order agreed upon during the Round Table talks tempered the general mood of jubilation. The Italian policymakers supported the Jaruzelski candidacy in the presidential elections as the essential point in the implementation of the Round Table agreement. Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti stated that such a turn of events was necessary “in order to maintain the necessary internal equilibrium”.<sup>41</sup> Pope John Paul II’s reaction to the election results was rather different: firstly, he made increasing efforts to ensure that Poland received western aid, and secondly, he made a final decision to establish full diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of Poland, despite continuing uncertainty surrounding the situation. Following intense negotiations, both sides agreed that the resumption of diplomatic relations would be announced on July 17 simultaneously in Warsaw and the Vatican.<sup>42</sup> Everything went according to plan, and over a month later, Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk was appointed as the apostolic nuncio.<sup>43</sup> A new era of mutual relations had begun.

*Polish government crisis*

Western diplomats were barely able to catch their breath following the dramatic presidential vote before the parliamentary crisis began in earnest in August of the same year. Contrary to the earlier plans, the Communist majority proved incapable of creating a government due to the mutiny of the so-called “satellite” parties of the Polish United Worker’s Party. The political squabbles in the Polish Sejm attracted the attention of the US government. Wałęsa’s rejection of the concept of a “great coalition” at the beginning of August and the lack of support for the proposed government led by General Kiszczak, head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (events referred to as the Solidarity “step-up”) came as a surprise, even to the knowledgeable Davis. Domber observes that the atmosphere at that time was extremely tense since the US government had no way of knowing how the Soviet government would

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<sup>41</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages – Rome, 24/91, vol. 20, Cyphertext message no. 3726/II from Rome, 7 VI 1989, 423–422; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 3994/II from Rome, 13 VI 1989, 439–438; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-211/III from Rome, 5 VII 1989, 488–487.

<sup>42</sup> “Polska – Watykan,” [Poland – the Vatican], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 17, 1989; AMSZ, Cyphertext message no. 4210/II from Rome, 16 VI 1989, 449–447; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 4686/II from Rome, 27 VI 1989, 467; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 022/III from Rome, 1 VII 1989, 478; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-368/III from Rome, 8 VII 1989, 497; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-352/III from Rome, 8 VII 1989, 495; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-475/III from Rome, 11 VII 1989, 500–498; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-557/III from Rome, 12 VII 1989, 506–505; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-592/III from Rome, 13 VII 1989, 511–510; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-609/III from Rome, 13 VII 1989, 513–512.

<sup>43</sup> “Pierwszy nuncjusz w PRL,” [The first nuncio in the People’s Republic of Poland], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 28, 1989..

behave. The US State Department therefore issued a directive to the ambassador “to do everything in your power to inform the Solidarity leaders, including Wałęsa, that we attach a substantial significance to the continued dialogue with government representatives”.<sup>44</sup>

On August 11, the ambassador met with Kiszczak. The general made it clear that the attempts by the Solidarity movement to rise to power in cooperation with the “satellite” parties was “unacceptable to the long-serving functionaries within the army and the police as well as to the Czechs, the East Germans and the Soviets”. He threatened that the collapse of his government, not even formed, could lead to a disaster. Domber believed that these statements amounted to a “desperate attempt” to convince Washington to discourage the opposition from the idea of forming a government of its own.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the US government, concerned about the ongoing developments, treated general Kiszczak’s words seriously and adopted a defensive stance but it still remained unclear what actions should be taken in this case. The US Embassy in Warsaw received a vague order to “maintain all communication lines” with both Solidarity and the Party.<sup>46</sup> The US State Department, wishing to gain a deeper insight into the situation, requested the US Ambassador in Moscow, Jack F. Matlock, to perform an analysis of the Soviet reaction to the possible emergence of a Solidarity-led government. The response was rather comforting. The ambassador opined that “the Soviet interests in Poland may be satisfied by any government, whether led by Solidarity or not, provided that such government acts for the benefit of internal stability and avoids any anti-Soviet statements”.<sup>47</sup> Washington began to realize that there was no risk of a military intervention. For the above reasons, the US Embassy responded in a calm and positive manner to the compromise reached on August 19, according to which Solidarity politician Mazowiecki was to become prime minister, with the key ministries left to the Communists.<sup>48</sup>

When the government including Communist ministers was finally formed on August 24, the reaction at the US State Department was that of “exhilaration

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<sup>44</sup> Message of the State Secretariat to the US embassy in Warsaw, 12 VIII 1989. In Domber, *Ku zwycięstwu „Solidarności”*, 342; NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 27 VI 1989, unsigned; Ibid. Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 16 VI 1989, unsigned; Domber, *Introduction*, 24.

<sup>45</sup> NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 11 VIII 1989, unsigned; Domber, *Introduction*, 24–25.

<sup>46</sup> NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 12 VIII 1989, unsigned.

<sup>47</sup> NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US embassy in Moscow to the State Secretariat, 16 VIII 1989, unsigned. In the view of Mark Kramer, the USSR has actually “made active efforts to facilitate the collapse of Communist rule in Poland”, Kramer, Mark, “The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 1),” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4 (2004), 200.

<sup>48</sup> NSA, NSAEBB42, Message of the US Embassy in Warsaw to the State Secretariat, 19 VIII 1989, unsigned.

bordering on ecstasy”.<sup>49</sup> However, the official statement made by President Bush on this occasion was cautious in character and apart from assurances of support for the Solidarity movement and reforms; it contained words of appreciation for Jaruzelski.<sup>50</sup> Ever since its inception, the Solidarity movement stood in opposition to the system of government; now, it began to shape this very system on its own. In the light of this historical breakthrough, US and Western diplomats had to make fundamental readjustments to their positions. The strategic concept of *containment* (and subsequently *engagement*) was becoming less and less efficient in dealing with a new geopolitical context of 1989. Washington had to redefine its methods in order to establish a new space for action for American policies in Eastern Europe.<sup>51</sup> The August unrest surrounding the formation of Kiszczak’s government also gave rise to concerns in London where there were fears that Solidarity may not become the constructive opposition that had been bargained for. The stalemate in the new government only served to reinforce the wait-and-see attitude of the British and of the West in general. The laconic statements on the necessity to ensure a swift formation of government as well as the need to take advantage of the space for action left by the policies adopted by the Soviet government served to disguise fears of enraging the “Russian Bear” and the possibility of a political and social crisis in Poland. It was those fears that led to calls for the Solidarity movement to be restrained, regardless of the actual support that the movement attracted. This attitude went as far as to lead to the suspension of the proposal to invite Wałęsa to London. The appointment of Mazowiecki as prime minister placated the prevailing mood and contributed to a shift to a more active British policy. On September 5, 1989, Thatcher submitted letters concerning the economic aid for the People’s Republic of Poland to Bush, Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl and President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors.<sup>52</sup> Relations between British diplomats, Polish Communist authorities and the former opposition were entering a new phase.

The political bickering in Poland gave rise to concerns in Paris as well, with Dumas expressing his anxiety with respect to the resulting situation. He also voiced his surprise at the radicalization of the views held by Wałęsa’s associates – a phenomenon that was not observed during the Mitterrand visit. He asked whether it would be possible to entrust the business of government to the opposition, but leave the key ministries in the hands of the Communists. This, as we now know, was exactly what would later happen. The conciliatory attitude exhibited by Prime Minister Mazowiecki abated these fears somewhat. Mazowiecki spoke of a “great coalition”

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<sup>49</sup> Domber, *Solidarity’s Coming Victory*.

<sup>50</sup> Cyphertext message no. 0-2539/III from Washington, 24 VIII 1989. In Szlajfer, *Ku wielkiej zmianie*, 212.

<sup>51</sup> Szlajfer, 11.

<sup>52</sup> “Aby Polsce się powiodło,” [So that Poland may succeed] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 7, 1989; AMSZ, Incoming messages – London, 24/91, vol. 12, Cyphertext message no. 0-1868/III from London, 10 VIII 1989, 368–367; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-2487/III from London, 23 VIII 1989, 392–391; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-3115/III from London, 6 IX 1989, 406.

formula of governance and of cooperation with the Polish United Worker's Party without looking into past. All this was very much in line with what Paris wanted. For the above reason, this approach, which attracted so much criticism from many Solidarity activists, was greeted with approval at the Quai d'Orsay.<sup>53</sup> Fears related to Kiszczak's troubles also appeared on the Italian Peninsula. In its comments on the situation in Poland, the Vatican State Secretariat expressed its preference for a "great coalition" between the Communists and Solidarity, allowing itself even to level a certain amount of criticism at the latter. The establishment of the Mazowiecki government was seen in both Rome and the Vatican as a historic event that would take away the tension from the relationships between East and West. The fact that the promises of reform attracted the support of all political forces represented in the Sejm was also received with satisfaction. Mazowiecki travelled to Rome and the Vatican in October, further proof that diplomatic relations were being transferred into the hands of the former opposition.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, the political struggles that plagued the Polish parliament contributed, along with other factors, to delays for Kohl's contemplated visit.<sup>55</sup> The end of the crisis and the conciliatory approach adopted by Mazowiecki allayed fears and attracted positive comments in Bonn, much like elsewhere in the West. On August 31, the Chancellor spoke to Mazowiecki on telephone. A few days later, a group of Solidarity delegates led by Wałęsa visited the FRG. The inaugural speech made by Mazowiecki on September 12 was very warmly received in Bonn.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> AMSZ, Incoming messages– Paris, 24/91, vol. 17, Cyphertext message no. 0-2072/III from Paris, 14 VIII 1989, 563–562; Ibid. vol. 18, Cyphertext message no. 0-2536/III from Paris, 24 VIII 1989, 583–582; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-3587/III from Paris, 15 IX 1989, 614–613.

<sup>54</sup> Janicka, Herman-Łukasik, Szczepanik, *Stosunki dyplomatyczne Polski*, 408, 508; AMSZ, Incoming messages – Rome, 24/91, vol. 20, Cyphertext message no. 0-2061/III from Rome, 12 VIII 1989, 555; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-3252/III from Rome, 9 IX 1989, 599; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-3285/III from Rome, 9 IX 1989, 600; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-3437/III from Rome, 13 IX 1989, 604; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-510/IV from Rome, 11 X 1989, 670–669.

<sup>55</sup> Reiter, Janusz, "Przed przyjazdem kanclerza Kohla," [Waiting for chancellor Kohl's arrival] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 18, 1989.

<sup>56</sup> Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit dem Vorsitzenden der Gewerkschaft „Solidarität“, Walesa, Bonn, 7 IX 1989. In Küsters, Hans Jürgen, Hofmann, Daniel eds., *Deutsche Einheit Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes 1989/1990* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998), 398–402; Turowski, Krzysztof, "Świat komentuje," [The world comments], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 25, 1989; "Wizyta w RFN," [The visit in the Federal Republic of Germany] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 4, 1989; AMSZ, Incoming messages– Cologne, 37/p/IV, Cyphertext message no. 0-2106/III from Cologne, 15 VIII 1989, 770–769; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-2868/III from Cologne, 31 VIII 1989, 818; Ibid. Cyphertext message no. 0-3683/III from Cologne, 18 IX 1989, 888.

Despite the unresolved issues that plagued mutual relations, a new era was beginning for the two countries. However, it also brought with it new challenges, led by the issue of German unification. It is against the background of the social, political and economic upheaval in Poland, and momentous events afoot in East Germany, that on November 9, 1989, the long overdue five-day visit by Kohl finally took place. Kohl's stay in Poland was interrupted by news of the opening of the Berlin Wall, but nevertheless concluded with a joint declaration with Mazowiecki, a step which may be considered as the climax of the relations between Poland and FRG in the period in question as well as the very first move towards a new era.<sup>57</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The Polish political transformation of 1989 influenced the changes in the political attitudes of all the parties that were involved in Polish affairs. The Communist party had to face the loss of its monopolistic power, while the Solidarity movement had to rapidly adapt itself to a completely new situation: in just a few months, the former anti-Communist opposition was suddenly participating in the process of governance.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union had *de facto* given up the "limited independence" dogma formulated by Brezhnev in 1968. Gorbachev, facing internal problems in the USSR, was able to accept the presence of non-communist leaders in Poland, provided that Poland would stay in the Warsaw Pact. Simultaneously, the West performed a dramatic shift in its policy: if earlier on the Western states had been interested in supporting actions of the Polish opposition and undermining the communist power, now they began to apply a different strategy, aimed at maintaining the compromise reached during the Round Table talks. They have moved from supporting the opposition to lending a helping hand to the defeated Communists, albeit in a discreet way. The predictable and paradoxically constant reality of the Cold War era was no more.

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<sup>57</sup> See Bingen, *Helmut Kohls Polenpolitik*, 31–32; Bingen, Dieter, "Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen nach 1945", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 5–6 (2005), 13; Mérétki, *Noc generata*, 260.



# **Russian foreign policy towards America and Europe under Putin and Medvedev**

***Peter J.S. Duncan***

## *Introduction*

This article will analyse the sources of stability and change in Russia's foreign policies towards some of the countries and multilateral organizations of the West in the period since Vladimir Putin became Acting President of the Russian Federation at the end of 1999. The focus will be on policy towards the United States, the countries of the European Union (EU) and the EU itself, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The concentration on this group of countries is justified because despite the growing international importance of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and of Russia's links with the other BRICS, the bulk of Russia's trade and its diplomatic activity is still focused on Europe and America. It is not possible fully to separate Russian policy towards the West from policy towards other parts of the world, where Russia in one way or another interacts with Western countries. For example, in the former Soviet republics, Russia's relations with the West are essentially competitive; in Afghanistan, Russia co-operates with NATO in supporting Kabul against the Taliban; in China, Iran and Syria, Russia displeases the West by supplying those states with arms or nuclear technology.

The use of the concept of 'the West' imposes a greater degree of unity on its constituent parts than actually exists today. During the Cold War, NATO could be considered the geopolitical representation of the West, but even then the congruence was imperfect; the alliance included Turkey but a number of West European states claimed neutrality, and no Latin American state was included. Following NATO's enlargements into Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War, states that had never previously been considered Western became members. Historically, Russian identity was formed partly in relation to the Tatar-Mongol invaders from the East, but more in relation to the Catholic and Protestant, and latterly democratic, Europe, and the West (including the New World) as a whole. In Iver Neumann's words, 'the idea of Europe is the main "Other" in relation to which the idea of Russia is defined'.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the Russian leadership, like their Soviet predecessors, consider the country to be part of Europe, although not (normally) part of the West. The degree to which Russia subscribes, or should subscribe, to 'European' values, and whether these values have 'universal' validity, have been an important part of the discourse of diplomatic

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<sup>1</sup> Neumann, I.B. (1996) *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1.

relations between Russia, Western countries and European and Euro-Atlantic institutions since the collapse of the USSR.

*Sources of stability and change*

Russian foreign policy towards the West is essentially reactive. I concur with the view of Derek Averre that there is no ‘ideology-driven “grand strategy”’ to confront the West.<sup>2</sup> This does not preclude Russian initiatives to solve regional problems, or grander designs such as President Dmitrii Medvedev’s proposal in June 2008 for a new security architecture for Europe.<sup>3</sup> Russia is normally responding to events outside its control, such as the enlargements of NATO in 1999, 2004 and 2009 or the election of Barack Obama as US president in 2008. Russia’s strategic, geopolitical and economic interests have not changed greatly in the post-Soviet period, but its capacity to promote its policy has varied considerably, according to the fluctuations in its economic position and its success in concentrating its political forces.

Some factors have, however, been constant under the presidencies of Boris El’tsin (1991-1999), Putin (1999-2008 and since 2012) and Medvedev (2008-2012). Underlying Russia’s approach to foreign policy, apart perhaps from the earliest El’tsin years, is a fairly consistent Realism, in the sense used by scholars of International Relations. This involves a trenchant defence of the sovereignty of the Russian state in a Westphalian world in which Russia has no permanent friends. Russia generally prefers to deal with individual countries rather than with multilateral organizations, and certainly when it does not belong to these bodies. Thus Russia holds fast to the importance of the United Nations, where it retains its veto as a permanent member of the Security Council; has sought to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), subject to its economic interests being protected, in order to influence the future rules of the world economic order; is puzzled by the EU, because most of its members have given up sovereignty in to a degree which Russia would find hard to accept; and remains deeply suspicious of NATO. Within the EU, El’tsin in the 1990s focused on developing relations with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President Jacques Chirac, the leaders of the powers at the centre of European integration. In March 1998 this ‘troika’ held a summit in Moscow. El’tsin claims that the three leaders felt the need to create an ‘independent European will’ to oppose ‘American pressure’.<sup>4</sup> Putin succeeded in building more lasting bilateral relationships, with Kohl’s successor Gerhard Schröder and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi,

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<sup>2</sup> Averre, D. (2008) ‘Russian Foreign Policy and the Global Political Environment’. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55 (5), 28-39 at 29.

<sup>3</sup> Medvedev, D. (2008) ‘Vystuplenie na vstreche s predstaviteliami politicheskikh, parlamentskikh i obshchestvennykh krugov v Germanii’, Berlin, 5 June. Retrieved October 14, 2011 from <http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/320>.

<sup>4</sup> El’tsin, B. (2000) *Prezidentskii marafon. Razmyshleniia, vospominaniia, vpechatleniia*, Moscow: AST, 126-35 (quotations, 130).

while Chirac's successor Nicolas Sarkozy had a stronger Atlanticist orientation than his predecessor.

At the same time, all three Russian presidents have given high priority to relations with the United States. The relationship has been co-operative and conflictual, with the balance varying over time. Around 2006, when Putin was making speeches critical of the Bush administration and Russian public opinion viewed American foreign policy negatively, Nikita Lomagin suggested that America, rather than Europe, was Russia's 'other'.<sup>5</sup> Russia's GDP is a fraction of America's and its military power a still smaller fraction. In 2011, for example, Russia's official defence budget was \$52.7 billion, while the Pentagon had \$739.3 billion at its disposal. In descending order, China, the UK, France and Japan also all budgeted more on defence than Russia (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2012: 31).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, for both internal political reasons and for the prestige of being a great power (*velikaia derzhava*), Russian leaders like to present themselves on a par with the presidents of the USA. Hence the importance for all presidents of direct engagement with America, so that they can be seen having summits with American leaders. El'tsin in particular attached great significance to the personal relationship of 'Boris and Bill' Clinton.<sup>7</sup> Through the ups and downs of the relations between the two states, Putin preserved a good personal relationship with George W. Bush. Medvedev, too, sought agreements and a close relationship with Obama.

For Russia, issues of nuclear arms control and disarmament are salient, since this is one field in which Moscow has something more resembling an equal relationship with Washington. Despite the fact that America has a larger number of missiles and warheads than Russia, and that they are more advanced and more reliable, Russia is still the only country in the world with the apparent capacity to destroy America. Russia's relations with the United States are also of prime importance because most of the European states and EU members are allied with America in NATO, and most of these see the United States as a bulwark of their security needs against Russia. This is especially true since the NATO enlargements, bringing in countries that have experienced Communism imposed by Soviet tanks and fear a Russian resurgence. France, too, under Sarkozy has rejoined the NATO military structure. Russia's relations with most European countries and with the EU are therefore strongly affected by the overall climate of Russian-American relations.

Russia is the only country with which the EU has bi-annual summits. Economic issues have dominated its interests with European states. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia's foreign trade, like that of most of the former Soviet European republics, was re-oriented from the other Soviet republics towards the EU. With the

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<sup>5</sup>Lomagin, N.A. (2007) Forming a New Security Identity under Vladimir Putin, in R.A. Kanet (ed.), *Russia: Re-Emerging Great Power*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 47-50.

<sup>6</sup> The Russian figures should be treated cautiously, however, since costs such as the Internal Affairs troops are omitted (*The Military Balance 2012* [2012] London: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 188).

<sup>7</sup> El'tsin, 156.

EU enlargement of 2004, its share of Russian trade ‘increased from 35-40 per cent to 50-55 per cent’;<sup>8</sup> by 2010, the EU’s share was still around 50 per cent,<sup>9</sup> but dropping with the rapid increase in China’s share of Russia’s trade. Russia’s exports to the EU are primarily oil, gas and other raw materials. Its primary aims have been to ensure security of demand for its hydrocarbon exports, and (less consistently) to attract foreign investment in Russian energy extraction and transportation. The Putin leadership was intolerant of EU states’ involvement in politics in the former Soviet republics, and especially of criticism of Russia’s domestic policy. Thus there was tension between the economic objectives, of coming closer to the EU, and the political objectives of keeping the EU at a distance from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). All Russian leaders have emphasized that Russia is, or should be, a great power; and part of this is that Russia should have a sphere of influence in post-Soviet space, in which Russia would clearly prefer that the roles of the EU and NATO should be minimal.

Considering the sources of stability, and the continuity of the aims and practices described above, a significant part is played by the entrenched nature of the regime established by Putin from 2000 onwards and continued by Medvedev from 2008. The leadership has defined the interests of Russia in international politics in the foreign policy concepts of 2000 and 2008.<sup>10</sup> As suggested earlier, and as will be illustrated below, the principal sources of change in Russian foreign policy have been changes in the external environment. The other main source of change has been the changing perceptions of the leadership about the strength of Russia. As Russia paid off its foreign debts and began to accumulate wealth in the course of Putin’s second term, as the price of oil and gas rose, Russia became more assertive; but after the international financial crisis hit Russia in late 2008, Russia became more responsive to Western, and particularly American, pressure. After Medvedev became president and raised the slogan of ‘modernization’, he spoke of the need to involve European and American firms and know-how in the service of the Russian economy. This would undoubtedly have been helped by a positive international image of Russia and a co-operative foreign policy. It will be argued, however, that even in these cases, it was the international political environment rather than the domestic economic situation that was a more decisive factor.

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<sup>8</sup> Vahl, M. (2007) ‘EU-Russia Relations in EU Neighbourhood Policies’. In K. Malfliet, L. Verpoest & E. Vinokurov (Eds.), *The CIS, the EU and Russia: The Challenges of Integration*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Hanson, P. (2011) ‘On Europe’s Fringes: Russia, Turkey and the European Union’, Chatham House briefing paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme/Europe Programme, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Kontsepsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (2000). In Vneshniaia politika i bezopasnost’ sovremennoi Rossii, 1991-2002. *Khrestomatiia*, 4 vols, vol. 4, Dokumenty (2002), (109-21) Moscow: Rosspen; ‘Kontsepsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii’ (2008). Retrieved October 12, 2012 from <http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/d48737161a0bc944c32574870048d8f7!OpenDocument>.

*The El'tsin legacy*

The 1993 Russian Constitution states that the president 'exercises leadership of foreign policy'.<sup>11</sup> From 1992, El'tsin and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, had sought to move quickly from the Soviet heritage and join international institutions including the Council of Europe, the International Monetary Fund, and the WTO (at that time known as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and co-operate with or even perhaps join Western organizations such as NATO and the EU. They were opposed by powerful individuals and institutions within Russian politics: Vice-President (until August 1993) Aleksandr Rutskoi, successive parliaments and the armed forces, who gave priority to restoring Russian influence in former Soviet republics. Between 1993 and 1995 El'tsin, like much of Russian society, became dissatisfied with Western policies: the IMF prescription for economic transformation proved disastrous, and the leading Western states were seen to be treating Russia like a defeated nation and not taking into account its interests.

In 1996 El'tsin sacked the unpopular Kozyrev and replaced him with Evgenii Primakov, a former candidate member of the Politburo under the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and then, under El'tsin, head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR). The same year Scott Parrish rightly described the foreign-policy process as 'chaos'.<sup>12</sup> Primakov largely succeeded in asserting the primacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in foreign policy advice and implementation. Russia was not strong enough to prevent NATO from enlarging into Central and Eastern Europe, but in May 1997 Primakov's pragmatism was instrumental in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, establishing the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) between Russia and the alliance.<sup>13</sup> The following day Russia signed a Friendship Treaty with Ukraine, allowing the Black Sea Fleet to remain in the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol, and thereby putting a brake on Ukraine's move towards the West.<sup>14</sup>

Russia suffered a severe blow to its prestige the following year, however, when its financial crisis led it to default on its sovereign debt. This made the country dependent on Western lenders, state and corporate. Russian was further humiliated in the foreign-policy field in the Kosovo war of 1999. Moscow was unable to prevent NATO from bombing Serbia, despite the absence of a United Nations Security Council resolution, and Kosovo was separated from Serbia. Making matters worse, El'tsin allowed the army to send tanks on the 'dash for Priština'. This was an attempt

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<sup>11</sup> Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii (1993) (Article 86) Moscow: Izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi literatury.

<sup>12</sup> Parrish, S. (1996) 'Chaos in Foreign-Policy Decision-Making' *Transition*, 2 (18), 30.

<sup>13</sup> Tsygankov, A.P. (2010) *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Lanham, MD and Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 102-04; Black J.L. (2000) *Russia Faces NATO Expansion: Bearing Gifts or Bearing Arms?* Lanham, MD and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 5-63.

<sup>14</sup> Black (2000) 175-202.

to seize the principal airport in Kosovo, with the apparent aim of forcing the NATO states to allow Russia a sector within Kosovo. It collapsed when the Russian troops had to appeal to British forces for water and supplies.<sup>15</sup>

*Putin's foreign policy aims*

After becoming president, Putin succeeded in co-ordinating and centralizing foreign policy much more successfully than El'tsin. His article published on the day before El'tsin's resignation to mark the new millennium represented his manifesto. Like El'tsin, Kozyrev and Primakov, he spoke of Russia's quality of being a great power (*derzhavnost'*); his innovation was to insist on the need for a strong state (*gosudarstvennichestvo*).<sup>16</sup> Putin succeeded in increasing what Samuel Charap has termed 'executive strength': raising the authority and capacity of the executive in relation to other institutions, and diminishing the fragmentation within the executive itself.<sup>17</sup> While Charap focuses on Putin's establishing control over the business 'oligarchs' and the regions, equally important was his success in bringing the foreign and defence ministries and the security services (the 'power ministries') in line with his priorities.

The foreign policy concept signed by Putin in June 2000, soon after his inauguration, emphasized the need for international co-operation against threats, especially international terrorism, and highlighted the importance of the United Nations. At the same time it reflected disappointment that the hopes of El'tsin's foreign policy concept of 1993 for a partnership between Russia and the rest of the world had not been realized. It complained: 'There is a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power (*silovom*) domination of the USA.' The latter and its allies were undermining the United Nations by unilateral action – a reference above all to the Kosovo war.<sup>18</sup> In terms of regional priorities, after relations with the CIS the concept describes relations with European states as Russia's 'traditional priority direction'.<sup>19</sup> It objected that Euro-Atlantic integration was being pursued on a selective basis but stated that Russia would continue co-operate with NATO, the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. In the early 1990s, Russia had sought to give the central role in European security to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) that had become the OSCE. This was to prevent NATO from taking the dominant role, leaving Russia in the sidelines. In practice, NATO became the main security organization, while the OSCE became mainly concerned with humanitarian issues and a venue for criticism of Russia's

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<sup>15</sup> Headley, J. (2008) *Russia and the Balkans: Foreign Policy from Yeltsin to Putin*, London: Hurst, 410-416.

<sup>16</sup> Putin, V. (1999) 'Rossiia na rubezhe tysiacheletii', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 30 December.

<sup>17</sup> Charap, S. (2007) 'Inside Out: Domestic Political Change and Foreign Policy in Vladimir Putin's First Term', *Demokratizatsiya*, 15 (3), 335-52 at 336.

<sup>18</sup> 'Kontseptsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii' (2000), 111.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 117.

domestic and foreign policies. Russia in 2000 still wished to strengthen the OSCE, but to widen its focus from the post-Soviet area and the Balkans. Russia would also pursue bilateral relations with 'the states of Western Europe, firstly such influential ones as Great Britain, Germany, Italy and France'.<sup>20</sup> The inclusion of Britain here reflected the fact that Prime Minister Tony Blair had, even before Putin's election as president, gone to see him in St Petersburg in a show of support. Putin reciprocated by making his first foreign visit after his election to London (after a stopover in Minsk) in April.

The foreign policy concept spoke of the role of foreign policy in support of the economy and business, and conversely of the need to use 'all the economic levers and resources at its disposal' to defend Russia's interests.<sup>21</sup> This seemed to be a clear statement of willingness to use energy supply, no less than arms sales, as a foreign policy instrument. What could not be written in any foreign policy concept, however, was that the first aim of Russian foreign policy was to ensure security for the Russian elite. As Russia moved towards an authoritarian system under Putin, the regime sought to project a benign image of Russia abroad (as indeed the foreign policy concept promised to), and tried to stop foreign states from criticising repression inside Russia. Within the CIS, Russia and the other authoritarian regimes sought to whitewash unfair political practices and electoral fraud, and to prevent outside forces from aiding opposition groups that challenged election results.<sup>22</sup>

Specialists have identified a number of schools of thought about the orientation of Russian foreign policy among foreign-policy makers and politicians in Russia. Margot Light has identified three schools: 'liberal Westernizers', who favour a market economy, liberal democracy and a foreign policy oriented towards co-operation with the West; 'fundamentalist nationalists', who advocate the re-integration of post-Soviet space under Russian hegemony and a strong state economic role, and are hostile to Western institutions; and 'pragmatic nationalists', who are somewhere between the two other groups, favouring integration within the CIS and a diversified foreign policy, where relations with the West are conducted on the basis of advancing Russia's interests. Light argued in 2006 that 'pragmatic nationalism' has become the 'prevailing consensus view of Russian foreign policy'.<sup>23</sup> This 'pragmatic nationalism' seems similar in its foreign policy orientation to pragmatism or to what International Relations scholars call Realism. Andrei Tsygankov also has identified three schools of thought, very similar in content but with different labels: liberal Westernizers; Statists, who believe in a strong state and pragmatically pursue policies which may be orientated towards either the West or towards Asia and the CIS; and Civilizationists, who see Russia as having fundamentally different values from those of the West and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 115.

<sup>22</sup> Ambrosio, T. (2009) *Authoritarian Backlash: Russian Resistance to Democratization in the Former Soviet Union*, Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

<sup>23</sup> Light, M. with Allison, R. (2006) The Place of Europe in Russian Foreign Policy. In R. Allison, M. Light, and S White, *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, London: Chatham House; Oxford: Blackwell, 12-13.

seek to spread these abroad.<sup>24</sup> These typologies of schools of thought can be helpful as models, but the experience of the post-Soviet period is that the views held by the schools are not static, and individuals appear to move between these schools. In crude terms, both El'tsin and Putin began their presidencies with an orientation towards the West, and became less friendly to it, while Putin was a 'Statist' consistently since before becoming president.

Nevertheless, the point expressed by the leading Moscow expert Vladimir Baranovskii in 2000 that Europe 'is the main intended focus of Russia's long-term international strategy'<sup>25</sup> retained its validity for the duration of Putin's presidency. How much Russia has seen itself as European is a different question. Putin in early 2000 argued that 'we are part of West-European culture',<sup>26</sup> not even just of European culture. Public opinion surveys show a distancing of Russians from feeling European, however. Between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of respondents who claimed to consider themselves European 'to a significant extent' or 'to some extent' fell from 52 to 25 percent.<sup>27</sup> At the same time positive attitudes to the EU and to European countries such as France, Germany and Finland continued to dominate. Attitudes to the United States, on the other hand, were less positive. More than half the population in a 2001 survey considered the USA to be hostile to Russia, and it was consistently seen in surveys as the largest external source of threat.<sup>28</sup> By the end of the Putin presidency anti-American feelings had increased: according to the Levada Center, such feelings were held by 22 per cent in February 2000 and 50 per cent in May 2009, while the Public Opinion Foundation reported in March 2009 that two-thirds of Russians considered America hostile.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Putin's rapprochement with America and Europe*

Putin began his presidency with an activist foreign policy which saw him travel to rebuild bridges with former Soviet allies such as North Korea, where no Soviet or Russian leader had previously been, in July 2000, and Cuba in December of that year. Trade and co-operation with China were also pushed forward, leading in June 2001 to the formation of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO). This comprised the two major powers together with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and was perceived by some as a potential global rival to NATO. But it was clear that his priority was improving relations in America and Europe. In March

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<sup>24</sup> Tsygankov (2010) 4-9, 204-209.

<sup>25</sup> Baranovsky, V. (2000) 'Russia: A Part of Europe or Apart from Europe?', *International Affairs* (London), 76 (3), 443-58 at 451.

<sup>26</sup> Ot pervogo litsa. Razgovory s Vladimirom Putinym (2000) Moscow: Vagrius, 156.

<sup>27</sup> White, S. (2006) 'Russia and "Europe": The Public Dimension'. In Allison, Light, and White, *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, 137.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 138-44.

<sup>29</sup> Shlapentokh, V. (2011) 'The Puzzle of Russian Anti-Americanism: From "Below" or from "Above"', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63 (5), 875-89 at 877.



2000, answering British interviewer David Frost's question whether Russia might ever join NATO, Putin replied, 'Why not?' NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson of Port Ellen welcomed Putin's desire to co-operate with the alliance, but said that membership was "not on the agenda".<sup>30</sup> Many Russian politicians drew the conclusion from this that if NATO was excluding Russia, then it must be hostile to it. Putin's visit to Blair has been mentioned; the focus on Blair was probably linked with the fact that Clinton was in his last year as president, and Putin wanted to establish himself with the leader of a key European country who was his own age and likely to stay in power for some time.

As well as visiting London, in April 2000 Putin also succeeded in persuading the newly-elected State Duma to ratify the US-Russian Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty START-II. This had been signed in 1993 but El'tsin had never had sufficient parliamentary support to have it ratified. This was an important gesture to the United States, as well as demonstrating Putin's own power inside Russia. Putin added a condition, however; if America abandoned the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty, then Russia might withdraw from START-II and other treaties. Withdrawal from the ABM treaty was a precondition for the United States to build a national missile defence (NMD) system.<sup>31</sup>

The logic behind the Russian position was that if the United States sought the capability to destroy Russian missiles through a technology that Russia lacked, then Russia would need to ensure that it had enough missiles to maintain a credible deterrent. Gorbachev had maintained a similar position at the Reykjavik summit with US President Ronald Reagan in 1986, when he had refused to agree to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) if Reagan insisted on pursuing the Strategic Defense Initiative ('Star Wars'). The NMD issue dominated Putin's first summit with Clinton, held in Moscow in June 2000. By then the American position was that NMD was needed not to deal with Russian missiles but with those from 'rogue states' such as Iran, Libya and North Korea.<sup>32</sup> In November Russia repudiated the 1995 agreement between Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and Vice-President Al Gore that Russia would not sell arms to Iran.<sup>33</sup> This was probably a case of immediate economic interests taking precedence over diplomatic links with the West, rather than a desire to show Russia's independence, but the timing of the announcement was unfortunate for Gore, the Democratic presidential candidate, coming four days before the presidential elections.

The administration of George W. Bush, inaugurated in January 2001, initially took a harder stance towards Moscow than the Clinton administration had. It proclaimed the need for NMD and for further NATO enlargement, to include the Baltic States. Hostile rhetoric escalated. CIA Director George Tenet called Russia a

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<sup>30</sup> Black, J.L. (2004) *Vladimir Putin and the New World Order: Looking East, Looking West?* Lanham, MD and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 32-3.

<sup>31</sup> Talbot, S. (2002) *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*, New York: Random House, 372-89.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 389-97.

<sup>33</sup> Black, 97.

global threat, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld accused Russia of supplying missile technology to North Korea and Iran. In turn Putin's spokesperson Sergei Iastrzhembskii and the chair of the State Duma Committee on International Relations Dmitrii Rogozin accused America of supporting terrorists. Putin himself, while pursuing a programme of co-operation with the EU, avoided the tough rhetoric and took a more open approach on NMD. In February 2001 he offered to co-operate with America against possible threats from 'rogue states' if the system would be extended to protect Europe and Russia.<sup>34</sup> This was not on the Bush agenda at that stage. The first summit between the two presidents, held in Ljubljana in June 2001, achieved little agreement in policy terms. What was important was the confidence it created between the two men, which seems to have lasted, despite policy differences and confrontational rhetoric, right to the end of Putin's presidency. Bush said afterwards: "I looked into that man's eyes and saw that he is direct and trustworthy. We had a very good dialogue. And I saw his soul."<sup>35</sup>

The al-Qa'eda attack on the United States on 11 September 2001 gave Putin the opportunity to demonstrate his desire for co-operation with America and raise international respect for Russia. Joining Bush's 'war on terror' meant not only continuing to support the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan but sharing intelligence with America and agreeing to the establishment of American bases in Central Asia. Russia benefited from the destruction of the Taliban regime in Kabul, which had given support to Chechen separatists and Islamists in Central Asia. In 2002 both the United States and the EU recognized Russia as a market economy, a necessary step to Russia's membership of the WTO. The G7 group of leading industrial democracies accepted Russia as a member, and agreed that Russia would chair what therefore became the G8 in 2006. Putin closed the Lourdes surveillance base in Cuba and the naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam, in gestures of friendship to the United States that also saved money. On the initiative of Blair and Lord Robertson, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established in May 2002. This replaced the PJC that Russia considered inadequate after the Kosovo war, and allowed a Russian voice in certain aspects of NATO's decision-making. Also in May, Bush and Putin signed the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty, or Moscow Treaty, in which both sides agreed to reduce their deployment of strategic warheads to 2,200 by the end of 2012. In this warm atmosphere, Putin reacted calmly to two Western decisions which Russia had been strongly opposed to: the American unilateral withdrawal from the ABM treaty in December 2001, and the NATO decision at its Prague summit in November 2002 to include seven new members, including the Baltic States. He portrayed these decisions as mistakes but not as threats to Russia.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 105-34.

<sup>35</sup> Shevtsova, L. (2005) *Putin's Russia*, rev. edn, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 203.

<sup>36</sup> Shevtsova (2005) 204-20; Smith, M.A. (2006) *Russia and NATO since 1991: From Cold War through Cold Peace to Partnership?*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 89-105; Black, 172-82.

There was much talk in this period, as there had been in 1990-92, that a particular decision or treaty marked the end of the Cold War.<sup>37</sup> While the Cold War itself, in the sense of the confrontation of two military blocs representing opposing social systems and ideologies and each headed by a superpower, had undoubtedly come to an end even before the collapse of the USSR, suspicions and some undercurrents of hostility have always remained between Russia and the main Western powers. Sympathy for the American people after the terrorist attacks had not wiped out the memory of the bombing of Serbia in public opinion, which was now more suspicious of the USA and NATO than Putin seemed to be. In March 2002 it was leaked to the *Los Angeles Times* that Russia was a potential American nuclear target, along with China and Bush's 'axis of evil', Iran, Iraq and North Korea. Not only the Communists but also some mainstream experts considered that the government was making too many concessions to America, in return for little. For example, it emerged that under the Moscow Treaty, Russia was going to destroy warheads, while America would only mothball them, so that they could still be deployed; and the NRC did not enable Russia to veto NATO enlargement. Putin was not, however, gambling all on his relations with the West, nor willing to allow America to have everything its own way in Central Asia. In May 2002, the same month as the NRC and SORT were signed, Russia's CIS allies established the Collective Security Treaty Organization. This military alliance comprised Russia, Belarus, Armenia, and three Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Simultaneously the SCO announced that it was increasing co-operation against terrorism.<sup>38</sup>

As America moved towards war on Iraq in early 2003, popular hostility to the United States increased. In January 2003 52% of Russians opposed a possible US-led attack, while 3% supported it.<sup>39</sup> Russia's main interest in Iraq since the 1990s had been for the UN sanctions against Saddam Hussein to be lifted. This would allow the Russian oil company LUKoil to begin operations that had been held up by the sanctions, and Iraq to begin again to earn money to pay off its substantial debt to the USSR, which it now owed to Russia. Putin sought from Washington guarantees that in the event of a US invasion of Iraq, America would ensure that the oil contracts between Saddam Hussein and LUKoil would be honoured, but Washington refused to do this. France and Germany among others inside NATO, and much of world opinion outside it, were hostile to the idea of a war with Iraq and given the state of Russian public opinion it would have been difficult for Putin to have appeared more pro-American than Chirac and Schröder. Nevertheless, while criticizing the American-led invasion, Putin maintained a tone that was less hostile than that of

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<sup>37</sup> Black, 175-7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 159-82.

<sup>39</sup> Shevtsova (2005) 267.

Bush's European critics. He saw Iraq as a diversion from the 'war on terror', and made it clear that he did not want America to be defeated there.<sup>40</sup>

The coming together of Russia with France and Germany over Iraq did not prevent problems arising over the enlargement of the EU, planned for May 2004. The ten new members would include the three Baltic States and five other states that had previously belonged to the Soviet bloc. Initially, Putin looked benignly on EU enlargement, as El'tsin had done; Russia itself wanted close relations with the EU and open access to its market. In 1999 the EU adopted a 'Common Strategy on Russia'; in response, the same year Russia published its 'Medium-Term Strategy for the Development of Relations between the Russian Federation and the EU (2000-2010)'. Both documents built on the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) between Russia and the EU, made in 1994 and implemented in 1997, which assumed that Russian economic and political norms and values would converge with those of the EU.<sup>41</sup>

Russian attitudes changed in 2002 and 2003 when the implications of enlargement became clearer to Russian policy-makers who had surprisingly little knowledge of the EU and its workings because of their concentration on relations with the member states. The most visible issue was Putin's demand, raised in May 2002 for visa-free travel for Russian citizens crossing Lithuania between the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad *oblast'* and the rest of the Russian Federation.<sup>42</sup> Russia was offended by the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), announced in 2003, because it put Russia on a par with all the other countries of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean who were not about to join the EU.<sup>43</sup> In January 2004 Russia raised 14 issues over the cost of extending the PCA to the new member states. On the EU side concerns were being raised about the arrest of the 'oligarch' Mikhail Khodorkovskii and the lack of freedom and fairness in the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2003 and 2004. The EU threatened Russia with serious consequences if it failed to extend the PCA. Similarly to crises inside the EU, the differences were resolved only at the last minute, days before the enlargement was due. Russians travelling to and from Kaliningrad would require a travel document that was a visa in all but name. Russia

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<sup>40</sup> Donaldson, R.H. and Noguee, J.L. (2009) *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 350-4; Tsygankov (2010) 143-5.

<sup>41</sup> Lynch, D. (2005) From "Frontier" Politics to "Border" Policies between the EU and Russia. In O. Antonenko and K. Pinnick (Eds.), *Russia and the European Union: Prospects for a New Relationship*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 18-21; Robinson, N. (2007) The "Normalization" of Russian Politics and Europe. In J. Gower and G. Timmins (Eds.), *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century: An Uneasy Partnership*, London and New York: Anthem, 34.

<sup>42</sup> Bordachev, T. (2005) Russia's European Problem: Eastward Enlargement of the EU and Moscow's Policy, 1993-2003. In Antonenko and Pinnick, *Russia and the European Union*, 51-8.

<sup>43</sup> Haukkala, H. (2008) 'Russian Reactions to the European Neighbourhood Policy', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55 (5), 40-48.

was not included in the ENP; instead, the focus of EU-Russia relations would be four 'common spaces' (economic; freedom, security and justice; research and education; and external security).<sup>44</sup>

*Putin's second term and the rise in tension*

It was in Putin's second term that it became clear to all that Russia was not going to converge with EU norms and values. Russian state brutality in Chechnia had already been an issue under El'tsin, causing the postponement of the PCA from 1994 to 1997. The Second Chechen War under Putin had also led to criticism, but much of that had been muffled as Putin successfully linked his war with the 'war on terror'. In September 2004, however, following the death of 334 hostages seized by Chechen terrorists at a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, and the Dutch presidency of the EU infuriated the Russian leaders by asking for an explanation.<sup>45</sup> Putin himself used the Beslan events to accuse unnamed outside powers of using terrorism against Russia.

Some would like to tear from us a 'juicy piece of pie'. Others help them. They help, reasoning that Russia as one of the world's most important nuclear powers still remains a threat to someone. And so it's necessary to remove this threat. And terrorism, of course, is only an instrument to achieve these aims.<sup>46</sup>

This accusation went further than the regular charge of double standards made against some Western countries, particularly after the Chechen opposition figure Akhmed Zakaev, accused of terrorism, and the 'oligarch' Boris Berezovskii were given asylum in Britain in 2003 and the British courts refused to allow their extradition to Russia. Putin also used the Beslan events to justify strengthening central control, by abolishing elections for regional governors and preventing independent candidates from standing for the State Duma. These measures increased criticisms of Russia from the EU. These criticisms were now strengthened by the presence of the new East European members who were frequently suspicious of Russia.

It was the coloured revolutions, however, more than the Western criticism of Russian behaviour, which was the biggest factor in increasing tension with the West. The Rose Revolution in Georgia in autumn 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine at the end of 2004 and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 all led

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<sup>44</sup> Lynch (2005) 21-5; Frellesen, T. and Rontoyanni, C. (2007) EU-Russia Political Relations: Negotiating the Common Spaces. In Gower & Timmins, *Russia and Europe in the Twenty-First Century*, 229-46.

<sup>45</sup> Light, M. (2006) Russian Political Engagement with the European Union. In Allison, Light and White, *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe* (45-71) 62-3.

<sup>46</sup> Putin, V. (2004) 'Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossii Vladimira Putina', Moscow, 4 September. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2004/09/76320.shtml>.

Moscow to fear that America, the EU countries and NATO were putting pressure on the former Soviet republics to remove them from Russia's influence. In each case fraudulent vote counting in national elections by the regimes led to mass mobilizations that succeeded in overturning the election results. Western election observers and Western-backed NGOs played important roles in denouncing the cheating and organizing the protests, respectively. The new governments in Georgia and Ukraine were markedly more anti-Russian and oriented towards NATO and the EU than their predecessors. The Orange Revolution particularly embarrassed Putin because he had personally endorsed the failed candidate, Viktor Yanukovich.<sup>47</sup> In response to the perceived growth of US influence, Russia began to revise its view of US bases in Central Asia. In May 2005 Uzbekistan violently put down an Islamist-led uprising in Andijon, and was criticised by the United States. The SCO reacted by asking for a deadline for the removal of US bases from Central Asia. Uzbekistan asked the Americans to leave by the end of the year, which they did.<sup>48</sup> As well as fearing Western influence among the neighbours, Russian leaders, aware of their own electoral fraud, came to believe that Western countries might help to bring about a coloured revolution in Russia during the 2007 State Duma or 2008 presidential elections. One result of this was the Kremlin's creation in March 2005 of *Nashi* (Ours), a youth movement briefed and trained to prevent the streets of Moscow from falling into the hands of revolutionaries.<sup>49</sup>

Indirectly linked to the Orange Revolution was the action by the Russian state-controlled gas company Gazprom to cut off the supply of gas to Ukraine at the beginning of January 2006. This followed Gazprom's decision in 2005 to raise the price of gas to Ukraine from the beginning of 2006, when the supply contract was due to expire. This move was widely seen as punishment for the Orange Revolution, and an attempt to influence Ukraine in favour of Yanukovich prior to the Ukrainian parliamentary elections. When negotiations failed and the contract expired without agreement on price, Gazprom terminated supply and Ukraine sought to meet some of its needs by diverting some of the gas passing through its territory to customers further West, including Germany. Gazprom had been supplying gas at favourable prices to most former Soviet republics, but was now phasing out these subsidies to all except Belarus, which formed a 'Union State' with Russia.<sup>50</sup> The decision to raise prices was commercially justified, and indeed had been urged on Russia by Western advisers; but

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<sup>47</sup> See the special issue on coloured revolutions, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, (2009) 25 (2-3); and Ó Beacháin, D and Polese, A. (Eds.) (2010) *The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Republics: Successes and Failures*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

<sup>48</sup> Ambrosio (2009) 165-82.

<sup>49</sup> Atwal, M. (2009) 'Evaluating *Nashi*'s Sustainability: Autonomy, Agency and Activism', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61 (5), 743-58.

<sup>50</sup> Stern, J. (2006) 'The Russian-Ukrainian Gas Crisis of January 2006', Oxford Institute of Energy Studies, 16 January. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from <http://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Jan2006-RussiaUkraineGasCrisis-JonathanStern.pdf>, 3-13.

the interruption in supply was uncivilized. It raised questions in the West as to whether Russia was using energy supply as a political weapon, and even if it was not whether Russia's supply could be relied on.

The result was a decision by the EU and some of its members to seek to diversify sources of energy supply from Russia, such as the Nabucco pipeline to bring gas from Azerbaijan and possibly from Central Asia, avoiding Russia; and to try to develop alternative energy sources. In Germany, somewhat paradoxically, the effect of the crisis was to consolidate support for the agreement signed in September 2005 between Putin and Schröder for Gazprom and the German companies E.ON and BASF to build the Nord Stream Gas Pipeline from Russia under the Baltic Sea to Germany, avoiding any transit countries. Schröder after retiring as Chancellor was elected to the lucrative chair of the Nord Stream shareholders' committee. His successor, Angela Merkel, although more critical of Russian policy, maintained support for Nord Stream. The deal was greeted with dismay in Poland and the Baltic States, who saw it as reducing their bargaining position with Russia, and undermining the unity of the EU. Poland's defence minister, Radek Sikorski, compared it to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 between the USSR and Nazi Germany.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the European Commission came round to approve the project, and the pipeline was opened in 2011.

The opponents of Nord Stream were not impotent. Negotiations were due to begin in 2006 to extend the Russia's PCA with the EU, which was due to run until 2007. Already by then, however, it was clear that with Russia's slide to authoritarianism, any new agreement would have to be based on shared interests rather than common values. Negotiations were delayed for 18 months, first by Poland over Russia's ban on meat imports from the country, and then by Lithuania over Russia cutting off oil supply to its Mazeikiu refinery. In the meantime, the existing PCA was kept in place.<sup>52</sup>

As a supplier, Russia's main concern was to ensure security of demand through long-term contracts with its customers in Europe. But Russia was by then unwilling to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty, which it had signed in 1994. Under this Russia would have to raise energy prices to market levels, domestically and abroad; and open up its pipelines to international use, when in reality it was maintaining state control over pipelines inside Russia and seeking to control pipelines in transit and customer countries.

Russia achieved the prestige of chairing the G8 in 2006 and made energy security one of the main themes of the year. Little co-operation was achieved in any field, however, as relations with the USA soured. In May 2006, US Vice-President Dick Cheney made a speech in Vilnius at the Common Vision for Common Neighbourhood conference. This brought together delegations from the Baltic and

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<sup>51</sup> Lucas, E. (2008) *The New Cold War: How the Kremlin Menaces both Russia and the West*, London: Bloomsbury, 211-41.

<sup>52</sup> Light, M. (2007) 'Russia and the EU: Strategic Partners or Strategic Rivals?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 46, Annual Review of the European Union in 2007, 7-27 at 7-9.

Black Sea regions to discuss common interests and reinforce their commitment to the advancement of democracy and common values. Cheney claimed that the Russian government had ‘unfairly and improperly restricted the rights of her people’ and that ‘oil and gas [had] become tools of intimidation and blackmail’ of Russia’s neighbours.<sup>53</sup> Six days later, Putin, likening the United States to a predatory animal, replied, ‘Comrade Wolf knows who to eat.’ He accused America of hypocrisy over human rights, and pointed out that the American defence budget was 25 times that of Russia.<sup>54</sup> With the murder of the investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaia in Moscow in October 2006, and of the ex-FSB agent Aleksandr Litvinenko, who had been campaigning against his former employers, in London the following month, Western criticism of Russia continued. Although there was no proof to link these murders with government action, they reflected the repressive atmosphere inside Russia. A cyber-attack on Estonia and the harassment by *Nashi* activists of the British and Estonian ambassadors further damaged relations with the West in 2006-7.

Russia’s greater assertiveness in this period reflected not only annoyance at Western interference but also the transformation of Russia’s finances. The GDP and state budget depend to a great extent on the price of oil, which began to rise in 2000 continued to rise for the rest of Putin’s presidency. As a result, the government was able to reduce its sovereign debt rapidly.<sup>55</sup> This encouraged Putin to respond to foreign critics in language as harsh as theirs.

In February 2007, at the Munich Security Conference, Putin protested that the United States had ‘overstepped its national frontiers in all spheres [...] nobody feels safe’. NATO enlargement was a serious provocation, and proposed American missile defence (MD) deployments in Poland and the Czech Republic threatened a new arms race.<sup>56</sup> The threat of MD was probably the main reason why Putin, in November 2007, in a popular move two days before the Duma elections, suspended Russia’s participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.<sup>57</sup> Originally signed

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<sup>53</sup> ‘Cheney’s Speech in Lithuania’ (2006) New York Times, 4 May. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/04/world/europe/04cnd-cheney-text.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>54</sup> Putin, V. (2006) ‘Poslanie Federal’nomu Sobraniu Rossiiskoi Federatsii’, 10 May. Retrieved May 11, 2006 from <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2006/05/105546.shtml>.

<sup>55</sup> Goldman, M. (2008) *Oilopoly: Putin, Power and the Rise of the New Russia*, Oxford: Oneworld, 77-81.

<sup>56</sup> Putin, V. (2007) ‘Vystuplenie i diskussii na miunkhenskoii konferentsii po voprosam politiki bezopasnosti’ 10 February. Retrieved February 23, 2007 from <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2007/02/118109.shtml>. The American terminological change from ‘national missile defence’ (NMD) to ‘missile defence’ (MD) reflected the idea that the system would defend not only the United States but also some of its allies and partners.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Putin signs law suspending CFE treaty’ (2007) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 30 November. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from <http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/>



in 1990, the treaty had been amended in 1999 to take account of the end of the Warsaw Pact and NATO enlargement. NATO countries had refused to ratify the amended treaty, in protest at Russia's failure to honour its commitment at the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit to withdraw its forces from Georgia and Moldova.<sup>58</sup> The timing of Putin's action was not coincidental, however; a week earlier he had accused some of his domestic opponents of having the support of Western embassies.<sup>59</sup> On the eve of the election he wanted to demonstrate that he and United Russia were the defenders of Russia's interests.

In December United Russia, inevitably, won the election easily. Putin announced that he would support Medvedev as the next president and work with him as prime minister. Medvedev, equally inevitably, was elected president in March 2008. The Bush administration had no such certainty of guaranteeing the succession as it entered its final year in 2008. Washington sought to persuade NATO to offer Membership Action Plans (MAPs) to Ukraine and Georgia at its Bucharest summit in April 2008. Russia succeeded in influencing the rest of the 'troika', and France and Germany vetoed Bush's plans. Ukraine and Georgia were, however, promised membership at an unspecified future date, which was unsettling for Moscow.

*Putin and Medvedev in tandem: war and 'reset'*

It is difficult to find any significant changes in the aims of Russian foreign policy after Medvedev became president. There were changes in style, as Medvedev presented a more friendly face to the West, but Putin remained the more influential figure. Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2004, remained in post. Inaugurated as president in May 2008, the following month in Berlin Medvedev presented the idea of a new European security treaty.<sup>60</sup> The aim was to reduce the influence of NATO, from which Russia was excluded, and move the OSCE away from its focus on human rights. A humiliating reminder of Russia's lack of influence had come in February when most members of the EU and NATO recognized the independence of Kosovo, against Russia's wishes. In July, Medvedev signed a new foreign policy concept. This spoke of the greater role that Russia was now playing in international affairs and the trend to a 'polycentric world order'. It spoke of 'civilizational' differences between Russia and the West, and accused the West of responding to Russia's ascent by seeking the containment (*sderzhivanie*) of Russia.<sup>61</sup>

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1079211.html.

<sup>58</sup> Donaldson & Noguee (2009) 369-72.

<sup>59</sup> Putin, V. (2007) 'Vystuplenie na forume storonnikov Prezidenta Rossii', 21 November. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2007/11/153636.shtml>.

<sup>60</sup> Medvedev (2008).

<sup>61</sup> 'Kontseptsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii' (2008), 12 July. Retrieved November 8, 2011 from <http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/ns->

The main reasons why war broke out between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 were the desire of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to regain control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which although internationally recognized as part of Georgia had never been ruled from Tbilisi since independence; and the determination of Russia to resist this. Additionally, Moscow wished to prevent Georgia from joining NATO and, after Kosovo's independence, show the West that it could not impose its will on Russia within the former Soviet Union.<sup>62</sup> With France at the time holding the EU presidency, Sarkozy succeeded in mediating a cease-fire agreement between Medvedev and Saakashvili.

Western leaders initially unanimously blamed Russia for the conflict even though an enquiry established by the EU under Heidi Tagliavini later assigned blame fairly evenly to both sides.<sup>63</sup> NATO suspended the NRC, and the EU postponed negotiations on the new PCA. American and EU leaders criticised Russia for continuing military operations in Georgia after the cease-fire, and for recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This recognition flew against Russia's policy on Kosovo, that boundaries should not be changed by force, and led to Russia's almost complete diplomatic isolation on the issue as neither China nor any CIS state wished to encourage separatism by following suit. Russia's relations with the West had reached their lowest point since before the collapse of the USSR, although co-operation continued in relation to Afghanistan. At the end of August, Medvedev announced five principles on which he would base foreign policy: the 'supremacy of international law'; that 'the world must be multi-polar'; Russia did not want confrontation or isolation; the need to defend Russian citizens, 'wherever they are'; and, most controversially, that there were regions where Russia had 'privileged interests'.<sup>64</sup> This sounded like a claim to an undefined sphere of influence.

Although NATO maintained its commitment to membership for Georgia and Ukraine, it did not pursue the issue, nor offer either country a MAP. NATO members were not willing to risk a Third World War, which might have happened if Georgia had already been a NATO member in August 2008 and if NATO states had gone to its defence. In late 2008 the international financial crisis began to affect Russia, but it affected the USA and most West European states more severely. In November Obama, the Democratic Party candidate, was elected American president.

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osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/d48737161a0bc944c32574870048d8f7!OpenDocument.

<sup>62</sup> For views on Russia's motivations, see Shearman, P. and Sussex, M. (2010) *The Roots of Russian Conduct*. In P.B. Rich (Ed.), *Crisis in the Caucasus: Russia, Georgia and the West*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge; Asmus, R.D. (2010) *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia and the Future of the West*, New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>63</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (2009), Report. Retrieved October 14, 2011 from <http://www.ceiig.ch/Report.html>.

<sup>64</sup> 'Interv'iu Dmitriia Medvedeva telekanalam "Rossiia", Pervomu, NTV', (2008) Sochi, 31 August. Retrieved September 1, 2008 from <http://president.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205991.shtml>.

Fedor Luk'ianov points to the paradox of Russian-American relations, which both sides believe that the global importance of the other is diminishing.<sup>65</sup> One might add that both sides may well be right. Obama, in the conditions of the financial crisis, saw the most urgent international problems facing the United States as being those in Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. He saw Russia as potentially able to help on all these issues, and showed little of Bush's messianic zeal in promoting democracy in Eastern Europe. Hence in February 2009 Vice-President Joe Biden proposed to 'reset' the American-Russian relationship. NATO enlargement into post-Soviet space was taken off the agenda. Obama showed interest in nuclear disarmament moves with Russia, and gave the impression that he would not proceed with MD deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic. This last was confirmed in September 2009. NATO lifted its suspension of the NRC in December. In April 2010 in Moscow Obama and Medvedev signed the 'new START' treaty, reducing the strategic weapons held by both sides, and increasing mutual confidence by restoring the arrangements for on-site verification of each other's missile deployments; this was ratified the following January.<sup>66</sup> In November 2010 Medvedev attended the NRC summit in Lisbon. Russia agreed to increase co-operation in Afghanistan, including transit across Russia of goods for the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Furthermore, the NRC agreed to discuss MD co-operation.<sup>67</sup> In 2010 and 2011 Russia gave some diplomatic support to the United States at the UN Security Council over nuclear proliferation to Iran and North Korea, and abstained over NATO operations to protect civilians in Libya. This warming in relations coincided with Medvedev's desire to improve relations with the West in order to gain American and European support for his programme of 'modernization'. It was the change in the American presidency and the American policy that made it possible, however, not any change in aims or strategy in Moscow.

The change in Moscow's view of the relations with America and NATO were officially noted in the doctrinal statements of the Medvedev-Obama period: the 'National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020', May 2009, and the Military Doctrine of February 2010. For example, in the latter NATO was listed as a

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<sup>65</sup> Lukyanov, F. (2010) 'Russian Dilemmas in a Multipolar World', *Journal of International Affairs*, 63 (2), 19-32 at 28.

<sup>66</sup> Valasek, T. (2009) 'Obama, Russia and Europe', Centre for European Reform Policy Brief. Retrieved October 12, 2012 from <http://www.cer.org.uk/publications/archive/policy-brief/2009/obama-russia-and-europe>; Kaczmarek, M. (2011) 'The Fragile "Reset": The Balance and the Prospects for Changes in Russian-US Relations', Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), Warsaw, Policy Briefs. Retrieved October 12, 2012 from <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/policy-briefs/2011-04-11/fragile-reset-balance-sheet-and-prospects-changes-russianus-rela>.

<sup>67</sup> 'NATO-Russia Council Joint Statement' (2010) 20 November. Retrieved August 15, 2011 from [http://eng.new.kremlin.ru/ref\\_notes/39/print](http://eng.new.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/39/print).

'danger' but not as an actual 'threat'.<sup>68</sup> Symbolically, the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the defeat of fascism in May 2010 was marked by the presence in Red Square of troops from America, Britain, France and Poland, as well as the leaders of Germany and China.

After the Lisbon summit, it became clear that the 'reset' had its limits. America was not going to put pressure on Russia over Georgia, but it was not going to put pressure on Georgia either to persuade it to stop blocking Russia's entry into the WTO. Nor was Obama prepared to make Russia an equal partner in MD, as Medvedev had asked; the final decision on the use of the system, after it had been built, would be taken by the United States.<sup>69</sup> Basic divisions remained, as Russia saw no real reason for NATO to continue to exist (despite its positive role for Russia in Afghanistan), and some Eastern members of NATO retained fears of Russia.<sup>70</sup> In this context, the biggest change in bilateral relations in Europe during this period was the positive 'reset' between Russia and Poland. Like the Obama reset, it was possible after government change: the conservative-nationalist government in Poland was replaced with a liberal one.

Both the United States and the European institutions became concerned with human rights issues inside Russia in 2010 and 2011. This followed, in particular, campaigns for an investigation into the death of the lawyer Sergei Magnitskii, who had acted in Russian courts for Western firms, in a Moscow prison in 2009. This led to America banning certain officials from entering the USA. At the second trial of Khodorkovskii in 2010 he received an additional four and a half years in prison. The European Court of Human Rights ruled the following May that his rights had been violated. The refusal of the Russian authorities to register the liberal opposition Party of People's Freedom for the 2011 State Duma elections produced a protest from the European External Action Service. The principal concern of European countries in this period, however, was to ensure the security of energy supply from Russia. In January 2009 another price dispute between Russia and Ukraine led Russia to reduce its gas deliveries to Ukraine, and the latter compensated by diverting gas in transit to other countries. This increased the desire in the EU not only to diversify routes from Russia, but to diversify its sources of supply. The EU promoted its (already existing) plan for the Nabucco pipeline to take Azerbaijani (and possibly Central Asian) gas to

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<sup>68</sup> 'Strategiia natsional'noi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda' (2009). Retrieved November 15, 2011 from <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/1/99.html>; 'Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii' (2010). Retrieved November 15, 2011 from <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/18/33.html>.

<sup>69</sup> Kamp, K.-H. (2011) 'Missile Defence: A Sticking Point?', *The World Today*, 67 (10) 21-3.

<sup>70</sup> Monaghan, A. (undated but 2011) 'NATO and Russia: Resuscitating the Partnership', *NATO Review*. Retrieved July 14, 2011 from [http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/NATO\\_Russia/Resuscitating-partnership/EN/index.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2011/NATO_Russia/Resuscitating-partnership/EN/index.htm); Trenin, D. (2011) 'A European Missile Defence System to Replace the Great Game'. *Russia in Global Affairs*, 9 (2), 76-85. Retrieved August 12, 2011 from <http://dlib.eastview.com/sources/article.jsp?id=25743784>.

Southern Europe, avoiding Russia. Moscow in turn advocated 'South Stream', in which Gazprom collaborated with Italian, French and German companies to carry Russian gas to Southern Europe. The international financial crisis put the viability of both projects in doubt, but what was significant was the inability of West European states and companies to form a common position on energy in relation to Russia.

The EU did, however, act together in launching the Eastern Partnership in May 2009. This was partly a response to Russia's actions in Georgia, and aimed at increasing EU co-operation, without offering membership, with six former Soviet republics: Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova in Europe, and Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Caucasus. Russia saw this as an intrusion into its region of special interest.<sup>71</sup> The initiative suffered a setback in February 2010 when Ukraine elected Ianukovich president, rejecting the EU-oriented leaders of the Orange Revolution. Within two months Ianukovich, in exchange for reducing the gas price, extended Russia's lease of Sevastopol until 2042, ending the possibility of NATO membership.

Despite these differences, relations between the EU and Russia were generally positive in the 'reset' period. Each wanted security in the supply of and demand for hydrocarbons, in the context of the international financial crisis. In February 2010, Foreign Minister Lavrov presented Medvedev with a document showing how Russia's foreign policy could be used to assist Russia's modernization.<sup>72</sup> The plan was predicated on co-operation with western countries. Although Medvedev had given a high profile to creation of a Russian 'Silicon Valley' at Skolkovo outside Moscow, and attracted big American names there, it was clear from the document that the main outside assistance, in capital, knowledge and technology, would be coming from Europe. The EU-Russia summit in Rostov-on-Don in June 2010 announced the 'EU-Russia Partnership for Modernization'. European leaders continued to see the rule of law, the development of civil society and democratization as pre-requisites for successful modernization of Russia; Medvedev claimed to share these values, but as his presidency evolved it became clear that he was incapable of implementing them.<sup>73</sup> The announcement in September 2011 that Putin rather than Medvedev would stand for president in 2012 seemed to confirm that while there might be increased business opportunities for Western companies in Russia, the corruption of the Putin years would continue and the likelihood of successful modernization of the economy and society was small.

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<sup>71</sup> Kulhanek, J. (2010) 'The Fundamentals of Russia's EU Policy'. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 57 (5), 51-63.

<sup>72</sup> 'Programma effektivnogo ispol'zovaniia na sistemnoi osnove vneshnepoliticheskikh faktorov v tseliakh dolgosrochnogo razvitiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii' (2010) *Russian Newsweek* 10 February. Retrieved May 12, 2010 from <http://www.runewsweek.ru/country/34184/>, but no longer available due to the closure of *Russian Newsweek*.

<sup>73</sup> Adomeit, H. (2011) 'Russia's "Partnerships for Modernisation": Origins, Content and Prospects', in 'The Medvedev Presidency – A Wasted Effort', *The EU-Russia Centre Review*, 19, 31-51.

The State Duma elections in December 2011 were accompanied by mass falsification to the benefit of United Russia. This was not just a question of the overwhelming bias of all the main national television stations in favour of the regime's party, or the refusal to allow twelve opposition parties to register. It involved intimidation of voters and election observers, and multiple ballot-box stuffing.<sup>74</sup> The Russian observer group GOLOS estimated that one million extra votes for United Russia were added in Moscow alone.<sup>75</sup> As the fraud became widely known, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators occupied Russian squares and street in protests. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the European Parliament were among many Western officials and institutions who criticised the conduct of the elections. In response, Putin accused Mrs Clinton of encouraging the protests in order to destabilize Russia.<sup>76</sup> It appeared likely that such rhetoric was primarily aimed at the domestic audience, in the run-up to the presidential elections in March 2012. It was troubling, however, that US Ambassador to Moscow Michael McFaul remained the object of media attack and *Nashi* harassment into April, well after Putin had been safely re-elected.

Other portents concerning the forthcoming Putin presidency's foreign policy were mixed. Putin published an article on Russian foreign policy one week before his election. It contrasted Russia's concerns over NATO enlargement and MD with the 'unprecedentedly high level of trust' between the leaderships of Russia and China.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, through the Putin era the two countries normally voted together at the UN Security Council, amongst other things impeding Western plans for sanctions against Iran and in 2011-12 blocking calls for Russia's ally President Bashar al-Assad of Syria to resign. Putin's article warned against a possible Israeli or American military strike against Iran, while demanding that the latter placed all its nuclear facilities under the inspection of the International Atomic Energy Authority. In relation to Europe, Putin advocated deeper co-operation between Russia and the EU, asserting that Russian citizens felt themselves to be Europeans. He attacked the European Commission's 'Third Energy Package', which he rightly saw as likely to reduce the influence of Russian energy companies within the EU.

After the election, MD continued to be seen as a major issue in Russia's relations with the United States; but Obama signalled to Medvedev that if he (Obama) were re-elected in 2012, he would resist domestic pressure to pursue the project. A significant gain for Russia that could only strengthen its economic relations

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<sup>74</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2012) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 'Russian Federation: Elections to the State Duma, 4 December 2011. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report'. Warsaw, 12 January. Retrieved November 9, 2012 from <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86959>.

<sup>75</sup> Lyubarev, A. (2012) 'An Evaluation of the Results of the Duma Election', *Russian Analytical Digest* no. 108, 6 February, 2-4 at 4.

<sup>76</sup> Halpin, T. (2011) 'Putin revives the Cold War', *The Times* (London), 9 December.

<sup>77</sup> Putin, V.V. (2012) 'Rossiia i meniaiushchiisia mir', 27 February. Retrieved March 2, 2012 from <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/18252/print/>.

with the USA and Europe was the final agreement, less than two weeks after the fraudulent Duma elections, by all the members of the WTO to invite Russia to join. Still more significant in terms of security co-operation with NATO was the Russian proposal, immediately after Putin's election, for NATO to establish a military transit centre for personnel and cargo going to and from Afghanistan in Lenin's birthplace, Ulyanovsk.<sup>78</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Putin's rise to the presidency brought greater coherence to the making and implementation of foreign policy than there had been under El'tsin. Russia continued to seek to restore its status as a great power, and during Putin's presidency with the help of the rising prices of oil and gas won back some of what had been lost in 1991. Undoubtedly Russia's growing wealth made its leaders more confident in foreign policy, while the financial crisis of 2008-9 imposed some restraint. Putin, like El'tsin, sought co-operation with Western states and institutions in order to serve the interests of the Russian economy and of the ruling elite. Western reaction to the growing authoritarianism of Russian society and the increasing competition for influence in the former Soviet republics put a limit on the possibilities of such co-operation. Medvedev continued Putin's foreign policy approach.

The article has tried to show that the major factor affecting the warmth of Russian-Western relations was not changes in Russian capacity or policy, however, but change in the external environment: particularly Bush's hot pursuit of American interest, which alarmed Moscow, and Obama's reset, which led to a new warmth, despite continuing differences. Russia's relations with the EU were strongly affected by the Russian-American relationship, but were less volatile and more pragmatic, and the key relationship with Germany survived the change of government from Schröder to Merkel. As Putin returns to the presidency in 2012, it remains to be seen whether the United States would continue with the generally warmer, if sometimes difficult, relationship or whether a new administration would be elected in Washington which might take a more anti-Russian line.

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<sup>78</sup> Reisinger, H. (2012) 'A NATO transit hub in Ulyanovsk – What's behind the Russian debate?', NDC Research Report, NATO Defense College, Rome. Retrieved April 18, 2012 from [http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current\\_news.php?icode=381](http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current_news.php?icode=381).

# **From concentration to competition: The struggle for power between the Kremlin and Gazprom through the study of TNK-BP and South Stream**

***Paolo Sorbello & Ludovico Grandi***

## *Introduction*

In 2004, after granting the state a majority stake in Gazprom, Putin compared the Russian gas giant to Saudi Aramco and American ExxonMobil. He emphasized the necessary role of Gazprom as a multinational company “representing the interests of the Government both domestically and internationally”.<sup>1</sup> This was accompanied by a declaration of Gazprom’s officials that: “The strategic goal ... is to become a global vertically integrated energy company occupying a leading position on the world market”.<sup>2</sup> Many academics and Western newspapers regard Gazprom and Rosneft as new diplomatic actors acting on behalf of the Russian state.<sup>3</sup> Although a causal question may arise (is it the state’s interests that are represented by the companies, or vice versa?), it is true that the two hydrocarbon giants have a say in Russian foreign policy decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan P. Stern, *The Future of Russian Gas and Gazprom*, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2005, 219

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Rutland, ‘Oil, Politics and Foreign Policy’, in David Lane (Ed.), *The Political Economy of Russian Oil*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, ML, 1999, 163; Nina Poussenkova, ‘Lord of the Rigs: Rosneft as a Mirror of Russian Evolution’, Working Paper for the joint project by the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University and Japan Petroleum Energy Center, *The Changing Role of National Oil Companies in International Energy Markets*, March 2007; Vladimir Milov and Boris Nemtsov, *Putin i Gazprom: Nezavisimyi Ekspertnyi Doklad*, Novaya Gazeta, Moscow, 2008; Amelia Hadfield, ‘Energy and foreign policy: EU-Russia energy dynamics’, in Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Tim Dunne (Eds.), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007; Alexander Visotzky, *Double-Edged Sword: Russia’s Use of Energy as Leverage in the Near Abroad*, VDM Verlag, Saarbrücken, 2009; Steven Wöhrel, ‘Russian Energy Policy toward Neighboring Countries’, in Martin T. Pohler (Ed.), *Russia’s Energy Assets: Security and Foreign Policy Issues*, Nova, New York, NY, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Leigh Hendrix, ‘Russian Energy Policy: Exploring the Efficacy of a Resource-Dependent Economy and Foreign Policy’, University Honors Thesis defended at Wittenberg University, Springfield, OH, 2008, 25. Available at:



Since our goal is mainly to depict power relations, we picked two issues to exemplify our argument. Far from a simplistic approach, these cases for oil and natural gas represent paragons for the whole post-Soviet energy sector as seen from Moscow. Other authors prefer to take into consideration the Yukos affair (see below), others Gazprom's monopolistic role in the foreign realm. Instead, our goal is to analyse concentration and competition where the flow of power bottlenecks: our work sheds a light on two of the latest controversial cases: TNK-BP, with its strong connections in the Kremlin, and Gazprom's activity with regards to the South Stream gas pipeline.

After having taken into careful account the energy power structure in Russia – particularly with regard to oil and gas – our effort is directed towards the study of each case, in terms of power. First, we consider the early struggle of TNK-BP to gain a domestic leadership in oil production and the subsequent policy change on the Kremlin's part that essentially translated to hoarding every venture that had gained a strong position through shady privatisation practices in the Nineties. Second, we focus on the free-floating activity carried out by Gazprom for the prospective construction of the South Stream pipeline, which at times marks a drift from Moscow's foreign policy stance. We conclude that, although different and diachronic, the oil and gas sector present analogous dynamics in terms of power relations with the Kremlin.

#### *Russian Energy Power Structure*

The Ministry of Fuel and Energy (*Mintop*) replaced the old Soviet structure upon the collapse of the USSR and was only granted limited and regulatory duties. The real heirs of the Soviet oil industry were the 'Production Associations', taken over by private companies that supplemented the work of the *Mintop*. In 1995, the first ministerial 'Energy Strategy' was published, shortly before the launch of the 'loan for shares' program.<sup>5</sup>

To illustrate the role played by energy, it will suffice to outline the 'energy intensity' in the Russian economy. The share of value added produced by oil and gas in Russia's total GDP has averaged 20% for the past ten years and the exports in the

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[http://etd.ohiolink.edu/view.cgi?acc\\_num=wuhonors1242245813](http://etd.ohiolink.edu/view.cgi?acc_num=wuhonors1242245813) (Last accessed on 15 January 2011).

<sup>5</sup> 'This is how [so-called 'oligarchs' like] Mikhail Khodorkovsky (owner of Menatep Bank) came to purchase the former Siberian portion of the state-owned Rosneftgaz, which became known as Yukos. Following this model, in 1997 Mikhail Fridman (owner of Alfa Bank) bought Tyumen Oil, another Siberian asset, better known as TNK. Potanin himself (owner of OneksimBank) used the same method to take control of Norilsk Nickel (now the largest non-ferrous metal conglomerate) and the Sidanko oil company, for one tenth and one fifth of the real value respectively.' Paolo Sorbello, *The Role of Energy in Russian Foreign Policy towards Kazakhstan*, Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken, 2011.

oil sector amount to roughly 50% of crude production. Exports of raw materials since 2005 are consistent as a percentage of total exports, constituting a share higher than 60%.<sup>6</sup> The substantial participation of the State in the Russian energy companies favours the coordination of central political intents and peripheral – or foreign – business actions. Vice versa, the business sector retains a relevant and collaborative role in shaping policies to be adopted by the ministries.

The oil industry was privatized at a slower pace compared to the gas sector. Furthermore, the Kremlin has allowed the existence of non-threatening independent companies only in the oil sector, such as LUKoil and, initially, TNK-BP. On the gas side, Gazprom has captured and retained the lion's share of the Russian market, leaving the crumbs to 'independent producers',<sup>7</sup> who play, in fact, cameo roles and benefit little from the domestic sale of gas.

### *Oil Sector*

During the Nineties the oil industry witnessed the vertical integration of a number of operators, Vertically Integrated Companies (VICs). VICs were involved in each stage of the supply chain, from upstream to downstream. A significant share of formerly state-owned energy assets went to companies that spun off from Rosneftegaz: Surgutneftegaz (1992), LUKoil (1995), Yukos (1995), Sidanko (1995), Sibneft (1995), and TNK (1997). The remnants of the former Soviet Ministry of the Oil Industry that remained in the hands of the state after privatization in the Nineties were just Rosneft, Onako and Slavneft. In 2009, Russia surpassed Saudi Arabia and became the largest world producer of crude oil, with an estimated production capacity of 9.9 million barrels per day (bbl/d). In the same year, its domestic consumption was *only* 2.9 million bbl/d. Thus, Russian oil exports amounted to about 7.7 million bbl/d.<sup>8</sup>

Today, oil production is completely controlled by domestic operators. The only exceptional feature emerged in 2003, when BP and TNK joined forces to create a new major oil producer. This market operation remains unique since subsequent attempts by foreign operators to enter in Russia's oil production were unsuccessful. After Yukos' collapse, the state-run company Rosneft acquired most of its assets and challenged LUKoil as the largest oil producer of the country.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Russian Federal Statistics Service (ROSSTAT), *External Economic Activities* (chapter 26), 2010, available at: [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru) (last accessed: 14 March 2011). In the first quarter of 2011, the share of oil and gas in Russian export revenue hit a record 68.2%, according to Louis Skyner, "Revising Russia's Energy Strategy", *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, October 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Stern, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Elvira Oliva and Paolo Sorbello, "Energy Fact Sheet: Russia", *Energy Policy Studies*, Portal on Central Eastern and Balkan Europe, November 2011, available at [www.pecob.eu](http://www.pecob.eu)

<sup>9</sup> Rosneft finally overtook LUKoil as the largest petroleum company in Russia in 2007.

It is important to point out both Yukos and Rosneft's peculiar trajectory in the past decade. Since the incarceration of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev, Yukos became the prey of an opaque judicial operation, which induced a few oligarchs to step down from their energy thrones and a few companies that retained strong links with the Kremlin to concentrate under their wings most of the Russian energy sector. As Yukos's doomed fate materialized, Rosneft collected the spoils and led the new wave of energy nationalism that some analysts labelled 'Kremlin Inc.'<sup>10</sup> Igor Sechin, an early member of the Kremlin administration under Putin's first presidential term, was appointed chairman of Rosneft in 2004, becoming the Kremlin's representative in what had become the strongest oil company in Russia. LUKoil's primacy in terms of output and revenue was not contested directly, however, the discretionary behaviour that both the legislative and the judiciary powers demonstrated were the showcase of Rosneft's all-round strength.

#### *Gas Sector*

Gazprom was born from the Soviet-era Ministry of Gas, which was restructured and converted into a "Russian" joint stock company (the Russian acronym is RAO) in 1993. Viktor Chernomyrdin acted as a natural gas *factotum* for half a decade before being appointed to various government positions by Yeltsin, during the height of the economic crisis of the Nineties. Throughout Rem Vyakirev's chairmanship, Gazprom underwent a period of transformation, chiefly represented by the reincorporation into an open joint stock company (OAO).<sup>11</sup> Such transformation remarkably came after the restructuring of the oil industry and kept high the participation of the state, which retained 38.37% of the company's shares. Rosgazifikatsiya, a company born in the Nineties for the gasification of the Federation, owns 0.889% and continues to have strong ties to the management of both Gazprom and Transneft.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, state-owned Rosneft' purchased 10.74% of the privately owned stocks in order to give the majority "sceptre" to the Kremlin.

This last period, with the appointment of Alexei Miller at the head of Gazprom, which might be called 'the recapture of Gazprom by the state', was now personified by the energy-conscious Putin. Between 2003 and 2006 the shift was clear: the CEOs of the major Russian energy companies used to participate in the decision-making process at the governmental level by lobbying, however, when Putin strengthened his position in the Kremlin, he made sure that the businessmen he had

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<sup>10</sup>Adrian Dellecker, "Kremlin Inc.", Policy Paper for the *Institut Français des Relations Internationales*, January, 2008; Catherine Belton, "Rosneft Considers Kremlin Board Purge Order", *Financial Times*, 5 April 2011.

<sup>11</sup> For a legal distinction between "open" and "closed" JSCs, see Ichiro Iwasaki, "Legal Form of Incorporation", in Tat'yana Dolgopyatova, Ichiro Iwasaki, and Andrei Yakovlev (Eds.), *Organization and Development of Russian Businesses*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, UK, 2009, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Nataliya Grib and Dmitry Butrin, 'State Can't Take Control of Gazprom', *Kommersant*, 1 August 2006.

to deal with were men under his thumb, thus utilizing state-owned energy companies as the operative branch of the Ministry of Energy. At the end of 2008, ‘11 of 18 members of Gazprom’s board had worked in the St. Petersburg administration or the FSB during the Nineties’.<sup>13</sup>

The evolution of the gas industry followed the basic political principles laid out by Putin during his studies. He subscribed to the concept of ‘natural monopoly’ and took it further to the level of ‘national champion’. The state-owned energy company not only retained ‘natural’, i.e. inherent, monopolistic rights due to the fact that the energy extracted from the subsoil was property of the Russian Federation, in addition, the company had to champion the herald of the nation on a global scale. In Putin’s own words, the role of Gazprom was to be that of a multinational company ‘representing the interest of the Government both domestically and internationally.’<sup>14</sup> In 2006, a law was passed to give Gazprom exclusive rights for gas trade abroad,<sup>15</sup> which was paired with the transportation monopoly over pipelines held by Transneft. This strategy designed by Moscow further strengthened Gazprom’s position as the biggest natural gas company in the world.<sup>16</sup>

#### *The National Conundrum: TNK-BP*

Partnership in the Russian energy sector has historically been a challenging venture. Since Putin’s rise to power, several foreign companies saw the terms of their Product Sharing Agreement (PSA) revised.<sup>17</sup> Many pundits and analysts tend to associate these events with the rising presence of the State in the industry. Under the sways of energy nationalism, the interests of the Russian Federation have increasingly been associated with those of its ‘national champions’, Gazprom and Rosneft,<sup>18</sup> especially in high prices conjunctures. As simple and straightforward this narrative may sound, there are several cases in which this logic does not apply to foreign investors.

The prime example of this is the case of BP’s joint venture with a group of Russian oligarchs. The aim of this chapter is thus to outline why Kremlin’s designs do not always correspond to the interests of its state owned companies. The consortium known as TNK-BP was born at the beginning of 2003, resulting in what would have later become one of the world’s top ten energy operators in terms of oil output.<sup>19</sup> Its

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<sup>13</sup> Vladimir Milov and Boris Nemtsov, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Putin in 2004, cited in Jonathan Stern, 2005, 219.

<sup>15</sup> Tobias Buck and Neil Buckley, “Russian Parliament vote Backs Gazprom Export Monopoly,” *Financial Times*, 16 June 2006, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Pol-Henry Dasseleer, *L’idéalisme européen à l’épreuve du réalisme russe*, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2009, 15.

<sup>17</sup> *The Economist*, ‘Russian Arm Twisting’, 22 June 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall I. Goldman, *Petrostate: Putin, Power, and the New Russia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, 3.

<sup>19</sup> See TNK-BP Website: <http://www.tnk-bp.com/en/company/>, (last accessed: 13 March 2012)

successes were the result of BP's know-how (and capital availability) next to the key assets controlled by AAR (Alfa Bank, Access Industries and Renova). The oligarchs controlling AAR are Mikhail Friedman, Len Blavatnik and Viktor Vekselberg. In them, BP had found the right connection to the Kremlin, as well as a consolidated industrial group controlling substantial assets such as the giant gas Kovykta field. On the other end, to AAR, BP represented those badly needed financial resources and exploration/extraction experiences so crucial to operate in the Russian business environment.

The TNK-BP board of directors was composed of 4 AAR and 5 BP representatives. The ownership was divided on a 50–50 scheme, and Robert Dudley was appointed as CEO.<sup>20</sup> Finally, a clause granted the consortium with the right of pre-emptive veto in case of future energy projects in Russia and Ukraine involving its two components. The inaugural ceremony of the biggest foreign investment in Russia since 1917<sup>21</sup> was held in London and attended by both Tony Blair, then British prime minister, and Putin, in his first term as president of the Russian Federation.<sup>22</sup> However, as Putin predicted during a conversation with Lord Brown (BP's former CEO), the equal control in terms of shares and the unbalanced representation in the board of directors was inevitably lead to future contrasts in TNK-BP's management.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the events following the establishment of TNK-BP brought BP into a defensive position. The Yukos affair (and its later acquisition by Rosneft) led the British company to think that the business climate was changing in favour of state-owned enterprises.<sup>24</sup> In fact, Khodorkovsky, the former CEO of Yukos, attempted to form a venture similar to that of TNK-BP, by selling stakes to Exxon Mobil and merging its assets with Sibneft.<sup>25</sup> The acquisition of Sibneft by Gazprom in 2005 further reinforced this belief.<sup>26</sup>

From that moment onward, a misunderstanding of the business environment led BP's Russian venture into an increasing unpredictable discontinuity in its activities, together with major international trials. Whenever AAR proposed to expand the scope of TNK-BP's activities, BP would use its majority in the board of directors to prevent it. This was the case when Alfa tried to gain control of four refineries controlled by Venezuela's national oil company, PDVSA.<sup>27</sup> BP's attitude stemmed from the belief that a low business profile would have reinforced its position

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<sup>20</sup> A. Cemal Ekin, Thomas R. King, 'A Struggling International Partnership: TNK–BP Joint Venture', *International Journal of Strategic Business Alliances*, Vol.1 n. 1, Inderscience Enterprises Ltd., 10 March 2009, 95.

<sup>21</sup> *Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)* and *PLATFORM*, 'BP and the Russian Bear: A Case Study', 2009, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Marshall I. Goldman, 2010, 126.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Yergin, *The Quest: Energy, Security and the Remaking of the Modern World*, The Penguin Group, London, 2011, 38.

<sup>24</sup> *The Economist*, 'Mixing Oil, Gas and Politics', 20 June 2005.

<sup>25</sup> *The Economist*, 'Divorce Me, Darling', 18 December 2003.

<sup>26</sup> *The Economist*, 'Russia's Energetic Enigma', 6 October 2005.

<sup>27</sup> *The Moscow Times*, 'Alfa to Buy Venezuelan Oil Refineries', 25 December 2003.

in a continuously evolving business environment, and helped protect its assets from being seized by Russian national companies.

Although this approach may sound understandable since BP was the only foreign company controlling more than 49% in a Russian energy company, Putin was nurturing other designs. Not only did he initially present the consortium as the perfect example of how safe the Russian business environment had become, but in his quest for the rationalisation of the Russian energy industry, he later opposed BP and Gazprom's designs. In fact, when BP started to negotiate an alliance with Gazprom with the aim of replacing AAR in the consortium in 2007, the fear of an unmanageable and excessive power concentration in the hands of Gazprom led the Kremlin to oppose the venture.<sup>28</sup> One of the consequences of such a deal would have been to question Rosneft's role as one of the leading Russian oil producers, unbalancing the delicate equilibrium designed by the Kremlin to rationalise the oil and gas industries. Not surprisingly, Igor Sechin (Rosneft's CEO) strongly opposed the deal.<sup>29</sup>

Gazprom's successful attempt to seize control of the Kovykta gas field from TNK was in line with the rationalisation of Russia's energy sector.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, when BP made a second attempt in 2011 to replace AAR from the consortium through a partnership with Rosneft over the Arctic explorations, not only AAR felt confident enough to sue BP according to the already mentioned clause on the consortium's exclusive agreement with BP (thus challenging Rosneft's designs), but Sechin walked out of the talks.<sup>31</sup> The fact that the TNK-BP consortium is still in place and well performing<sup>32</sup> (even if with a different CEO)<sup>33</sup> is a clear statement that AAR's ties with the Kremlin are strong enough to resist assaults from either Gazprom or Rosneft. Thus, the Kremlin's interests do not simply coincide with those of its proxies. As this brief chapter outlines, the stances expressed by private Russian and foreign companies have sometimes prevailed<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Shamil Yenikeeff, *BP, Russian Billionaires, and the Kremlin: A Triangle that Never Was*, The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, Oxford University, 2011, 8.

<sup>29</sup> C. Belton, S. Pfeifer, 'Putin Ally Delivers Connects with the West', *The Financial Times*, 16 January 2011.

<sup>30</sup> *Reuters*, 'Gazprom Gets Licence to Develop Kovykta Gas Field', 7 October 2011.

<sup>31</sup> *The Economist*, 'Dancing with Bears', 3 February 2011.

<sup>32</sup> *Reuters*, 'TNK-BP Net Profit Hits \$ 9 Bln in 2011 on Strong Output', 29 February 2012.

<sup>33</sup> *The Economist*, 'Moscow Calling', 27 June 2010.

<sup>34</sup> This article was completed in the summer of 2012. Later on, BP decided to sell its 50% stake and quit its partnership with TNK. Rosneft was resolute in its decision to purchase what was available on the market. The continuous developments of the issue force us to restrict our analysis to the period preceding the sale (2003-2011). The events occurred in October do not, however, substantially modify our assumption that the oil sector alternatively swings between concentration and competition, according to both economic and political reasons. Our aim in this paper is simply to outline this dynamic, not to go deeper in the analysis of the single case.

*The International Tug-Of-War: South Stream*

The complicated domestic relationship between Gazprom and the Kremlin is also evident in the purely international sphere. Here, we take the South Stream natural gas pipeline project as paramount example<sup>35</sup>. Such an angle allows us to describe what has become a paragon of the tug-of-war between the gas giant and the Russian government for the past five years. In June 2007, Alexey Miller, Chairman of Gazprom's Management Committee, flew to Rome to sign a memorandum of understanding with Paolo Scaroni, CEO of the Italian energy company (ENI), for the construction of a pipeline from Russia to Austria and Italy. ENI and Gazprom had closely collaborated in pipeline construction since the Blue Stream feasibility study, performed in 1999, after the signing of an intergovernmental agreement between the Russian Federation and Turkey. Like the Blue Stream<sup>36</sup>, South Stream would be laid at the bottom of the Black Sea<sup>37</sup>. However, the newer project is much more challenging: instead of re-emerging 396 kilometres south in Durusu, Turkey, South Stream will be stretching for 900 kilometres from the Russian to the Bulgarian coast<sup>38</sup>.

Due to the variety of countries that would be involved in the completion of the project, Gazprom and ENI lobbied and engaged with European governments and

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<sup>35</sup> This is only one among many energy issues that are carried on by the companies rather than the central government. For reference, the example of Rosneft in the Kurmangazy offshore field in the Caspian Sea, (Gawdat Baghat, 'Prospects for Energy Cooperation in the Caspian Sea', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, vol. 40, nr. 2, 2007 and the Rosneft web page on the Kurmangazy offshore field at [http://www.rosneft.com/Upstream/Exploration/international/kurmangazy\\_kazakhstan/](http://www.rosneft.com/Upstream/Exploration/international/kurmangazy_kazakhstan/), last accessed: 14 March 2012) and the entire Central Asian gas market, which only responds to Gazprom's commands in terms of price and quantity (Simon Pirani, *Central Asian and Caspian Gas Production and the Constraints on Export*, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, December 2012, available at: <http://www.oxfordenergy.org/2012/12/central-asian-and-caspian-gas-production-and-the-constraints-on-export/>, last accessed, 14 December 2012).

<sup>36</sup> The Blue Stream project was completed in 2003, when gas started flowing. 'Blue Stream gas starts flowing', *Upstream Online*, 20 February 2003, available at: <http://www.upstreamonline.com/live/article33319.ece> (last accessed: 14 March 2012).

<sup>37</sup> As this article went to press, the final agreement on the pipeline was being signed and the start of the construction was celebrated with an inaugural ceremony in December 2012. In this article, however, we only consider the period until the summer of 2012 for our arguments.

<sup>38</sup> The four pipes that will be laid in the offshore section are technologically new and have a large diameter (LDP) that will allow the flow of the projected amount of natural gas of 63 bcm every year. These LDPs are Vysota 239, manufactured in Russia. *LNG World News*, 'Gazprom Says Large Diameter Pipe Purchases to Rise 30 Percent in 2011', <http://www.lngworldnews.com/> 22 September 2011 (last accessed: 28 April 2011)

national companies, to sell shares, bargain for the best transit tariffs, and ensure the most feasible routes (both technically and politically). In fact, after its journey through Bulgaria, the pipeline will split into at least two branches. The southwestern pipe will supply Greece and possibly the prospective Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI), ending up in the Adriatic and purposely avoiding the Albanian territory. The northwestern branch will run through Serbia and Hungary to Austria. This branch is likely to split into several smaller branches to feed in many directions.

Land connections are nonetheless a simpler task. For the offshore leg, the question involves the much-sought bypassing of Ukraine. Gazprom accused Kiev of stealing gas and fuelled the crises of 2006, 2008, and 2009. This has been the main reason for pushing forward routes that circumvent the Soviet-built network that brings gas from Russia to Europe through Ukraine. Both *Soyuz* and *Bratstvo* ('Union' and 'Brotherhood') follow comparable/similar routes and were used as weapons during the above-mentioned crises. Nord Stream, bypassing the Baltic States, came on line in the summer of 2011, while South Stream would eventually run South of the exclusive economic zone pertaining to Ukraine in the Black Sea. Interestingly, these two pipelines carry names that are evocative of the Russian effort to emancipate its natural gas from the transit in Ukraine: both *streams* are north and south of the 'peripheral country'<sup>39</sup>.

'Nobody can win a gas war: all parties lose'<sup>40</sup>. Perhaps this consideration is the main driver for Gazprom to seek for alternative routes instead of insisting on its claims of unpaid gas bills or pipeline siphoning from Kiev. As one spokesman at Gazprom told the press in February 2012, with Nord Stream already on line, once South Stream is completed 'Ukraine's transit role for the export of Russian gas will be equal to zero'<sup>41</sup>. Gazprom's assertiveness against Ukraine is not necessarily matched by the same strong political antagonism from the Kremlin. *Nametkina ulitsa*<sup>42</sup> has often released strong and unequivocal declarations that have put Putin's attempts to build friendly relations with the Ukrainian government in jeopardy<sup>43</sup>. If Gazprom's interests were the same as Russia's such a competition would hardly emerge.

In this respect, Gazprom has been described by many political, academic, and journalistic figures as a 'weapon' in the hands of the Kremlin, used for the fostering of Russian foreign policy abroad. As described below in section 5, this is not necessarily

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<sup>39</sup> Ukraine's prior name was *Malorossiya*, "Little Russia", later turned into Ukraine, from *u krai*, "extreme edge".

<sup>40</sup> Jérôme Guillet 'How To Get a Pipeline Built: Myth and Reality', in Adrian Dellecker and Thomas Gomart (eds.), *Russian Energy Security and Foreign Policy*, Routledge GARNET series: New York, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Gazprom's Sergei Kupriyanov is quoted in the article "Gazprom's pipeline projects to reduce Ukraine's transit role to zero – Kupriyanov", *ITAR-TASS*, 23 February 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Gazprom's headquarters in Moscow are located at nr. 16, *Nametkina ulitsa*.

<sup>43</sup> This problem was outlined by Alexei Khaitun during his interview with Mikhail Gusev, "Nord Stream and South Stream inefficient for Russia", *RIA Novosti*, 26 September 2011.



the angle one should look at such events. Gazprom has followed its own market strategies and has garnered the trust of several other multinational energy companies in order to obtain a strong position in the so-called “near abroad”<sup>44</sup> and in Eastern Europe, both representing gateways to energy-thirsty Western Europe. Taking into account the analysed case of South Stream only, ENI, MOL, Bulgargaz, and Srbijagas are in business with Gazprom for the administration of the national and offshore sectors of the pipeline. Moreover, national companies from Romania, Croatia, Austria, Greece, and Slovenia, are involved in the setup of transit agreements in terms of both legislation and supply. Romania and Croatia, in particular, have decidedly changed their position from a more western-oriented support for the Nabucco project, to one that pays lip service to the business interest of their respective national companies, Transgaz and INA, who have greatly improved their relations with Gazprom<sup>45</sup>.

What has become evident is an opposite *competitive* trend, with Gazprom acting more freely in the international arena, gaining influence primarily through and for business. Gazprom needs to secure customers downstream, preferably via long-term contracts because the sizeable cost for the construction of the pipeline is judged between 19 and 25 billion USD. For Gazprom, to break into the European market with yet another pipeline is more important than finding the 63 billion cubic metres (bcm) of natural gas that would go through South Stream yearly<sup>46</sup>, because the key goal is to gain a foothold in highly rewarding markets. European customers are willing to pay an inflated price for Russian energy, as there few other options.

The favourable scenario that Gazprom is laying out for its own profits duly influences the Kremlin foreign policy options. Having judged the prospective configuration as advantageous for the Russian budget, Putin was personally involved in the high-level meetings that gave birth to the abovementioned agreements. His participation represented the official seal on the foreseeable success of the project. Investors and analysts were sceptical up until the central government began employing every means to support Gazprom. However, endorsement came at a cost, as the Kremlin has recently tried to counter Gazprom’s plans to raise domestic prices for natural gas, which would be extremely harmful for the newly formed Duma and for Putin’s new term as president.

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<sup>44</sup> In this case, we employ the narrower definition of *near abroad*. While it is often used to describe the entire post-Soviet area, with the exception of the Baltic States, most academics and politicians use the phrase when referring to the three Newly Independent States located to the east of Russia: Moldova, Belarus, and Ukraine.

<sup>45</sup> On Romania, see John Lough, “Russia’s Energy Diplomacy”, *Chatham House Briefing Paper*, May 2011. On Croatia, see the article signed “MarSz” in the Center for Eastern Studies’ (OSW) *EastWeek*, issue 9 (202), 3 March 2010, Warsaw, Poland.

<sup>46</sup> The figure of 63 bcm/yr was originally as low as 30 bcm, according to Nicklas Norling, “Gazprom’s Monopoly and Nabucco’s Potentials: Strategic Decisions for Europe”, *Silk Road Paper*, The Central Asia – Caucasus Institute, 2007. The figure gradually surged to 63, which is the latest available on the project’s official website: [www.southstream.info](http://www.southstream.info) (last accessed on 14 March 2012).

*From Concentration To Competition*

The first decade of the Twenty-first Century could be viewed as a *concentration* period in terms of governmental control of the Russian energy sector. Through the appointment of Putin affiliates in key positions as ‘national champions’ and the exclusion of players unwilling to subdue to the Kremlin's design, Moscow managed to reorganize both the gas and oil industries in a vertical pattern designed to keep political control over national strategic assets in the hands of the presidential clique. At the same time, Gazprom's desires are not necessarily dictated by the Kremlin. Over time, the company has built relations of its own, ranging from international projects such as South Stream, to national policies on pricing, supply, and exports. The ‘decade of concentration’ has unleashed a multiplicity of power poles, whose interests collide and converge according to the continuously evolving energy environment in which the players interact.

*Competition*, in particular, has come to the surface during the last few years, as the power held by energy companies consolidated within the Russian power struggle. Domestic energy prices are one of the many examples that could be taken to outline how the Kremlin and those that used to be its proxies are competing for setting the agenda. Prices are of paramount importance to understand how Gazprom and Moscow's interests diverge. On the one hand, the Kremlin prefers to keep them as low as possible in order to maintain a wide popular consensus and subsidise the industrial sector.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, Gazprom would like to increase them, turning the Russian market from a source of losses into a profitable outlet. Traditionally, in fact, the company concentrated its profits on hard currency from foreign markets to cover for the losses from the internal sale, with prices set far below production costs.<sup>48</sup>

The dimension of the quarrel overlaps with the consideration of Gazprom as a national champion, therefore entitled to privileged access to internal markets and monopolistic grip on exports. As noted by many academics and experts, Gazprom's budget is highly reliant on foreign currency and the company has retained little interest in seizing entirely the unprofitable domestic market. Moreover, the Kremlin's concessions to third companies for the sale of natural gas have become the poster child for Russia's application to the World Trade Organization and, in general, for the friendliness of its business environment. Not considering the US-born ITERA, which maintains an insignificant share of the market, Novatek is the only competitor-on-paper for Gazprom. Still, Gazprom keeps its grip on the transportation system and on processing plants and the internal markets bear little profits both due to subsidised prices and because of the common practice of non-payment<sup>49</sup>. Not surprisingly, Novatek's existence is preserved through strong ties with the Kremlin and can only be considered a competitor when the two centres of power in Moscow disagree. As it has become evident, Gazprom has grown ‘too big’ to be just a tool in the hands of the

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<sup>47</sup> Kevin Rosner, *Gazprom and the Russian State*, GMB Publishing, London, 2006, 9.

<sup>48</sup> *The Economist*, ‘In a Bear Hug’, 18 December 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Stern, 2005, 198.

Kremlin, especially abroad, where the state cannot control business and lacks puppet competitors like the domestic ones.

*Concentration* has been the recent trend in the oil industry, backfiring from the permissive liberalisation policy of the early Nineties. Besides the better known Yukos affair, the case of TNK-BP has shown an interesting dynamic in relation to the Kremlin's actions. Moscow directed all its energies to restructuring Rosneft into a national champion and therefore opposed any manoeuvre that undermined this goal. Acting on behalf of the Kremlin, Rosneft tried to secure a partnership with BP for the joint exploration of offshore Arctic fields in 2010. The international lawsuit that followed, prompted by TNK-BP stakeholders, struck a blow against the flourishing role of Rosneft as an internationally recognized and reliable business partner. However, the principle of the rule of law had to be protected, and no further retaliations took place. It can be argued that the Yukos lesson was learned – although another precedent still looms in TNK-BP as non-Russian board members were prevented from entering Russia for a brief period in 2008, until BP agreed to let Mikhail Fridman be the CEO of the joint venture.

Although maintaining an intimate connection with regard to energy, the central government in Moscow and the *Nametkina ulitsa* Gazprom offices in Moscow have had numerous rows, challenging the mainstream idea of coordination which has circulated for the past ten years among scholars and experts in Russian energy politics. The representation of Gazprom as a tool in the hands of the Kremlin for the dominance of the domestic energy market and for the fostering of Russian foreign policy objectives abroad is undermined by several examples of the frictions between the two centres of Russian power. It is more a tug-of-war between concentration and competition in terms of sheer power, rather than economic profits.

Boris Barkanov judges the 'change in state authority' as 'the causal explanation for the shift in the industry management'<sup>50</sup> while energy analysts at CERA have explicitly stated that 'the Russian state is becoming the industry itself'<sup>51</sup>. Petersen recently went as far to declare that 'energy policy has become such a central and consuming plank of Russian foreign policy that the two are practically one and the same'<sup>52</sup>. It is reported that Putin meets 'Gazprom's CEO more often than the majority of ministers in the Russian government'<sup>53</sup> and unsurprisingly, at the end of

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<sup>50</sup> Boris Barkanov, "From Apprentice to Mercantilist: Transformation of State Identity and Russian Energy Charter Treaty Policy" (forthcoming), paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities held at Columbia University, NY on 13-14-15 of April, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Cambridge Energy Research Associates, *Russia at a New Crossroads: Can Expanding State Companies Deliver Energy Supply Growth?*, CERA, Cambridge, MA, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> Alexandros Petersen, *The World Island: Eurasian Geopolitics and the Fate of the West*, Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara, CA, 2011, 99.

<sup>53</sup> Stanislav L. Tkachenko, "Actors in Russia's Energy Policy towards the EU", in Pami Aalto, *The EU-Russia Energy Dialogue*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008.

2008, ‘11 of 18 members of the energy giant had worked in the St. Petersburg administration or the FSB during the Nineties’<sup>54</sup>.

The federal government in Moscow has ‘tightened the grip on Gazprom, considerably expanded its involvement in the management of the oil sector and reinforced its monopoly over oil and gas export pipelines’<sup>55</sup> since Putin took power in 2000. To honour these intents, Russia’s official strategic documents put in printed characters multi-faceted energy policies that often mirrored multipolar foreign policy ‘doctrines’<sup>56</sup>. Personal ties and proximity to the Kremlin have taken the place of the tycoonish attitude of the oligarchs, so as to seal Putin’s victory against such behaviour and individuals. In spite of this, the competition on the surface of the energy component of the Russian economy masks a concentrating effort that is likely to provoke more volatility in the near future, as Gazprom tries to emancipate its destiny from the Kremlin’s.

### *Conclusion*

With this paper, we sought to individuate the power dynamics between the central government and the “national champions”, particularly those controlling the energy sector. Economic and political decisions are made both by the heads of the power cabinets (so called, *siloviki*) and by the companies’ CEOs, who frequently meet and plan policy options together. Furthermore, the paper aimed to show how opposite trends stemming from decisions in Moscow influence the Russian energy sector, both in its structure and in its business endeavours. Without being explicitly codified, trends of competition and concentration reflect the degree of resource nationalism circulating in the Kremlin rooms. Strategic energy policy documents, together with foreign policy doctrines, pave the way for certain behaviours towards and within the business sector. However, sometimes, as seen above with the case of Gazprom in the international arena, a competing thrust might emerge. On the internal stage, the struggle over domestic prices has reached a peak recently<sup>57</sup> and is likely to show cracks in the nearly perfect structure that Putin’s policies have contributed to build.

The recent turn from a trend of increasing concentration to one of open competition, domestically and internationally, needs not to divert the researcher’s attention from the real stakes that the Kremlin still holds in this confrontation: Gazprom remains ‘property’ of Russia, in that the government retains more than 50% of its shares; Gazprom is not jeopardising the Moscow’s strategic interests either at home or abroad; the failure of Gazprom’s recapitalisation has shown a weakness from *Nametkina ulitsa* that can become a weapon in Kremlin’s hands; and, lastly, the personal ties between the Kremlin and the key figures in the energy sector remain solid and strong.

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<sup>54</sup> Vladimir Milov and Boris Nemtsov, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Louis Skyner, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Paolo Sorbello, 2011, 95-102.

<sup>57</sup> Isabel Gorst, ‘Gazprom: feeling the squeeze’, *Financial Times*, 26 March 2012.

The key findings from the analysis of the TNK-BP and the South Stream cases are the recognition of multiple power poles that join hands and collide without a clear pattern. Historic and personal rivalries have played a relevant role in the unravelling of the events that led to the failure of the concentration effort. On the other hand, the apparent freewheeling attitude shown by Gazprom in its international ventures is counterbalanced by a contingent convergence of interests with the Kremlin. Should the circumstances vary, the approach by Moscow, Gazprom, and the other Russian energy giants might follow a different path from the present one. The described cases are to be considered a paragon for the general behaviour in the energy sector. Above the chessboard of Russian energy the pool of players is so diverse and numerous that it becomes hard to predict beyond one or two moves.

# **Part 2**

# **Culture**

# **Re-assessing Vakhtangov: Relationships and reputations in early twentieth- century Russian theatre**

*Rayla Tadjimatova*

The historical and political changes in Russia over the past twenty years have increased interest in Russia's historical and cultural past. The first decades of the twentieth century, when the historical avant-garde was flourishing in Russian arts, literature and theatre have attracted significant attention of contemporary scholarship. This attention partly aims to recover the names of some artists that were deleted from the official history of Soviet theatre. Their contribution to the development of contemporary Russian and Western theatre was distorted by the ideologically pre-conditioned censorship of the Soviet system. This led, for example, to misinterpretation or undervaluation of the work of Russian theatre directors Evgeny Vakhtangov<sup>1</sup> and Nikolay Evreinov<sup>2</sup>. In the West, the significance of their work was overshadowed by a widespread assumption that the Russian theatre of the first decades of the twentieth century was represented by Konstantin Stanislavsky<sup>3</sup> and Vsevolod Meyerhold<sup>4</sup> – two great theatre theorists and experimentators and practitioners well known by Western scholars and practitioners. However, the contribution of Vakhtangov's and Evreinov's work to the twentieth century Western theatre and drama is also important and valuable.

Stanislavsky and Meyerhold lived quite long lives, produced dozens of plays and left a rich legacy of publications. However, they were a part of a wider Russian theatre development that inevitably nourished and influenced their work. This development was concerned with a constant negotiation between realism on one hand and modernism and the avant-garde on the other. This process developed the Russian

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<sup>1</sup>Evgeny Vakhtangov (1883-1922) was born in Armenia and became known as a Russian theatrical experimentator and outstanding actor-training teacher. He founded the Vakhtangov Studio that became the Vakhtangov Theatre in 1924 and still operates in Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> Nikolay Evreinov (1879-1953) is a Russian playwright, theorist and practitioner associated with his highly subjective concepts of theatricality and monodrama. Some of his plays were quite popular in Europe before the WW II. In 1920 he organized a mass spectacle *The Storming of the Winter Palace* that involved over ten thousand people. However he soon left Russia to escape the Bolshevik terror.

<sup>3</sup> Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) was a Russian and Soviet actor, director, teacher, theorist and theatrical reformer, creator of the 'Stanislavsky System' for a realistic actor training

<sup>4</sup> Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) was an actor and director of revolutionary experimental theatre technique and a head of the Meyerhold Theatre until 1938.

and Western modernist theatre of the twentieth century and embraced the work of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov and Evreinov. However, this article argues that Vakhtangov's input into this development was essential. His artistic intuition drew the discoveries of Meyerhold's avant-gardism and Evreinov's theatricalism into the realistic bourgeois theatre developed by Stanislavsky. In the mid-1920s, Vakhtangov's artistic achievements encouraged Meyerhold to renew his interest in combining a realistic style of acting with his own revolutionary theatre discoveries. Therefore, the evaluation of Vakhtangov's contribution cannot be separated from the evaluation of the process of negotiation between modernism and the avant-garde in the Russian theatre that took place in the first decades of the twentieth century.

### *Introduction*

In the course of the nineteenth century, modernity established itself as a socio-economic reality in most industrialized European countries. People faced enormous mental and physical modifications of life that changed the face of Europe beyond recognition. Consequently, 'a 'paradigm shift' took place in the popular mind, an awareness of living in a new era, whose new features far outweighed the ones persisting from the past.'<sup>5</sup> The speed of changes, alterations to the previously established conception of a linear time and space continuum and new understandings of the physical universe destroyed the older ways that individuals related to the world and time.

The traditional concept of an objective reality that could be captured through the human senses began to crumble. By the turn of the century, a feeling of disappearing reality became combined with a profound understanding of the apparently ever-increasing negative aspects of modernity. This caused a crisis in the intellectual world. Irrational dynamics in social practice and the arts replaced the rationalism of the modern age. Realistic approaches could no longer express the uncertainty and anxiety of experiencing a chaotic and unpredictable world. The crisis of modernity became inevitable.

Modernism, as an artistic response to this crisis, started the development of new methods of representing these times and attempted to rupture realist and naturalist modes of representation. In their own time, however, realism, naturalism and symbolism prepared the ground for modernism. Realist artists worked on discovering new subject matters, on developing new methods of translating objective reality into visual or literary and dramatic media. Their oppositional attitude towards the new dominant middle class and increased awareness of social and cultural changes within society established a foundation for emancipation from the dictates of a pure literary and idealized narrative.

Naturalists shared with realists the idea that the arts must be devoted to an objective representation of contemporary life, its culture, ideas and issues. However,

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<sup>5</sup> Gunter Berghaus, *Theatre, Performance and the Historical Avant-Garde* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 26.



they came to accept that reality could never be objectively reproduced by art, but can only be registered and processed by a sensitive and reasoning artist-scientist. This led to the recognition that a representation of the object of artistic observation is fragmented rather than a reflection of reality as an organic whole. This growing awareness of the subjective component in the creative artistic process and thinking fuelled a desire to overcome mimetic imitation by using symbolic representation. Symbolism rapidly spread throughout Europe, exercising a substantial influence on the fine arts, music, literature, and theatre. The symbolists challenged the ability of rational language to signify meaning and chose suggestive rather than descriptive language. Their works communicated 'ideas, experiences, and emotions indirectly through metaphoric rather than mimetic imaginary, and they used their associative and evocative power to reveal what conventional means of representation could not divulge.'<sup>6</sup> The crisis of subject, language and representation became evident and at this moment modernism came into existence.

### *Modernism*

Modernism embraces a whole host of distinct but connected artistic movements and schools, such as Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism, and Constructivism and so on, that represented a mixture of critical, positive and ambivalent attitudes towards modernity. Even though the image of modernity as something desirable and concurrent with advancements of science and technology inspired futurists and constructivists in Russia, most artists of the early twentieth century were against the destructive forces of industrialization and were critical about its grand ideas of progress and emancipation, which had been introduced by the Enlightenment. Moreover, they did not accept reality as a given phenomenon, but rather as expressed by the work of human mind, so their perception of reality was critical and its representation needed to be innovative. This encouraged self-conscious experimentations in all art forms, which became the most fundamental aspect of modernism.

### *The Avant-Garde*

The concept of the avant-garde is related to the concept of modernism but has a different emphasis and intention. The figurative meaning of this medieval military term originated in the Renaissance to designate an advanced position in arts or literature. At the time of the French Revolution the term was applied to politics and utopian philosophies and then developed into a concept linking an artistic avant-garde with the political avant-garde. In the twentieth century, the idea of a radical merging of arts with revolutionary politics became essential for Italian and Russian futurists, constructivists and surrealists. However, avant-garde artists did not aim to turn into

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<sup>6</sup> Berghaus, 23.

politicians, but ‘at transforming politics into a creative occupation and thus instituting change both in the arts and politics’.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, avant-garde art and theatre appeared as an oppositional and subversive force which promoted ‘rupture, revolution and destruction as vehicles of liberation and innovation, and employed transgression and shock as a means of criticizing (a) the functions of art and the role of the artist in bourgeois society and (b) the means of expression employed in the creation of works of art.’<sup>8</sup> However, avant-garde artists were also experimenters with new forms and with new, forward-looking anticipated visions. They had an intuitive perception of approaching changes and attempted to provoke radical changes before others saw a need for it. Their art ‘took on a visionary role and acted as an instrument of social change.’<sup>9</sup>

Modernist artists translated the innovative achievements of the avant-garde into features of the contemporary culture. They emphasized the call to move with the times, but they did not disregard the roots of modern culture in older traditions. They operated within such established cultural institutions as theatres, newspapers, magazines, museums and so on, but they were interested in experimenting with forms, innovation and technical development. Their self-reflexive art aimed to revolutionize art aesthetics but did not target the social or political structure of society. They did not share the avant-garde’s radical critique of the affirmative ideology of art in bourgeois society and their sharp opposition to the institutionalized conditions of artistic production.

The Russian theatre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was actively involved in these developments, alongside the whole European theatre. By the end of the nineteenth century, naturalistic drama had developed into a major movement in Western drama. It demanded a specific style of acting in order to portray not only individual behaviour on the stage but also contemporary social interactions within a ‘natural’ environment. Naturalistic acting aimed to ‘present behaviour as a symptom of the character’s psychophysical condition’.<sup>10</sup> This acting technique required a new approach to rehearsing and training the actor. It was actor, director and founder of the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) Konstantin Stanislavsky who dedicated his entire life to the creation of a training system for realistic acting. Between 1898 and 1905 the MAT successfully produced plays by Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky. By 1906, these productions made the MAT and Stanislavsky famous throughout Europe. However, Stanislavsky was not satisfied. It was a modern insight into human psychology that helped Stanislavsky to identify that actors needed a specific training of their psychological and nervous systems. He believed this would allow the actor to achieve the feeling of spontaneity on the stage and psychologically true acting that would lead to a deep emphatic connection with the audience. The success of Stanislavsky’s production of a realistic play, *A Month in the Country* (1908) by

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<sup>7</sup> Berghaus, 36-7.

<sup>8</sup> Berghaus, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Berghaus, 40.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Gordon, *The Purpose of Playing*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 36.

Ivan Turgenev, was the first result of the implementation of his new ideas on rehearsal and acting techniques.

In the meantime, in the early twentieth century, European and Russian symbolist drama was also developing. It inspired a search for theatrical means of expression that were different from naturalistic/realistic styles of staging. In Europe, the theories of Richard Wagner underpinned the development of a symbolist theatrical aesthetic. His ideas were further developed by Adolphe Appia<sup>11</sup> and Gordon Craig<sup>12</sup> who problematized a need for a new acting technique that must match the symbolist aesthetic. This aesthetic required artistic control by the stage director. The director had to create such stage design, music, light and movement on the stage as would express the hidden essence of the play seen through the director's subjective perception of the play. The task of an actor in such a production would be to execute the design of a director through symbolic movement, voice and gesture.

In Russia, Vsevolod Meyerhold tried to realise these ideas on the stage. He started his career as an actor of the Moscow Art Theatre and worked with Stanislavsky from 1898. In 1902, however, he rejected the MAT's aesthetic of naturalism and started developing a theatre of conscious stylization. This inspired his experimentation with different anti-naturalist techniques and directions. Meyerhold's rejection of the MAT's naturalistic style of acting was supported by his idea that the essence of acting was movement. In 1905, Stanislavsky, who was impressed by the experiments of his former actor, invited Meyerhold to take part in the work of the studio that was organized and financed by Stanislavsky.

Stanislavsky aimed to create an artistic environment where new styles of theatre production, required by the symbolic aesthetic, could be explored. The studio was to be affiliated with the Moscow Art Theatre and dedicated to experimentation with space, design and acting style under the artistic leadership of Meyerhold. However, Stanislavsky interrupted the work of the studio. For Meyerhold, realization of the new symbolic aesthetic on the stage necessitated a cardinal change of the attitude towards the bourgeois audience and to the roles of actor and director in the production process. He undeniably credited a director with an unlimited artistic power and attributed to the actors the goal of a physical realization of the director's imaginary world. His subjective creativity did not aim to satisfy bourgeois values, so his stage images could not coincide with the accustomed images of the observed world. Meyerhold conceptually wanted 'to laugh in the face of the crowd' if it fails to understand his productions.<sup>13</sup> His revolutionary concepts had already echoed the

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<sup>11</sup> Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) was a Swiss musician, artist and theatrical theorist. He rejected historical accuracy in stage design, affirming generalised abstract and stylized set design with an important role for lighting.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) was an English director, artist and theatrical theorist. His stage designs were characterized by a stylized symbolism and abstract, architectural sets.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Rebecca B. Gauss, *Lear's Daughters: The Studios of the Moscow Art Theatre 1905-1927* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1999) 10

political attitudes of the avant-garde artists. For Stanislavsky, however, theatre was outside of the realm of politics and served as a social educator in bourgeois society. Nevertheless, he recognized a contemporary modernist need for experimentation with theatrical form. In contrast to Meyerhold, he believed in the central role of the actor in theatre. For Stanislavsky, it was essential that actors always remain 'natural' even in the unnatural stage environment proposed by the symbolic aesthetic. However, this was not the case for Meyerhold, who was experimenting with external modes of expression and believed in the priority of the director in theatre. This situation reflected an uneasy relationship between the modernist Moscow Art Theatre and the avant-garde ideas of the young Meyerhold. Moreover, it highlighted a need to resolve the task of combining 'natural' or 'true' acting style with symbolic or stylised dramatic text and stage design. However, Meyerhold had not yet come to realization of the necessity and importance of this task for modern theatre. Inevitably, Stanislavsky closed the studio.

Stanislavsky made another attempt at combining his discoveries on psychologically true acting with symbolic stage design. In 1908 the Moscow Art Theatre invited Gordon Craig to take a role of a stage designer in the project of staging *Hamlet* by Shakespeare under directorship of Stanislavsky. The play was produced in Moscow in 1912. However, this collaboration was not entirely successful. For Craig, their project required more freedom for the actor. He was looking for an acting style whereby actors on the one hand could execute the symbolic design of the director through voice, movement and gesture and, on the other, could freely improvise in cooperation with the director. This was a complete opposition to the Moscow Art Theatre's quest for subtle, psychological interpretation of each character at any given moment. This acting style could not allow the actors to improvise or use techniques that would highlight theatricality, or the theatrical nature of the performance. However, Craig's ideas were not lost in the naturalistic aesthetic of the Moscow Art Theatre. A group of young actors participated in the mass scenes of this production. They were interested in Craig's ideas far more than Stanislavsky and paid a great attention to his comments during rehearsals. One of them was Evgeny Vakhtangov.

Vakhtangov was accepted by the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) as an actor and then became actively involved in the First Moscow Art Theatre Studio as actor, teacher, and director. The First Studio was founded in 1912. The previous 1905 studio had been devoted to finding new theatrical forms in collaboration with Meyerhold, whereas the First Studio aimed to create a system for training new actors. This could not be achieved within the Moscow Art Theatre with its established rehearsal and production processes based on the bourgeois system. This could not allow experimentation and research to take over its financial interests and turn the repertoire theatre into a laboratory. Moreover, well-established and highly experienced actors of the Moscow Art Theatre were sceptical about Stanislavsky's experiments. Therefore, Stanislavsky drew in a group of young actors 'who had sufficient experience of professional theatre to recognize their difficulties and know the

problems involved but who were not yet fixed in their ways'.<sup>14</sup> Vakhtangov was among them. Soon Vakhtangov became one of the leading teachers and directors of the First Studio.

Vakhtangov started his career in the First Studio as an ardent follower of Stanislavsky's experimentation in actor training and the Moscow Art Theatre tradition of psychological realism. However, by the Russian Revolution, his directing and acting theories began to depart from psychological realism. Between 1920 and 1922, Vakhtangov developed an anti-naturalist theatre concept that constituted a theatrical paradox: an acting technique that was outwardly expressive, often apparently grotesque, but internally deep and emotionally realistic. His directing method re-established a theatrical nature and a playful festival spirit in theatre but could at the same time make a true (or subconscious) contact with the spectators and create a playful involvement of the audiences into the theatrical event. Vakhtangov's directing style was unique and had not any other analogues in contemporary theatre. He called it *fantastic realism*. Eventually, by 1922, Vakhtangov solved Stanislavsky's task of combining psychologically true acting with the symbolic aesthetic of stage design, light and costume. Moreover, he was able to organically synthesize all elements of the performance through a playful improvisational attitude of the actors to their characters and action. This helped him to reveal the theatrical essence of theatre – its playful theatricality, but, and at the same time, to maintain a director's subjective control over the whole production. This was something similar to what Craig and Meyerhold were looking for.

The progression of Vakhtangov's method from one production to another reflects a process of an active interrogation between modernist theatre and the avant-garde ideas. He never ceased his deep affiliation to the Moscow Art Theatre and Stanislavsky but aimed to change their outdated aesthetic, trapped in naturalism. He believed that the educated audiences of the Moscow Art Theatre were waiting for this. The work of the First Studio and Vakhtangov in particular, considerably contributed to the development of the MAT and Stanislavsky's actor training system. However, most of Vakhtangov's best achievements took place outside of the First Studio and the MAT.<sup>15</sup> The bourgeois values of the MAT establishment were not easily changed. Nevertheless, Vakhtangov became known as an original director of successful productions, which became major theatrical events during 1920-1922. His creativity became a significant factor in Russian theatre and profoundly influenced contemporary European and US-American theatre during the 1920s-1930s.

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<sup>14</sup> Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavsky: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 198.

<sup>15</sup> *Erik XIV* by August Strindberg was produced at the First MAT Studio in 1921, *The Wedding* by Anton Chekhov, *The Miracle of St. Antony* by Maurice Maeterlinck and *Princess Turandot* by Carlo Gozzi in the Vakhtangov Studio between 1920 and 1922, and *Dybbuk* by S. Ann-sky in the Habimah Studio in 1922 and was performed in Hebrew.

*Evaluation of Vakhtangov's contribution*

Unfortunately, Western theatre critics and scholars underestimate Vakhtangov's contribution to the development of European theatre. This was partly due to Vakhtangov's early death<sup>16</sup> and his limited written legacy, partly due to himself, as he humbly presented himself as a disciple of Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold and partly due to political and cultural changes in Russia that followed after the mid-1920s. Stanislavsky and Meyerhold are recognized by contemporary scholarship as two of the most important figures in European theatre in the twentieth century. Both of them left a rich legacy of articles and books and stimulated the further development of the Western theatre practice and scholarship. Stanislavsky is accepted as a 'father' of contemporary realistic psychological acting and staging, while Meyerhold is a 'founder' of anti-realistic stylistic staging and Russian Constructivism, who advanced self-conscious theatricality in theatre. Therefore, Vakhtangov's position was traditionally assessed as occupying a secondary position compared to Stanislavsky and Meyerhold.

Vakhtangov definitely learned from Stanislavsky and Meyerhold. He worked with Stanislavsky and experimented under his guidance in the First Studio. He did not work with Meyerhold but saw some of his productions and carefully read all his publications and books. However, Vakhtangov was also critical of both of them. For him, Stanislavsky was a genius in knowing the actor but was trapped by naturalism in staging, whereas Meyerhold was a genius in directing - in materializing his subjective imagination on the stage - but, in Vakhtangov's view, knew nothing about the actor. And both of them underestimated the role of playful theatricality in theatre, expressed through actors. Vakhtangov recognized that theatricality is a vital feature of theatre. It creates festive expressiveness on the stage and an informal playful interaction with the audience. Evidently, Vakhtangov thoroughly studied publications and books by Nicolai Evreinov - an actor, director and theatre theoretician from Petersburg. Evreinov helped establish the theory of *teatralnost'* (or theatricality)<sup>17</sup> and coin the term. For him, theatricality was an instinct, 'theatrical will', to transform the appearance of nature, similar to the animal instinct for play. It is a kind of a universal quality present in humans and anterior to any aesthetic act. It is linked to the body of the actor and appears initially as a result of game-like, physical experiences before taking the form of a product intellectually focused upon a given aesthetic.<sup>18</sup> For Vakhtangov, 'theatrical will' or 'creative state' reveals itself as a creative engine. It helps the actors organically justify any stage design, sound or text that is symbolically transformed. In the meantime, it allows the actors to remain emotionally and

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<sup>16</sup> Evgeny Vakhtangov died of cancer, at the age of thirty-nine, three months after his last premiere of *Princess Turandot* by Carlo Gozzi.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Slonim, *Russian Theatre: From Empire to the Soviet*, (London: Methuen, 1963), 256.

<sup>18</sup> Josette Feral and Ronald P. Bermingham, 'The Specificity of Theatrical Language', *SubStance*, 31, 2 /3, Issue 98/99 (2002): Special Issue: Theatricality (Winconsin: University of Winconsin Press), 106.

psychologically organic. The artistic policy of Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theatre was against theatricality as a barrier to serious and socially motivated theatre with a deep psychological truth. Meyerhold was naturally interested in the development of symbolic theatricality and theatrical form. However, in acting, he was a proponent of expressive external physicality rather than inner emotional or psychological truthfulness. It was only after Vakhtangov's death that his actor training and directing methods, leading to impressive stage productions, found their further development in the experimental work of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold.

*Vakhtangov's writings*

Vakhtangov left limited written material explaining his method. Two key documents, specifically focussed on the Vakhtangov method, are actually stenographic records of two discussions with student-actors, which took place at his apartment just one and a half months before his death. Besides this, the student-actors of his own Vakhtangov Studio took notes of training processes and rehearsals, and recorded Vakhtangov's lectures, comments and talks. The greater part of these documents was reworked into books or articles or reminiscences. These are valuable sources for researching Vakhtangov's methods. However, not all of these materials have been fully studied. Even Vakhtangov's diaries were not published in Russia without cuts until 2011.

During Soviet times, this was not possible because the state considered Vakhtangov's legacy ideologically suspect and limited access to his historical sources. Moreover, in the 1920s, the Soviet authorities did not support his critical views on Stanislavsky and Meyerhold as both directors were in favour with the government. They were internationally recognized and represented the culture of the Soviet Russia in the West. For quite a long time therefore, Soviet Russian and Western scholars had no interest in Vakhtangov's influence on Stanislavsky and Meyerhold's work. Only in the late 1950s and early 1960s did Russian theatre scholarship renew its interest in Vakhtangov's writings.

English speaking scholarship mostly understands Vakhtangov's practice through translations of Russian publications. This naturally limits the scholars' access to possible sources and documents and, in some cases, creates confusion in the interpretation and understanding of key Vakhtangov concepts. This situation has a chance to be changed after the recent publication of Vakhtangov's archives in Russia in 2011.<sup>19</sup> The *Vakhtangov Source Book*, edited and translated into English by Andrei Malaev-Babel, immediately followed the Russian publication. His book attempts to conceptualize Vakhtangov's written work and provide a reader with interpretive commentary of Vakhtangov's specific terminology, ideas and concepts. The book compiles all Vakhtangov's key writings but the arrangement of the material could allow a bit more freedom of perception. The detailed conceptual framing of the material offered might affect a freedom of their critical perception. And this is, above

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<sup>19</sup> Vladislav Ivanov, ed., *Evgeny Vakhtangov, Dokumenty I svidetel'stva* [*Evgeny Vakhtangov: Documents and Evidence*], vols I, II (Moscow, Indrik, 2011).

all, needed in Vakhtangov studies to uncover his contribution to the development of Western theatre.

*Soviet ideology and Vakhtangov*

From approximately 1924, the official Soviet ideology turned against Vakhtangov's method of *fantastic realism*. *Socialist realism* became the official ideology in the arts. This led to distortions in interpretation of the Vakhtangov legacy by Soviet and then by Western critics. Presumably in order to protect the Vakhtangov Studio (which became the Vakhtangov Theatre Company) and the Vakhtangov creative legacy from political oppression under Stalinism, his disciples had to alter or veil some of the fundamental ideological and artistic assumptions of their teacher. This was reflected in their books and articles dedicated to Vakhtangov and his method. To what actual degree this altered the essence of the Vakhtangov's method is yet to be revealed. We can see this alteration, for example, in how Ruben Simonov quoted his teacher's explanation of the method of *fantastic realism*:

The correct theatrical means, when discovered, gives to the author's work a true reality on the stage. One can study these means, but the form must be created, must be a product of the artist's great imagination-fantasy. This is why I call it *fantastic realism*. It exists in every art.<sup>20</sup>

In his description, Simonov omitted some very important assumptions of his teacher. Vakhtangov started his description with radical statements: 'Naturalism in theatre should not exist, and neither should realism. Only fantastic realism should exist.'<sup>21</sup> Only after these preconditions does Vakhtangov develop his idea of fantastic realism as a correct combination of theatrical means which truly express both the playwright's original intentions and the form which should be created<sup>22</sup> by active psycho-physical and improvising work inspired by imagination. For Vakhtangov, realism was anti-theatrical and a limiting approach to theatre.<sup>23</sup> It is clear however that Simonov made an effort to protect Vakhtangov's method from the ideological accusations of those for whom realism was associated with the concept of *socialist realism* and had a positive connotation.

Boris Zakhava, another of Vakhtangov's disciples, wrote an introduction to the first edition of *Vakhtangov's Diaries* in 1939. According to K. Avshtolis, who reviewed

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<sup>20</sup> Ruben Simonov, *Stanislavsky's Protégé: Eugene Vakhtangov*, trans. Miriam Goldina, (New York: DBS Publications, 1969), 146.

<sup>21</sup> Andrei Malaev-Babel (ed.), *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook*, trans. by Andrei Malaev-Babel, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 158.

<sup>22</sup> Malaev-Babel, 158.

<sup>23</sup> Mei Sun, 'A Meeting Point or a Turning Point: On Vakhtangov's Theatrical Activities and Thought', *Chang Gung Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1:1 (April 2008), 189-201.



the book and its introduction in the journal *Teatr* in 1940, Zakhava made every effort to present Vakhtangov as a committed supporter of the Revolution, and even as an artist whose art and statements anticipated principles of socialist realism in theatre.<sup>24</sup> This was a time when Soviet theatres were scrutinised for focusing on ‘formalist’ experimentations at the expense of socialist content, so Zakhava had to find ways to protect his theatre. Avshtolis, however, was sceptical towards Zakhava’s ideas about Vakhtangov. For Avshtolis, Vakhtangov ‘was only interested in philosophical and world-outlook problems’.<sup>25</sup> This view, proclaimed on the pages of the only official Soviet journal on theatre at the time, reflected ideological suspicion and did not promise security.

It also did not clarify Vakhtangov’s position towards new political system. On the one hand, Vakhtangov’s practice did not fully coincide with the political dimensions of the radical avant-garde aesthetic, but, on the other hand, it broke substantially with the affirmative realism of bourgeois culture. Vakhtangov’s attitude towards the Bolshevik Revolution and the new political system was not as straightforward as that of Meyerhold for example, who joined the Communist Party and positioned himself as a leader of a new proletarian theatre that must replace the dead bourgeois theatre. Vakhtangov belonged to the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party that failed in October 1917. So, after the Revolution he, among the majority of the Russian intelligentsia, faced a necessity of reviewing his political preferences. Vakhtangov genuinely believed in the purposeful course of history. Therefore, he eventually accepted the Bolshevik Revolution. But he also believed that the period of Bolshevik dictatorship would be short and then would inevitably be replaced by a democratic society. Therefore, Vakhtangov did not participate in political debates to support Bolsheviks and never publically expressed his support for Marxist ideas. His democratic beliefs could not bear Bolshevik ideas of ‘proletarian dictatorship’ and a division between the members of the Russian society according to their belonging to a particular class or according to their material status. So, there was a place for everyone in the socialist future, when Russia would overcome this tragic break with its previous existence. However, Vakhtangov intuitively discovered that a great creative power was released by the Revolution. It was given to all people, including the workers. The workers, who now own the state and are ‘masters in it’, ‘will be able to fix everything that was destroyed’ and do even more than ‘fixing’ as they ‘will also *build*’ and build for themselves.<sup>26</sup> Vakhtangov’s romanticized perception of the political changes in Russia allowed him, however, to recognize that the Revolution freed and activated agency in the people. This included the audiences, the actors and himself. He became convinced of taking a part in this process of building a new country together with his theatre-studio company and the people. This enthusiasm towards a

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<sup>24</sup> K. Avshtolis, ‘Review on the first edition of the book *Vakhtangov’s Diaries*, by N. M. Vakhtangova and L. D. Vendrovskaya (eds), *Teatr* (Theatre), No3 (1940), 150-153 at 153.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Boris Zakhava, *Vakhtangov i ego studia* [*Vakhtangov and His Studio*] (Moscow: Teakinopechat, 1930) 76.

prospect of building a new better life led to an explosion of Vakhtangov's creative energy and talent.

Since 1918 and until his death in 1922, Vakhtangov's teaching and directing was inspired by this discovery. He tried to free and activate his own creative subjectivity by thorough studies of Meyerhold's writings. He searched for acting techniques that would stimulate and release the creative subjectivity of his actors and he experimented with new dynamic relationship between the stage and the audiences. These directions of his work partly reflected the militant intentions of the avant-garde towards the outmoded values of the bourgeois audiences. Fuelled by this attitude, artists of the Left campaigned to knock down 'old' culture to the ground and build a new one from the scratch. Vakhtangov's productions, on the contrary, highlighted the positive power of expressive creativity over tragically braking reality with its devastation and death. He aimed to unite people even in their painful process of reconsideration of their life and values after the Revolution. He appealed to their genuine humanity rather than to their antagonistic political stands that could not but deepen the divisions between them in that troubled time.

One can see that Vakhtangov's work was in an active phase of the negotiation between modernist and the avant-garde theatre. This view is also supported by the fact that during all those years he maintained his loyal association with the Moscow Art Theatre and Stanislavsky. In his personal diary, Vakhtangov passionately criticised their naturalistic methods of staging but shared their focus on the central role of the actor in theatre. Even though he was actively searching for new forms of theatre dictated by the Revolution, he did not join Meyerhold's attempt to tear down traditional old art institutions, including the Moscow Art Theatre, in line with the radical avant-garde manifestos. His position of a negotiator between modernist and avant-gardist artistic modes of expression in the post-Revolution Russian theatre allowed him to create his method of synthesis of different modes of expression in order to activate positive creative agency of actors and audiences.

*Vakhtangov as a bridge between Stanislavsky and Meyerhold*

Vakhtangov's part in Russian theatre has been evaluated by previous Soviet and Western scholarship under two perspectives. One is that Vakhtangov played the role of a bridge between Stanislavsky and Meyerhold and reconciled their contradictions. This formula was established after the 1960s, when official Soviet critics (probably following B. Brecht's reflection<sup>27</sup>) and then Western theatre historians and critics (M.Banham and A.Orani<sup>28</sup>, N.Worrall<sup>29</sup>) identified Vakhtangov's method as a fusion

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<sup>27</sup> Berthold Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. and notes by J. Willet (London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1965), 237-238.

<sup>28</sup> Martin Banham, 'Vakhtangov' in *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 1157. Aviv Orani, 'Realism in Vakhtangov's Theatre of Fantasy', *Theatre Journal*, 36:4 (Dec. 1984), 480, M.Banham describes Vakhtangov as a "Russian director-actor-teacher, disciple and reconciler of Stanislavskian psychological realism

of Stanislavsky's and Meyerhold's methods and identified Vakhtangov's historical position of a reconciler of extremes. Vakhtangov, according to Brecht, 'was this 'meeting point' between Stanislavsky and Meyerhold' and reconciled 'formerly irreconcilable opposites'.<sup>30</sup> However, this concept has rather a technical connotation that does not clarify Vakhtangov's contribution or specify his method. The reconciliation of Stanislavsky's and Meyerhold's methods with their ideological and conceptual differences was hardly possible. Vakhtangov offered a way of negotiation between them by engaging actors' agency through theatrical playfulness or *theatricality* – the concept theorized by Evreinov.

*Vakhtangov and Evreinov*

The view that Nikolay Evreinov influenced Vakhtangov's method belongs to Mark Slonim, who expressed it in the early 1960s. However, his idea was not further discussed or developed in Soviet Russia or in the West. For Soviet critics, Evreinov, who emigrated to France in the early 1920s, was deleted from the history of Soviet Russian theatre for more than eighty years. The association of Vakhtangov's method with a former aristocrat who was critical of the new Soviet regime could not help to preserve Vakhtangov's method during Stalinist ideological oppression. Evreinov's name and theories were therefore simply forgotten in Russia and in the West too.

The first full-length study on Evreinov was published in English only in 1984.<sup>31</sup> According to Laurence Senelick, this was the 'first full-length study of Evreinov's conceptual and theatrical work in any language'.<sup>32</sup> Senelick admitted that Evreinov's contribution to Western theatre is sharply underestimated by contemporary Western

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and Meyerholdian grotesque via his system of human and joyous creation Fantastic Realism". Orani agrees with this and stresses that Vakhtangov's 'tolerance and adherence' to the rich traditions of the MAT made it possible for the triumph of 'the new brave theatre of the Revolution'. He also quotes Nemirovich-Danchenko, who clarifies this point: "In his creative endeavour Vakhtangov did not strive to divorce himself from the MAT, though he did divorce himself from its bad traditions. What were these traditions? The naturalism of which the MAT wants to rid itself. ... And it was of this drab, tedious naturalism that Vakhtangov rid himself of with such spontaneous finality." Orani concludes then that in fact Vakhtangov 'absolved his favourite teacher and friend' from negative notions of Stanislavsky's system, as Vakhtangov 'had paved back to Meyerhold' and bridged the gap 'between two giants of the Russian stage again'.

<sup>29</sup> Nick Worrall, *Modernism to Realism on the Soviet Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 76-78.

<sup>30</sup> Brecht, 238.

<sup>31</sup> Spenser Golub, *Evreinov: The Theatre of Paradox and Transformation* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1984).

<sup>32</sup> Laurence Senelick, 'Review', *Theatre Journal*, 37:1 (Mar., 1985), 131-133 (132)

scholarship.<sup>33</sup> Tony Pearson also questions why Evreinov's artistic contribution 'has never been examined in his native land on anything like a proper scale'<sup>34</sup> and assumes that the banning of his plays and theoretical works after his emigration to France and the ideological limitations of *socialist realism* fostered 'an ignorance of Evreinov and hindered a proper appraisal of the wider significance of his work'.<sup>35</sup> According to Spencer Golub, for Soviet theatre critics and historians Evreinov was a light-minded aesthete and apolitical formalist so, 'his highly subjective approach to art has made his value and intentions seem suspect'.<sup>36</sup> This attitude still affects the recognition of Evreinov's role in the twentieth century Russian theatre. Malaev-Babel in his recent *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook* has not credited Evreinov's influence on Vakhtangov while mentioning Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and some other names.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, according to Pavel Novitsky, Vakhtangov's library, among a number of other books on theatre, contained all of Evreinov's books. They showed every sign of a careful reading and prolonged examination.<sup>38</sup> Evreinov believed that theatricality, with its playful nature, its live qualities and its freedom from the text, grows out of the actor's personality. This understanding can be clearly traced in Vakhtangov's approach to actor training and to his directing process that puts actors' creativity at its centre. Moreover, Vakhtangov's last productions represent a playful interaction of art and life in theatre and, therefore, represent Evreinov's ideas in practice.

Evreinov acknowledged this. In *A History of the Russian Theatre*, published in Russian by an English publishing company situated in Belgium in 1953, Evreinov discussed Vakhtangov's production of *Erik XIV* by Augusto Strindberg and credited Vakhtangov's departure from the Stanislavsky and the MAT tradition that was opposed to theatricality. For Evreinov, 'all theatricality that was thoroughly exterminated from the MAT by Stanislavsky' was rehabilitated by Vakhtangov; the 'spectacular magic' of his productions reflected what Evreinov had 'preached' in his *Apology for Theatricality*.<sup>39</sup> Evreinov also recognised Vakhtangov's production of *Princess Turandot* by Carlo Gozzi as 'the best example of the most humorous and most subtly pure theatricality ever celebrated on the stage'.<sup>40</sup> For Evreinov, this production demonstrates that Vakhtangov shared his 'views on theatricality as a positive foundation in arts and life'.<sup>41</sup> Vakhtangov shared Evreinov's opposition to the

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<sup>33</sup> Senelick, 131-2.

<sup>34</sup> Tony Pearson, 'Evreinov and Pirandello: Twin Apostles of Theatricality', *Theatre Research International*, 12:2 (1987), 147-167, at 148.

<sup>35</sup> Pearson, 148.

<sup>36</sup> Golub, *vii*.

<sup>37</sup> Malaev-Babel, 81.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Worrall, 96.

<sup>39</sup> Nikolay Evreinov, *Isstoriya Russkogo Teatra* (A History of the Russian Theatre), introduced by C. Moody, (Letchworth, Herts: BRADDA Books, 1972), 356 (The translations of quotations from this book are mine).

<sup>40</sup> Evreinov, 359.

<sup>41</sup> Evreinov, 360.

psychological realism of Stanislavsky, whose attempts to reproduce life and nature on stage were seen by both Evreinov and Vakhtangov as inherently anti-theatrical. Evreinov's rejection of the symbolist abstractions of Meyerhold echoes Vakhtangov's critique of Meyerhold's concept of externalization of acting for the price of eliminated emotional and psychological truth. Evreinov believed that in order to restore theatricality, contemporary theatre must, firstly, admit the absolute centrality of the actor and, secondly, emphasize the absolute importance of a conscious rapport between actor and audience.<sup>42</sup> These ideas were definitely shared by Vakhtangov and he realized them in his method of *fantastic realism*. Actors' creativity and their tight emotional relationship with the audience were specific features of his productions. Vakhtangov believed that every production must create its own original rapport between actor and audience. For him, this matter inevitably becomes a part of a creative rehearsal process and aims at activation of actors' agency. And this, consequently, activates the role of the audience in the theatrical event.

From the beginning of this century, some of Evreinov's theoretical works, plays and correspondence documents have been published in Russia, though in a small edition. Hopefully, this will encourage a further exploration of Evreinov's theoretical contribution to the Russian and Western twentieth century theatres in general and to Vakhtangov's work in particular.

*Vakhtangov and Meyerhold*

In March 1921 in his diary, Vakhtangov expressed his admiration for Meyerhold:

I am thinking of Meyerhold. What a genius director, the grandest of all who lived before us, and of all who exist today. His every production is a new theatre. His every production could produce an entire movement. ... Meyerhold gave roots to the theatres of the future. The future will give him his due.<sup>43</sup>

In his letters to Meyerhold, Vakhtangov calls him 'My dear, beloved Master!' and expresses passionately that he is 'eternally grateful' for everything Meyerhold does in theatre and thanks him 'for every moment' which he spends in the Vakhtangov Studio, whose student-actors are his 'enthusiastic admirers'.<sup>44</sup> Vakhtangov was never formally Meyerhold's subordinate but assumed this position out of humility and respect. He wanted to express his attitude to Meyerhold from his humble position as a student vis-à-vis his teacher. For a long time, this one-way relationship has been considered the only possible one. It also suited the classification of Vakhtangov as a

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<sup>42</sup> Pearson, 155.

<sup>43</sup> Evgeny Vakhtangov, 'All Saint's Notes' in A. Malaev-Babel (ed.), *The Vakhtangov Sourcebook*, trans. by Andrei Malaev-Babel, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 128.

<sup>44</sup> Vakhtangov, 322.

bridge between Stanislavsky and Meyerhold. However, some members of the contemporary international research community see this view as suspicious.

Recent articles by Mei Sun and Vera Gottlieb show that both are suspicious of this formula. Mei Sun disputes the common perspective that Vakhtangov is an eclectic who combines Stanislavsky's psychological realism and Meyerhold's theatricalism and argues that Vakhtangov's last production, *Princess Turandot*, was a stage production of pure anti-realism which has nothing in common with Stanislavsky's method of realism. For Mei Sun, there were historical reasons for misunderstanding Vakhtangov's method. In the Soviet Union, *socialist realism* then dominated literature and art. This made *realism* a positive term while *anti-realism* was a negative one. Naturally, Mei Sun continues, Vakhtangov's students had to de-emphasize their remarkable teacher's anti-realistic leanings and emphasize that *fantastic realism* was not beyond realism.<sup>45</sup> Mei Sun comes to the conclusion that Vakhtangov's work showed a tendency towards anti-realism under the influence of a wider anti-realistic development from Western Europe, which also influenced the work of Meyerhold. In this anti-realistic climate, Vakhtangov's work gradually changed from Stanislavskian realism to Meyerholdian theatricality'.<sup>46</sup> As we see, Mei Sun disputes the role of Stanislavsky in Vakhtangov's method and argues for the exclusive position of Meyerhold in it.

Vera Gottlieb is concerned with the fact that Vakhtangov, as a director, 'is both little-known outside Russia and, crucially, under-estimated'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Gottlieb invites us to re-examine the common representation of Vakhtangov as a lesser figure than Meyerhold. She admits that Vakhtangov addressed Meyerhold as 'Master', called him a 'genius' and acknowledged him as the soulmate from whom he could learn. But she also emphasizes that Vakhtangov understood 'contradictory elements' in Meyerhold's work where he, was 'carried away by theatrical truth, and removed the truthfulness of feelings ...'.<sup>48</sup> For Gottlieb, Vakhtangov gives a very clear explanation and formulation of his own theatre, of *his* own style that is different from those of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold:

A perfect work of art is one in which there is a harmony of content, form and material ... I am searching in the theatre for modern methods of solving the problem of direction in a form which has a theatrical ring to it. [...]. I should like to call the work I do on the stage 'fantastic realism'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mei Sun, 'A Meeting Point or a Turning Point: On Vakhtangov's Theatrical Activities and Thought', *Chang Gung Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1:1 (April 2008), 89.

<sup>46</sup> Mei Sun, 199.

<sup>47</sup> Vera Gottlieb, 'Vakhtangov's Musicality: Reassessing Yevgeny Vakhtangov (1883-1922)', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 15:2 (2005), 259-268, at 260.

<sup>48</sup> Gottlieb, 265.

<sup>49</sup> Evgeny Vakhtangov, 'Stenogramme of Two Discussions between Vakhtangov and his Students', in Lybov Vendrovskaya and Galina Kaptereva (eds.), *Evgeny Vakhtangov*, trans. by Doris Bradbury, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 153.

In Vakhtangov's view, *Princess Turandot* was successful because harmony was achieved in it. This was the harmony of form with content, when the content is subjected to the actors' individuality and the form is created by methods that are 'modern and theatrical'. This harmonization of the form and content Vakhtangov called 'fantastic realism, a new trend in the theatre'.<sup>50</sup> Vakhtangov's objectification of the performance to the individuality of his actors is cardinally opposite to Meyerhold's approach. Meyerhold, as Berthold Brecht clearly said, was 'against the private element' in actors and emphasized instead their virtuosity, 'movement and its mechanics'.<sup>51</sup>

### *Meyerhold and Vakhtangov*

Building on Gottlieb's attempt to restore Vakhtangov's distinctive position in Western theatre, we can consider the creative influences of Vakhtangov's work on the work of Meyerhold in the 1920s, shortly after Vakhtangov's death. During my research in Moscow in 2010, I explored media coverage on the occasion of anniversaries of Vakhtangov's death and investigated Meyerhold's archive. I was looking for information or reflections on the Vakhtangov-Meyerhold relationship as expressed by their contemporaries and by Meyerhold himself.

In 1925, the magazine *Iskusstvo Trudiashchikhsia* (Art of the working people) dedicated its issue to Vakhtangov to commemorate a third anniversary of his death. An article written by Nikolay Volkov for this magazine caught my interest. According to Volkov, Vakhtangov's achievement in directing was original and important in that, he 'linked the art of the true psychological experience (*perezhivanie*) with the theatrical form' and, therefore, 'built a bridge between theatre and contemporaneity'.<sup>52</sup> Volkov finished his article with the assurance that in these days:

... one can still hear Vakhtangov's call to seek a new form of a theatre craft which can be developed from the art of the true psychological experience in theatre. [...] And it is not for nothing that Vakhtangov's name has begun to resound again in relation to the *Mandat* production in which Meyerhold was exactly able to reveal the realism of the stage through the sharp form of the conditional exaggerated theatre.<sup>53</sup>

This extract acknowledges Vakhtangov's achievement in finding a new theatre form which has grown out of the art of the true psychological experience. It also highlights

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<sup>50</sup> Vakhtangov, 158

<sup>51</sup> Berthold Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. and notes by J. Willet (London: Methuen & Co LTD, 1965), 237-238

<sup>52</sup> Nikolay Volkov, 'Vakhtangov', *Iskusstvo Trudyashchikhsya* (Art of the working people), 26 (1925), 7-8 (The translations of quotes from this article are mine)

<sup>53</sup> *Mandat* by a young Soviet playwright Nikolay Erdman was produced in 1924. Volkov, 8.

the task, announced by Vakhtangov, of seeking new forms of stagecraft combined with the true psychological experience in theatre and insists that this is still extremely relevant in contemporary theatre. Above all, it reflects a common opinion among Volkov's contemporaries that Vakhtangov's work established the high standard by which Meyerhold's *Mandat* was assessed.

Two important documents in the Meyerhold's archive are related to Meyerhold's work on the play *Teacher Bubus* by Aleksei Faiko at his theatre in November 1924. One document records Meyerhold's explanation of his production plan to his theatre company, and the other is a short comment written by Zinaida Raykh.

Raykh was Meyerhold's wife and a leading actress and administrator in his theatre. She was also known as a straightforward and honest person who never sought to be polite for the sake of the truth. She wrote a note that was attached to the record of Meyerhold's talk to his actors:

Vakhtangov has an exceptional influence on Meyerhold. [...] If only it was possible to grasp one more feature of Vakhtangov: the long-duration work. ... 'baking' the play for one and a half months will never give us the Vakhtangov – Japanese like pre-acting because our actors are absolutely lacking this technique.<sup>54</sup>

The record captures Meyerhold's reflection on a strategy for a new project, which must lead his theatre away from the technique of 'naked' physicality used in a previous production and move towards tragic comedy. Meyerhold explains:

I am not asking you to adopt the MAT acting style; it does not exist any more in its old fashioned way even in the [MAT] theatre itself. And all other [actors], attached to it<sup>55</sup>, were moved from the dead state with ease by Vakhtangov.

In Vakhtangov's studio his traditions are fostered deeply. By close observation of its work I see that its actors have moved far away from those modes [of acting] which I knew well from my own work at the Art Theatre. [However], neither Vakhtangov nor anybody else has been able to offer a full realisation of tragi-comic acting with its pre-acting. This is a big rarity in theatre. Maybe to some extent [this exists] in the *Miracle of*

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<sup>54</sup> 'K Zapisi Eksplikatsii V. E. Meyerholda *Uchitel Bubus* ot 18.XI.24. *Restzenzia* tov. Z. Raykh ot 25.XI.1924', RGALI, Fond 998, op. 1, ed. hran. 171 'The Addition to The 'Explication of *Teacher Bubus* by V. E. Meyerhold from the 18.11.24', Review by comrade Z. Raykh from 25.11.1924.' Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts, Fund 998, inventory 1, unit of storage 171 (The translation of the quote from the document is mine).

<sup>55</sup> Meyerhold speaks about actors of the First and Second MAT Studios. They were trained by Vakhtangov or were involved in his experimental work in the Studios.



*Saint Anthony* [...] and in the second act of the *Dybbuk*, and nowhere else as far as I know.<sup>56</sup>

We see that Meyerhold is deeply interested in Vakhtangov's work in the MAT and in his Studio. Meyerhold acknowledges that his own opposition to the MAT's 'old fashioned' acting style had changed and praises Vakhtangov's personal contribution to the move of the MAT and its studios from their previous 'dead state'. This illuminates the huge importance of Vakhtangov's work for the transformation of the MAT's acting style.

For Meyerhold, Vakhtangov's Studio represents the best example of this new acting style. Probably, this specific style helped Vakhtangov to achieve tragi-comic qualities in his productions of *Miracle* and *Dybbuk*. According to Meyerhold, Vakhtangov's achievements were not fully completed. Therefore, he aims to fulfil the task which nobody else, except Vakhtangov, with only partial success, had achieved so far. Once again, we can see that the high standard established by Vakhtangov's directing is at work. The *Teacher Bubus* was not successful. Probably, Raykh was right and Meyerhold could not achieve the task in one and a half months. His desire to do so, however, was truly inspired by Vakhtangov's work.

Meyerhold's explanation of the *Teacher Bubus* production-plan is a valuable document, which, arguably, reflects the moment when Meyerhold, under the influence of Vakhtangov's achievements, re-evaluated the significance of combining realistic and grotesque techniques in one production and, possibly, re-formulated some of his previous artistic approaches. The result of these dynamics, however, was realised not in *Teacher Bubus* but in the next production – *Mandat* by Nikolay Erdman, and was noticed by many contemporary critics, including Nikolay Volkov.

### *Conclusion*

The crisis of modernity, which became evident at the beginning of the twentieth century, provoked the appearance of modernist arts and, as a reaction, the avant-garde opposition. This was the time when awareness of the subjective component in the creative artistic process began to grow and caused self-conscious experimentation with form in the artistic media. By the early years of the twentieth century, in Europe, self-reflexivity had become an integral quality of works of art. The concept that 'the work of art is not a mimetic copy of an objective reality [any more] but an expression of the artist's consciousness of that reality' became recognised and accepted in the arts

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<sup>56</sup> Eksplikatsiia V. E. Meyerkholda *Uchitel' Bubus* ot 18.XI.24', RGALI, Fond 998, op. 1, ed. khran. 171. 'Explication of *Teacher Bubus* by V. E. Meyerhold from the 18.11.24', Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts, Fund 998, inventory 1, unit of storage 171. (The translation of the quote from the document is mine).

and theatre.<sup>57</sup> The subjectivity of artists and their audiences needed to be taken into consideration in order to create an active engagement with the work of art.

These features of modernism and the avant-garde were developed in the highly subjective art of Meyerhold, Evreinov, and Vakhtangov. However, Meyerhold developed the director's subjectivity that controls actors, whereas Vakhtangov freed his actors' subjectivity and encouraged them to express their individuality through theatrical forms of his productions. Vakhtangov used the Stanislavsky System as a starting point in actor training but developed its capacity enormously. He used Meyerhold's ideas and methods to develop his own directorial subjectivity but he did not become imprisoned by them. Vakhtangov was inspired by Evreinov's enthusiasm to re-establish a positive attitude towards theatricality in theatre, and realized his inspiration in practice. Importantly, Vakhtangov developed a method of expressing the actors' subjectivity in a text-based theatre and this has become a valuable contribution to the social nature of Western theatre. Vakhtangov achieved these results while addressing issues in the progressive development of contemporary theatre, at a time when modernist theatre was actively and productively engaging with avant-garde theatre and art.

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<sup>57</sup> Gunter Berghaus, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 45

# **Central European historical memories of Russia and the Soviet Union after the Cold War (1989/1991-2004)**

***Katrin Van Cant and Idesbald Goddeeris***

## *Introduction*

Central European countries are often thought to have a very hostile memory of Russia and the Soviet Union. Decades of communist rule have allegedly left a strong mark on the region, revealing itself in antagonistic relations with successor-state Russia and representations of the oppressor of olden days. Headlines are made by conflicts and controversies, for instance when the Estonian government decided to relocate the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn, a Soviet-era war memorial, from Tallinn city centre to the city's military cemetery in the spring of 2007. This immediately prompted a diplomatic spat with neighbouring Russia and violent encounters in Tallinn between Estonians and Russian speakers who make up 28 percent of Estonia's total population.<sup>1</sup> While most Estonians consider the statue to be a symbol of Soviet occupation and repression, Russians see it as a symbol of liberation from Nazi Germany and as a symbol of the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War in general.<sup>2</sup>

Are hostile memories of Russia common in the Central European post-Soviet space? This paper will analyze and compare the memory of Russia and the Soviet Union in three Central European countries (Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine) during the first fifteen years after the fall of Communism (1989/91-2004). It will do so by analyzing periodicals in those three countries. The chronological focus is on twentieth century historical narratives, more precisely regarding the Second World War and the communist period. How have Russia and the Soviet Union been represented in the press regarding these recent episodes in national history? Can it be said there is a general negative perception of Russia or are there differences between the three countries? Have these representations been subject to change and if so, how can these developments be accounted for?

We will also examine which factors colour these particular representations. The selection of countries enables us to look into both the influence of the past and the present on the shaping of the memory of Russia. Whereas all three countries prior

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<sup>1</sup> Marina Martynova, "The Political Aspects of the Russian Minority in Estonia", in *Minorities in Europe. Croatia, Estonia and Slovakia*, ed. Snežana Trifunovska (The Hague, TMC Asser Press, 1999), 88.

<sup>2</sup> This term is used in Russia and some other states of the former Soviet Union to describe the war of 1941 (starting from Operation Barbarossa or the German attack on the Soviet Union) to 1945 between Nazi Germany and its Axis allies and the Soviet Union.

to 1989/91 belonged to the communist bloc, the Soviet influence in the Soviet republic of Ukraine went much deeper than it did in satellite states Poland and Czechoslovakia. Two countries, Poland and Ukraine, experienced Soviet occupation during the Second World War. Besides that, both share a significant history with Russia with often antagonistic relations. How decisive is the specific historical context of each country? Or are contemporary representations of Russia steered above all by current geopolitical factors? In this respect too, the selected countries show large differences: while Poland and Slovakia have opted for an integration into Western European structures and are members of the European Union since 2004, Ukraine, with a large ethnic Russian minority of about 20%,<sup>3</sup> continues to compromise between Russia and Europe.

The periodicals that are used for this comparative analysis mainly consist of weeklies, since these tend to devote more attention to historical topics than, for example, dailies, which focus on political and economic issues and are more commercially oriented. However, a number of dailies were included in the case of Ukraine because of the specifics of the country's press market since the early 1990s, i.e. the very low viability and reading level of journals mainly as a result of the impoverishment of Ukrainian society. The selected press sources are all comparable as to their profile and reading public. They can be typified as 'elite periodicals' and are located in the centre of the political spectrum. The Slovak and Polish sources are generally considered to represent centre-leftist (*Nove Slovo (bez rešpektu)* and *Polityka*<sup>4</sup>) and centre-rightist (*Domino(Efekt/forum)* and *Wprost*) views. Moreover, *Wprost* and *Polityka* are the top selling weeklies in Poland. As for Ukraine, the bilingual weekly *Žerkalo Nedeli/Dzerkalo Tižnya* was included, an intelligentsia-oriented periodical, usually typified as liberal and reconciliatory in its discourse. Therefore, it is well suited for a comparison with the Polish and Slovak sources. However, considering the fragmented character of the ideological centre in the Ukrainian press landscape – which is not entirely reflected in the existing weeklies/journals – we included three popular newspapers, *Ukraina Moloda* (Ukrainophile), *Den'* (Ukrainophile) and *Segodnya* (Russophile), and the governmental newspaper *Golos Ukrainy*.<sup>5</sup>

We carried out a sample survey for the period 1989-2004, going through every 7th copy of the selected sources. This yielded some 340 articles regarding the Second World War and 380 articles concerning the communist period, which together corresponds with 70 to 80% of the total amount of historical contributions in all three countries (besides these key periods of historical interest, 10 to 30% of the obtained

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<sup>3</sup> Marion Recktenwald, "The Russian Minority in Ukraine", in *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*, ed. Ted Robert Gurr (Washington, United States Institute of Peace, 2000), 58.

<sup>4</sup> *Polityka* is sometimes also simply typified as 'centre'.

<sup>5</sup> Since *Golos Ukrainy* was influential only during the first half of the 1990s, most examples originate from this time period. As to *Den'* and *Segodnya*, which were established in 1996 and 1997, the examples go back to the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Ukraina Moloda* continuously came out starting from 1991 and was therefore consulted for the entire time period of the analysis.

sources involve pre-1939 and pre-twentieth century history). The analysis of these articles is complemented in various ways: in the case of debates concerning topics and/or historical anniversaries of particular importance to the historical memory of Russia, additional thematic selections of articles were gathered from all the mentioned press sources; moreover, we also discuss how these debates evolved after 2004 with Poland and Slovakia's accession into the European Union and Ukraine's Orange Revolution.

*Anti-Russian memories in Poland*

Polish post-communist historical culture is permeated by anti-Russian sentiments. This is most striking in the case of Second World War representations. Russians are more vividly and vigorously portrayed as enemies than Germans, primarily by paying more attention to the Russian rather than the German occupation and war crimes during the Second World War. At first sight, this is surprising, given that the German occupation lasted for almost five years from September 1939 until the summer of 1944, whereas the Soviet occupation ended in the summer of 1941, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and the latter switched sides to the Allies. Nevertheless, post-1989 popular historical representations have had the tendency to focus first and foremost on the detrimental role played by Stalin during the Second World War. In this respect, the Soviet-German alliance at the outset of the war carries a lot of weight. Many Poles see the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939 as facilitating the German invasion of Poland in the first place and denying Poland at best a much needed supply of arms or at worst a neutral refuge on its eastern side. Thus, the Soviet Union is perceived as facilitating the German occupation by dividing Poland with Germany. In addition, the Soviet Union retained the territory it annexed after 1945 and expelled its almost 1.2 million ethnic Polish inhabitants.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the horror of the Soviet occupation of 1939-41 has acquired an important place in Polish post-1989 historical culture. In this respect, a highly emblematic topic is that of Katyń. This village in western Russia, not far from Smolensk, has come to symbolize the three locations, where the NKVD executed approximately 22,000 Polish officers and intellectuals in 1940. Upon the invasion of the Red Army in eastern Poland in September 1939, they were arrested as a potential source of resistance against the communist system, carried off to prisoner camps in the Soviet Union and eventually murdered. In post-communist Poland, the Katyń crimes have been one of the most discussed episodes of Polish Second World War history. When the Soviet Union officially admitted responsibility in April 1990 after decades of

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<sup>6</sup> A recent publication that deals with the topic of forced migration in the aftermath of the Second World War is: W. Sienkiewicz & G. Hryciuk (ed.), *Wysiedlenia, wypędzenia i ucieczki 1939-1959. Atlas ziem Polski*. Warsaw, Demart, 2008. Two years after its publication in Poland, it also appeared in Germany (W. Sienkiewicz & G. Hryciuk (ed.), *Illustrierte Geschichte der Flucht und Vertreibung – Ost- und Mitteleuropa 1939 bis 1959*. Augsburg, Weltbild, 2010) and was greeted favourably.

concealment and placing the blame on Nazi Germany, this marked only the beginning of the settlement of the issue. During the next two decades, Katyń was almost constantly in the public eye. As for the Russian Federation, this meant a great deal of negative public attention: besides the atrocity itself, of which the Russian state had become a heir, the manner in which the Russian government dealt with the topic after the collapse of the Soviet Union cast it mostly in a very negative light.

The Russian investigation into the Katyń crimes initiated in 1991 by the Prosecution Counsel of the Soviet Union and continued by the government of the Russian Federation soon grew into a major source of disappointment and nuisance in Poland. Despite the initially promising results, there remained too many unsolved issues and unfulfilled demands on the Polish side. These included the identity of 3,870 bodies that remained unknown and the legal persecution of those involved in the crime and still alive. During the 1990s, these issues evoked impatience and dissatisfaction in Poland. The Russian investigation was followed closely and criticized in most sections of the press.<sup>7</sup> Revisionist tendencies in Russian society only enhanced these feelings of distrust: the publication in 1995 of *Katynskij detektiv* (The Katyń Detective Story) provoked indignation as Russian author Yuriy Muchin popularized the Soviet myth about the Katyń crimes and questioned the public admission of guilt by the Soviet Union five years earlier.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, Katyń became a fixed element of Polish official historical culture with celebrations of historical anniversaries and other commemoration initiatives.<sup>9</sup> The large amount of public attention on the topic turned it into one of the most well-known Soviet crimes committed toward the Poles.

When Moscow terminated the Russian investigation in 2004 and decided not to reveal its results it aroused great dissatisfaction in Poland. In reaction, the Polish Institute of National Memory (IPN) opened its own official inquiry into the Katyń events on 30 November 2004. The language used with reference to the massacres also hardened on Polish side. The label of genocide, which had already sporadically occurred in the media during the 1990s,<sup>10</sup> was adopted by the procurator of the IPN as the judicial qualification of the crimes.<sup>11</sup> The judicial fight over the disclosure of the files of the Russian investigation and the persecution of those responsible continued

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<sup>7</sup> See for example: Waldemar Gontarski, "Gąszcz katyński", *Wprost* 41, 1994, 9; Wacław Bragin, "Próba moralności", *Wprost* 24 1995, 72; Marian Turski, "W trybie specjalnym. 55 lat po Katyniu: nie znamy jeszcze nazwisk wszystkich ofiar", *Polityka* 14, 1995; Stanisław Podemski, S., "Śmierć szybsza niż sprawiedliwość. Co zrobić, aby zbrodniarze wojenni rozliczyli się ze swą przeszłością", *Polityka* 39, 1997, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Zdzisław Raczyński, "Paszkwil w Dumie. "Katyńska powieść kryminalna"", *Polityka* 5, 1996. Ten thousand copies of the book by Muchin were printed in Moscow.

<sup>9</sup> Examples are: Janina Paradowska, "Cierń wyrwany z rany", *Polityka* 23, 1995; Wiesław Władysław, "Słowa o Katyniu", *Polityka* 17, 2000, 5.

<sup>10</sup> For example in Podemski, S., "Polityka na mogiłach", *Polityka* 37, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> This statement can be consulted both in Polish and in English on the official website of the IPN: [http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/en/2/77/Decision\\_to\\_commence\\_investigation\\_into\\_Katyn\\_Massacre.html](http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/en/2/77/Decision_to_commence_investigation_into_Katyn_Massacre.html) (consulted on 3 December 2010).

for years and cast a shadow over Polish-Russian relations. A lack of official results<sup>12</sup> eventually led Polish victims' organizations to turn to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in 2009.<sup>13</sup> During the historical anniversaries of 2009 and 2010, the Russian government seemed increasingly willing to come to an agreement. The presence of Russian Prime Minister Putin at the official commemoration of the start of the war in Gdańsk in September 2009 was seen as an important gesture in Polish-Russian relations.<sup>14</sup> Putin's speech, however, was welcomed with mixed feelings.<sup>15</sup> On 7 April 2010, for the first time, a collective ceremony was organized in the presence of both the Russian and Polish prime ministers. Nevertheless, Polish President Lech Kaczyński wanted to hold his own Polish celebration three days later. The plane that was to bring him and about ninety other public and military dignitaries and family members of Katyń victims to Smolensk crashed. No one survived this *tragedia smoleńska*. Katyń seemed to be cursed.

On the one hand, the airplane crash appeared to bring about further reconciliation and openness regarding Katyń. Russian President Medvedev finally promised to declassify the Russian files on the Katyń investigation. Some were promptly released on 28 April 2010.<sup>16</sup> At the end of that same year, the Russian parliament, with a large majority, adopted a resolution that univocally allocated the responsibility for Katyń to the communist regime and Stalin.<sup>17</sup> This happened in the

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<sup>12</sup> In this respect, for example, a Polish-Russian commission was established that was to deal with difficult issues in the mutual relations. The activities of this commission are made accessible on the website of the Polish Ministry of the Exterior (<http://www.msz.gov.pl/index.php?document=38309>).

<sup>13</sup> Cezary Łazarewicz, "Katyń do Strasburga", *Polityka* 11, 2009, 32-35.

<sup>14</sup> "Obchody 70. rocznicy II wojny światowej, kolejny krok dla przyjaznych relacji polsko-rosyjskich", *Gazeta Petersburska* 7, 2009, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.gazetapetersburska.org/pl/node/503>; Konrad Piasecki, "Dziwny taniec Putina okazał się sukcesem", 2 September 2009, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.rmfm24.pl/fakty/swiat/news-dziwny-taniec-putina-okazal-sie-sukcesem,nId,137872>

<sup>15</sup> Piasecki, K., "Dziwny taniec", 2009; Krzysztof Zasada, "Na Westerplatte Putin ugodowy, a najlepsze przemówienia mieli Merkel i Tusk", 1 September 2009, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.rmfm24.pl/tylko-w-rmf24/krzysztof-zasada/wiadomosci/news-na-westerplatte-putin-ugodowy-a-najlepsze-przemowienia-mieli,nId,73123>; Karol Manys, "O prawdzie na Westerplatte", *Rzeczpospolita*, 1 September 2009, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/354603,357046-O-prawdzie-na-Westerplatte.html>

<sup>16</sup> See Russian government website: <http://www.rusarchives.ru/publication/katyn/spisok.shtml> (accessed 17 November 2012).

<sup>17</sup> PAP, "Uchwała Katyńska Dumy", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 November 2010, 13; PAP, dmrk, "Duma potępiła Katyń", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 November 2010, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,8723071,Duma\\_potepila\\_Katyn.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,8723071,Duma_potepila_Katyn.html); Waław Radziwinowicz, "Stalin winny Katynia", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 November 2010, 1.

context of Medvedev's visit to Poland the following month. The European Court of Human Rights finally delivered its verdict in April 2012, but this brought only minimal relief. Stalin's guilt was reaffirmed and Katyń was recognized as a war crime but not liable for prosecution.<sup>18</sup> The court was highly critical about the Russian attitude during the investigation, but unable to enforce Russian cooperation.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, for example, Polish demands to release all documents to Polish side appear to have fallen on deaf ears. On the other hand, however, Smolensk 2010 caused a renewed sharpening of the anti-Russian discourse in Polish nationalist circles. The political party *Law and Justice* (PiS) has continuously tried to capitalize on the topic, especially through its leader Jarosław Kaczyński, the brother of the deceased president. PiS has always maintained that the Smolensk air disaster was more than a mere accident, or human error, as found by Polish and Russian reports into the crash. The topic has once again receded to the background, however, it seems clear that the final word in the matter has not yet been said and that Katyń will, at least for some years, remain a stumbling block in Polish-Russian relations.

Besides the focus on the horror of the Soviet occupation in Poland, embodied by the topic of Katyń, there is also an important episode from the final stage of the war that has considerably contributed to anti-Russian sentiments in Polish historical culture: the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Popular images of this uprising represent the best example of the uneven proportion between representations of the Russians and the Germans. The Warsaw Uprising was an armed uprising by the *Armia Krajowa* (Home Army), which wanted to liberate Warsaw from the German occupier ahead of the advancing Red Army in order to assert Polish sovereignty. The operation was launched on 1 August 1944, but was suppressed by the Germans after 63 days of fighting. On Polish side, about 250,000 people were killed; the death toll on German side was about 17,000.<sup>20</sup> The material damage was also immense: approximately 90% of the Polish capital was destroyed.

The Warsaw Uprising occupies an important place in post-communist Polish historical consciousness. Although it had already been a powerful symbol of patriotism in oppositionist circles and in the personal memories of participants in the People's Republic, since 1989 its commemoration could now also penetrate the official level. Since 1989, the Uprising has become omnipresent in Polish historical culture regarding the Second World War.<sup>21</sup> In the Polish press, the Uprising has received

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<sup>18</sup> Matsza, ape, PAP, "Wyrok Trybunału w Strasburgu ws. Katynia: Rosja nie wywiązała się ze zobowiązań", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16 April 2012, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,11543437,Wyrok\\_Trybunalu\\_w\\_Strasburgu\\_ws\\_Katynia\\_\\_Rosja\\_nie.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,11543437,Wyrok_Trybunalu_w_Strasburgu_ws_Katynia__Rosja_nie.html).

<sup>19</sup> Reuters, "European court rules against Russia on 1940 Katyn massacre", 16 April 2012, accessed 15 August 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/16/us-russia-massacre-court-idUSBRE83F0UB20120416>

<sup>20</sup> Norman Davies, *God's playground. A History of Poland*, New York, 1982, Volume II, 477.

<sup>21</sup> This is of course most visible in the capital itself (see the monument to the Warsaw Uprising on Krasiński Square [Plac Krasińskich], the countless inscriptions and



constant attention, with additional peaks on historical anniversaries (i.e. 1994, 1999, and 2004).<sup>22</sup> Here, it is mostly depicted as a symbol of the Polish love for freedom and glorified as ‘the most tragic episode in the history of Warsaw’ and ‘the bloodiest and most destructive of all Polish uprisings’.<sup>23</sup>

Even more remarkable is the amount of attention paid to the role of Stalin and the Red Army in representations of the Uprising. Stalin halted the advance of the Red Army on the east side of the River Vistula and condemned the Uprising. He refused to send aid despite Polish requests and thwarted British and American attempts to drop supplies. The Red Army only entered Warsaw in January 1944, once the Germans had imprisoned the remaining Warsawians and destroyed the city. This wilful inertia by the Soviets is one of the most frequent elements in representations of the Warsaw Uprising. What is more, it has been criticized to the detriment of the role of the Germans who, though obviously having been the most important adversary during the Warsaw Uprising, have disappeared somewhat into the background.<sup>24</sup>

This inverted ratio in representations between Russians and Germans is a general phenomenon in popular Second World War images after the end of the Cold War. The role of the Soviet Union is seemingly overplayed at the expense of the attention paid to Germany. The role of Nazi Germany was present in Polish post-communist debates regarding the Second World War, but more in particular contexts such as that of the financial compensations to Polish forced labourers<sup>25</sup> and the

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commemorative plates in the city referring to the uprising and the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising in ulica Grzybowska), but also on the regional level and in Polish pop culture (e.g. comic books about the Uprising).

<sup>22</sup> For example: “Koncert w 55 rocznicę”, *Polityka* 33, 1999, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Tomasz Raczek, “Szkoła kłamców”, *Wprost* 34, 1994, 89; Stefan Kisielewski, “Porachunki narodowe”, *Polityka* 39, 1997, 78-79. It is true that there has been a debate going on about the ultimate sense of the Uprising, but these discussions did not prevent the insurgents and the Uprising from being honoured and idolized as before.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed article on the politics of the Kremlin towards the Uprising concerning the conscious slowing down of the Red Army with a view to break up the pro-London AK forces see: Tadeusz Sawicki, “Moscow wobec Powstania Warszawskiego. Z przyczyn wojskowych i politycznych”, *Polityka* 31, 1993, 21.

<sup>25</sup> During the Second World War, almost three million of Poles had been forced to work for a pittance in German industry and, even more, in agriculture. Since the Polish People’s Republic, just like the other communist states, renounced any settlement aimed at compensating the forced labor of Polish citizens in the Third Reich during the entire period of the Cold War, this issue could be raised only after 1989. In 1991, the Foundation Polish-German Reconciliation (Fundacja Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie/Stiftung Polnisch-Deutsche Aussöhnung) was established in order to settle this compensation in extremis. Some examples of Polish press articles dealing with this issue are: Piotr Cywiński, “Dług honorowy”, *Wprost* 4, 1999, accessed 15 August 2012, <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/2937/Dlug-honorowy/>; Turski, M., “Pod przymusem. Polscy robotnicy przepracowali dla Rzeszy ponad 19 mld godzin”,

*Heimatvertriebenen*.<sup>26</sup> Other aspects of the German occupation in Poland occurred less frequently or were not mentioned at all. The latter is, for example, true for the policy of Governor-General Frank, the relationship between the Nazis and the Polish Church, the cruelties committed by the Germans against the local population, and many other issues.<sup>27</sup> Besides the quantitative prevalence of the Russians as antagonists in Second World War representations, there is also a considerable qualitative difference between images of Russians on the one hand and Germans on the other hand. Both writings on the compensations as well as on the *Heimatvertriebenen* are characterized by remarkably reconciliatory language. The name of the Foundation answering for the compensations, *Pojednanie* (Reconciliation), illustrates the line Poles want(ed) to follow. With reference to the *Heimatvertriebung*, Germans and Poles were put in the same category. As Kazimierz Wóycicki wrote in 1995, they had been enemies during the war but during its last phase, they both became the object of the great mechanisms of history.<sup>28</sup> Poland and Germany lost large parts of their territory and were amputated of their historical heritage. Both countries also came to contend with millions of migrated fellow-countrymen and, because of the loss of ethnically mixed territories, were transformed into ethnically homogenous states. Besides that, both nations were victims of Stalin's policies and hundreds of thousands of Germans and Poles were deported to Siberia by the NKVD. Although the Polish-German dialogue with reference to both the issue of compensations and the *Heimatvertriebenen* experienced moments of embitterment, for example as a result of some of the

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*Polityka* 47, 1999, 96-98. More information about Polish forced labor during the war in: Czesław Łuczak, *Praca przymusowa Polaków w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, Warsaw, 1999.

<sup>26</sup> The alteration of the borders in Poland and Easter-Germany was accompanied by the migration of large population groups. Almost 1.2 million Poles from the former Polish territories that were added to the Soviet Union, were forced to settle in the Polish People's Republic, and about three million Germans from East-Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania were driven westwards. The term 'Heimatvertriebenen' here refers to the latter group of Germans, whose perception of this chapter from Second World War history has been the subject of heated debates both in contemporary Poland and Germany. Examples of Polish press articles regarding this topic are: Kazimierz Wóycicki, "Wschód utracony. Belka i oko – niemiecko-polski dialog wypędzonych", *Polityka* 24, 1995, 21; Cywiński, P., "Zawód: "wypędzony"", *Wprost* 28, 1998, 70-71; Stanisław Janecki, "Realpolitik", *Wprost* 28, 1998, 13; Stefan Bratkowski, "Wroga przyjaźń", *Wprost* 30, 2004, accessed 15 August 2012, <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/63474/Wroga-przyjazn/>; Krystyna Grzybowska, "Nacjonalistyczny patriotyzm", *Wprost* 51, 2004, accessed 15 August 2012, <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/71067/Nacjonalistyczny-patriotyzm/>; Adam Krzemiński, "O parę słów za daleko", *Polityka* 38, 2004, 17; Joanna Cieśla, "Pozew za pozew", *Polityka* 45, 2004, 34-38.

<sup>27</sup> The latter in contrast with the crimes committed by the Red Army with regard to the Polish civilian population in for example: Ireneusz Rutkowski, "Pierwszy dzień bezwolności. Armia Czerwona w drodze do domu", *Wprost* 15, 1991, 33-34.

<sup>28</sup> Wóycicki, K., "Wschód utracony", 21.

initiatives of the German *Bund der Vertriebenen* (The Federation of Expellees) and its chairwomen from 1998, Erika Steinbach, the main tone remained one of reconciliation.

This reconciliatory tone is particularly striking when comparing Polish post-communist representations of the Germans with those of the Russians. Relatively moderate representations contrast strongly with the univocal negative memory regarding the Soviet occupation in the east of Poland, in particular regarding Katyń. The reasons behind this sharp increase in focus on the negative Soviet and Russian image during the Second World War are naturally connected to the geopolitical context. During the forty years of Communism, topics such as the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Katyń and the Soviet role during the Warsaw Uprising were taboo. The limited attention and the overall moderate discourse with respect to Germany have to be seen within the context of Poland's strong focus on the West after 1989, and its pursuit to integrate into European economic and political structures. Germany was a privileged partner, becoming the leading advocate of Poland's membership in the EU and NATO in exchange for Poland's early support for German reunification, NATO membership and settling of the shared Oder-Neisse border.<sup>29</sup>

Somewhat predictably, the negative image of the Soviet Union (and post-Soviet Russia) in contemporary Polish historical consciousness has been exacerbated by the country's communist past. Post-1989 Polish popular historical culture is characterized by a clear rejection of the heritage of the pre-1989 People's Republic. This is demonstrated by stressing of the imported character of the communist regime in Poland. In the early 1990s, the press devoted much attention to the early period of construction of the People's Democracy (1944-48) and the merciless state violence and repression which accompanied it. For example, former taboo topics such as the notorious 'trial of the sixteen' leaders of the Polish underground state in Moscow in 1945 could finally be documented as a staged political trial.<sup>30</sup> Typically, the search for truth through deconstruction of communist-era language was the dominant discourse during these early post-communist years. This scholarly programme also exposed and denounced the system of open repression of the subsequent Stalinist period (1948-56). Polish dignitaries such as President Bolesław Bierut and Marshall Konstantin Rokossowski were identified with this system of open repression and enjoy a very negative reputation in popular representations.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the final responsibility

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Murphy, 'Ending Cold War Divisions and Establishing New Partnerships: German Unification and the Transformation of German-Polish Relations' in Jana Braziel & Katharina Gerstenberger (eds), *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 144-71.

<sup>30</sup> Aleksander Chećko, "Historia z odrzutu", *Polityka* 50, 1989, 10; (m), "Przed sądem moskiewskim. Przemówienie generała Okulickiego", *Polityka* 12, 1990, 14.

<sup>31</sup> See for example the series of articles about Bierut, built up around the question whether he was 'the Polish Stalin': Maria Turlejska et al., "Czy Bierut był 'polskim Stalinem'?", *Polityka* 6, 1989, 3; Andrzej Garlicki et al., "Czy Bierut był 'polskim Stalinem'?", *Polityka* 8, 1989, 14; Hieronim Kubiak, "Czy Bierut był 'polskim Stalinem'?" Wątki pozornie zamknięte", *Polityka* 9, 1989, 14; Turski, M. and Władysław,

for the communist repression tends to be allocated to the Soviet government.<sup>32</sup> The Polish nation is one-sidedly victimized and Polish supporters of the regime are largely absent.

The dominant narrative of state repression is for the most part also extended to the subsequent period of national communism. This is at least partially counter-intuitive, since the post-1956 regime in Poland, especially in comparison to other Central European countries like Czechoslovakia and former Soviet republics like Ukraine, is generally recognized as having been fairly 'moderate' and characterized by a relatively low degree of repression.<sup>33</sup> And yet, during the early 1990s, this aspect of repression occupied centre stage in popular historical narratives. This is well illustrated by moving witness reports, such as the story of Roman Strzałkowski, the youngest victim of the June 1956 Uprising in Poznań at thirteen years old, and the accounts on the violent provocation of Solidarity activists in Bydgoszcz in March 1981.<sup>34</sup> Post-communist evaluations of these acts of repression and violence are almost univocally negative. In this respect, the more recent episodes of violence, particularly in December 1970 and during the period of martial law (1981-82), have received major attention in post-communist Poland.<sup>35</sup> From the second half of the 1990s, the focus consequently shifts to protest against the political system itself. In other words, the narrative of victimhood is continued with reference to this period, but is now outshone by a narrative of heroism. However, this narration of resistance also contains anti-Russian feelings. Lining up these watershed moments in the history of the Polish People's Republic (1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980-81, 1989) makes this entire period

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W., "Czy Bierut był "polskim Stalinem"? Zadanie dla biografów", *Polityka* 21, 1989, 14. A later example of an article about Bierut is: Garlicki, A., "Początek kariery. Bierut był agentem NKWD dość niskiego szczebla", *Polityka* 32, 1994, 24.

<sup>32</sup> In this context, they are depicted as Soviet puppets and therefore also to some extent as victims or at least blind executors of the Soviet will.

<sup>33</sup> For literature on the typologies of the various communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, see for example: Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore, MD, 1996; Herbert Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*, Cambridge, 1999. In both typologies, Poland is categorized as a fairly moderate regime of respectively the 'authoritarian' (Linz and Stepan, 255) and the 'national-accommodative' category (Kitschelt et al., 40).

<sup>34</sup> Piotr Gabryel, "Poznański czerwiec. Historia jednej kuli", *Wprost* 27, 1989, 20-23; Michał Żurowski, "Kryzys bydgoski (2). Kobiety do środka!", *Wprost* 18, 1990, 16-19; Timothy Garton Ash, "Dwie prowokacje", *Wprost* 18, 1990, 17-18. Stefan Wyszyński, "Prymas dobrej woli", *Wprost* 50, 1991, 56-57.

<sup>35</sup> e.g. Podemski, S., "Strzały w Gdańsku '70 – Religia w szkole. Procesy w przyszłości", *Polityka* 2, 1991, 6; Podemski, S., "Wszystko od nowa. Odpowiedzialność za stan wojenny", *Polityka* 24, 1993, 13; Podemski, S., "Nie ma winnych. Grudzień 1970", *Polityka* 31, 1995, 22; Jerzy Eisler, "Grudzień 1970: kto wydał rozkaz? Dzisiaj milicja użyła broni", *Polityka* 51, 2000, 78-80.

appear like a linear road of resistance against the intrinsically anti-Polish, Soviet supported system. This deterministic, post-factual narrative of the last three decades of the People's Republic as a period of gradual, but steady decline and dismantling of the communist system until today predominates in popular historical consciousness and represents one of the key elements of national pride.

*Ambivalent memories in Ukraine*

As is true in the case of Poland, Russia and the Soviet Union constitutes the most important 'meaningful other' in post-communist Ukrainian historical narratives. This seems only natural, since the two countries share a long and turbulent history. However, unlike in Poland, the attitude towards this other party is characterized by ambivalence. This is primarily visible in the context of the Second World War, the period that occupies centre stage in Ukrainian historical consciousness.

On the one hand, post-communist Ukrainian press sources show a striking continuity of Soviet Second World War representations, and thus an overall positive evaluation of the Soviet role in the war. There are, to be sure, differences between the periodicals themselves (not surprisingly, the most positive discourse originates from the Russophile newspaper *Segodnja* and the most critical comments in regard to the Soviet Union come from the pronounced Ukrainophile newspaper *Ukraina Moloda*), but the overall picture in all sources predominantly favours the Soviet Union. Keeping to the Soviet chronology of the Great Patriotic War, popular historical representations focus almost exclusively on the period starting from the initiation of Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. Hereby, they positively identify the Soviet Union with the battle against Nazi Germany and belittle or completely omit their prior collaboration with that same German regime between September 1939 and June 1941 and the disastrous effects this had for the territories of present day Western-Ukraine.

The military contribution of the Soviet Union in the war prevails in press representations. Battles and, as can be expected, Soviet victories, are awarded a great deal of attention. Neither the quick and initially successful advance of the Germans nor the devastating retreat of the Soviet forces,<sup>36</sup> but rather the liberation from German occupation in 1943/44 occupies centre stage. Anniversaries of the liberation, both on the local and the national level, are consistent press items.<sup>37</sup> In this context,

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<sup>36</sup> Since there was no time for the evacuation of ten thousands of political prisoners detained in Western-Ukrainian prisons, the NKVD murdered them on a massive scale during the first week of 22-29 June 1941. Besides that, during their retreat the Soviet troops applied the tactics of 'burnt soil' and destroyed all economic enterprises that could be of use to the Germans (Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: a history*, Toronto-Buffalo-London, 2000, 461).

<sup>37</sup> Illustrations are the following articles published on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of certain regions in Ukraine: Lidiia Titarenko, "Возможно мы встретились в последний раз...", *Голос України* 239, 1993, 2; Iakov Gal'chenko et al., "Огни памяти", *Голос України* 86, 1994, 1-2; Vasiliï Soproniuk,

the Soviet war veterans are extensively honoured and presented as model heroes of the Ukrainian nation. Fantastic personal stories of 'living legends' such as that of a soldier who was buried alive, or a pilot who managed to successfully complete several flights with only one remaining eye, create a romanticized picture of the carefree, courageous, soldier-victor.<sup>38</sup> This is enhanced by a whole string of heroes who are honoured posthumously. Female and male, 'big' and 'small heroes', they all have extraordinary military feats and courage in common. Michail Naumov, the legendary partisan commander, Lidija Litvjak, world's most successful bomber, and Vladislav Chrustickij, the renowned tankist who perished while breaching the blockade of Leningrad, are only a few examples.<sup>39</sup>

However, despite the predominantly positive discourse and the focus on the ultimate victory, the Soviet Union has not entirely escaped criticism. After all, the Ukrainians themselves experienced a war not only of victories, but also great losses. One out of five Ukrainians were killed at the front and in total an estimated nine million Ukrainians perished during the war. Therefore, it is not surprising that this enormous cost represents the most important negative comment in popular consciousness.<sup>40</sup> Responsibility is attributed to the Soviet government. Stalin and his army command are sharply criticized for their war policy, their naïveté towards the Soviet-German friendship, the incompetence of the military command immediately following the outbreak of war, the abominable level of military technology with which the army was equipped, and also the omnipresent fear and related alcohol abuse

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“Стратегическая Белгородка”, *Голос України* 191, 1994, 3. On the central level, especially the Victory Day's celebrations (on 9 May) attract press attention: “Да будет светлый день освобождения!”, *Зеркало Недели* 1, 1994, 1; Oksana Panchenko and Viktor Marushchenko, “День Перемоги з героєм Великої Вітчизняної війни”, *День* 86, 1998, 6; Galina Gilak, “Ветеран вспомнил, как его зо живо похоронили”, *Сегодня* 101, 2003, 17; Viktor Tsvilikhovskii, “На вилицах - по крещатику”, *Сегодня* 245, 2004, 5; Volodomir Soniuk, “Свято солдатської шинелі”, *День* 196, 2004, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Nikolai Volok, “Вижу цепь – рейхстаг”, *Голос України* 4, 1997, 14; Gilak, G., “Ветеран вспомнил”, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Vladimir Fomenko and P'ia Khomen'ko, “Разбитые звезды”, *Зеркало Недели* 28, 1998, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/razbitye\\_zvezdy-12151.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/razbitye_zvezdy-12151.html); Aleksandr Fomin, “Танкисты Хрустицкие”, *Зеркало Недели* 7, 2000, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/tankisty\\_hrustitskie-19427.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/tankisty_hrustitskie-19427.html); Leonid Poritskii, “Она ушла в облака”, *Зеркало Недели* 18, 2001, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/ona\\_ushla\\_v\\_oblaka-24420.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/ona_ushla_v_oblaka-24420.html). Other examples of articles dealing with individual heroes are: Liudmila Litvinenko, “Рядовий Перемоги”, *День* 78, 2003, 21; Grigorii Grin' and Leonard Nikolaenko, “Хто командував ротами”, *Голос України* 85, 2003, 7; Vladislav Zhmurkov, “Я живий, мамо!”, *Голос України* 85, 2003, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Sergii Makhun, “Герновий вінець Великої Перемоги”, *День* 79, 2001, 8; Mikhail Romantsov and Ananii Shevchuk, “Красноармейцам приказали забрасывать немецкие танки... грязью”, *Сегодня* 137, 2001, 11; Makhun, S., “Ціна Великої Перемоги. Нефанфарна війна без лінії фронту”, *День* 78, 2003, 8.

among the troops.<sup>41</sup> In addition, it is sometimes highlighted that official celebrations with reference to the Second World War receive varying attention in parts of Ukraine.<sup>42</sup> However, these critical comments feel out of place when juxtaposed with the abundance of glorifying and idealizing in press writings. The accusations directed at the Soviet war policy, for that matter, do not affect this predominantly heroic discourse, since the Soviet soldiers had themselves been victims of this Soviet policy. They are honoured for their enormous sacrifices without exception. The Soviet victory in the Second World War is represented as the replacement of Nazi terror with Soviet terror in only a few instances,<sup>43</sup> but this criticism is drowned out by the, paradoxically, positive aspect of the Soviet victory: the reunification of all ethnic Ukrainian territories that followed.<sup>44</sup>

Another source of contestation and threat to the positive image of the Soviet Union in post-communist Second World War narratives is the evaluation of the heritage of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its military wing UPA (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army). Unlike the Soviet troops, the position of this grouping of Second World War veterans in Ukrainian collective memory is still highly disputed today. The fact that they are regarded as mutually exclusive heroes makes it harder to integrate them into the Ukrainian pantheon. After all, one must remember, Ukrainian and Soviet forces had considered each other arch-enemies: in addition to collaborating with the Germans several occasions, both factions of the Ukrainian nationalists, including UPA, fought against the Red Army during the entire war. The Ukrainian nationalists were eventually defeated during the first half of the 1950s, after continuing their battle for over a decade in the newly incorporated western territories of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic. Naturally, in the official Soviet narrative Ukrainian nationalists were demonized as collaborators, bourgeois-nationalists and war criminals that committed fratricide against East-Ukrainians who fought alongside the Soviet troops.

However, after the disintegration of the communist system in Ukraine, this Soviet view with its one-sided heroisation of Red Army veterans was publically challenged. The pendulum of history writing swung in the opposite direction, particularly under the influence of the Ukrainian diaspora, and presented a narrative

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<sup>41</sup> Romantsov, M. and Shevchuk, A., “Красноармейцам”, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Oleg Oleniuk, “...Та чи для всіх?”, *Україна Молода* 36, 1994, 1; Gilak, G., “Ветеран вспомнил”, 17. In the first article, the author draws attention to the limited attention local inhabitants of Ternopil’ pay to Victory Day, which brings him to a comparison with Mother’s Day; in the second article the poor general knowledge of the young generation of Ukrainians with regards to the history of the Second World War is jokingly brought up by means of the example of schoolchildren who, asked during an interview, associated 9 May with the Tatars.

<sup>43</sup> Oleniuk, O., “...Та чи для всіх?”, 1; Makhun, S., “Герновий вінець”, 8.

<sup>44</sup> “Закарпаття готується к юбилею”, *Голос України* 105, 1995, 4; Pavel Pozniak, “Памятный львовский сентябрь”, *Зеркало Недели* 38, 1999, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/pamyatnyu\\_lvovskiy\\_sentyabr-17694.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/pamyatnyu_lvovskiy_sentyabr-17694.html); Makhun, S., “Ціна Великої Перемоги”, 8.

that adopted a pronounced pro-OUN-UPA attitude. This new nationalistic perception has been growing gradually and historian David Marples has observed efforts in Ukrainophile sources to integrate OUN-UPA favourably in popular historical consciousness.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time, the inherited Soviet narrative has remained strongly present in the Russophile press in Ukraine. While it has mainly been defensive in character this Soviet narrative has been shown to be just as aggressive as it was in Soviet times when necessary. It has remained resolutely suspicious of nationalistic tendencies and rehabilitation initiatives, particularly in the western part of the country, for example, the sharp press reactions in *Segodnya* in 2010 criticizing the pro-OUN-UPA policy being put forward on the state level. Initiatives to rehabilitate OUN-UPA culminated during the period in office of president Viktor Yushchenko (2005-2010). Of all the actions undertaken, the decree in which Yushchenko awarded OUN-B<sup>46</sup> leader Stepan Bandera the title 'hero of Ukraine' was by far the most controversial. Russophile press sources reacted with articles awarding special attention to war crimes committed by the Ukrainian nationalists and Soviet terminology made an apparent return. Once again, OUN-UPA members acted as 'golovorezy' (decapitators) and 'bandity' (bandits), who had terrorized the Ukrainian civilian population and shot East-Ukrainian soldiers in the back.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, Bandera was again deprived of his title by means of a judicial procedure when Yushchenko's successor, Viktor Yanukovich (2010- ), took office. This meant a return to the official 'state historical policy of compromise' (and thus ambivalence) of Yushchenko's predecessors. Once more, a legal arrangement regarding the official status of OUN-UPA appears elusive. In the press, the controversy brought by the Ukrainian nationalists has again subsided, although perhaps only temporarily.

With regard to the Communist period, Ukrainian representations of Russia and the Soviet Union are characterised by ambivalence. On the one hand, there are negative memories of the Soviet past, particularly with reference to the Stalinist period, which have largely come to dominate press representations of the Soviet period. During the 1990s, but also after the turn of the century, the Ukrainian reader

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<sup>45</sup> David R. Marples, *Heroes and Villains. Creating National History in Contemporary Ukraine*, Budapest - New York, 2007, 125-161.

<sup>46</sup> In 1940, the OUN split into two parts with the older more moderate members supporting Andriy Melnyk (OUN-M) while the younger and more radical members supported Stepan Bandera (OUN-B). OUN-B was to finally dominate the organization of Ukrainian nationalists in western Ukraine including the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

<sup>47</sup> Oles' Vuzina, "Истории от Олесья Бузины. Ветераны УПА пилили пленных, как бревна", *Сегодня*, 2007, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.segodnya.ua/news/199842.html>; Timur Marchenko, "Оуновцы убивали для круглого счета", *Сегодня*, 2009, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.segodnya.ua/news/14088850.html>; RIA "Novyi Region", "В Крыму издали учебник о преступлениях ОУН-УПА", *Сегодня*, 2010, accessed 1 August 2012, <http://www.segodnya.ua/news/14209472.html>



was showered with articles depicting the horror of those years. The Holodomor<sup>48</sup> (famine of 1932-33), repression of kulaks, large-scale political persecution of intellectuals, and other evils of the time, coloured the new, unhindered imagination of the Soviet period. In the first years of independence, this victim discourse served as a consolidating force by rallying the entire nation around the evils of Stalinism. Indirectly, it also clearly continued to function as a justification for a sovereign Ukrainian state. The Holodomor was depicted as “a tragedy of the entire nation<sup>49</sup>”, “the Golgotha of the Ukrainian people<sup>50</sup>”, “one of the blackest pages in Ukrainian history<sup>51</sup>”, and even as “a part of the genetic code of every Ukrainian<sup>52</sup>”. The Famine also affected several other regions of the Soviet Union, but this wider context of the Holodomor was minimized or entirely absent.

The intensity of this victim discourse took on enormous proportions, which is again best shown in press articles dealing with the Holodomor.<sup>53</sup> A number of factors have made a lasting impression on Ukrainians; the ranging number of estimated victims from 3 to 12 million, visual horror in the form of witness accounts, biased use of language, shocking titles and photographs of emaciated bodies and corpses. The anti-Russian bias that this discourse would occasionally assume is illustrated in the use of Holodomor imagery in a contemporary context: A 1993 article published in the pro-Ukrainian oriented newspaper *Ukraina Moloda* concerning the Ukrainian-Russian dispute on gas prices was titled “1933: Ukraine was strangled by means of starvation, 1993: they try it once again, this time by way of (the) cold”.<sup>54</sup> Although the famine was not mentioned in the body of the text, the figurative language of the title was clearly

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<sup>48</sup> The Ukrainian word Holodomor derives from a combination of the word for hunger “holod” and “mor” to exterminate or eliminate. See Norman M. Naimark *Stalin's Genocides*, Princeton University Press, 2010, 70.

<sup>49</sup> For example, the following articles from the early 1990s in the state newspaper *Golos Ukrainy*: Volodimir Maniak, “Повернути народові історію”, *Голос України* 139, 1991, 12; Lidiia Kovalenko, “Апокаліпсис-33”, *Голос України* 139, 1991, 13.

<sup>50</sup> Kovalenko, L., “Апокаліпсис-33”, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Svetlana Kirichenko, “История одного заявления”, *Зеркало Недели* 1, 2004, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/istoriya\\_odnogo\\_zayavleniya-38527.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/istoriya_odnogo_zayavleniya-38527.html)

<sup>52</sup> Valerii Soldatenko, “Голодний тридцять третій суб'єктивні думки об об'єктивних процесах”, *Зеркало Недели* 24, 2003, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/golodnyy\\_tridtsat\\_tretiy\\_subektivnye\\_mysli\\_ob\\_obektivnyh\\_protsessah-32395.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/golodnyy_tridtsat_tretiy_subektivnye_mysli_ob_obektivnyh_protsessah-32395.html)

<sup>53</sup> E.g.: “Свідчення очевидців”, *Голос України* 171, 1993, 4; Liudmila Varanevich, “Отак и починалося”, *Голос України* 171, 1993, 5; Valentin Bogaevs'kii, “Дай мені, бозю, хоч соломинку...” Дві сповіді про голодомор 33-го року”, *Голос України* 69, 1994, 8; Volodimir Sergiichuk, “Щоб не поїли сусідські буряки”, *Голос України* 71, 1995, 11.

<sup>54</sup> “1933-й: Україну душили голодом. 1993-й: намагаються – холодом”, *Україна Молода* 16, 1993, 1.

meant to stress Ukraine as a victim. Moreover, the article created continuity in the alleged hostile attitude of Russia toward its neighbour, Ukraine.

The monstrous and anti-Russian character of the memory of the Holodomor was brought to a climax in 2003, when the Ukrainian Parliament and government recognized the events as genocide.<sup>55</sup> Hereby, the famine was officially acknowledged as having been specifically oriented against Ukrainians as a nation and not just affecting one of the most important grain producing regions in the Soviet Union. Naturally, Russia refused to recognize this and emphasized the all-Soviet character of the tragedy. In Ukraine, however, the genocidal character was reaffirmed by a law of November 2006 during the office of President Yushchenko.<sup>56</sup> Acting President Yanukovich distanced himself from the genocide theory immediately after taking office in February 2010, stating on April 27 that the massive famine of the 1930s had not been genocide of the Ukrainians, but a common tragedy of all nations in the Soviet Union.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, these legal acts remain in place.

In contrast to these unambiguously negative memories regarding the Stalinist period, the rest of the Soviet period is represented more ambivalently in independent Ukraine.<sup>58</sup> Images of this past are very eclectic and depend largely on the periodical's ideological background and its target audience. The centrist, Ukrainophile narrative (as well as the nationalistic one) tends to focus on Soviet repression versus Ukrainian resistance. Articles hark back to the times of the incorporation of today's Eastern and Western Ukraine, which met considerable opposition.<sup>59</sup> Both the turbulent years of

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<sup>55</sup> For a detailed analysis of the legal initiatives with regard to the recognition of the Holodomor as genocide, which dated back already to June 1993, and the political instrumentalisation of the Holodomor in post-communist Ukraine, see: Georgiy Kasianov, G. "Revisiting the Great Famine of 1932-1933. Politics of Memory and Public Consciousness (Ukraine after 1991)" in *Past in the Making. Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. M. Kopeček (Budapest-New York, 2008), 207-215.

<sup>56</sup> See the website of the UINP: <http://www.memory.gov.ua/ua/publication/content/1524.htm> (consulted on 5 April 2012). This law confirmed the genocidal character of the historical events and equated the public denial of the famine with 'a contamination of the memory of millions of victims' and 'a humiliation of the dignity of the Ukrainian people'.

<sup>57</sup> See for example: <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1071204-yanukovich-golodomor-nelzya-priznavat-genocidom-ukraincev> (consulted on 5 December 2010)

<sup>58</sup> An exception to this is the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. However, the Chernobyl topic is not included in this analysis since post-communist representations regarding Chernobyl first and foremost involve post-1991 consequences of the catastrophe and only to a small extent deal with the Soviet past.

<sup>59</sup> Taras Shamaida, "Крути", *Україна Молода*, 9, 1992, 7; Vladimir Ulianich, "Жили-были 'Батьки'-атаманы, или почему надо изучать повстанческое движение в Украине", *Голос України*, 56, 1994, 7-8; Sergei Shevchenko, "'Сова' призывала к примирению... Исторический этюд по документам Госархиву СБУ", *Зеркало Недели*, 28, 2000, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/sova\\_prizyvala\\_k\\_primireniyu\\_istoricheskiy\\_etyud\\_po\\_dok](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/sova_prizyvala_k_primireniyu_istoricheskiy_etyud_po_dok)

civil war following the Russian revolution of 1917 and the guerrilla war between the remnants of OUN-UPA and the Soviet authorities in the aftermath of the Second World War present the image of the Soviets as oppressors and emphasize the forced character of the Soviet regime in Ukraine. Articles dealing with the repression of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the 1940s and 1950s and dissidents in the 1960-70s create a continuity regarding Ukrainian resistance and Soviet repression.<sup>60</sup>

The Russophile narrative on the other hand, is characterized by either silence or a focus on so-called 'petit histoire', history centred on anecdotes and details. Instead of, as could perhaps be expected, denying the repressive character of the Soviet regime, it simply ignores this aspect (and serious historical articles/topics all together) and provides a mixture of positive Soviet heroes (cultural figures, scientists etc.) and anecdotic images, evoking feelings of nostalgia instead.<sup>61</sup> However, ambivalent or opposing images can still co-exist within one narrative, for instance the representations of the character and era of Vladimir Shcherbickii, the last leader of the Ukrainian Communist Part between 1972 and 1989. While some articles negatively associate him with the repression of Ukrainian dissidents and the Chernobyl disaster,<sup>62</sup> other articles in the same periodical praise him for his outstanding leadership, intelligence, likable personality, love for sports, and soccer in

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umentam\_gosarhiva\_sbu-21261.html; Dmitrii Vedenev and Jurii Shapoval, "Мальтийский сокол, или судьба Мирона Матвиейко", *Зеркало Недели*, 30, 2001, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/maltiyskiy\\_sokol,\\_ili\\_sudba\\_mirona\\_matvieyko-25325.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/maltiyskiy_sokol,_ili_sudba_mirona_matvieyko-25325.html); Vladimir Kravtsevich-Rozhnetskii, "Западная для атаманов", *Зеркало Недели* 32, 2002.

<sup>60</sup> E.g.: Oksana Sokolova, "Лебеді відлетіли, лишилося материнство", *Україна Молода* 3, 1995, 4; Stalii P'evich, "Жизнь и драма профессора Паншина", *Зеркало Недели* 44, 1995, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/zhizn\\_i\\_drama\\_professora\\_panshina,-382.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/zhizn_i_drama_professora_panshina,-382.html); Maïia Orel, "Жити так, ніби немає облоги", *Україна Молода* 198, 2002, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Examples are the following articles about the suspicious disappearance of Brezhnev's daughter, and about Soviet actor Vasil' Kachalov: Kira Strel'tsova, "Он так упал, что публика заволела: "Качалова убили!""", *Сегодня*, 263, 2003, 11; Aleksandr Korchinskii, "6. В расследование вмешался генсек Брежнев", *Сегодня*, 76, 2000, 11.

<sup>62</sup> E.g.: Aleksandr Muratov, ""В связи с тем, что моя деятельность в вашей стране не нужна...""", *Зеркало Недели* 28, 1995, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/v\\_svyazi\\_s\\_tem,\\_chto\\_moya\\_deyatelnost\\_v\\_vashey\\_strane\\_ne\\_nuzhna-33447.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/v_svyazi_s_tem,_chto_moya_deyatelnost_v_vashey_strane_ne_nuzhna-33447.html); Igor' Malishevskii, "Монолог над могилой Главлита", *Зеркало Недели* 30, 2000, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/monolog\\_nad\\_mogiloy\\_glavlita-21424.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/monolog_nad_mogiloy_glavlita-21424.html); Alla Iaroshinskaïa, "Будет ли жизнь на земле с атомным реактором?", *Зеркало Недели* 11 (1994), accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/ECONOMICS/budet\\_li\\_zhizn\\_na\\_zemle\\_s\\_atomnym\\_reaktorom-37280.html](http://zn.ua/ECONOMICS/budet_li_zhizn_na_zemle_s_atomnym_reaktorom-37280.html).

particular.<sup>63</sup> These contradictions are also illustrated on the state level when the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vladimir Shcherbickii's birth was celebrated the day after the official honouring of a communist political prisoner in 2003.<sup>64</sup> A deeper analysis of the dissention/ambivalence toward national history in Ukraine goes beyond this paper's scope, but one thing is clear: the memory of the communist period and for that matter of the Soviet Union and Russia is far from clear cut.

*Absent memories in Slovakia*

Unlike in Poland and Ukraine, historical memories of Russia and the Soviet Union are remarkably absent from popular representations of the Second World War in Slovakia. If they do appear, it is only in the background and generally in a positive manner. The Soviet participation in the anti-German resistance in Slovakia, more precisely during the Slovak National Uprising (August-October 1944), and the subsequent partisan struggle in the mountains following its suppression are good examples.<sup>65</sup> Within this same setting of anti-German resistance is the image of the Red Army liberating Slovakia from its clerofascist regime. This can sometimes be found in leftist periodicals and needs to be regarded as a Soviet inheritance. Operation Barbarossa represents a second context in which the Russians appear. As an ally of Nazi Germany during the war, Slovakia actively assisted alongside the Germans during their campaign in the Soviet Union. In the rare instances when this

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<sup>63</sup> e.g.: Dmitriij Kijanskii, "Патон, которого мы не знаем", *Зеркало Недели* 10, 1997, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SCIENCE/paton,\\_kotorogo\\_mu\\_ne\\_znaem-15225.html](http://zn.ua/SCIENCE/paton,_kotorogo_mu_ne_znaem-15225.html); Dmitriij Poliukhovich, "Сталин и Щербицкий как главные творцы украинской нации и государственности", *Зеркало Недели* 37, 2000, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/stalin\\_i\\_scherbitskiy\\_kak\\_glavnye\\_tvortsy\\_ukrainskoy\\_natsi\\_i\\_gosudarstvennosti-21955.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/stalin_i_scherbitskiy_kak_glavnye_tvortsy_ukrainskoy_natsi_i_gosudarstvennosti-21955.html); Kijanskii, D., "Костюмы от любивого носили самые-самые,... одежда, шитая в "коммунаре", была в советские времена признаком принадлежности к "высшему обществу"", *Зеркало Недели* 9, 2001, accessed 1 August 2012, [http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/kostyummy\\_ot\\_lyubivogo\\_nosili\\_samye-samyeyodezhda\\_sshitaya\\_v\\_kommunare,\\_byla\\_v\\_sovetskie\\_vremena\\_priz-23727.html](http://zn.ua/SOCIETY/kostyummy_ot_lyubivogo_nosili_samye-samyeyodezhda_sshitaya_v_kommunare,_byla_v_sovetskie_vremena_priz-23727.html).

<sup>64</sup> I am referring here to the official celebrations of the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of former dissident and one of the most prominent political figures of the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Viacheslav Chornovil (who died in a car crash in 1999). For an extensive analysis of the ambivalent and highly eclectic official historical culture in post-communist Ukraine see: Mykoła Riabczuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, Wrocław, 2005, 99-149.

<sup>65</sup> See for example: Ján Korček, "Vznik ilegálnej SNR a Vianočná dohoda (3)", *Slovo* 29, 1994, 26; František Cséfalvay, "Partizánsky odboj do leta 1944 (5)", *Slovo* 31, 1994, 26; Viola Ivašková, "Keď sa zachraňovala česť slovenského národa", *Slovo* 35/36, 1997, 54-55.

sensitive topic of military collaboration with Germany is brought up, its compulsory character is stressed.<sup>66</sup> Slovak participation is depicted as counter to Slovak wishes and as ‘a battle void of sense’ from the perspective of Slovak soldiers. This image is enforced by the (seemingly self-evident) argument that there was a stronger affiliation – both on a linguistic and a mentality level – between Slovaks and Russians than between Slovaks and Germans. However, it is said the political circumstances at the time demanded Slovakia to proceed as an ally of Germany.

The two mentioned contexts clearly illustrate how it is not the Soviets but rather the Germans who are the main antagonists in popular Second World War representations. This can primarily be explained by the fact that, in contrast with Poland and Ukraine, Slovakia was not occupied by the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Therefore, there was nothing that would come to light after 1989 to tarnish the Slovak view of the Soviet Union, in contrast to the events in Poland and Ukraine. This did not mean that the recovered pluralism in history writing after 1989 was not welcomed enthusiastically in Slovakia. For example, the Soviet role during the Slovak National Uprising, finally freed from the tight straightjacket of the Soviet narrative, was reassessed. The alleged Soviet support of the uprising was no longer mentioned or, on the contrary, was exposed in all its ambiguity.<sup>67</sup> The Communists were no longer seen as the leaders, but more as one (out of many) component(s) of the resistance. The roll of the civil resistance was, conversely, highlighted and Czechoslovak military leaders, such as Rudolf Viest and Ján Golian, were reinstated.<sup>68</sup>

A second explanation for the Russian absence in the Slovak Second World War memories is the overwhelming focus on a different issue: the trauma of Slovak collaboration. This question, namely how to evaluate and deal with the heritage of the Slovak War Republic, became one of the most discussed and most controversial topics in Slovak public space for many years. It overshadowed many other debates, including one on the role of the Soviet Union.

There are quite a number of negative assessments of the Soviet Union when articles address the communist era, for example the organized political trials during the late 1940s and the early 1950s, Soviet intervention of August 1968 and subsequent permanent stationing of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, these images

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<sup>66</sup> E.g. Martin Lacko, “22. jún 1941 a Slovensko”, *Domino* 25, 2001, 8.

<sup>67</sup> “Dokumenty z obdobia príprav SNP. Sovietsko- československé vzťahy počas druhej svetovej vojny 1.”, *Slovo* 35/36, 1997, 40-41; 63; “Dokumenty z obdobia príprav SNP. Sovietsko- československé vzťahy počas druhej svetovej vojny 2.”, *Slovo* 35/36, 1997, 40-41; 63.

<sup>68</sup> Ján Golian and Rudolf Viest were Slovak generals and commanders of the insurrectionist 1<sup>st</sup> Czechoslovak Army (and later the partisan army) in Slovakia. Both were captured by German special forces in November 1944, sentenced to death, and executed in the Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945. Their role during the SNP as well as their tragic fate after its suppression received considerable attention during the 1990s, e.g.: Bohuš Chňoupek, “Generáli”, *Slovo* 35/36, 1997, 56-58.

<sup>69</sup> e.g.: Natália Hattalová, “Procesy”, *Domino* 26, 2001, 10-11; Ivo Samson, “Tma nad Československom”, *Domino* 51/52, 2001, 30-31; Viliam Bernáth, “Pozadie tragédie.

are sparse (especially in comparison with Polish and Ukrainian sources) and none of them have been the topic of large public discussions, conflicts or problems in the bilateral relations between Russia and Slovakia. Thus, there is no mention of any anti-Russian sentiments in Slovak historical consciousness similar to Poland or Ukraine. Slovak historical identity disposes of other, much more meaningful “others”, such as the abovementioned Germans, Hungarians (as oppressors during the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and to a lesser extent Czechs (as a former dominant neighbour and rival in Czechoslovakia). Slovak historical consciousness has first and foremost also been preoccupied with itself. This is illustrated by the large public discussions regarding Tiso’s state, the Slovak National Uprising, and the past-relationship with the communist period.

### *Conclusion*

This comparative analysis of post-1989 popular historical representations of Russia and the Soviet Union has revealed that Poland, Ukraine, and Slovakia harbour surprisingly divergent memories of Russia and the Soviet Union, despite a shared communist past. Not only is the popular premise that post-communist states share a hostile memory of the Soviet Union an incorrect simplification, so is the idea that Russia necessarily occupies an important place in post-communist historical narratives. In this respect, Russia remains important within Polish and Ukrainian historical culture while it is absent in Slovak historical consciousness. This can be explained by historical polarizations in the cases of Poland and Ukraine, which are rooted in the anti-Russian element of both countries’ national identity. In addition, the outlook of the individual post-communist memories of Russia and the Soviet Union appear to have been largely dependent on current geopolitical factors. Slovakia, a small, young state, that resolutely chose to pursue European integration, deals with other important issues apart from Russia. First and foremost, it elaborates on the proper Slovakian position, for instance, the Tiso regime and the Slovak National Uprising in the Second World War. Poland, well anchored within Western European structures as one of the larger European Union states, can afford a firm attitude toward Russia, even when this means having strained relations. At times, it even prefers to clash with Russia rather than with Germany, which is a new ally within the European Union. Ukraine on the other hand, remains very much dependent on its eastern neighbour. It is a large country in Russia’s backyard, hesitant concerning whom to link its identity building project to.

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Sovietski poradcovia a politické procesy” , *Slovo* 2, 2003; Samson, I., “ ...august...”, *Domino* 33, 1998, 7-9

# **Science Belongs to the People! Popularisation of science in Central Europe in the 1950s**

*Doubravka Olšáková*

The issue of Sovietisation of Central European societies is a key research topic in contemporary history and as such, it is widely discussed. It has become clear that the problem of Sovietisation should be approached not as “a homogenous and monolithic transformation which was fully pre-determined by Moscow, however rather as multi-faceted, trans-national processes of large scale institutional and ideological change made up of multiple ‘takeovers’ in various fields”.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless this doesn’t mean that the Soviet structure of institutions and various schemes were not implemented in extenso at least at the very beginning of the transformation of Central European states and societies. Especially during the Stalinist period of early 1950s, new Soviet schemes were taken over and implemented with minimum differences between the Soviet model and its Central European ‘copy’. This was the case for a new structure for the popularisation of sciences that was implemented in Central Europe at the beginning of 1950s. This scheme placed science and scientific explanation of the world at the centre of attention of communist regimes.

‘Science belongs to the people!’, ‘Science goes with the people!’ – these and similar slogans were often used by Communist regimes. Science was seen as important despite the fact that neither Karl Marx nor Friedrich Engels, though keen on a scientific approach to explaining historical development, ever paid much attention to science as such. Only later, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin linked science and the working class. He pointed out that if the workers are to achieve their goals on the way to brighter tomorrows, they need something that had been very much missing in the first phase of the Communist revolution, namely, the knowledge and experience of experts, i.e., scientists. This is why Lenin says in his work *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government*, which was discussed at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on April 26, 1918, that in the first phase of the revolution, concessions should be made to scientists and intellectuals since the working class needed their knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Iodarchi, C. (2009) ‘Postface’, In: Timaneanu, V. (ed.) (2009) *Stalinism Revisited - The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, Budapest: CEU 2009. Cf. also Connelly, J. (2000) *Captive University - The Sovietization of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956*, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press 2000.

Lenin's strategy was clear: "The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology."<sup>2</sup> Science and technology thus became key elements in the plans of the new regime. This was reflected in the *Decree of November 18, 1917*, suggested by V. I. Lenin and agreed by the Council of People's Commissars. The Decree included a section 'On the Remuneration of People's Commissars and Senior Government Employees and Officials', which set a maximum monthly salary of members of the Council of People's Commissars. In response to a December 1917 request by A. G. Shlyapnikov, People's Commissar for Labour, the Council revised this section and issued an explanation stating that the decision did not pertain to the payment and salaries of scientific and technical experts. In other words, there were no caps on the salaries of experts.

The new regime saw popularisation of science as both an economic necessity and an instrument of ideology. It became one of the pillars of the new society where knowledge was supposed to belong to all people and everyone was supposed to contribute to its improvement. The relatively strong network of institutions and organisations of public education, which was created in Russia and in Central Europe in the course of the nineteenth century, was to guarantee the success of a drive for the enlightenment of the people.<sup>3</sup> The scientific background of the new state ideology – Marxism-Leninism – is the key element for understanding the importance of popularisation of sciences. The scientific basis of Marxism-Leninism was explained in terms of natural law, including laws on the development of human societies. A scientific approach and methodology became a synonym for the truth. However a key problem was how to convince people? How could the state make them replace their beliefs in God(s), in a higher power, with an understanding of natural laws and scientific theories?

What strategies did the Communist regimes adopt in their attempt to spread scientific knowledge to the broad public? What means did they use in trying to familiarise people, including those from remote rural areas, with scientific and technical progress? In most cases, both in Central Europe and in Russia, there existed since the nineteenth century various scientific or academic societies that aimed at communicating scientific results to the broader public. In Russia, there was for example the Russian Society for the Spread of Natural-Historical Education.<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup> Lenin, V. I. (1972) *Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, Volume 27, 4<sup>th</sup> English edition, 235-77. Retrieved on June 9, 2012 from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/mar/x03.htm> (Marxists Internet Archive).

<sup>3</sup> Andrews, J. T. (2003) *Science for the masses: the Bolshevik state, public science, and the popular imagination in Soviet Russia, 1917-1934*, Texas: Texas A&M University Press. Available online: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/natl/Doc?id=10046117>.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Andrews, J. T. (2003) *Science for the masses: the Bolshevik state, public science, and the popular imagination in Soviet Russia, 1917-1934*, Texas: Texas A&M University Press. Available online: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/natl/Doc?id=10046117>. Cf. Zasztowt, L. (2009) 'Science for the Masses: The political background of Polish and Soviet science popularization in the post-war period', in: A. Schirmacher (ed.), *Communicating*



Czechoslovakia, there existed a social-democratic Workers' Academy, a Communist Socialist Academy, and a local chapter of the international Free Thought movement.<sup>5</sup> In Germany, there was URANIA,<sup>6</sup> an influential association founded in 1888 in Berlin with the support of Werner von Siemens and by the initiative of Humboldt's student Wilhelm Foerster and Wilhelm Meyer, but also the Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands, a new type of association that aimed at bringing together cultural and scientific elites and a mass membership. It was founded in August 1945 by Johannes R. Becher and other intellectuals in the Soviet zone of occupied Germany. In Poland, there was the socialist Society of the Workers' University (Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Robotniczego), founded in 1922 by Ignacy Ewaryst Daszyński, and the 'Reader' Cooperative Institute for Culture and Popular Education (Instytut Kulturalno-Oświatowy Spółdzielni "Czytelnik"), founded in 1944 in Lublin by Jerzy Borejsza.<sup>7</sup> With the exception of the Kulturbund, all of these societies were based on the classical nineteenth century concept of popular education. There were therefore networks of local societies run by representatives of local intelligentsia (as e.g. school teachers, journalists, engineers, writers), very often with limited contacts to the capital and more important groups or circles focusing on the same aim. Their functioning was therefore very often fragmented and several societies competed in the same field. The model of centralisation offered what proved to be an efficient solution to this fragmentation. In Russia, the centralisation of these organisations, and consequently also the radicalisation of their activities, occurred after Stalin's rise to power, that is, after 1928 (as illustrated, e.g., by the history of the Obschestvo za ovladanie techniki – Society for the knowledge of technology). In Central Europe, this process took place somewhat later, in 1950–1954.

In all Central European countries, the process of creating a communist central organisation for the popularisation of science followed very much the same script. First of all, there would be an ideological conference of all scientific workers of the country, at which a roadmap for the future would be established. In 1951-54, conferences of this sort took place in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany. In

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*Science in twentieth Century Europe*, Berlin: Max-Planck-Institute (pre-print No. 385), 133–146. (Available online, retrieved on June 20, 2012 from <http://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/Preprints/P385.PDF>)

<sup>5</sup> On popular education in the Czech Lands, cf. Pokový, J. (2003) *Lidová výchova na přelomu 19. a 20. století*, Prague: Karolinum. On Czechoslovak Free Thought movement, see Kudláč, A. K. (2005) *Příběh(y) Volné myšlenky*, Prague: NLN.

<sup>6</sup> Wolfschmidt, G. (2002) *Popularisierung der Naturwissenschaften*, Berlin: GNT-Verlag; Hess, H. (1969), *Die Geschichte der Gesellschaft Urania zu Berlin und die Widerspiegelung der wissenschaftlich-technischen Entwicklung: Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte und zur Organisation der Popularisierung wissenschaftlich-technischer Erkenntnisse*, Greifswald; Daum, A. W. (2002) *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert: Bürgerliche Kultur, naturwissenschaftliche Bildung und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit, 1848-1914*, Munich: Oldenburg (for the history of Urania, see 178-188).

<sup>7</sup> Krasucki, E. (2009) *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza - biografia polityczna*, Warsaw, : Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Poland, some 1,800 researchers and scientists attended the first Congress of Polish Science,<sup>8</sup> which took place in June and July of 1951 in Warsaw. The congress suggested and later adopted a resolution that appealed to the political authorities to dissolve the Polish Academy of Arts. This was to be replaced by a new kind of scientific institution based on a Soviet model, namely, the Polish Academy of Sciences. Sciences and scientific agendas were divided into three institutional subfields, each focused on a specific goal. The Academy was tasked with basic research, universities were supposed to provide education, and the aim of societies for natural and social sciences was to popularise science. In the 1950s, this ‘division of labour’ was rigidly observed. Later on, more flexibility was introduced but the basic layout persisted throughout the Communist era, not only in Poland but also in the entire Communist bloc.

A conference similar to the Polish one took place in Czechoslovakia in late February and early March 1952. Its agenda featured basically the same points as in Poland with one exception, the introduction of Marxist-Leninist – and at that time also Stalinist – philosophy into Czechoslovak science and education. As in Poland, however, the conference focused on a new structure and hierarchy of research institutions and on the popularisation of sciences. The same model was adopted also in Germany, where an analogous conference took place in June 1954 (it was carefully planned throughout the spring of 1954). The political situation in Germany, however, was much more complicated. To a certain extent, the conference was supposed to counterbalance a Science and Freedom meeting, which was organised in July 1953 in Hamburg by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an anti-Communist and anti-totalitarian organisation set up in Paris in 1950 and funded partly by the CIA.<sup>9</sup>

Based on the political orders and plans of the respective central committees of Communist parties, these large ideological meetings were followed by ‘spontaneous’ appeals by the intelligentsia, who would demand a new organisation for the popularisation of science in order to better serve the interests of the working class. At that point, a new society would be established with the appropriate degree of pomp. This society would then be supposed to bear the same name as its Soviet model, the All-Union Society for Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge, which was founded in July 1947 as a result of an initiative launched by Soviet researchers with Stalin’s approval.<sup>10</sup> The Academician Sergey Ivanovich Vavilov, a famous Soviet

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<sup>8</sup> Hübner, P. (1983) *I. Kongres Nauki Polskiej jako forma realizacji zalozeri polityki naukowej Panstwa Ludowego*, Wrocław: Ossolineum.

<sup>9</sup> Saunders, F. S. (2001) *Wer die Zeche zahlt... Der CIA und die Kultur im Kalten Krieg*, Berlin: Siedler 2001; Hochgeschwender, M. (1998) *Freiheit in der Offensive?: der Kongress für kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen*, Munich: Oldenburg. See also (1954) *Wissenschaft und Freiheit. Internationale Tagung Hamburg, 23.–26. Juli 1953, veranstaltet vom Kongress f.d.F.d.K. und der Universität Hamburg*, Berlin: Grunewald Verlag.

<sup>10</sup> National Archives, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Ideological Department, folder 49, arch. unit 414, fol. 46: *Žkušnosti VKS(b) – Všesvazová společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých poznatků* [Experience of the RSDLP(b) – All-Union Society for Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge].

physicist and, in 1945–51, President of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, became its first president.

So, what did the Soviet model of Central European societies for the popularisation of science look like in the early 1950s? And how did it work? The All-Union Society functioned as a voluntary organisation with an option of collective membership that was not limited to scientific institutions such as Lomonosov University, but included even industrial bodies such as Stalin's factories, kolkhozes, and the like.<sup>11</sup> In 1951, the All-Union Society had 282,000 members of whom over one half – 152,000 – were active members. Membership rapidly expanded and by the end of June 1957 reached 568,827.<sup>12</sup> The All-Union Society's lecturing activity was amazing. For example, in 1950 alone, it organised 933,000 lectures, which were attended by 80 million persons. On average, the All-Union Society thus organised 90,000 lectures each month on the territory of the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> Subjects of lectures had to be approved in advance and, for example, in 1951, some 2,000 subjects were recommended by the Central Committee of the Society for presentation to the broad public.<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that during the initial phase, the main mission of the society was to spread ideological indoctrination and not the improvement of technical education or familiarisation with new technical discoveries. The All-Union Society therefore focused on "explaining issues of internal and foreign policy of the Party and the government", and organised lectures on Marxism-Leninism, history of the RSDLP(b), and political economy. Lectures in technical and natural sciences were included in the activities of the All-Union Society as part of its fight against religion, where the main goal was to provide a 'materialist explanation of natural phenomena'. The official statement says "issues of antireligious propaganda are paid this much attention because it is required by the transition from socialism to Communism, which would be hampered by religious prejudice. Relics of religiosity prevent believers from correctly understanding natural and social phenomena and using them for practical activity. Antireligious propaganda is best suited to unveil the anti-scientific, reactionary meaning of religious ideology, its opposition to Communism."<sup>15</sup> Based on

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. folder 48, arch. unit 407, fol. 3: *Zpráva o výměně delegací mezi Vsesvazovou a Československou společností pro šíření politických a vědeckých poznatků, k níž došlo v září a říjnu 1957* [Report on exchange of delegations between the All-Union and Czechoslovak Society for Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge that took place in September and October 1957].

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. folder 49, arch. unit 414, fol. 48: *Zkušenosti VKS(b) – Vsesvazová společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých poznatků* [Experience of the RSDLP(b) – All-Union Society for Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge].

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. fol. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. fol. 47. The text continues: "Earlier, subjects were put only in a positive manner ... In this positive approach, nothing that would be said targeted religion directly. Nowadays, this attitude is insufficient. Propaganda is aimed directly against religious views and religion is unmasked as unscientific and false. The antireligious

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this model, the teaching of atheism was to become one of the priorities of the Czechoslovak version of this society very soon after it established its basic activities.

In 1956, the All-Union Society organised lectures on the following subjects:<sup>16</sup>

Areas covered by lectures	Number of lectures in 1956 (in thousands)	Proportion of the total in %
History	318.7	16.4%
Philosophy	61.5	3.2%
Economics	157.2	8,1%
International relations	437.3	22.5%
Biology and medicine	114.5	5.9%
Other disciplines of the natural sciences	68.6	3.5%
Agricultural sciences	210.5	10.8%
- including progressive knowledge and experience	32.0	1.6%
Technical and scientific knowledge	141.9	7,3%
- including progressive knowledge and experience	12.6	0,6%
- excursions (organised by the Polytechnic Museum)	28.4	1,5%
Scientific atheism	84.0	4,3%
Military theory, sport, physical education	54.8	2,8%
Literature and arts	90.0	4,6%
Other subjects (pedagogy, law, etc.)	09.0	0,5%
Total	1947.9	100%

Societies created in Central Europe in the early 1950s were supposed to adopt not only the name but also the main areas of activity of the All-Union Society. In Czechoslovakia, no one protested against the Czech translation of the Russian name for the Soviet society and the association was indeed until 1965 called ‘Society for Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge’. In Germany however, the adjective ‘political’ was omitted and the June 1954 congress that created the society decided that the German name would not follow the Soviet model. According to the archive documents, their society was supposed to be called *Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung politischer und wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse* (Society for Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge) but in the end, it was called just *Gesellschaft zur*

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subject contains issues such as contrast between science and religion, including what science says about religion and life, about people. This is the way to break down religious prejudice. Lectures against religion are published in mass editions.”

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. folder 48, arch. unit 407, fol. 21: *Celková informace o desetileté výstavbě a činnosti Věsvazové společnosti* [Overall information on ten years of building and activities of the All-Union Society].

Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse (Society for Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge). This modification took into account the comments made by the East German scientific community. In their eyes, the problem was the word 'political'. The official explication stated: „After the consultation with comrades scientists, including comrades Steinitz, Klein, Kröger, Schilfert, Havemann and Rapport, it became clear that the original name „Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung politischer und wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse“ (Society for Dissemination of political and scientific Knowledge) would reduce the membership potential of the Society. Some scientists, who are ready to spread the scientific knowledge on the basis of materialist grounds, would not be interested in cooperating with the Society.”<sup>17</sup> In Poland, a name based on the Soviet model did not catch on at all and the society was called Towarzystwo Wiedzy Powszechniej (Society of General Knowledge).

The degree of dependence on events in the USSR is nicely demonstrated by the fact that as soon as the Soviet All-Union Society in 1963 changed its name to 'Obschestvo Znaniya' (Society of Knowledge), anniversary meetings of the Czechoslovak and German society also soon changed their names. In Czechoslovakia, this led to the creation of the Socialist Academy (1965) whose name referenced the interwar Communist organisation Socialist Academy. In Germany, the society returned to the name of the pre-war society for public instruction, URANIA in 1966.<sup>18</sup> Again, the German case was much more complicated and sensitive since the issue concerned German-German relations. The proposal to rename the German society and to return to the previous name URANIA was made at the fourth Congress of the society in 1966 but it already appeared on the agenda of the Central Committee in 1965. The problem was that the name 'Urania, e.V.' was already used by an organisation in West Germany. This complicated legal matters but the Central Committee stated that it was politically important to show and prove to the West that the name URANIA was closely linked to the progressive and leftist tradition of popularisation of sciences and not to the bourgeois tradition.<sup>19</sup>

The renaming of all societies in Central Europe according to the Soviet model, which is amusing more than anything else, nonetheless very well illustrates the state of affairs in this area. The era of de-Stalinisation of science – which also ushered a de-Stalinisation of its popularisation – had to be formally confirmed both in the centre and in the peripheries. During most of the second half of the twentieth century, links between the Soviet society for the popularisation of science and the Central European societies that were created on the Soviet model were very close indeed. Coordination

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<sup>17</sup> Bundesarchiv-SAPMO, Sekretariat des ZK SED, DY 30/ J IV 2/3/ 428, Arbeitsprotokoll zum Protokoll Nr. 6/54, Sitzung am 19. Mai 1954, 4. Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung politischer und wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse, fol. 417/59.

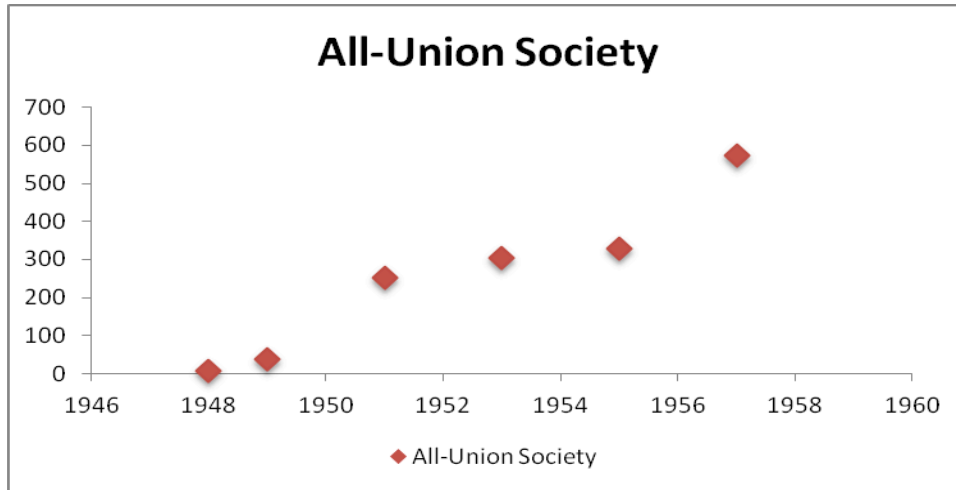
<sup>18</sup> Bundesarchiv-SAPMO, Sekretariat des ZK SED, DY 30/ J IV 2/3A/1207 bis 1208, Anhang 1, Arbeitsprotokoll zum Protokoll Nr. 55/65, Sitzung am 28. Juli 1965, fol. 1207/164-165.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. fol. 1207/165: “Uns scheint es sogar politisch wichtig zu sein, den verpflichten – den Namen „Urania“ mit seinen progressiven Traditionen nicht Vertretern des reaktionären bürgerlichen Bildungswesens in West-Berlin zu überlassen.”

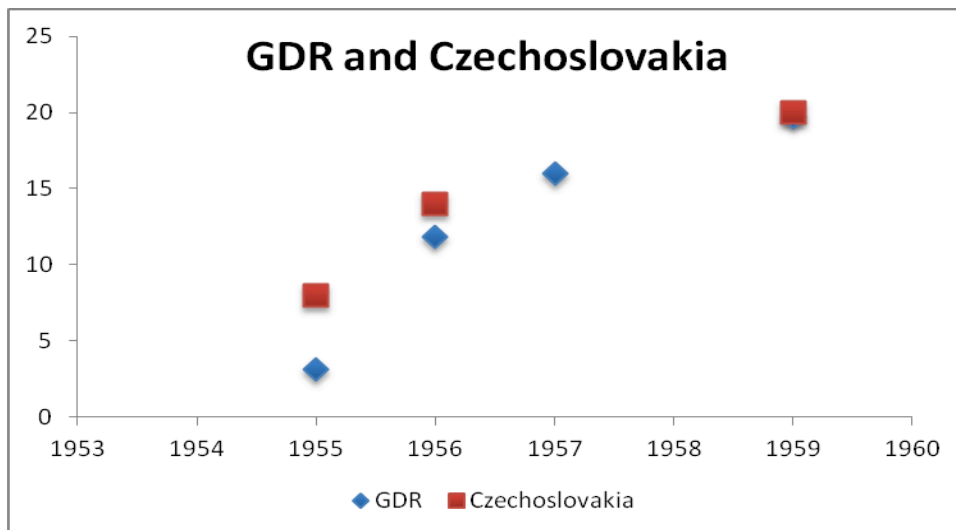
of activities with the Soviet All-Union Society usually took the form of regular visits to Moscow but especially after 1965, also included lectures by invited scientists.

Nevertheless, the membership in the Czechoslovak, East German, and Polish societies as a percentage of national population never reached similar proportions to that of the All-Union Society. This had hundreds of thousands of members and (see graph) a mass character. During the time of its greatest glory - which came to an end around 1960 - its membership oscillated around 0.3–0.4% of total population of the USSR. The number of members, including so-called collective members such as institutions, plants, or factories, exceeded an impressive 700,000 and was approaching one million. In Central Europe, figures were more modest: in Czechoslovakia, membership moved around 0.1–0.2% of total population, in the German Democratic Republic around 0.1%. This difference between the Soviet original and its Central European reflections could doubtless be explained by the fact that while in the USSR, the All-Union Society was created at the peak of Stalinism, in Central Europe the establishment of these structures was part of formation of a new society in a new form of state. Everything was therefore new and many undertakings were starting from a green field. The dynamics of development of the membership base of these societies also reflects political pressures. In the case of USSR, it is clear that the year 1953 represents a breaking point, doubtless in consequence of the beginning of the de-Stalinisation process, which was heralded by the XX<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in particular, by Khrushchev's speech there. It is therefore not surprising that the de-Stalinisation process had a strong impact on the scientific landscape as well. For example Stalin's Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature was abandoned because it didn't work. Stagnation of membership of the popularisation societies was then clearly visible until 1956, when the political situation became clearer and many political and scientific taboos, including some pseudo-scientific theories, were finally officially broken. The political situation in Central Europe changed too, since the fundamental basis of regimes were disturbed: the Czechoslovak president Klement Gottwald died in March 1953, only nine days after Stalin, the uprising in East Germany started in June 1953. Development of the Czechoslovak popularisation society stalled in a similar way to the Soviet society. In the case of East Germany we can however observe a delay, starting only around 1956. This was reflected in the stagnation of membership size but even more so, in stagnation of numbers of lectures and size of audience (see Figures 2, 4, 6). All of the above-mentioned societies had the same structure as the All-Union Society: most of the top positions were filled with representatives of national academies of science, university teachers participated in the organisation's activities, but representatives of the highest Party schools, who supervised adherence to ideological principles, were also never absent. Just as in the Soviet model, the president of the society was usually chosen by the central committee of the relevant Communist party from one of the top representatives of the national academy of sciences. This was the case of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences's founding president Zdeněk Nejedlý (1878-1962). Its second president František Šorm (1913-1980) and later also Josef Macek

*Figure 1: Membership of the Soviet All-Union Society for Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge (in thousands)*



*Figure 2: Membership of the Czechoslovak Society for Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge and of the German Society for Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge (in thousands)<sup>20</sup>*



(1922-1991) and Ivan Málek (1909-1994), who was the president of the society in the 1950s, were all high-ranking academicians. The situation differed in Germany, where presidents of the society were chosen from the ranks of university professors. This was principally due to the political background and situation of the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, which had a strong impact on the institutional background of the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin. Among the first presidents of this society, we find prominent scientists such as Werner Rothmalar (1908-1962), a famous German

<sup>20</sup> Figures from Poland are unfortunately inaccessible.

biologist and botanist, who was later replaced by Friedrich Mögliche (1902-1957), director of the Institute for Theoretical Physics at the Humboldt University in Berlin. On the other hand, we also find in the top ranks of the society persons such as Matthäus Klein (1911-1988), professor of philosophy at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED, the key institute responsible for the development of Marxism-Leninism in the German Democratic Republic.

Other members of the top leadership bodies of the Central European societies for dissemination of political and scientific knowledge – which were, following the Party's example, also called 'Central Committees', – were usually chosen from leading representatives of individual sections of the society, which were divided according to the various sciences. There thus existed sections for economy, psychology and pedagogy, law, agricultural sciences, technical sciences, natural sciences, and history, but also some specialised sections such as sections for Marxism-Leninism and scientific atheism. The last one of these was considered the most important, since its purpose was not simply to 'popularise' sciences but also to politically indoctrinate the masses and spread antireligious propaganda.

Attached to the central administration of each national popularisation society, there was also a publishing house, which was an integral part of its agenda. The All-Union Society had its publishing house Znanie (Knowledge), one of best-known Soviet publishing houses. The Polish society had at its disposal the publishing house Wiedza Powszechna (General Knowledge), the Czechoslovak society's publishing house was Horizont (Horizon), and the German society had Urania-Verlag, which was based in Leipzig. Following the model of the Soviet society and Znanie, these publishing houses were parts of their respective science societies. The incorporation of publishing houses into the system of popularisation of science was driven not only by the need to adhere to the Soviet model: it also had an economic aspect because the publishing house was the only activity within the system of popularisation of science that had the potential to be profitable. And some books from this production actually did manage to raise profit. In all of the above-mentioned countries, series of so-called *Little Encyclopaedias* were very popular. It should also be noted that all of these Central European societies for the popularisation of science copied, and successfully so, not only the idea of 'in-house' publishing houses but even the structure of the publishing plan and the portfolio of journals that were published by the model Soviet society.

Publishing was de facto one of the most important activities of these societies for public instruction, and one that had the largest impact on the society. The Czechoslovak Society for Popularisation of Science, for example, published from 1960 on a hardly imaginable 300,000 copies of journals, books, and brochures every month. The portfolio of journals of the Czechoslovak society, which was inspired by the Soviet model, included, among others, *Dějiny a současnost* (History and our Times), *Mezinárodní politika* (International Politics), *Věda a život* (Science and Life), *Magazín aktualit a zajímavostí* (Magazine of News and Curiosities), *Technický magazín* (Technical Magazine), and *Domov* (Home) but also the Slovak *Příroda a společnost* (Nature and Society) and *Svet vedy* (World of Science) and the Hungarian-language *Természet és Társadalom* (Nature and Society). The society also published series such as the Czech *Malá moderní encyklopedie* (Modern Little Encyclopaedia), Slovak *Polytechnická knižnice*



(Polytechnic Library) and others. The above mentioned series *Malá moderní encyklopedie* (Modern Little Encyclopaedia) was typical in that it followed the Soviet model exactly and in many cases also contained translations of Soviet authors into the national languages.

It is rather characteristic that in Central Europe, many of these journals and even the publishing houses remained active even after the fall of the Communist regimes. This was the case of, e.g., the *Wiedza Powszechna* in Poland. In Czechoslovakia, some of the most important titles from the Czechoslovak society's portfolio appear till this day. Though current readers of the Czech journal *Mezinárodní politika* (International Politics) tend to believe that the monthly they hold in their hands is a modern scientific journal, as a matter of fact, this journal has been appearing continuously since 1957. Actually, most of these journals inspired by the Soviet portfolio still exist in Czechoslovakia and Poland and some of them, such as *Domov* (Home), developed into 'high-fashion' magazines in their own right. One would be hard pressed to find a better example of continuity of Central Europe. It also shows that these publishing houses were highly popular instruments with a strong impact on the society.

Another central institution linked to the society headquarters was a museum of atheism. This, however, existed only in Moscow. Periodical requests (made in 1955, 1957, and 1959) that a similar type of museum also be created in Czechoslovakia were never met. Instead of a museum, a special methodological research centre was created in 1972, during the period of 'normalisation'. It was an independent Institute of Scientific Atheism within the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, which was supposed to coordinate all activities related to scientific atheism.<sup>21</sup> In 1983, the name of the institute was changed to 'Institute for Research on Social Consciousness and Scientific Atheism.'<sup>22</sup> Its main task was to develop new approaches and new methodologies in teaching scientific atheism and related subjects. No request for the establishment of a museum of atheism was in all likelihood ever made of Poland, where the situation with respect to religion was different from the Czechoslovak one and the majority of the population had strong religious beliefs.

Until the end of 1950s, the core activity of societies for the popularisation of science consisted of organising lectures. Only in the late 1960s, however, did this activity receive dedicated institutions. Around that time, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Poland witnessed the creation of various 'people's academies', 'village academies', and 'people's universities'. These offered both specialised series of lectures and courses that provided opportunities to improve one's professional qualification. People's universities offered the option of earning, after taking requisite courses, the equivalent

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<sup>21</sup> The institute came into being as a result of transformation of an independent research unit for philosophy at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, which was established in 1969 and located in Brno.

<sup>22</sup> Barvíková, H., Janderová, H., and Podaný, V. (1999) *Fondy a sbírky Archivu Akademie věd České republiky*, Prague: Archiv AV ČR, 128. Cf. D. Václavík (2006) 'Český ateismus ve dvacátém století. K vývoji a institucionalizaci v letech 1948-1989'. *Soudobé dějiny* 14 (2-3), 471-487.

of the professional diploma that proved that graduates had increased their education. People's academies were organised much more loosely than people's universities and offered series of lectures on various subjects. Among the people's academies, three specialised sub-academies were created: so-called 'parent academies', film academies and agricultural academies. Here are two examples of how a series of lectures was structured. A series of lectures in philosophy would include the option of various topics. One of them was a series of lectures on scientific atheism (for young people), containing the following lectures: 1. *What is religion and how did a belief in God arise*; 2. *Does the soul exist? And is there life after death?*; 3. *How did various religious ceremonies, feasts, and superstitions originate and what is spiritualism*; 4. *What is the Vatican and whom does it serve?*; 5. *On the evolution of outer space and the formation of Earth*; 6. *On the origins of life and human evolution*; 7. *Satellites, rockets, and space flights*. Another series of lectures dealt with subjects like physics, mathematics, and chemistry. A series titled *Atoms and nuclear physics* included e.g. the following lectures: *Substance and energy*; *Nuclear power stations*; *Nuclear-powered engines for ships, planes, and train engines*; *Use of radioisotopes in medicine or Radioisotopes in biology and agriculture*.<sup>23</sup>

In Poland and Czechoslovakia, people's universities started functioning in 1956, and in the GDR, they opened in 1958. Five years later, in Poland, there were 800 such institutions, in Czechoslovakia 700,<sup>24</sup> and in GDR, 2,072, which shows that it was a successful concept. The People's universities and academies were present at district, regional and national levels, their branches functioned in almost all district and regional capitals, and moreover some of them were created in cooperative farms, big plants or university cities.<sup>25</sup>

All three of the Central European societies for the popularisation of science were intended for the masses. Attendance of lectures and size of membership were therefore seen by the Communist parties as one of the main criteria of their success. The official figures are astonishing: the number of people who attended lectures often reached dozens of millions, thus equalling or exceeding the total population of a given

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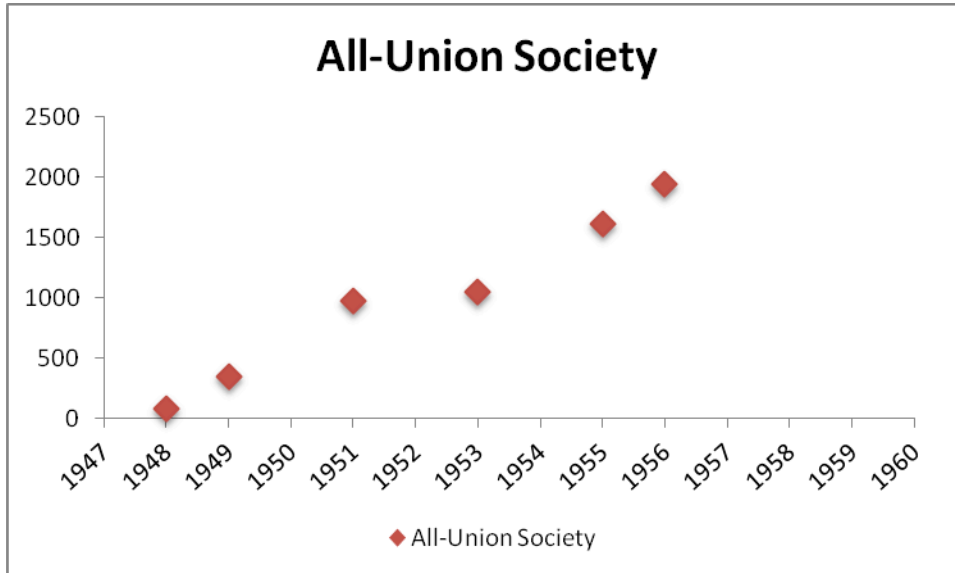
<sup>23</sup> National Archives, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Ideological department, folder 48, arch. unit 399, fol. 10-23: *Předběžný plán opatření Čs. společnosti k zabezpečení úkolů vyplývajících z usnesení červnového pléna ÚV KSČ* [Preliminary plan of measures of the Czechoslovak society to fulfil tasks following from a June plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. cf. thematic plans exemplified in, e.g. (1964) *Základní kursy – Tématický plán lidových akademií vědy, techniky a umění 1964*, Břeclav [Basic Courses – Thematic plan of popular academies of science, technology, and arts 1964, Břeclav]

<sup>24</sup> National Archives, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Ideological department, folder 11, arch. unit 63, fol. 23: *Zpráva o dosavadním rozvoji lidových universit a akademií* [Report on existing development of people's universities and academies].

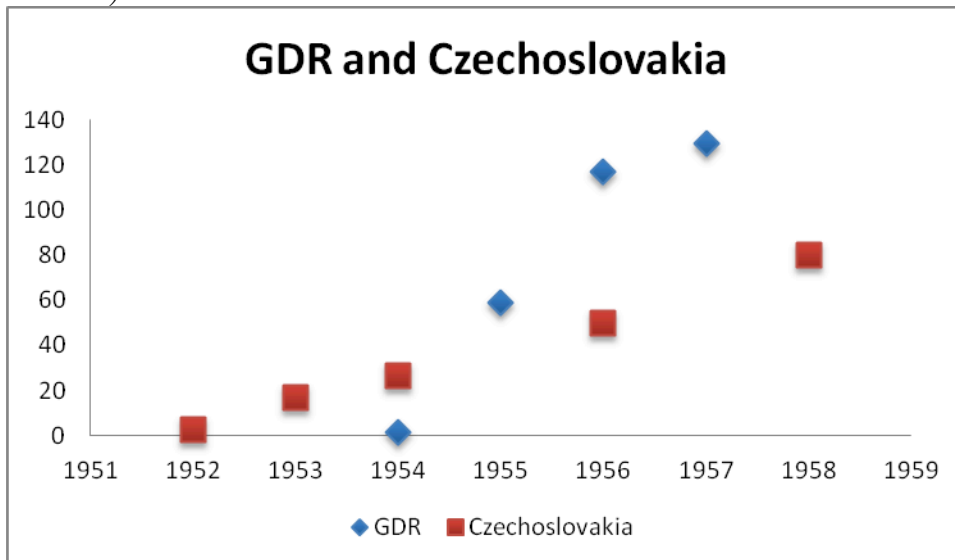
<sup>25</sup> Bundesarchiv-SAPMO, Politbüro des ZK SED, DY 30/ J IV 2/2/ 702, Protokoll Nr. 21/60, Sitzung des Politbüros am 9. Mai 1960 - 6. Bericht über die Arbeit der Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse.

country. Of course, the obvious explanation is that some people attended more than one lecture. Even so, the numbers are astonishing:

*Figure 3: The number of the lectures given by the Soviet All-Union Society for Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge (in thousands)*

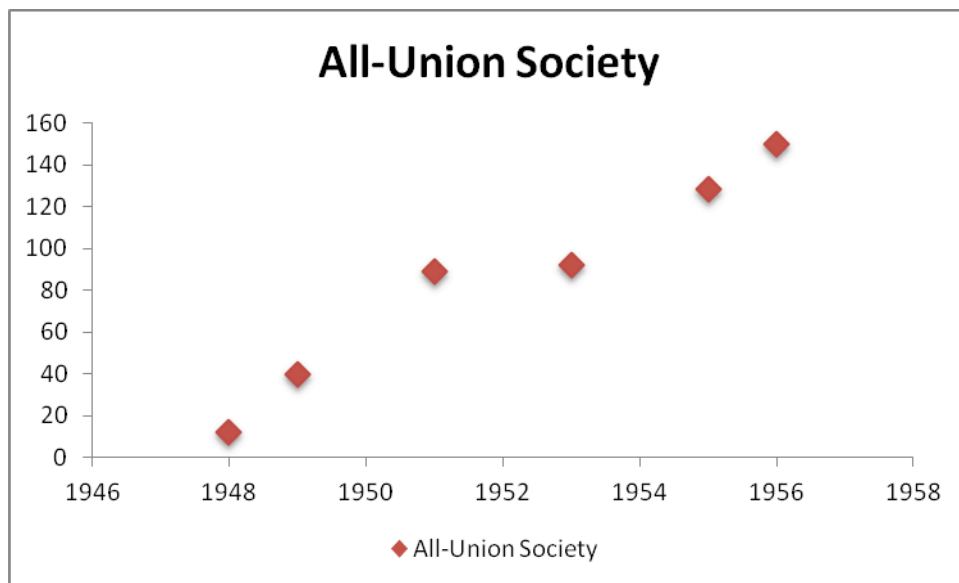


*Figure 4: The number of lectures given by societies in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia (in thousands)<sup>26</sup>*

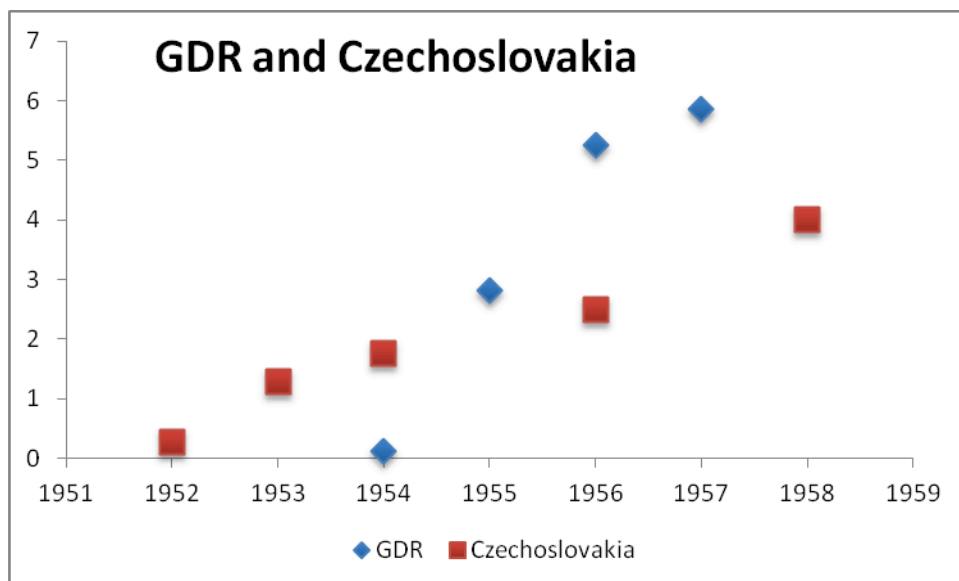


<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, figures from Poland are not accessible.

*Figure 5: Numbers attending lectures given by the Soviet All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific knowledge (in thousands)*



*Figure 6: Numbers attending lectures given by the German Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge and the Czechoslovak Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge (in thousands)<sup>27</sup>*



<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, figures from Poland are not accessible.

Implementation of the Soviet model to popular education in Central Europe even went so far that – as part of adherence to the Marxist-Leninist dictum on the evolution/breakdown of state in a Communist society – one gradually witnessed not only changes in the activities of organisations of popular instruction but even modifications to the legislative framework within which popular education in the various states functioned. The adoption of laws pertinent to popular instruction was grounded in the assumption that Communism was fast arriving. Based on a resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from March 1957, the All-Union Society took under its auspices all popularisation of science in the USSR. This task was thereby taken from the competence of the Soviet Ministry of Culture, since, as the resolution said: “in this solution, comrades discern harbingers of Communism, when the state hands over some of its functions to voluntary organisations of the people.” Oddly enough, this measure was undertaken at the initiative of Nikolai Aleksandrovich Mikhailov, the Minister of Culture. In September 1957, a Czechoslovak delegation travelled to the USSR and upon its return, a new law on popular education was incorporated into the Czechoslovak legal system. This came into effect in 1959. In Germany, a new law on education and popular instruction was adopted in the same year, and in Poland, an equivalent law was passed in July 1961. The adoption of these laws inspired by the Soviet model completed the first and most important phase of implementation of a Communist type of popular instruction based on a central model of indoctrination of masses. This model functioned more or less successfully until the fall of the Communist regime and its vestiges were disassembled only in the first half of the 1990.

In response to the question of a possibility of Sovietisation in the sense of monolithic implementation of Soviet models in various areas and fields of political, cultural and scientific life in the Soviet bloc, a comparison between the Soviet model and Central European societies for dissemination of political and scientific knowledge shows that differences between them were minimal – or at least purposely kept at the minimum. The structure, decision-making mechanisms, and the content of activities of societies for the popularisation of science in Central European countries closely followed the Soviet model. They did not differ from one another and the leading representatives of the relevant societies did not want them to be different. This is seen even in such details such as the change of the name of the Soviet society that in the 1960s led almost immediately to a re-naming of equivalent societies in Central Europe. Even increases in membership in these countries corresponded to the developments in the USSR, though with a little delay. This, once again, very well illustrates their dependence on the developments in Moscow.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> This paper was funded by the research project no. GPP410/11/P007 of the Czech Science Foundation.

# **How to preserve the body of an allied leader: the export of Soviet embalming expertise to Czechoslovakia**

*Luděk Vacín<sup>1</sup>*

Embalming of leaders in Stalinist regimes became traditional by the mid-1950s. When Czechoslovak president Klement Gottwald died, already three leaders from three different countries had been embalmed for some time – Lenin (1924), Dimitrov (1949), and Choibalsan (1952), while Stalin's body was just being embalmed (1953).<sup>2</sup>

This extravagant hallmark of a full-fledged leader cult in communist societies was introduced in Soviet Russia after the untimely death of Lenin, whose 'immortalization' was the task of a special commission, and whose embalming and display in a mausoleum was supervised by Leonid Borisovich Krasin and Anatolii

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<sup>1</sup> This paper could not have been completed were it not for the generosity and support of several people to whom I would hereby like to extend my warmest gratitude. My sincere thanks go to the witnesses, Professor Rudolf Vaněček and Mr Miroslav Hubka, for their willingness to give me an interview about the time they spent at the mausoleum.

My work in the archives has been considerably facilitated by the expertise and generosity of Dr Alena Nosková (National Archive, Prague), Dr Pavel Minařík (Military Historical Archive, Prague), and Ms Jitka Bílková (Archive of the Security Units, Prague). I am also obliged to the staff of the branch office of the Archive of the Security Units in Brno–Kanice for their retrieval of the relevant Ministry of the Interior personal file.

The staff of the study rooms in all three archives are thanked for the patience and diligence with which they located and prepared hundreds of documents for me and answered my many questions.

Further, I am very grateful to Strahil Panayotov for his work in the Sofia archives that resulted in locating the files of the Dimitrov mausoleum. Although fully occupied by his own research, Strahil found the time to immerse in archival work on my behalf and provided me with excellent photos of many important sources from the Dimitrov mausoleum dossier.

Finally, I am much obliged to my wife Kateřina for her unceasing understanding and support of my mausoleum research, in which she eventually got directly involved when she drew the fine illustrations of the basic stages of a communist leader's embalming.

<sup>2</sup> See the account in Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt № 1*, Moscow: Vagrius, 44-57, 211-215, 230-233, 303-304. See also Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press, 15-31, 165-168, 172-190.

Vasil'evich Lunacharskiĭ.<sup>3</sup> Both men were proponents of the 'God-building' intellectual strand of pre-1917 Bolshevism, which sought to create a new socialist religion consisting in a humanistic faith in man, or in the deification of man, which would result from the new social reality of a classless society with the help of modern science and technology.<sup>4</sup> While they could not apply all the ideas of 'God-building' in post-1917 Russia, they were at least able to deify Lenin and thus set an example for the next generations of dictators from very different cultural backgrounds. The North Korean Kim dynasty, with Kim Il-sung's body soon to be joined by that of his son and successor Kim Jong-il, stands out prominently to this day. Ironically, the first holy relic of communism was created in the wake of a campaign which Lenin himself had endorsed and which was meant to demonstrate by means of exhuming and exposing the bodies of Orthodox saints that faith in the incorruptibility of holy bodies was by itself a relic for which there was no room in the new, socialist Russia.<sup>5</sup>

The 'God-builders' actually attempted to show that while the incorruptibility of Orthodox saints was a fraud, the new progressive regime was able to preserve the leader's body with the use of modern technology, no divine dispensation necessary.<sup>6</sup> Yet this made little difference for the people, particularly peasants, whose minds were molded by the traditions of Orthodox Christianity and age-old funerary customs. For them, glimpsing Lenin's body would always mean having seen a saint ready for a unique resurrection of the soul and flesh; or the sight of a saintly prince, a holy ruler protecting his subjects and land forever.<sup>7</sup> Such considerations apparently played a role in the decision to embalm Lenin and put him on permanent display. Influential Bolsheviks like Zinov'ev referred to the Lenin mausoleum as a place of 'pilgrimage', a sacred site to which believers flock.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Stalin contemplated already at a Politburo meeting in late autumn 1923 that because Lenin was a Russian, once he died he should be buried in a Russian manner. Trotskii, who was also present,

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<sup>3</sup> On the beginnings of Lenin's cult see Ennker, B. (1997) *Die Anfänge des Leninkults in der Sowjetunion*, Cologne and Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau. Ennker, B. (1987) 'Die Anfänge des Leninkultes'. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 35 (4), 534-555. Ennker, B. (1996) 'Leninkult und mythisches Denken in der sowjetischen Öffentlichkeit 1924'. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 44 (3), 431-455. Tumarkin, N. (1997) *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press.

<sup>4</sup> See Tumarkin, N. (1981) 'Religion, Bolshevism, and the Origins of the Lenin Cult'. *Russian Review*, 40 (1), 35-46; Tumarkin, N. (1997) *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 18-23.

<sup>5</sup> The campaign has recently been described by Greene, R.H. (2010) *Bodies Like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia*, DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press; see particularly 122-159.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 209.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Tumarkin, N. (1997) *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 4-6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 168.

correctly decoded this idea as referring to the Orthodox practices, particularly when Stalin continued that ‘contemporary science offers the possibility, by means of embalming, to preserve the body of the deceased for a long time’.<sup>9</sup> The combination of Orthodox traditions and Bolshevik ‘God-building’ thus seems to have been the decisive factor in the decision to embalm Lenin,<sup>10</sup> and thereby to create a constant source of legitimacy and a focal point of communist symbolism.

However, the embalming and establishment of a mausoleum for Klement Gottwald transpired in a very different setting: a country which definitely joined the Soviet bloc only in 1948, possessed of a well-developed industrial sector and a rich and rather secularized cultural life. Czechoslovakia, a country with Western cultural traditions, whose pre-WWII democracy was, despite its many faults, exceptional in all central Europe, was an unlikely candidate indeed to adopt the ultimate manifestation of a leader cult.

Yet the glorified leader died comparatively young, shortly after the demise of an even more glorified Soviet leader, and at a time of economic as well as social crisis. His death therefore called for a measure that would help repair the impaired legitimacy of the only recently established communist regime. The Gottwald mausoleum was meant to represent such a measure.

It was a final piece of leader cult symbolism imported into the country from the USSR in an attempt to turn the tragedy into a victory, to show that the leader would always be present, physically.<sup>11</sup> Cultural differences were not taken into account. For instance, funerals by incineration were not uncommon in Czechoslovakia already before WWII and coffins were sealed during the preceding ceremony. In contrast, funerary practices in both of the countries which at that time had their embalmed leaders on display, i.e. the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, involved touching and kissing the deceased in an open casket, etc. After all, this is something one would expect in countries whose funerary customs were defined by Orthodox religious practices. Also, Czechoslovak state funerals had never been organized on such a grandiose scale before and the deceased president was never carried through the streets in a glass-covered coffin. Copying the Soviet model reached even into the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 174.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 179-182. See also Moretto, G. (2010), *Lenin and His Body: A Case of Soviet Religiosity*. In J. Carvalho (Ed.), *Religion and Power in Europe: Conflict and Convergence*, 2nd ed. (258-275) Pisa: Plus – Pisa University Press.

<sup>11</sup> For other examples of imported leader cult patterns, in the context of Stalinist praise poetry, see Macura, V. (2008) *Šťastný věk (a jiné studie o socialistické kultuře)*, 2nd ed., Prague: Academia, chapter “*Obraz vůdce*” (The Image of the Leader), 101-120. For a semiotic analysis of texts and events related to Gottwald’s death and the establishment of his mausoleum see Ibid. chapter “*Smrt vůdce*” (Death of the Leader), 121-130. For an English version of the latter chapter see Macura, V. (2010) *The Mystifications of a Nation: The “Potato Bug” and Other Essays on Czech Culture*, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 62-68. For the import of Soviet patterns into the leader’s representation in the visual art see Petišková, T. (2002) *Ceskoslovenský socialistický realismus 1948-1958*, Prague: Gallery.



realm of official funerary rites.

In view of this, it is no wonder that most of the population understood the Gottwald mausoleum right from the start as just another sign of the regime's Byzantinism. Thoroughly unpopular, it failed entirely; not in terms of technology but in terms of ideology. Klement Gottwald's mausoleum, an object of rumours and jokes rather than respect and veneration, was closed down in 1962, after merely nine years of full operation.

Declassified documents from Czech archives tell the story of the Gottwald mausoleum in some detail. Major groups of relevant sources come from the dossiers of supreme executive bodies of the Party, the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of the Interior. Based on extensive research of those sources, as well as on interviews with two eyewitnesses – the mausoleum's former deputy commander and its chief physician, this study is to my knowledge the first in English to scrutinize the transfer and application of the Soviet embalming method in another country, thereby offering insights into the gloomy reality of a modern embalmer's craft as well as into the construction and daily operation of a communist leader's mausoleum.

Klement Gottwald was the unquestioned leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia since 1929, prime minister after WWII, principal architect of the communist takeover in February 1948,<sup>12</sup> and the first so-called 'workers' president' of the country which was quickly changing into a province of the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> He had already been subject to glorification before the coup but after it, a leader cult of vast proportions emerged, modelled on the cult of Stalin and going hand in hand with it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Rupnik, J. (2003) *Dějiny komunistické strany Československa: od počátků do převzetí moci*, Prague: Academia, 57-88, 191-246.

<sup>13</sup> To date the only more recent book-length biography of Gottwald is still a volume from the time of 'normalization' in Czechoslovakia: Matějka, J. (1971) *Gottwald*, Prague: Svoboda. The rather brief narrative of Gottwald's career recently published by Karel Kaplan thus represents to my knowledge the sole larger work on Gottwald produced during the past two decades in any language: Kaplan, K. (2009) *Kronika komunistického Československa: Klement Gottwald a Rudolf Slánský*, Brno: Barrister & Principal, 7-206.

<sup>14</sup> The term leader cult is used here in the sense of the definition offered by E.A. Rees (2004), *Leader Cults: Varieties, Preconditions and Functions*. In B. Apor et al. (Ed.), *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc* (3-26, at 4) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan – 'A leader cult is an established system of veneration of a political leader, to which all members of the society are expected to subscribe, a system that is omnipresent and ubiquitous and one that is expected to persist indefinitely. It is thus a deliberately constructed and managed mechanism, which aims at the integration of the political system around the leader's persona.' I deliberately avoid using the term 'personality cult', because this expression – coined by Khrushchev at the 20th Soviet Party Congress to describe Stalin's methods of leadership at large – was often used as a universal label for various principles and manifestations of the Stalinist political system which were deemed 'wrong', 'mistaken', or 'harmful'. Yet, and particularly in the Czechoslovak context, the expression was

After Gottwald was elected president in June 1948, he was praised as the infallible guarantor of the bright future to come, and as the symbolic embodiment of the Party, the working class, the people, etc. Party members clung to Gottwald particularly strongly after the trial against Slánský and his 'anti-state conspiratorial centre' in November 1952.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, the Party and state establishment together with the press actually presented Gottwald and his Soviet mentor as the only ones whom Czechoslovak communists could trust.<sup>16</sup>

Gottwald's death on March 14, 1953, only five days after he returned from Stalin's funeral, therefore caused an upheaval among the Party leadership as well as among rank and file members (Fig. 1). The regime had not yet managed to get the country under full control and faced a grave crisis of the economy. The crisis was brought about mainly by the military's ever increasing demands on heavy industry for arms supplies so that it could accomplish the important role that it was supposed to

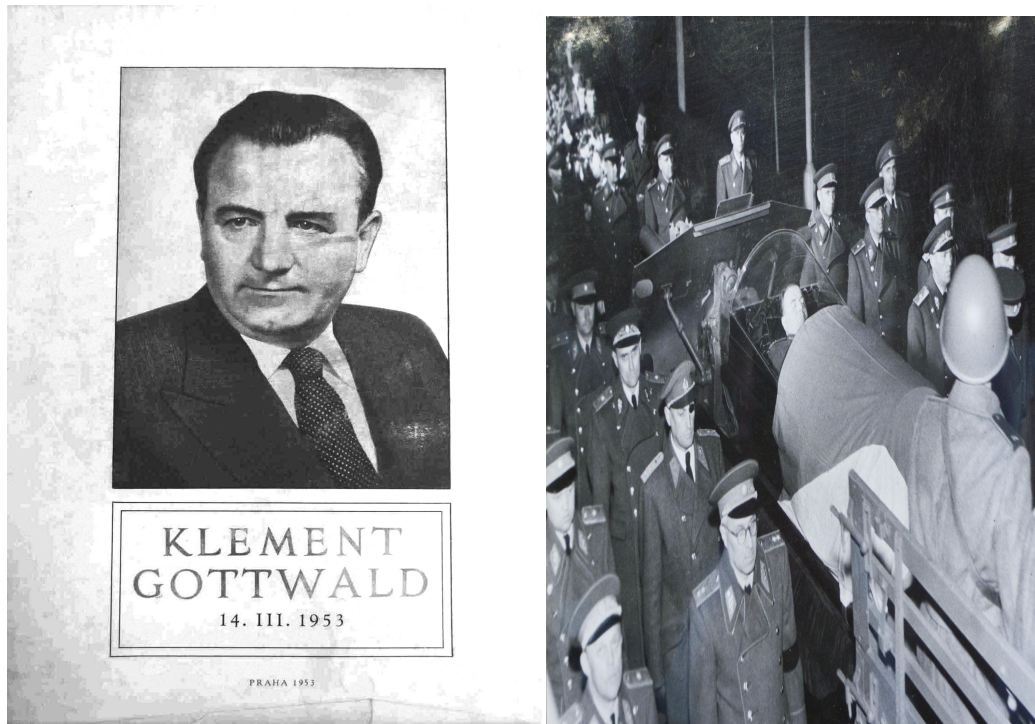
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seldom used in the sense laid out in the above definition by Rees. The growing literature on the cult of communist leaders includes: Plamper, J. (2012) *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power*, New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press. On the cult of Mao see Leese, D. (2011) *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution*, Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. The latest collections of papers dealing specifically with leader cult issues are Apor, B., et al. (Ed.) (2004) *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Heller, K., and J. Plamper (Eds.) (2004) *Personality Cults in Stalinism – Personenkulte im Stalinismus*, Göttingen: V&R unipress; the first issue of the journal *Twentieth Century Communism* (2009) called *Communism and the Leader Cult*; Ennker, B., and H. Hein-Kircher (Eds.) (2010) *Der Führer im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, with further bibliography. The cult of Klement Gottwald, however, has hitherto escaped attention. A partial study of this large topic is in preparation by the present author.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed account of the Slánský affair in English see Kaplan, K. (1990) *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Cf. Lukes, I. (2006) *Rudolf Slansky: His Trials and Trial*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

<sup>16</sup> Many examples may be cited. For instance, the concluding speech of state prosecutor Josef Urválek at the Slánský trial contained the following words: 'High treason, espionage, sabotage, plotting against the life of our nations' most illustrious son, the great leader and teacher, comrade Klement Gottwald.' '...ardent patriotism of all our people, their enthusiasm for socialist construction, their boundless trust in our Party, its leadership and comrade Gottwald, their glowing love for the Soviet Union are insurmountable.' 'More vigilant, more tough and more united around its leadership and Klement Gottwald is our Communist Party, leading our people into a happy future.' Translated by the author from the original edition of the trial proceedings: *Ministerstvo spravedlnosti* (1953), *Proces s vedením protistátního spikleneckého centra v čele s Rudolfem Slánským*, Prague: Orbis, 524.

Figs 1 & 2



play in the expected war against the West.<sup>1</sup> Factory workers, who according to official rhetoric were supposed to rule the country, were increasingly alienated while collectivization of agriculture was not proceeding well either.<sup>2</sup> The almost simultaneous demise of both of the leaders who had been presented to the public as demigods entailed a severe ideological blow, adding to the many problems the regime already had.

To tackle that damage and to show the power of the regime, Party leadership orchestrated Gottwald's funeral as a formidable ritual, involving armed forces on an unprecedented scale (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The ceremony concluded in the National Memorial, a First Republic structure built to commemorate the legionnaires and other fighters for independence at Vítkov Hill, the location of the successful Hussite battle against the

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<sup>1</sup> The huge demands on military production followed from a Kremlin meeting on January 9, 1951, where Stalin warned that the West would be prepared for war by the year 1953 and requested a substantial increase of military expenditures in all countries of the bloc. See Lukes, I. (2006) *Rudolf Slansky: His Trials and Trial*, Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2, fn. 7, with references.

<sup>2</sup> Pernes, J. (2008) *Krise komunistického režimu v Československu v 50. letech 20. století*, Brno: CDK, offers the latest discussion of the regime's crisis in the early 1950s.

<sup>3</sup> Gottwald's funeral has been discussed in detail by Galandauer, J. (1995) 'Zachvěl se, zakymácel, rudý prapor náš: vojensko-civilní pohřeb Klementa Gottwalda'. *Historie a vojenství*, 44 (1), 40-65.

crusaders in 1420.<sup>4</sup> A mausoleum would be opened there in December 1953 with Gottwald's embalmed body on display. His semi-divine status thus would remain unharmed, for if his earthly remains defied the laws of nature, he truly must have been a special being. At least this seems to be one of the rationales behind the embalming of communist leaders in general.

The specific reason for embalming Gottwald was made clear by Václav Kopecký, the minister of information,<sup>5</sup> in his introduction to a book commemorating Gottwald: 'Our working people did not let Klement Gottwald's body moulder but lovingly placed it in the National Memorial at Vítkov Hill. People will go there to look at the dear face of the one who provided for their happy life.'<sup>6</sup> An internal telex of March 17, 1953, sent by a secretary of the Party CC Bruno Köhler to all regional chief secretaries, apparently set the tone for this kind of official explanations: 'Dear comrades, in order to preserve comrade Gottwald's appearance for future generations it has been decided that his body be embalmed. The embalmed body will soon be publicly displayed. We communicate this message to you in order to satisfy those workers who are currently unable to see comrade Gottwald or to attend his funeral.'<sup>7</sup> The wording of this message is quite similar to the explanation of Lenin's embalming published in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* on June 13, 1924 (4 in both): 'During three days and nights access to the Trade Union House was continuous, and this period of time turned out to be not big enough for a significant proportion of Moscow's population. For this reason, the government made the decision to not commit Vladimir Ilich's body to the earth, but to put it in a mausoleum and to allow those who wished to, to visit it.'<sup>8</sup> The official reasoning of Czechoslovak communists in this matter is therefore only another of a variety of examples for the nearly absolute imitation of all things Soviet in the country at the time. We may only speculate on the unofficial reasons for Gottwald's preservation. According to an informed speculation of former Security officer Miroslav Hubka, who oversaw the embalming of the body and the building of the mausoleum, it was Alexej Čepička, the powerful minister of national defence and

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<sup>4</sup> More closely on the history of the National Memorial Galandauer, J. (1996) 'Genosse Žižka': Das Nationaldenkmal auf dem Vítkov-Hügel in Prag. In B. Unfried (Ed.), *Spuren des 'Realsozialismus' in Böhmen und der Slowakei: Monumente, Museen, Gedenktage* (52-98) Vienna: Löcke Verlag. See also Hojda, Z., and J. Pokorný (1996) *Pomníky a zapomníky*, Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 150-163.

<sup>5</sup> On Kopecký see Pávová, J. (2009) *Demagog ve službách strany: portrét komunistického politika a ideologa Václava Kopeckého*, Prague: ÚSTR.

<sup>6</sup> *Ze života a činnosti Klementa Gottwalda*. In *Ústav dějin KSČ (1954)*, Klement Gottwald 1896-1953, Prague: Orbis, not paginated (translation mine).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from Galandauer, J. (1995) 'Zachvěl se, zakymácel, rudý prapor náš: vojensko-civilní pohřeb Klementa Gottwalda'. *Historie a vojenství*, 44 (1), 59 (translation mine). As Galandauer refers to this document only by its original file number (KO-4/53), I have not been able to locate it in the archives yet.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from Tumarkin, N. (1997) *Lenin Lives!: The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 179.

Gottwald's son-in-law,<sup>9</sup> who came up with the idea to preserve Gottwald: 'Well, Čepička, in my view it was his job. He liked to show off anyway ... he went crazy about it and nobody attempted to oppose him.'<sup>10</sup> By suggesting the permanent preservation and display of his relative's remains, Čepička may well have attempted to underpin his own position, weakened by the leader's untimely death. Members of the ruling group could hardly speak up against such a proposal, for in March 1953 a mausoleum still meant the pinnacle of honour and veneration extended only to communist leaders of the highest rank.<sup>11</sup> This very issue of prestige was probably another reason for the embalming. The incorruptibility of Gottwald's body would put him on a par not only with Dimitrov but, more importantly, with Lenin and Stalin. He would join an exclusive club of immortals, which was apparently a desirable way to deal with his shocking death so soon after Stalin's, and to make the most of it in ideological terms. Thus, the physical immortalization of Gottwald seems to have been meant primarily to support the regime's endangered legitimacy. The establishment of the mausoleum at Vítkov, a place intimately connected with the nation's 'heroic' past, was only logical in this respect. For Czechoslovak communists, the Hussites – 15th century fighters for religious reform – were prototypical revolutionaries and the communists presented themselves as their followers who would fulfill their struggle for a better world.<sup>12</sup> According to this interpretation of history, Gottwald, a supposed

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<sup>9</sup> On Čepička see Pernes, J., J. Pospíšil, and A. Lukáš (2008) *Alexej Čepička: šedá eminence rudého režimu*, Prague: Brána; Kaplan, K. (2011) *Kronika komunistického Československa: Alexej Čepička – dobová dramata komunistické moci*, Brno: Barrister & Principal.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010). Translation mine.

<sup>11</sup> In case of non-Soviet leaders, their rank warranting the public display of their preserved remains seems to have been dependent not only on their standing in their own country, the USSR and the other countries of the bloc, but also on the position of their homeland within the bloc. For instance, Choibalsan's body was never supposed to be put on permanent public display because of Mongolia's low population and marginal economic importance. See Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt N<sup>o</sup> 1*, Moscow: Vagrius, 233; Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press, 179.

<sup>12</sup> For the use of the 'Hussite tradition' in Czechoslovak public discourse after 1945 see e.g. Konečný, M. (1985) 'Husitská symbolika v politickém životě Československa v letech 1945-1948 (Příspěvek k teoretickým otázkám aktualizace husitství)'. *Husitský Tábor*, 8, 247-261. Janoušek, B. (1978) 'Husitská revoluční tradice v roce 1948'. *Husitský Tábor*, 1, 99-103. Slavík, S. (1981) 'K metodologii výzkumu husitských tradic a jejich uplatňování v Československu v letech 1948-1951'. *Husitský Tábor*, 4, 227-231. Brátka, P. (1985) 'Idea husitství v některých aspektech české kultury v letech 1948-1955'. *Husitský Tábor*, 8, 263-270. For the perception of the Hussite movement in Czech historiography of the Stalinist period see Górný, M. (2004) 'Husitské revoluční hnutí' v české historiografii stalinského období. In D. Olšáková and Z. Vybíral (Eds.), *Husitský Tábor a jeho postavení v české historiografii v 70. a 80. letech 20. století* (129-148) Tábor: Husitské muzeum.

Fig. 3



fighter for national independence and a builder of social justice, security, prosperity and happiness for the common people, was a symbolic embodiment of Jan Žižka, the Hussite captain and national hero. The display of Gottwald's embalmed remains at Vítkov provided a powerful, 'eternal', link between the 'heroic' efforts of the mediaeval 'revolutionaries', the present building of socialism, and the blissful future in communism (Fig. 3). Gottwald literally became the central figure of national history 'forever'.

The method used to ensure that the leader's unique status was preserved was devised by an anatomist from Khar'kov, Vladimir Petrovich Vorob'ev, and his assistant, biochemist Boris Il'ich Zbarskiĭ, who successfully embalmed Lenin.<sup>13</sup> It was further developed and refined by Zbarskiĭ's successor in the laboratory of Lenin's mausoleum, Sergeĭ Ruffovich Mardashev and his co-workers.

The decision to embalm Gottwald was made within hours after the president's death during the session of the 'political secretariat' of the Party, which was the supreme executive body in the state at the time. The session was chaired by Antonín Zápotocký, Gottwald's future successor as president and it was resolved that Alexej Čepička and Václav Kopecký be put in charge of arrangements for the embalming.<sup>14</sup> The actual work was done by Mardashev and his assistants exclusively.<sup>15</sup> They landed

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<sup>13</sup> Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt N° 1*, Moscow: Vagrius, 44-57, 80-91, 128-130. See also Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press, 15-31, 77-85.

<sup>14</sup> NA, f. KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – politický sekretariát 1951-1954, zn. KSČ-ÚV-02/5 (henceforth KSČ-ÚV-02/5), sv. 55, a. j. 144: Zázpis z mimořádné schůze politického sekretariátu ÚV KSČ, konané dne 14. března 1953.

<sup>15</sup> For a short biography of Mardashev see the obituary (1974) in the *Bulletin of Experimental Biology and Medicine*, 77 (5), 588, which, however, does not mention

in Prague on the day after Gottwald's death and prepared the body for the funeral by fixing the tissues with formalin and other chemicals.<sup>16</sup> After the gates of the National Memorial slammed behind the cadaver on March 19, it was transported to a secret villa of the Ministry of National Security. An ad-hoc laboratory had been set up there, and the Soviet embalmers started working on permanent preservation of the body.<sup>17</sup>

The main ingredient of the Soviet recipe was the embalming solution composed of certain amount of glycerine, potassium acetate, water and quinine chloride. This mixture proved to be able to arrest autolysis, the process of cell destruction by enzymes produced by the cells themselves. Moreover, the liquid also ensured that the volume of the tissues as well as the form and elasticity of the skin would remain unchanged. The solution was repeatedly injected into the carotid arteries, thereby penetrating every tissue through blood vessels.<sup>18</sup> Apart from vascular injections, the fluid was occasionally injected into muscles near the incisions in the

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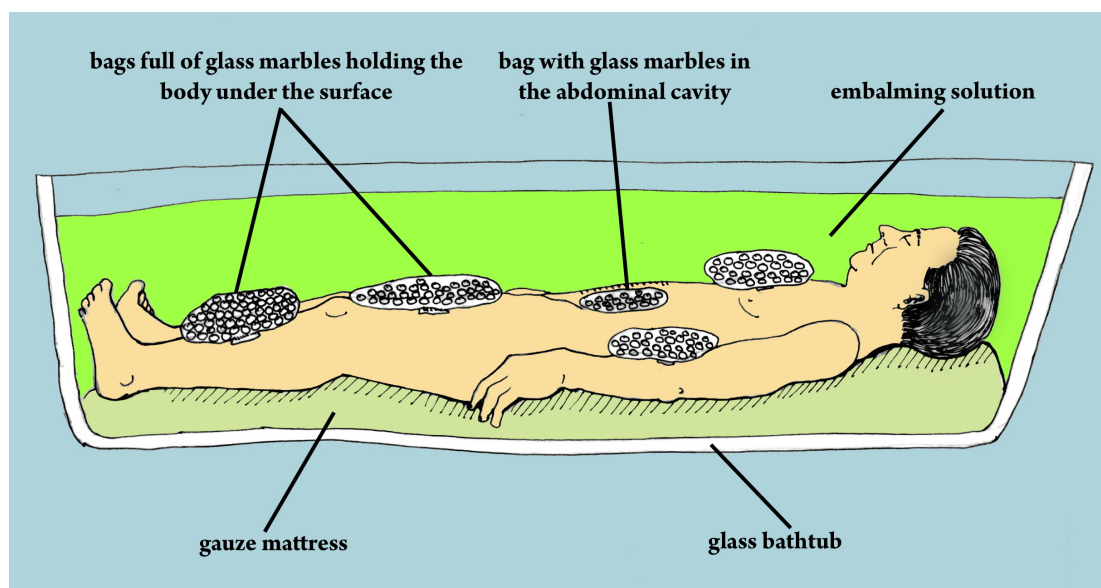
his mausoleum work at all. Apart from Mardashev, the team included Ivan Sergeevich Kuznetsov, Aleksandr Sergeevich Pavlov, Iuriĭ Alekseevich Romakov, Boris Nikolaevich Uskov and Vladimir Vasil'evich Zhuravlev. ABS, f. Sekretariát ministra vnitra II. díl, zn. A 2/2-35 (henceforth A 2/2-35), b. Žádost vládě SSSR o stanovisko k vyznamenání sovětských odborníků (dated April 1, 1960).

<sup>16</sup> According to Miroslav Hubka, then the commander of the 'embalming unit', and Rudolf Vaněček, a pathologist who signed the final medical report on the cause of Gottwald's death and later became the chief physician in his mausoleum. Interviews with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010) and R. Vaněček (August 2, 2008). The timeline of the embalming can at present be reconstructed only from testimonies of witnesses, for relevant written documentation, most importantly the 'Report of the Ministry of Health of the USSR on the Embalming of Klement Gottwald's Body', has not been located in the archives yet. Some information on the career of Hubka, who served as deputy commander of the Gottwald mausoleum unit between autumn 1953 and summer 1962 (when the unit was dissolved), is also found in his Ministry of the Interior personal file: ABS, f. Personální spisy příslušníků a zaměstnanců, 4779/26 – Hubka, Miroslav.

<sup>17</sup> Interviews with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010) and R. Vaněček (August 2, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> See Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt N° 1*, Moscow: Vagrius, 80-91, 128-130; Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press, 78-85, for a general description of the method. Cf. the records of 'additional embalmings' that are at present the only available archival sources directly bearing on procedures applied in the preservation of Gottwald's body. NA, f. KSČ – Ústřední výbor – Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, zn. 100/24 (henceforth Klement Gottwald 1896-1954), 2 embalming log books (nos. 36 and 37) and 3 photographic albums: book no. 36, leaf 58 (record from November 10, 1956); book no. 37, leaf 30 (record from November 2, 1961). The files of the Dimitrov mausoleum in Sofia contain a comprehensive list of chemicals needed for its smooth operation. SDA, f. 3868 (Mavzoleĭ na Georgi Dimitrov), op. 1, a. e. 16: Katalog no. 2 mestno proizvodstvo za laboratorna stŭklariia i reaktivni za nuzhdite na mavzoleia 1962-1963.

Fig 4



cavities and extremities as well.<sup>1</sup> Internal organs, already removed during autopsy,<sup>2</sup> were preserved separately in glass jars,<sup>3</sup> and were put back in the body only before it was cremated in 1962.<sup>4</sup> After the body had been flushed with the embalming agent from the inside, it was immersed in a glass bathtub filled with the solution, and its condition was regularly checked (Fig. 4).<sup>5</sup>

By the end of June the embalmers began to prepare the corpse for display.<sup>6</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaves 56-57 (record from November 2, 1956); book no. 37, leaf 29 (record from October 23, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> Charvát, J. (2005) *Můj labyrint světa: vzpomínky, zápisky z deníků*, Prague: Galén, 237.

<sup>3</sup> NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaf 6 (record from March 28, 1955).

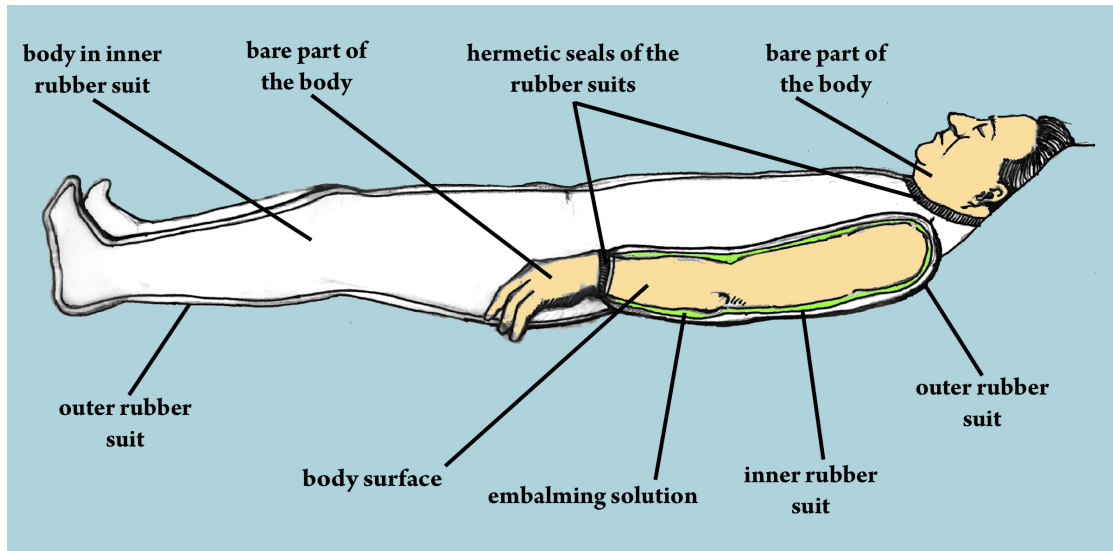
<sup>4</sup> NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 37, leaf 47 (record from June 11, 1962).

<sup>5</sup> See Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt N<sup>o</sup> 1*, Moscow: Vagrius, 80-91, 128-130. See also Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press, 78-85. Interview with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010). Cf. the 'additional embalming' records, e.g., NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaves 110-114 (records from September 14, 1958-October 12, 1958), leaves 153-157 (records from March 21, 1960-April 28, 1960).

<sup>6</sup> The album with photographs of Gottwald's body attached to the report on embalming, which originally belonged to the mausoleum documentation (its present whereabouts have not yet been ascertained), was dated June 22, 1953, according to NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 37, leaf 47. This indicates that the embalming was finished by that time, which would be in accordance with the general



Fig. 5



was dressed in a rubber suit, hermetically sealed around neck and wrists, and filled with approximately 10 litres of the embalming agent. This means that the bulk of the body was permanently exposed to the effects of the fluid. Then another rubber suit was put on and sealed, just in case a leakage occurred in the first one (Fig. 5). Next, the corpse was dressed in full uniform, later in civilian clothing,<sup>7</sup> opened at the back for easier dressing. The legs were covered with a blanket.<sup>8</sup> Visitors to the mausoleum were never able to see what was under the clothes, so they could not figure out that the top secret pride of Soviet science was actually little different from conserving anatomical exhibits in medical museums.

The only visible parts of the body were the head and hands. These had to be attended to by the specialists. Up to early 1955 the body was taken care of only by members of Mardashev's team. They inspected the body every day, wiped the face and hands dry with sponges if there was excessive moisture. They supplied the bare parts with the embalming solution from syringes and sprayers every week (Fig. 6). Bruises, spots, discolourations that occasionally occurred were treated with chemicals

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three to four-month duration of the long-term preservation work. See Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt N<sup>o</sup> 1*, Moscow: Vagrius, 91, 93, 214, 304. See also Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press, 31, 79, 177.

<sup>7</sup> See NA, f. KSCĚ – Ůstřednĭ vĭbor 1945-1989, Praha – politickĕ byro 1954-1962, zn. KSCĚ-ŮV-02/2 (henceforth KSCĚ-ŮV-02/2), sv. 139, a. j. 181, b. 12: *Nahrazení vojenskĕho stejnokroje Klementa Gottwalda obĉanskĕm odĕvem* (dated April 30, 1957). Gottwald's clothes were actually changed on June 2, 1957, according to NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaf 75 (records from June 2-5, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> See the 'additional embalming' records referred to in fn. 23 above. Interview with R. Vanĕĉek (August 2, 2008).

Fig. 6



like hydrogen peroxide, percarbamide or carbolic acid until they disappeared.<sup>9</sup>

While the embalmers were working on the preservation of the body in their secret lab in early 1953, the building of the mausoleum and its technical facilities was underway in the National Memorial under the auspices of Alexej Čepička.<sup>10</sup> Available documents mention that Soviet advisors were consulted on major stages of the construction work.<sup>11</sup> In medical matters the advisors were members of Mardashev's team but only one advisor on the technical matters was mentioned by name while another Soviet citizen mentioned in several documents was a design engineer of the

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<sup>9</sup> See NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaves 1-3 (records from February 10-24, 1955).

<sup>10</sup> Interview with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010). NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 55, a. j. 147, b. 3 h: Návrh usnesení předsednictva ÚV KSČ a předsednictva vlády Československé republiky o dočasném uzavření Národního památníku (dated March 28, 1953). NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 55, a. j. 147, b. 3 ch: Návrh na úpravu Národního památníku (dated March 28, 1953). NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 57, a. j. 154, b. 2 e: Schválení I. stupně projekční přípravy pro úpravu mausolea v Národním památníku (dated April 29, 1953).

<sup>11</sup> VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 1, ka. 1: Průvodní zpráva pro úpravu mausolea v Národním památníku na vrchu Vítkově (dated April 25, 1953). VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 3, ka. 1: IV. zpráva o postupu prací na mausoleu presidenta s. Klementa Gottwalda (dated July 21, 1953).

air-conditioning system.<sup>12</sup> It may be assumed that the other advisors invited to supervise the construction were specialists once involved in the building or additional improving of the Lenin mausoleum technical facilities.

The identity and tasks of most of the Czechs and all of the Soviets working on Gottwald's immortalization were kept strictly secret. While the involvement of Soviet physicians in Gottwald's treatment when he had still been alive was duly acknowledged,<sup>13</sup> the details of his posthumous treatment were not. Although the people could easily guess that it were Soviet specialists who performed the embalming, the Party leadership clearly was not interested in publicizing this fact as a further example of 'brotherly' assistance by the 'best experts' available. It was a time of social and economic crisis, marked on the one hand by a lack of consumer goods in the shops and serious housing problems, and on the other hand by a steady increase of labour norms for factory workers and delivery quotas for peasants. The crisis culminated in June 1953 with a draconic currency reform that plundered the savings of nearly all citizens, and brought about not only isolated strikes and riots but also an outright uprising.<sup>14</sup> Hailing the embalming of the dead leader and the construction of his mausoleum as a further mark of Soviet generosity and collaboration of socialist countries would hardly appease the angry population. Therefore, the mausoleum was actually not publicized at all until its opening to visitors.

At this point, attempts were made to publicly acknowledge the input of several members of the mausoleum building crew by awarding them the State Prize. But only the chief architect Jan Zázvorka, Sr. received a State Prize for the artistic value of the mausoleum's public premises.<sup>15</sup> The other two nominees, architect Prokop Kubiček and a Soviet air-conditioning expert Sergej Erusalimtsev, received only a special government recognition and a decent financial award, which did not require public announcement. One of the reasons given in the relevant document was that it would be difficult to explain the State Prize award because the public could not be informed

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<sup>12</sup> A certain engineer Iurenko of the Institute for Construction Materials and Structures was to help with the sarcophagus lighting system. VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 3, ka. 1: IV. zpráva o postupu prací na mauzoleu presidenta s. Klementa Gottwalda (dated July 21, 1953). For the expert on ventilation, Sergej Erusalimtsev, see NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 5, a. j. 7, b. 16: Zpráva o plnění usnesení politického sekretariátu ÚV KSČ ze dne 14. 12. 1953 o odměnách za výstavbu Mauzolea Klementa Gottwalda (dated June 21, 1954).

<sup>13</sup> See the reports on Gottwald's state of health and the final report on the cause of his death from March 13 to March 16, 1953, collected in Ústav dějin KSČ (1953), Klement Gottwald 14. III. 1953: dokumenty o nemoci a úmrtí Klementa Gottwalda, Prague: SNPL, 25-31. Note that the final report of March 16 bears the signatures of, among others, B.N. Uskov and A.S. Pavlov, members of Mardashev's embalming team, whose identity was, however, known only to a few insiders. Nevertheless, their signatures confirm that they already started working by that time.

<sup>14</sup> See McDermott, K. (2010) 'Popular Resistance in Communist Czechoslovakia: The Plzeň Uprising, June 1953'. *Contemporary European History*, 19 (4), 287-307.

<sup>15</sup> *Rudé právo* (Red Right), May 11, 1954, 2.

in detail what those two gentlemen would get the award for.<sup>16</sup> This secretive remark clearly shows that even the Politburo members were too afraid that if they revealed to the public some information, even if merely about the facility's construction, they might have been accused of putting in jeopardy a state secret of the USSR, i.e. the embalming method. It seems that everyone simply preferred to keep quiet about any details of the mausoleum work vis-à-vis the public.

However, there was no obstacle to acknowledging the achievements of people responsible for the mausoleum's construction and Gottwald's preservation on the non-public, internal level of the Party, security, government, and military apparatus. Several of the institutions and companies that supplied the technical equipment were decorated with high socialist medals in addition to formal written recognitions and acknowledgements by the Party CC. This also applied to some of their employees. Recognitions were also sent to responsible military and State Security officers. Many individuals from both groups received generous financial bonuses or gifts in kind.<sup>17</sup> All Soviet embalmers were highly decorated according to the Politburo decision of March 22, 1960. Mardashev received the 'Order of Labour' while the members of his team were decorated with the medal 'For Outstanding Work'.<sup>18</sup>

Thanks to the joint effort of all the people building the mausoleum, a spacious laboratory was constructed under the 'Mourning Hall' that housed the sarcophagus. A hydraulic ram lift with a plate on which the coffin with Gottwald's body would lay was installed. This device was used to move the body between the sarcophagus and the basement laboratory not only without the need to touch it but also without any vibrations.<sup>19</sup> The laboratory was fitted with hermetic doors and had to be kept entirely aseptic at all times. Technical facilities included electric generators, a sterilizer, systems for control of constant temperature of 15 °C ( $\pm 1$  °C) and humidity of 80% ( $\pm 2\%$ ), which was minutely measured and recorded.<sup>20</sup> Further, an elaborate ventilation system was installed. It was equipped with several filters preventing insects, dust

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<sup>16</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 5, a. j. 7, b. 16: Zpráva o plnění usnesení politického sekretariátu ÚV KSČ ze dne 14. 12. 1953 o odměnách za výstavbu Mausolea Klementa Gottwalda (dated June 21, 1954).

<sup>17</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 70, a. j. 189, b. 18: Zpráva o ukončení výstavby Mausolea Klementa Gottwalda, o průběhu prací a návrh na udělení odměn (dated December 9, 1953).

<sup>18</sup> ABS, f. A 2/2-35, b. Žádost vládě SSSR o stanovisko k vyznamenání sovětských odborníků (dated April 1, 1960).

<sup>19</sup> VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 13/4, ka. 10: Vojenský projektový ústav – projektová dokumentace IV. /zvedací plošina, elektrický uzávěr stropu/; inv. č. 9/6, ka. 7: Konstruktiva n.p. /návodů na obsluhu zubového reversačního čerpadla ZP 2-3, speciální zvedací plošiny typ CHP 1.450-1/.

<sup>20</sup> VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 1, ka. 1: Průvodní zpráva pro úpravu mausolea v Národním památníku na vrchu Vítkově (dated April 25, 1953). NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 63, a. j. 171, b. 3 b: Návrh na změnu projektu úprav Národního památníku na Vítkově (dated August 20, 1953). Interview with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010).

particles and other potential carriers of microorganisms from entering the laboratory.<sup>21</sup>

The fittings of the sarcophagus included a variety of lamps with colour filters, tubes, screens and mirrors positioned in the ceiling in such a way that Gottwald's pale face and hands would appear to visitors like those of Sleeping Beauty. Three specialists were sent to Bulgaria to take a look at the facilities of Georgi Dimitrov's mausoleum, particularly the lighting, ventilation, and sarcophagus design, and try to apply Bulgarian experiences in the Gottwald mausoleum.<sup>22</sup> Also, the Soviet government was asked to send an advisor to Prague to help with the lighting.<sup>23</sup> The initial unsatisfactory state of the lighting was then gradually improved in cooperation with the film-studios at Barrandov in Prague, which developed the original system.<sup>24</sup>

As the completion of construction work drew near, a number of safety tests were performed to check the permeability of the ventilation, the sterility of the facilities, even the noise level in the 'Mourning Hall' while the basement appliances were in full operation.<sup>25</sup> The mausoleum was opened on December 5, 1953.<sup>26</sup> Soviet specialists continued to maintain the body until late February 1955, when they handed it over to a group of initially three, later five Czech physicians.<sup>27</sup> During that month the Soviets were working on the additional embalming of the corpse, the so-

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<sup>21</sup> VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 9/4, ka. 6: Konstruktiva n. p. /plány klimatizace, technický popis k návrhu klimatizace/; inv. č. 13/3, ka. 9: Vojenský projektový ústav – projektová dokumentace III. /klimatizace, chladicí zařízení/; inv. č. 25, ka. 13: větrání Mauzolea.

<sup>22</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 58, a. j. 157, b. 4 f: Vyslání tří odborníků do Sofie k prohlídce technického zařízení mauzolea Jiřího Dimitrova (dated May 28, 1953).

<sup>23</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 82 B, a. j. 210, b. 9: Zpráva o některých otázkách provozu Mauzolea Klementa Gottwalda (dated April 14, 1954).

<sup>24</sup> VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 13/6, ka. 11: Vojenský projektový ústav – projektová dokumentace VI. /osvětlovací zařízení – projektoval čs. Státní film, technika a výzkum Praha – Barrandov/. ABS, f. Sekretariát ministra vnitra I. díl, zn. A 2/1 (henceforth A 2/1), inv. j. 942: Zpráva o provozu Mauzolea Klementa Gottwalda (contains a group of documents from March 1956).

<sup>25</sup> VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 11, ka. 7: Zprávy o měření /hluku, akustiky a filtrů/; inv. č. 12, ka. 7: Hlášení Vojenského technického ústavu o provedení kontrolních zkoušek klimatizačního, strojního, elektroinstalačního zařízení mauzolea.

<sup>26</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 69, a. j. 187, b. 0, č. 48 (oral proposal of A. Čepička, November 30, 1953). Rudé právo (Red Right), December 6, 1953, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Biochemist-physiologist Jiří Křeček, pathologist Rudolf Vaněček and neurologist Josef Vymazal were officially approved by the Politburo on March 18, 1955. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 37, a. j. 50, b. 8: Opatření k převzetí receptury pro balsamisaci těla soudruha Klementa Gottwalda. Neurobiologist Zdeněk Lodin and microbiologist Zdeněk Vacek joined them in December. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 61, a. j. 76, b. 11: Rozšíření stavu lékařů v Mauzoleu Klementa Gottwalda (dated September 1, 1955).

called 'remont', i.e. overhaul in Russian, which was performed every year and a half to two years. This reiterated the initial long-term preservation process but lasted only ca. four weeks.<sup>28</sup>

The Czechs were introduced to this procedure right away, whereupon they were received by Prime Minister Viliam Široký in the presence of Soviet ambassador Nikolai Pavlovich Firiubin and the Soviet specialists. The Soviet doctors gave them the detailed report on the embalming of the body, written instructions for the care of the corpse and for the performance of the 'remont', a collection of scholarly papers on the issue of embalming, two albums of photographs of the body, and a protocol of its current state. Thereafter the Czechs were instructed orally about the methods of embalming, maintaining and preparing the body for display. In the following month they cared for the corpse by themselves under the supervision of Ivan Sergeevich Kuznetsov who stayed until the end of March to keep an eye on them.<sup>29</sup>

According to Soviet instructions the Czechs had to avoid mechanical damage while removing excessive moisture from skin surface. They also had to avoid drying out of the skin, contact with colour agents, infection – particularly fungal, contact with insects, etc.<sup>30</sup> The state of the body was meticulously recorded, both in writing and image. Photographs were taken during general overhauls, the 'remonts'. Apart from photographic albums, two bulky logbooks survive in the archives, with handwritten entries recording the inspection and maintenance of the corpse day-by-day, and detailed records of the 'remonts'.<sup>31</sup> According to these repetitive entries the doctors carried out the daily maintenance of the body discussed before, adjusted the position of the tie and clothing if needed, checked the lighting, etc. Every week they moisturized the face and hands with the embalming solution (Figs. 7 and 8).

Electric devices, air-conditioning and other appliances were in operation day and night and their functioning was closely monitored by a number of technicians working in shifts.<sup>32</sup> The technicians occasionally cleaned the sarcophagus from the inside and regulated its hygroscope (a device to monitor humidity in the sarcophagus). If there was any problem of either a medical or technical nature, it was immediately reported, and often the physicians would seek advice from Soviet experts. Sometimes Mardashev himself would come to personally check the situation.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaves 1-3 (records from February 10-24, 1955). ABS, f. A 2/1, inv. j. 942: Zpráva o provozu Mausolea Klementa Gottwalda.

<sup>29</sup> ABS, f. A 2/1, inv. j. 942: Zpráva o provozu Mausolea Klementa Gottwalda.

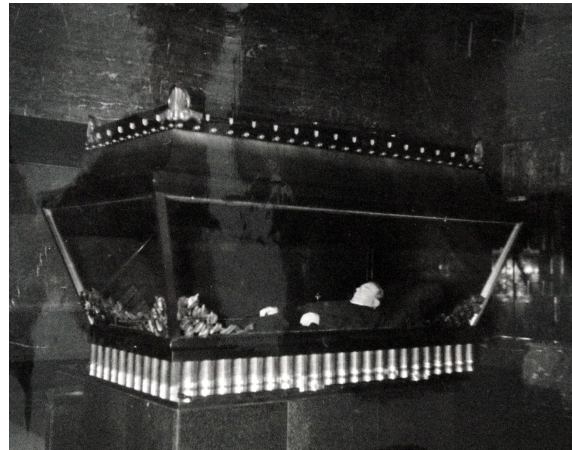
<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, 2 embalming log books (nos. 36 and 37) and 3 photographic albums.

<sup>32</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 65, a. j. 178, b. 6 h: Zřízení útvaru ministerstva vnitra pro zabezpečení těla a Mausolea soudruha Klementa Gottwalda. Interview with M. Hubka (October 2, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> See the report on the defects of two laboratory installations on April 14 and 16, 1955 in NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 90, a. j. 108, b. 14: Zpráva o provozu Mausolea Klementa Gottwalda (dated March 2, 1956). Cf. the meticulous records of both events

Figs. 7 & 8



‘Additional embalming’ was always done by Soviet specialists assisted by the Czech doctors. Occasionally, surgery had to be performed on some parts of the body that showed slight signs of deterioration. Such interventions were the task of the Soviets only (Fig. 9).<sup>34</sup> Samples of the embalming fluid drained from the rubber suit and the body at the beginning of a ‘remont’ were usually sent off to a Ministry of the Interior chemistry lab for detailed analysis. Although the Czech doctors were never allowed to perform an ‘additional embalming’ by themselves, they were expected to continuously improve their expertise.

Thus, they visited the Moscow mausoleum twice over the years to participate in conferences and workshops on the problems of embalming and maintaining dead leaders, to exchange notes with Soviet and Bulgarian colleagues, and to work on ‘parallel objects’.<sup>35</sup> These were cadavers of the same weight and body measurements as the main ‘objects’ (Lenin and Stalin). They were used for testing improvements of the method before those could be applied to the bodies of the leaders. The topics discussed during these study trips included microbiological aspects of the body’s preservation. Even though it was clear to all participants that the Soviet method of embalming was the best, they knew that nothing should be left to chance. Therefore, histological examinations of tissue samples excised during the ‘remonts’ were done

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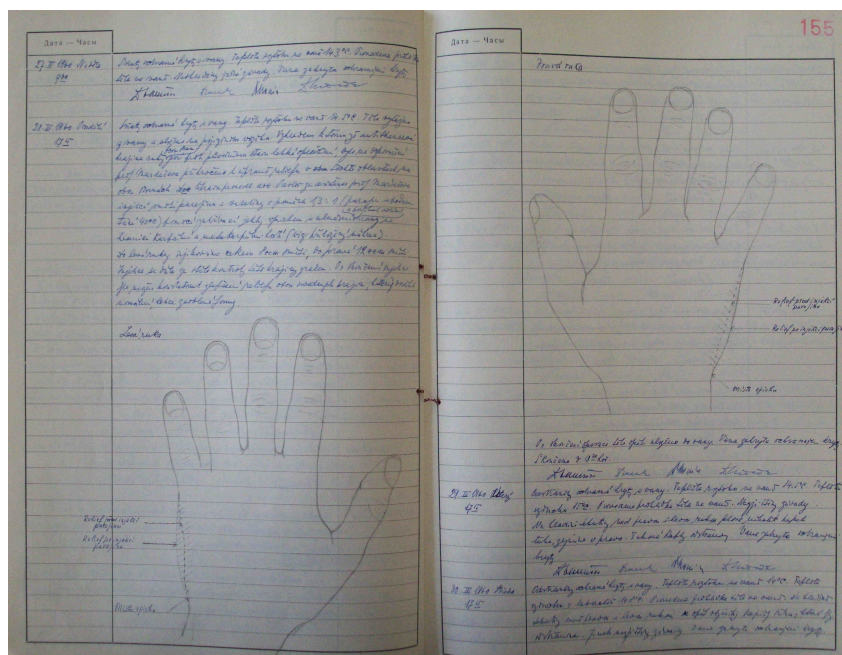
in NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaves 8-10 (records from April 14-24, 1955).

<sup>34</sup> In Gottwald’s case such problems affected only his palms. The natural curvature of skin relief was restored with injections of warm paraffin and vaseline and subsequent shaping of the mixture under the skin. NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 36, leaves 54-55 (record from October 16, 1956), leaf 57 (record from November 6, 1956), leaves 112-113 (record from October 6, 1958), leaves 154-155 (record from March 28, 1960).

<sup>35</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 252, a. j. 336, b. 20: Zpráva o stavu těla Klementa Gottwalda (dated March 10, 1960). ABS, f. A 2/2-35, b. Studijní cesta lékařů Mausolea Klementa Gottwalda do Moskvy (dated April 22, 1961).

*How to Preserve the Body of an Allied Leader*

Fig. 9



and pictures taken to make sure that even the subtlest possible changes in tissue structure did not occur, and if they did, that the doctors would be able to stop them before they could do any actual harm.<sup>36</sup>

Yet all of this was eventually in vain. Gottwald's mausoleum was closed and his body cremated in 1962 after nine years on display.<sup>37</sup> The Czechoslovak political leadership had already decided half a year before then that this way of honouring a noted revolutionary was inconsistent with the traditions and mindset of the people,

<sup>36</sup> NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 193, a. j. 265, b. 9: Dopis lékařů o stavu těla Klementa Gottwalda (dated October 21, 1958). NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, photographic album no. 3 contains microphotos of histological structure of tissue samples excised from the body during the 'additional embalmings' in 1956, 1958 and 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Following the Politburo resolution of March 20, 1962, the mausoleum no longer admitted visitors from April 1, 1962. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 342, a. j. 433, b. 19: Přemístění ostatků Klementa Gottwalda v Národním památníku na Vítkově (proposal dated March 17, 1962). The cremation was finally approved at the Politburo session on May 22, 1962. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 350, a. j. 441, b. 9: Architektonické úpravy a organizační opatření související se zpopelněním a přemístěním ostatků Klementa Gottwalda (proposal dated May 14, 1962). According to NA, f. Klement Gottwald 1896-1954, book no. 37, leaf 49, the cremation took place on June 12, 1962 at 10 p.m.



and that it was also quite expensive.<sup>38</sup> Over the nine years, the Party leadership became increasingly uncomfortable with this symbol of Stalinism which had actually already become obsolete by the time of its opening to the public in late 1953, because the symbols of Stalin's self-representation had already been questioned in the Soviet Union. Yet Czechoslovak communists did not dare to admit this until Stalin's corpse had been removed from the Moscow mausoleum, following the 22nd Soviet Party Congress in 1961. This event persuaded them that they could finally get rid of Gottwald's corpse as well as of another prominent symbol of the Stalinist era, the monstrous statue of the Soviet leader towering over Prague.<sup>39</sup>

After the mausoleum was closed it was treated as if it never existed. There is not a single mention of it in any official works on Gottwald and its existence was never discussed publicly. While the Soviets kept Lenin's body and the Bulgarians kept Dimitrov's, there was no place for the Gottwald mausoleum anymore. And while publications and memoirs praising the achievements of the embalmers appeared in Russia and Bulgaria even after the fall of communism,<sup>40</sup> ordinary Czechs always

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<sup>38</sup> See the speech of the President and First Secretary of the Party Antonín Novotný at the plenary session of the Party CC on November 15, 1961. NA, f. KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – zasedání 1945-1989, zn. KSČ-ÚV-01, sv. brožura listopad 1961, Zasedání Ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa 15.-17. listopad 1961, stenografický zápis, 12. According to Novotný the annual cost of the mausoleum's operation amounted to 78 million Czechoslovak crowns. According to the final invoice from February 12, 1954, the construction work alone cost 9.975,223.82 crowns at a time when the average gross monthly wage of an industrial worker was ca. 1.000 crowns. VHA, f. Mauzoleum Klementa Gottwalda 1953-1955, inv. č. 9/7, ka. 7: Konstruktiva n.p. /opis konečné faktury za provedené práce na úpravě mauzolea/. Cf. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/5, sv. 73, a. j. 192, b. 10: Návrh na schválení a předání projektové dokumentace k Mauzoleu Klementa Gottwalda (dated January 6, 1954).

<sup>39</sup> On the Stalin monument in Prague see now Šindelář, J. (2009) *Stalinův pomník v Praze*. MPhil thesis, Prague: Charles University – Faculty of Education.

<sup>40</sup>The series of Soviet publications telling the story of the Lenin mausoleum started with a booklet by a co-author of the embalming method Boris Il'ich Zbarskiĭ (1944) *Mavzoleĭ Lenina*, Moscow: Ogiz – Gospolitizdat. Other works on this topic include: Abramov, A.S. (1969) *Mavzoleĭ Lenina*, 2nd ed., Moscow: Moskovskĭ rabochĭi; Khan-Magomedov, S.O. (1972) *Mavzoleĭ Lenina: istoriia sozdaniia i arkhitektura*, Moscow: Prosveshchenie; Kotyrev, A.N. (1971) *Mavzoleĭ V.I. Lenina: proektirovanie i stroitel'stvo*, Moscow: Sovetskĭi khudozhnik. Post-communist memoirs and explanatory works by the embalmers include: Lopukhin, Iu.M. (1997) *Bolezn', smert' i bal'zamirovanie V.I. Lenina: pravda i mify*, Moscow: Respublika; Zbarskiĭ, I.B. (2000) *Ob'ekt N<sup>o</sup> 1*, Moscow: Vagrius; Zbarsky, I., and S. Hutchinson (1998) *Lenin's Embalmers*, London: The Harvill Press. The former commander of the Georgi Dimitrov mausoleum unit also published his memoirs: Gergov, G. (2001) *Istinata za mavzoleia (komendantŭt razkazva)*, 2nd ed., Sofia: Sibiia. In contrast, while memoirs of one of the Czech physicians once maintaining Gottwald's body did appear too, his

tended to make fun of the project.<sup>41</sup> Already in 1953 it was rumoured that Gottwald had been incorrectly embalmed and had started to decompose.<sup>42</sup> The closure of the mausoleum nine years later reinforced this rumour. Actually, the body never began decomposing but the rumours reflect rather well the popular resentment against this ‘Oriental’ project imported into a country widely regarded by its inhabitants as informed by Western culture.

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mausoleum work is never mentioned in the book focusing almost exclusively on his career as research scientist: Lodin, Z. (2004) *Příspěvek ke studiu života lékaře-badatele v Čechách*, Prague: Galén.

<sup>41</sup> Hard data of the mausoleum’s attendance seem to confirm its low popularity. According to official records, it was visited by 1.920,102 people from December 6, 1953 to August 3, 1961. NA, f. KSČ-ÚV-02/2, sv. 321, a. j. 408, b. 14: *Doplňující balzamizace těla Klementa Gottwalda* (dated August 3, 1961). This number includes not only delegates to Party events and foreign dignitaries but also organized groups of school children, soldiers, workers and collective farmers whose visit may only seldom have been voluntary. One also has to keep in mind that some people counted in the total number may have paid several visits to the mausoleum. The average daily attendance in 1960 was 1.622 visitors. However, it cannot be ruled out that even these comparatively low official figures were exaggerated to convince the Party leadership that the project was successful. The mausoleum was opened three days a week (Wednesday, Friday, Sunday). NA, f. KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – organizační sekretariát 1947-1954, zn. KSČ-ÚV-02/3, sv. 60, a. j. 272, b. 6: *Změna návštěvních hodin v Mausoleu Klementa Gottwalda a zrušení vstupenek do Mausolea* (dated April 7, 1954).

<sup>42</sup> Charvát, J. (2005) *Můj labyrint světa: vzpomínky, zápisky z deníků*, Prague: Galén, 262, diary entry from April 19, 1953: ‘People say that Gottwald has been poorly embalmed and has already started to putrefy, so it is impossible to approach him without having a mask on. Allegedly, they are considering burying him in the ground. I do not know if anything of that is true’ (translation mine). Cf. *Ibid.* 342, diary entry from March 22, 1954: ‘It is generally rumoured these days that Gottwald has been poorly embalmed, that he is in a refrigerator most of the time, only occasionally they lift him up for the visitors and then they lower him down to the coldroom again’ (translation mine).