DPhil thesis Lucy Dunlop New College Hilary 2017

Discourses of Heroism in Brezhnev's USSR

Short abstract

This thesis examines propaganda and educational campaigns in the Brezhnev-era USSR, where the Party-state continued the longstanding Soviet attempt to form the country's youth into conscientious builders and defenders of communism. Focusing on the military, military-historical and physical-cultural activity that the state identified as areas of strategic importance in a period of intensifying competition with the capitalist world, the thesis analyses the interactions between propaganda and its producers, and the ordinary and extraordinary young people at whom it was aimed. It finds that state agencies and organisations of the Brezhnev era followed tradition in employing heroic motifs and discourses to elicit heroic behaviour amongst the population, often seeking to apply themes and material from earlier periods directly to the situation of late-1960s and 1970s youth. In particular, propaganda emphasised the importance of both models of wartime heroism, and the characteristics articulated in the 1961 Moral Code of the Builder of Communism – but in a political and social environment now much changed from those in which they had originally emerged

The thesis begins with a study of material surrounding the reinstatement of universal conscription after Khrushchev's army reforms, before examining youth involvement in one of the flagship military-patriotic education campaigns of the period. The second part of the thesis then shifts the focus to a more symbolic, yet no less significant site of the 'defence of the honour of the Motherland': the international sporting arena, particularly during the 1972 Olympiads in 'hostile' West Germany and Japan. Through a case study of coverage of the gymnast Olga Korbut, the thesis argues that, while propaganda-makers still sought to control the Soviet definition of 'heroism', conditions increasingly allowed for the emergence of celebrity and a popular heroism based more on self-advancement and public acclaim than on established Soviet ethical models.

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Long abstract

Decades after the end of the Second World War, the USSR remained convinced of the need for readiness to defend itself militarily against future incursions. Newspapers and other propaganda continually warned of the dangers posed by Western 'imperialism' and 'adventurism'. The 'Soviet people' were told they were citizens of a great country responsible for saving the world from Nazism in 1945, but that it was only a matter of time before a capitalist system full of 'fascist' tendencies would seek their destruction again. Using heavily militarised rhetoric, public discourse urged citizens to look to the heroic example of previous generations and prepare themselves physically and mentally to defend the socialist system against a variety of possible threats. Those too young to have any memory of the 1941-45 war were particularly targeted by educational campaigns aiming to train up citizens distinguished from those of other countries by their 'spiritual richness, moral purity and physical perfection'.

This thesis examines Soviet propaganda and educational campaigns between 1964 and 1982, finding that state agencies and organisations of the Brezhnev era continued to employ heroic motifs and discourses with the intention of eliciting heroic behaviour amongst the population. Focusing on the military, military-historical and physical-cultural activity that the state identified as areas of particular strategic importance, it analyses the interactions between propaganda and its producers, and the ordinary and extraordinary young people at whom it was aimed. It begins by looking at propaganda surrounding the military establishment itself, analysing the armed forces as major objects of official veneration in the Brezhnev period. In contrast to their predecessors led by Khrushchev, the members of the collective leadership were determined that compulsory service in the armed forces, at the sharp end of the battle with imperialism, should resume its role as a central institution for the socialisation of young citizens (albeit only male ones). Although this line of thinking was well established in the USSR prior to the ascendancy of Khrushchev, the socio-cultural context of the 1960s and 1970s – with a population who had seen conscription decrease in significance under Khrushchev, at the same time as consumer choice in goods and ideas increased – meant that a new attempt to generate a popular sense of militarised attachment to the Motherland would itself pose significant challenges to state agencies and propagandists.

The first two case studies in this thesis therefore examine different facets of the Party-state's ongoing efforts in this area. Chapter One looks at the direct involvement of young people in the armed forces. Newspapers across the USSR published regular articles on the activities of military units past and present, with features on the finest individuals suggesting the excellence of the force as a whole – yet even when these pieces came directly from the military establishment, they were often abstract and lacking in detail about the reality of daily life, especially that of the conscript. Much of the focus, indeed, was shifted to spheres where conscripts did not actually serve, but which were more

amenable to romanticisation, such as the Soviet border defence force. Here children could even be encouraged into practical involvement themselves. If the overall numbers of children engaged in public patrols under the supervision of military units in the 1960s and 1970s were probably small, the 'young friends' of the armed forces were nonetheless highly visible in the discourse that promoted the defence of the USSR as an honourable and enviable calling. In a theme that will recur throughout this thesis, however, the soldiers and their young 'friends', held up as models for the rest of the population, were themselves the objects of a 'moral education' effort aiming to turn the country's children and youth into well-socialised, loyal and productive citizens. Internal discourse virtually never saw them as the heroic 'finished products' portrayed in the newspapers, but as perpetual works-in-progress. This chapter therefore looks closely at the work going on 'behind' the propaganda, examining Komsomol officials' objectives and concerns as they tried to direct the socialisation process.

Although all Soviet boys had a period of compulsory military service ahead of them (unless they were in a position somehow to circumvent it), the intense early contact with the military experienced by the members of the youth patrols was by no means universal. But the Soviet authorities did want to obtain the greatest possible unifying effect from the combination of external threat and internal glory, and on a practical level, they wanted to keep the population combat-ready in case of another invasion. The athletic body was a long-established symbol of communist self-discipline, and sport the ideal tool for achieving mass physical participation in a militarised society. Chapter One continues by examining the military underpinning of the USSR's national sports programme, tellingly entitled 'Ready for Labour and Defence' (*Gotov k trudu i oborone*, or GTO). In operation since 1931, and credited with the Soviet population's ultimate ability to withstand four years of Nazi occupation, the GTO scheme underwent a series of significant changes and modernisations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The results of the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee's consultation on the subject suggest that amassing contributions on the subject was itself no easy task – and when responses did come in from the republic-level Komsomol organisations, they were extremely varied in their recommendations.

The diversity of reactions to all-Union initiatives, from respondents ranging from regional Komsomol committees to local institutions such as schools and Pioneer palaces, to small-scale citizens' groups and individuals, is an important theme of Chapter Two. This chapter looks in detail at one of the most significant programmes for the military-patriotic education of the young, the All-Union Youth Hike to Sites of Revolutionary, Military and Labour Glory of the Soviet People. Launched in 1965 by a coalition of agencies including the Komsomol, the Central Council for Tourism, and DOSAAF (the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation and Navy), the campaign combined physical and military-skills training with a thorough grounding in the USSR's heroic traditions of labour and defence. According to the copious materials produced to support the initiative, all young people (in Komsomol terms, up to age 28) – from Olympic medallists and the cream of the USSR's officer corps, to the students of provincial technical colleges – were to be engaged in the work of researching and re-enacting key battles, collecting battlefield debris and using it to trace the families of lost soldiers, and above all, ensuring that previous generations of Soviet fighters were honoured in perpetuity. Alongside a discussion of the Komsomol's supporting literature

and the testimonies of some of the veterans who took on a pedagogical role in the campaign, the case study considers correspondence between the central organising body and some of the local participating groups – among them children's local history circles, tourism societies, and military-sporting clubs – which put the instructions into practice.

These young citizens wrote themselves into the national heroic discourse in ways that sometimes took their elders by surprise. However, the initiative was also aimed at youths who were already in the spotlight, and already described as 'heroes' 'defending the honour' of the USSR: elite athletes. By the early 1970s, the Soviet ideological investment in international sport had reached new heights as the Cold War continued. The GTO scheme had been considerably revamped, with a new aim in addition to preparation for purely military service: by allowing talented young athletes to specialise in a chosen sport earlier, the organisers now hoped to use the scheme to reverse the age-related decline that had started to become apparent in the USSR's Olympic sports teams. Although military defence remained the major priority of Soviet policy, the GTO scheme was now aligned with the cultural battles of the Cold War. Chapter Three shows how elite athletes were positioned as instruments of foreign policy, fighting for the USSR on the symbolic battlefield of the sports arena, and discusses the reactions of its nominated adversaries – chiefly the USA.

As this chapter demonstrates through an analysis of American press coverage of US-Soviet sporting engagements during the 1960s and 1970s, the relationship between the two sides was nothing if not complex. American journalists applauded their opponents' victories, castigated their excesses, fretted over the implications of US losses to Soviet teams, and constantly peered through the 'tight ring of security people' surrounding their rivals, in search of signs of friendship. The Soviet authorities, for their part, remained wary, treating any criticism by the West as outright hostility, and any sign of American admiration as evidence that the USSR had managed to teach the capitalists a thing or two. For deep as the American mistrust of communism was, the USSR was possibly even more sensitive to the dangers of foreign influence. As the 1972 Olympic competitions – in 'hostile' West Germany and Japan – approached, Soviet preparations therefore involved far more than making sure athletes were on top physical form. The archival evidence examined in this chapter shows that officials were acutely sensitive to the moral dangers that athletes, (rare) Soviet visitors to the Olympics, and even viewers at home might face as the Western powers put all their strength into what was expected to be a monumental show of counter-revolutionary propaganda. While the USSR's international envoys made representations to foreign governments to desist from their ideological broadcasts in order that the Games might take place in a properly apolitical climate, officials at home worked hard on 'political formation' campaigns – including special rallies of the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda* – to prepare young athletes to resist the temptations of capitalism and show the world how much more communism had to offer.

Success in high-profile events like the Olympics gave Soviet elite athletes immense popularity both at home and abroad. For the Soviet mass audience, as for viewers in Western Europe and North America, this was popular culture at its finest. The need for athletes to provide an excellent model of Soviet citizenship was therefore compounded by their likely influence on large numbers of their own young compatriots. Chapter Four

looks in detail at the educational processes to which elite athletes were subject, with a particular focus on domestic press coverage of the gymnast Olga Korbut following an Olympic debut that had produced one silver medal, three golds, and public tears following a series of disastrous (though not dangerous) crashes on the uneven bars. In the West, Korbut had quickly been adopted as a hero by reporters more used to machine metaphors for describing Soviet sport – but Soviet officials and commentators were much more equivocal. In Korbut's case, detailed here, journalists were clearly engaging in their officially-mandated task of educating subject and audience simultaneously. Much like the soldier, the elite athlete would have to be a model not of fully-formed Soviet subjectivity, but of the process of formation.

As the final section of this thesis argues, however, the variations apparent between national and local newspapers – together with Komsomol and Party officials' ex post facto criticism of 'mistakes' in coverage of other cases – point to an environment in which public adulation fed by titbits from the media could flourish despite official disapproval of the trappings of celebrity. The cultural shift could hardly have been clearer: popular admiration and the stamp of heroism, so long accepted as being in the gift of the Soviet leadership, were now there for the taking by anyone with the skill and spark to compete for them. Despite propaganda-makers' attempts to reemphasise more traditional 'ethical' models, according to which the civic hero was merely an exemplary member of the wider collective, heroism as popularly understood was becoming more about the thrill of the individual demonstrating his or her distinctiveness and embarking on a path of self-advancement. By exploring the interactions between propaganda, those who created it, and those at whom it was directed, this thesis attends to still under-studied questions of the development of subjectivity under late socialism.

Discourses of Heroism in Brezhnev's USSR

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Acknowledgements

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Though still not quite calm and collected when I made my way back to those archives, I found the reading room staff at GARF, RGANI, the RGASPI Archive of the Soviet Youth Organisations, and the Newspaper Department of the Russian State Library very knowledgeable and willing to assist. In their reading rooms, especially the Komsomol one presided over by the indomitable Galina Mikhailovna, I spent three hugely happy months enjoying the company of fellow students of Soviet history – among them Rosemari Bainbridge, Leah Goldman, Aaron Hale-Dorrell, Maya Holzman, Kristy Ironside, Adrianne Jacobs, Kelly Kolar (Sawyer), Brendan McGeever, Alan Roe, and Ben Sawyer. I am particularly grateful to Alan Roe for directing me to GARF holdings that turned out to be critical to my understanding of the topic, and to all of them for quiet camaraderie within the reading room, and less-quiet enjoyments without. In the relatively little time that I ended up actually spending at 'home', my host Lena Kozlova offered generous hospitality involving tea, chocolate and a truly comfortable place to rest, as well as fascinating discussion about Soviet and post-Soviet life and almost anything else we could think of.

Back in the UK, the serious and lengthy business of writing up awaited, and I am most grateful for the assistance – and forgiveness – of the staff of various branches of the Bodleian Libraries, especially the Taylor Slavonic. As my thesis progressed, it was fundamentally shaped by opportunities to present and discuss work at the Oxford Russian Graduate Seminar, the TORCH Celebrity Research Network, and the 'Researching Celebrity: Theories and methods' symposium organised by Neil Washbourne at Leeds Becket University. I also warmly thank Catriona Kelly, Al'bert Baiburin, and their colleagues at the European University at St Petersburg, for the invitation to present at the 'Official and Unofficial in Soviet Culture' workshop, which offered the invaluable chance to discuss ideas with scholars who had experienced some of this historical period themselves. It is my sincere hope that their institution will soon experience a revival of its fortunes.

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Sub-Faculty, it has been a great pleasure to get to know fellow graduate students as colleagues, and John Cook, Sara-Louise Cooper (Parker), Rob Daly, Olga Smolyak, Palina Urban and Margarita Vaysman were esteemed companions in writing, conference-planning, coffee and shashlyk. Slightly further from the centre of operations, but no less crucial, Amanda Wrigley and Danny Yee offered steadfast friendship, encouragement and practical support (sometimes rather late at night) as we learned together how to parent small children and still get some work done. Both of them, as well as my husband Howard Cattermole, offered helpful comments and corrections on drafts at various stages, and I am especially grateful to Amanda for making time to give the whole thesis a thorough reading towards the very end (though it goes without saying that remaining errors are mine alone).

While such varied academic input has clearly been absolutely central to the writing of this thesis, the warm and repeated encouragement offered by many individuals has been no less essential in getting it written up during what might euphemistically be termed an excessively eventful period of life. Above all I am grateful to Howard, and to our daughter Rachel, for humouring and re-humouring me, and enabling me when necessary to take a completely different perspective on life. Important as this project has been to me, their love means more than any work. So too does that of my mother, Denise Dunlop, and sisters Alice and Jenny – something that was brought home all the more sharply with the unexpected death of our father Chris in April 2014.

Until the day my beloved father died, it had never occurred to me that he would not be the person most delighted of all to see my finished thesis. I will always mourn not being able to show it to him – though that is so far from being the worst thing about losing him – but I am a little comforted by the certainty that he would have been rejoicing with me at its completion. It would never have come into being at all without the fascination with Russian culture and history that he, my first Russian teacher, inspired in me, and so it is dedicated to him, with deepest gratitude and love.

List of abbreviations

EVUD	*East View Universal Databases*
FB	*Fizkul'turnik Belorussii*
GARF	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (State Archive of the Russian Federation)
GP	*Grodnenskaya pravda*
Iz	*Izvestiya*
KP	*Komsomol'skaya pravda*
NYT	*New York Times*
PQHN	*ProQuest Historical Newspapers*
Pr	*Pravda*
RGANI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History)
RGASPI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History)
SS	*Sovetskii sport*
WP	*Washington Post*

Note on transliteration

This thesis employs BS 2979:1958, as modified in Oxford Slavonic Papers, for the transliteration of Russian text outside block quotations (which appear in Cyrillic script). Exceptions have been made for proper names such as Rachmaninov and Scriabin, which are given in the form most familiar to English-speaking readers. For ease of reading, apostrophes representing soft signs have also been omitted from the well-known names Maksim Gorky (Gor'ky) and Olga (Ol'ga) Korbut.

Introduction: Heroism in Brezhnev's USSR?

В буднях великих строек,
В веселом грохоте, в огнях и звонах,
Здравствуй, страна героев,
Страна мечтателей, страна ученых![1]

More than once, when talking to Russian friends and new acquaintances about the purpose of my visits to their country, I have watched their expressions change from interest to incredulity or incomprehension upon hearing that my thesis topic was something along the lines of '*sovetskii geroi pri Brezhneve*'. '*Pri Brezhneve?*' they ask. '*Nu, pri Brezhneve, geroev u nas ne bylo.*'[2] In a memorable tea-drinking episode on my main research trip to Moscow, my landlady (aged about forty), who had rapidly become a friend and excellent conversation partner, took great exception to my project, apparently on grounds of compassion for me. Why on earth, she wanted to know, was I bothering with the official culture of her childhood and early youth? '*Togda byl zastoi, zastoi, zastoi*'; all it produced was total rubbish, '*chistaya propaganda*' which people did their best to avoid and engaged with only under duress. On this and other occasions I have

[1] Anatoly d'Aktil' and Isaak Dunaevsky, 'Marsh entusiastov', 1940. From the film *Svetlii put'*, dir. by Grigory Aleksandrov (Mosfil'm, 1940). See James Von Geldern and Richard Stites, *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 327-328.

[2] In their comments on the fading of the enthusiasm and social activism of the Soviet 1960s, Vail' and Genis seem to concur: '[…] когда в брежневские времена партия пыталась оживить сибирскую легенду Байкало-Амурской магистралью, народ не отозвался. Не было больше порыва, и не было больше героев. Иссяк пафос', see Petr Vail' and Aleksandr Genis, *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), p. 84. A particularly scathing Brezhnev-era émigré indictment of 'Heroism – a form of behaviour presented as the moral ideal of communist society' can be found in Il'ya Zemtsov, *Sovetskii politicheskii yazyk* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd, 1985), pp. 107-110. On a 'general "de-heroicization" of childhood and youth culture' in the late Soviet period, see Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta Books, 2005), pp. 211-216. For similar claims (though with surprisingly little in the way of substantiating evidence) about changing attitudes to Soviet war heroes, see Rosalinde Sartorti, 'On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints', in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. by Richard Stites (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 176-193.

been told that I would be much better off – much happier, even – studying Khrushchev's Thaw.

The comments I encountered amongst my own acquaintances in Moscow echoed the discourse of glasnost' and perestroika, when Gorbachev and his allies sought to 'return the USSR to its Leninist roots', reforming and opening up the socialist system with new ideas and the real involvement of the Soviet population.[3] In a polemical article first published in the journal *Rabochii klass i sovremennyi mir* and reprinted in English in a 1989 pamphlet entitled *Leonid Brezhnev: The Period of Stagnation*, the historian and Brezhnev-era dissident Roy Medvedev decried what he saw as the human manifestations of stagnation:

> The unwillingness and inability to work well, the political passivity and apathy, the indifference to the moral and political values of socialism, the moral degradation of tens of millions of people, the universal rule of mediocrity, the discrepancy between word and deed and the encouragement of universal lies – all this crippled the mentality of a whole generation, which we now justly call 'the lost generation'. From this point of view, the overall consequences of Brezhnev's rule proved no less depressing than those of Stalinism. The country and society ended up in a blind alley, a situation that can no longer be tolerated.[4]

Commenting on Soviet society as a whole under the Brezhnev regime, Hedrick Smith's 1976 book *The Russians* repeatedly deplored the lack of freedom, the wariness and need for constant self-censorship endured by the people Smith encountered during three years as head of the *New York Times* Moscow bureau.[5] More recently, Christopher J. Ward has uncovered endemic criminality, corruption, disorganisation and environmental destruction on an enormous scale on the Baikal-Amur mainline, the late Soviet Union's flagship construction project.[6]

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[3] Martin McCauley, 'From Perestroika Towards a New Order', in *Russia: A History,* ed. by Gregory L. Freeze (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 383-421 (p. 384).
[4] Roy Medvedev, 'Brezhnev: A Political Sketch-Portrait', in *Leonid Brezhnev: The Period of Stagnation*, ed. by Alexei Serov (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1989), pp. 5-20 (pp. 19-20).
[5] Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (London: Sphere Books, 1976).
[6] Christopher J. Ward, *Brezhnev's Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

In the historiography of stagnation, the rot is usually seen as setting in decisively in the aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968,[7] when Warsaw Pact troops entered Prague to crush a 'creeping counterrevolution' – namely, the attempt, supported by the regime of Alexander Dubček, to carry out reforms capable of generating 'socialism with a human face'. In the USSR, little in the way of public protest greeted the news of the invasion, but it was followed by a tightening of controls on the media so as to clamp down on the expression of unorthodox political ideas,[8] increasingly aggressive tactics against dissidents,[9] and a 'multi-faceted disregard for human rights'[10] – as well as a continuing lack of open protest on the part of the generation of intellectuals who had begun their professional lives in the heady tumult of the first years after Stalin's death, and come to occupy leading positions in Soviet cultural and intellectual life following the 22nd Party Congress in 1961. Narratives of the later lives of the 'sixties generation', or *shestidesyatniki*, vary somewhat in their assessments of these intellectuals' later activities. Thomas C. Wolfe, for example, recounts the 'inertia and frustration' of journalists now finding themselves 'nothing more than the public relations arm of the Soviet Union's most powerful institution', and Vladislav Zubok describes a 'long decline' into 'apathy and conformism' accompanied by varying degrees of cynicism and/or shame.[11] Mark Sandle, by contrast, identifies 'a vast spectrum of intellectual

[7] For an evaluation of different chronological arguments of the stifling of reform-minded activity (claiming that it became evident almost as soon as Brezhnev took charge, or from the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel' in early 1966, or only really as Brezhnev grew seriously ill in 1973-1974), see Mark Sandle, 'A Triumph of Ideological Hairdressing? Intellectual Life in the Brezhnev Era Reconsidered', in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, ed. by Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 135-164.

[8] On the stricter monitoring of television output following the suppression of the Prague Spring, see Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 213-217, 259-261, 273-280.

[9] Peter Reddaway, 'Policy towards Dissent since Khrushchev', in *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR: Essays Dedicated to Leonard Schapiro*, ed. by T. H. Rigby, Archie Brown, and Peter Reddaway (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 158-192.

[10] Edwin Bacon, 'Reconsidering Brezhnev', in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, ed. by Bacon and Sandle, pp. 1-21.

[11] Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 104-142 (quotation p. 142); Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard

activity between "dissent" and "orthodoxy"'; amid a 'stultifying' political atmosphere in the 1970s, he claims, Soviet academics discussed new ideas in restricted-access forums, exercised a great deal of ingenuity, and above all 'struggled' against the state and with themselves.[12]

Despite the insistence I encountered in Moscow, then, the '*zastoi zastoi zastoi*' paradigm is far from straightforward. To be sure, Donald J. Raleigh's 'Soviet Baby Boomer' informants, all born in 1950 into the emerging post-Stalin middle class, largely found that epithet fitting when they were interviewed between 2001 and 2005. Although many acknowledged improvements in the availability of consumer goods and educational opportunities during the Brezhnev years, they cited a whole list of deficiencies – shortages of attractive goods for purchase, 'unbearable' and 'completely censored' media and artistic productions, apathy, bureaucracy and the reliance on *blat* – as evidence that the late Soviet Union was trapped in a steady process of political, economic and social decline.[13] Furthermore, the 'stability' that Brezhnev promised (and in many ways delivered) as a contrast to Khrushchev's impulsivity and 'hair-brained schemes', went further than a longed-for tranquillity: in cultivating a favourable climate for himself at the highest level of the political establishment, Brezhnev worked tirelessly to build consensus, and carried out carefully-calculated 'reshuffles' with assiduous concern for the personal feelings of individuals.[14] While the strategy allowed for the 'dignified' redeployment of politicians who seemed to threaten Brezhnev's authority, and their

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University Press, 2009b), pp. 297-334 (for the description of the ramifications of the Prague Spring for Soviet politics and society, see pp. 291-293, and on 'apathy and conformism', p. 332). For another major contribution to the literature on the Soviet 'sixties generation', see Vail' and Genis (1996).

[12] Sandle (2002), p. 156.

[13] Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 220-267. For a discussion of the term *blat* ('the ability to obtain personal benefits by illegal or devious means'), see Irina H. Corten, *Vocabulary of Soviet Society and Culture: A Selected Guide to Russian Words, Idioms, and Expressions of the Post-Stalin Era, 1953-1991* (London: Adamantine Press, 1992), pp. 29-30.

[14] Suzanne Schattenberg, 'Trust, Care, and Familiarity in the Politburo: Brezhnev's Scenario of Power', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 16 (2015), 835-858.

replacement by newly-promoted Brezhnev supporters from the regions, its most pronounced effect was to produce a gerontocracy which resolutely refused to make way for new leaders with new approaches.[15]

In the years before Raleigh began conducting his interviews, however, Russian opinion polls had shown a decisive shift towards a positive appraisal, first of the Brezhnev period as a time in which to live in the USSR, and then towards Brezhnev himself as the country's leader, largely based, as Marc Elie and Isabelle Ohayon have pointed out, 'on people's memories of their youth'.[16] The Brezhnev period seems enshrined in popular memory as a time of acceptable certainty and security – of a much-desired 'confidence in tomorrow'[17] – especially when compared to the upheavals over which virtually every other Soviet leader presided.

In Bacon's apt summary, 'That there was stagnation is not in doubt. [But] there was [also] much more besides.'[18] Since the appearance of Bacon and Sandle's edited volume *Brezhnev Reconsidered* in 2002, researchers have begun to approach the cultural and social life of 'late socialism' (as the period from Khrushchev's overthrow in 1964 to Gorbachev's accession in 1985 has come to be known) as phenomena worthy of historical study. By taking the period as an object of investigation in its own right, rather than just as a sad addendum to the much more vibrant story of Khrushchev's reforms, scholars have revealed previously unnoticed currents of diversity and creativity. Anna Kushkova's

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[15] For discussions of Brezhnev's mantras of 'stability' and 'tranquillity' in contrast to Khrushchev's style of leadership, see Bacon (2002); Archie Brown, 'The Power of the General Secretary of the CPSU', in *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR: Essays Dedicated to Leonard Schapiro*, ed. by Rigby, Brown, and Reddaway, pp. 135-157. On the 'glass ceiling' preventing members of Raleigh's 'Baby Boomer' generation from entering positions of political leadership, see Raleigh (2012), p. 266. On popular attitudes towards the leadership and ritualised discourse, see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 256-259.

[16] VTsIOM and other opinion polls, cited in Bacon (2002), pp. 4-6; Marc Elie and Isabelle Ohayon, 'Foreword', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 54 (2013), 27-45.

[17] Raleigh (2012), p. 236.

[18] Bacon (2002), p. 19.

oral history work on provisioning practices under late-Soviet shortage conditions has shown that, while informants in 2007 and 2008 claim that it 'was completely obvious [at the time] that everything was abnormal', they also styled their daily efforts to obtain deficit goods as 'heroic' in their recollections of the inventive methods required to get what they wanted. All these practices, Kushkova argues, were integrated into 'the narrative construction of a "Soviet identity"'.[19] With an emphasis on seeking out the many intersections between 'private' and 'public' spheres over the course of Soviet history as a whole, Lewis H. Siegelbaum describes a similar ingenuity developing amongst automobile owners (in contrast to Kushkova's shoppers, a typically male constituency). If, by the Brezhnev era, there was (slightly) more chance of an individual citizen managing to get hold of a car, the difficulty of keeping the car in order and obtaining fuel and spare parts resulted in a flourishing of semi-legal and illegal activity which the state accommodated and, through various contortions of logic, even justified.[20]

In the introduction to their 2013 anthology, Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova argue, after Aleksei Yurchak, that

> this period was not only characterized by economic stagnation and confrontations among the state authorities, dissidents, and other citizens, but also by genuine beliefs in socialist values, voluntary involvement in creating Soviet socialism, the liberalization of social, economic, and political life, and a dialogue among different socialist publics as well as state authorities. […] In contrast with earlier Soviet periods, this era distinguishes itself as relatively stable, prosperous, and non-violent, with governing methods involving negotiation, dialogue, and moral upbringing as well as control and discipline.[21]

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[19] Anna Kushkova, 'Surviving in the Time of Deficit: The Narrative Construction of a "Soviet identity"', in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Mark Bassin and Catriona Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 278-295 (pp. 279, 281).

[20] Lewis H. Siegelbaum, 'Cars, Cars, and More Cars: The Faustian Bargain of the Brezhnev Era', in *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. by Lewis H. Siegelbaum (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 84-103.

[21] Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, 'Introduction: What Was Late Socialism?', in *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985*, ed. by Klumbytė and Sharafutdinova (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 1-14 (pp. 2-3). Their argument builds on Yurchak (2006).

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Soviet people carved out niches for themselves, finding compromises in their workplaces and other encounters with the state that allowed them to pursue creative, spiritual and scholarly avenues without attracting the kind of negative attention that would have brought an end to their activities. Even as official bearers of Party ideology and discipline, some 'enlightened apparatchiks' (in Zubok's phrase) used their positions to facilitate, rather than obstruct, intellectual endeavours not strictly in keeping with the Party line.[22] Students and the younger generation of adults – over 36 million of whom were, according to official figures, Komsomol members in 1977[23] – likewise found ways of opening up space for what they termed 'work with meaning'. Yurchak's influential 2006 study of educated Leningrad youth of the 'last Soviet generation' describes how the ritualised reproduction of required speech and behaviour acts provided a pathway to positions from which individuals could carry out 'socially useful' activity according to individual definitions informed by a fundamental belief in key socialist values.[24]

In the environment thus created, Soviet citizens could also choose from an array of cultural products – some officially recommended by the state, and others not, yet still made available through channels the state itself provided – for their intellectual satisfaction. As Kristin Roth-Ey has put it,

> Inconsistency is not necessarily the same thing as cynicism. It was possible to remain committed to the brand in the abstract – Soviet culture as distinctive and spiritually superior, the clear victor in the historic battle (in the long run, but still) – while also taking other personal pleasures in the here and now.[25]

On the other hand, another channel was also open to those young people of the Brezhnev era who wanted as little as possible to do with compulsory political life, in

[22] Zubok (2009b), pp. 205, 290-291, 325.
[23] *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, ed. by A. M. Prokhorov, 3rd edn (Moscow: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1969-1981), XXIV:II (1977), p. 177.
[24] Yurchak (2006), pp. 93-98.
[25] Roth-Ey (2011), p. 20.

either an assenting or dissenting capacity: what Yurchak has termed 'living *vnye*', or relating to the state only in the sense of finding it completely irrelevant to one's own way of life.[26] For Zubok's intellectuals, the 'end' of the Soviet sixties was experienced as a painful and shameful move from activism to accommodation, a process of selling out to a 'conservative and corrupt' political regime, against which backdrop the best hope was to carve out one's own little niche.[27] For Yurchak's 'last Soviet generation', however, the very nature of late socialism offered the opportunities, time and resources for creative engagement with the topics of one's choice.

Perhaps, then, the problem with my research topic was that it focused on the production of the '*chistaya propaganda*' that my landlady derided to me, rather than primarily on the practices of selection, accommodation, compromise, and resistance employed by Soviet citizens under late socialism. Putting aside her reservations, I decided to press on with my original topic, partly out of fascination with the dichotomy between what she was telling me – '*geroev u nas ne bylo*' – and what I observed in the built environment of Moscow every day. Even before arriving at my first archive, I had walked past countless Brezhnev-era assertions of the great Soviet past, in the form of monuments and memorial plaques to 'heroes' of revolution, war, industry, and culture. Official discourse, at least, was clearly packed with heroes. This thesis therefore takes as its starting point the archival and published sources illustrating the processes through which official agencies – particularly the All-Union Leninist Communist Youth League, or Komsomol, and the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – made their most concerted attempts to shape and monitor the attitudes and behaviour of Soviet citizens. The development of the New Soviet Man (or

[26] Yurchak (2006), pp. 126-157.
[27] Zubok (2009b), p. 325.

Woman) – in other words, of subjects suffused with the values of the revolution – was a chief preoccupation of ideologists of the early Soviet period,[28] and heroic discourse was employed with the specific intention of eliciting heroic activity amongst the population.[29] Looking primarily at campaigns targeting those under the age of thirty, a demographic traditionally seen as the vanguard of communist construction, I argue that whatever modifications the official vision of the Soviet project underwent in the aftermath of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and whatever the evolution of citizens' attitudes towards the country and their place in it, the central authorities retained their preoccupation with the development of proper communist subjectivity, which continued to be touted as the essence of heroism. The question of what, exactly, that meant under conditions of late socialism is one that I attend to in detail.

Vospitanie: The importance of socialist upbringing

This thesis thus deals with the creation of propaganda and patriotic education campaigns, based on published products (for example, textbooks and propagandistic articles), published and unpublished accounts of the performance of educational activities and the consumption of propaganda by specific groups such as schoolchildren, and archival material documenting the processes by which propaganda and educational activities were devised. Due to constraints of space and time, the project in its current form focuses primarily on the ways that the Soviet propaganda apparatus sought to co-opt young people en masse to enact ideals of Soviet citizenship. However, it seeks to

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[28] David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror under Stalin, 1927-1941* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 10-15; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 6. On the origins of the term 'New Soviet Man' in the 1920s, see David Wedgwood Benn, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 63.

[29] For general late-Soviet assertions of 'the raising of the social activity of the masses' as a central aim of propaganda, see Benn (1989), p. 38; Roth-Ey (2011), p. 4. On post-Soviet claims that a spirit of wartime heroism can be transmitted via ritualised commemorations to younger generations, resulting in improved behaviour, see Vicky Davis, 'Time and Tide: The Remembrance Ritual of "Beskozyrka" in Novorossiisk', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 54 (2014), 103-129 (p. 126).

integrate the study of propaganda with the social histories of late socialism that are now assuming such importance.[30] For one thing, some of the supposedly 'softer' mechanisms by which the social contract was managed in this period can also be seen as (profoundly illiberal) methods of social control. The 'moral upbringing' (*vospitanie*), which Klumbytė and Sharafutdinova list alongside 'negotiation' and 'dialogue' as supposedly benign Brezhnev-era alternatives to relentless 'control and discipline' is one such. Andy Byford has described the all-encompassing approach of *vospitanie* of the late-imperial and early-Soviet periods:

> *Vospitanie* entailed 'the concept of education as 'nurturing', i.e. upbringing and cultivation, essentially a form of positive socialization. It implied moral upbringing, the development of character, and the inculcation of cultural traditions, mentalities, values and modes of behaviour.'[31]

Broadly taken, all these are goals common to the childrearing practices of many cultures, certainly not just those popularly referred to as 'illiberal' or 'authoritarian'. In the USSR, however, the official goals of 'upbringing and cultivation' – the very formation of the individual's subjectivity – were defined with precision, and administered at virtually every possible encounter between the individual and the state. Peter Reddaway's 1980 study of late-Soviet policy towards dissent noted the all-encompassing nature of an educational project designed to produce compliance:

> To try to keep the appearance of dissenters to a minimum the broad policy applied is one of political socialisation in forms so comprehensive and unified that it can best be called ideological indoctrination. This system, which is intended to have a fool-proof prophylactic effect in relation to dissent, is administered through the

[30] Amongst a growing list of such works, see for example Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (London: Routledge, 2013); Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Yurchak (2006); Zubok (2009b). See also the essays collected in *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 54 (2014); Klumbytė and Sharafutdinova (eds.) (2013); Siegelbaum (ed.) (2006).
[31] Andy Byford, 'Vospitanie and the Slavic Studies Conference 2012', Russian Child Science 1881-1936, 20 November 2012, <http://community.dur.ac.uk/russian.childscience/blog/?tag=vospitanie> [accessed 4 January 2017].

> familiar channels of the officially-controlled mass media, the Pioneer and Komsomol organisations, the education system, and compulsory lectures at work.[32]

There was nothing particularly secretive about the aims of Soviet pedagogy. According to a manual of 1974, 'The objective of educational work in a socialist society is the formation of a convinced collectivist, a person who does not think of himself outside society.'[33] Age-old problems of childish inattentiveness and mischief notwithstanding, Hedrick Smith could clearly see the effects of 'friendly but enforced conformism', and the parroting of slogans about Lenin and the Motherland (*Rodina*), in the children he met across the Soviet Union – including his own youngest child, enrolled in a Moscow kindergarten. Further evidence of the overall efficacy of the system is provided by the assiduity with which the educators Smith observed administered the activities designed to realise the goals of Soviet *vospitanie*. Significantly, these were not career propagandists, like the agitators from the *Znanie* society who played a significant role in 'educational' work with adults, but 'ordinary' people in such 'ordinary' professions as teaching and childcare.[34]

In a post-Soviet interview project, Victoria Semenova and Paul Thompson have also found that, from the more stable postwar period on, a generation inculcated with certain Soviet values would fairly reliably transmit those values to their own children, provided the adults' own lives had mostly followed the approved pattern:

> It does not seem […] that the family socialisation typical of Soviet Russian families with intact parental marriages encouraged the development of adult independence, adaptability and creativity. These were not the values favoured by the majority at any social level in the Soviet era, and surveys suggest that, even in the 1990s, Russians identified themselves primarily in terms of collectivities, of family and community, rather than in terms of professional achievement.[35]

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[32] Peter Reddaway, 'Policy towards Dissent since Khrushchev', in *Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR: Essays Dedicated to Leonard Schapiro*, ed. by T. H. Rigby, Archie Brown, and Peter Reddaway (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 158-192 (p. 160).

[33] V. M. Korotov, *Razvitie vospitatel'nykh funktsii kollektiva* (Moscow, 1974) cited in Smith (1976), p. 200.

[34] Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (London: Sphere Books, 1976), pp. 200-214.

[35] Victoria Semenova and Paul Thompson, 'Family Models and Transgenerational Influences: Grandparents, Parents and Children in Moscow and Leningrad from the Soviet to the Market Era', in *On Living Through Soviet Russia*, ed. by Daniel Bertaux, Paul Thompson, and Anna Rotkirch (London:

The question of responses to the specific ideas promoted through Soviet educational activities is more complex. As Vitaly Bezrogov's study of textbooks for Soviet and post-Soviet patriotic education (which in practice, under Brezhnev as earlier,[36] meant education in general) shows, the exact concepts involved varied over time; by the 1970s, the entities supposed to inspire the special devotion of the schoolchild were 'Lenin, the party, "the people" (instead of "the working class"), the country, the army, the Homeland, the [Russian] language.' Bezrogov continues:

> The official aim of patriotic education in primary education of this period was the formation of 'literate and hard-working citizens of our great Homeland – the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics', capable of 'living as upright citizens', giving their all in the workplace, and 'deeply loving and protecting' their Homeland.[37]

Certainly, the evidence is strong that Brezhnev-era *vospitanie* was far from successful in causing all Soviet citizens to express their love of the Motherland by 'giving their all in the workplace'. The USSR had a long history of poor planning and organisation, poor resourcing, poor supervision and poor rewarding of industrial labour; if recent scholarship devoted to the Brezhnev period complicates the assertion that, in the 1970s, 'remaining resolutely slack at work'[38] was a universal given, it was still a widespread phenomenon. In terms of an active approach to 'deeply loving and protecting' the USSR, the military service required of all young men also became highly unpopular, in large part due to an increasingly dangerous culture of hazing and bullying among

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Routledge, 2004), pp. 120-145 (p. 143). Note that this finding applied principally to families where the father was a constant presence; in setups which differed from the Soviet nuclear family 'norm' because the father was absent, children raised by single mothers and grandmothers tended to develop greater independence and resourcefulness.

[36] Alexander Karp, 'The Cold War in the Soviet School: A Case Study of Mathematics Education', *European Education*, 38 (2006), 23-43.

[37] Vitaly Bezrogov, 'If the War Comes Tomorrow: Patriotic Education in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Primary School', in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Bassin and Kelly, pp. 113-128 (pp. 118, 119).

[38] Robert Service, *The Penguin History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 417.

recruits, to which army leadership structures were quite incapable of – or perhaps had no interest in – putting a stop.[39]

When it came to love in the abstract, Western visitors to the USSR encountered even refuseniks and other free-thinking intellectuals – people with serious doubts about the Party and government – expressing a deep and unswerving devotion to their native land, and a readiness to defend it to the death if attacked again as in 1941. Such patriotism outwardly resembled precisely the values that the regime desired to inculcate into the young. However, members of this older generation were frequently vocal in their assertion that their patriotism had nothing at all to do with the state propaganda of the postwar decades, but was a product of a war which many had experienced as '[t]he best time of our lives':

> [At] that time we all felt closer to our government than at any other time in our lives. It was not *their* country then, but *our* country. It was not *they* who wanted this or that to be done, but *we* who wanted to do it. It was not *their* war, but *our* war. It was *our* country we were defending, *our* war effort.'[40]

What is quite clear is that, as Juliane Fürst has observed in relation to the generation that came of age immediately after the war, 'the party never quite acquired the popular emotional attachment and universal accessibility the Motherland was to gain during and after the war. In official iconography the Motherland easily replaced both the Party and class as items that were celebrated as primary vehicles of Soviet allegiance'.[41] Propaganda organs throughout the 1960s and 1970s attempted to reinforce the authority

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[39] William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 286-292; Roger R. Reese, *The Soviet Military Experience: A History of the Soviet Army, 1917-1991* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 149-151; Andrew L. Spivak and William Alex Pridemore, 'Conscription and Reform in the Russian Army', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 51 (2004), 33-43. See also Kharkhordin's comments on army 'eldership' ('*dedovshchina*') practices as a mechanism of social control: Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 310-313.

[40] Ben Levich, cited in Smith (1976), pp. 369-370; see also Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pp. 52-94.

[41] Fürst (2010), p. 118.

of the Party, but the only real way to achieve this was by appealing to popular feelings of attachment to the Motherland.[42]

Even without any personal experience of war, and with the scepticism born of watching the Soviet system crumble in its entirety, the majority of Raleigh's Baby Boomers affirmed, in the early 2000s, that the war itself was 'something honest instead of something fake', a victory for humanity to which the USSR had made the greatest and most costly contribution. Raleigh's composite narrative describes a simultaneous awareness of the limitations and falsities of propaganda, a recognition that their views were 'formed […] by the government, because all of the media conveyed the government's point of view', but a deep belief nonetheless that the USSR's role was 'decisive' and 'underappreciated'.[43]

If war memorials were almost unique amongst Soviet statuary in inspiring 'genuine affection', their centrality to any young couple's wedding-day photography schedule may itself illustrate the far more consumption-oriented outlook prevalent in late socialist society.[44] Although the Party-state had very clear objectives for its educational work, in the absence of mass terror as an enforcement method, there was plenty of room for the public expression and development of interpretations that were not quite those intended. This is different to what Oleg Kharkhordin has argued in relation to the Khrushchevian experiment in preparing for the withering-away of the state by developing a far-reaching

[42] In one of the periodic articles attempting to reinforce the Soviet communist status of the Baltic republics, for example, a Lithuanian builder orphaned as a young child in WWII wrote that he and his peers did not feel like orphans because they knew they had a Motherland (something he claimed was only possible in a country led by communists) (Nozas Zhelenis, 'Spasibo, mat'!', *KP*, 10 June 1966, p. 1). See also Bezrogov (2012), on the increasingly central place of 'our Soviet Homeland', 'a poorly differentiated, yet hypnotic image of *the USSR as a whole*', in educational materials of the post-Stalin decades (quotation on p. 114).
[43] Raleigh (2012), p. 253.
[44] Catriona Kelly, 'The Retreat from Dogmatism: Populism under Khrushchev and Brezhnev', in *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 249-273 (p. 263).

system of mutual, 'comradely' and 'prophylactic' surveillance that would do the job of correcting antisocial behaviour before it could even be committed:

> [Stalin's] uneven and frequently chaotic terror still allowed for a space of uncompromised human freedom and dignity that the later orderly mutual surveillance erased. The disciplinary grid became faultless and ubiquitous: and degree of freedom in private was to be paid for by an inescapable participation in the mutual enforcement of unfreedom and humiliation in public.[45]

By 1985, according to Kharkhordin, public zeal for participation in the institutions of mutual surveillance had dwindled: 'Express loyalty to the form now mattered more than substantive loyalty to the content of the doctrine, a state of affairs that sly citizens immediately turned to their advantage.' Nonetheless, repeated campaigns for social control had made a deep imprint on individual mentalities, leaving Soviet – soon to be ex-Soviet – citizens fundamentally susceptible to authoritarian control.[46]

My analysis, like those of Aleksei Yurchak, Larisa Honey and others, suggests that the Soviet system unintentionally but inescapably allowed for creative encounters with officially-promoted values. It is thus impossible to study propaganda without taking account of the context in and for which it was produced.[47] Honey has observed that the milieu of late-Soviet practitioners of alternative spiritual disciplines was the site of a 'dialectical interplay between the state and individuals',[48] and the assertion is eminently applicable to other Soviet periods and settings too. Although individual accounts of participation in Komsomol initiatives constitute a relatively small proportion of the primary material consulted for this thesis, my discussion of the propaganda-making process attends in detail to the implied dialogue between officials and their intended

[45] Kharkhordin (1999), p. 303.
[46] Kharkhordin (1999), p. 301.
[47] For David Brandenberger's argument for a 'three-dimensional' analysis of ideology, taking into account 'production, projection, and popular reception', see Brandenberger (2011), p. 2.
[48] Larisa Honey, 'Pluralizing Practices in Late-Socialist Moscow: Russian Alternative Practitioners Reclaim and Redefine Individualism', in *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985*, ed. by Klumbytė and Sharafutdinova, pp. 117-142 (p. 139).

audiences. At its heart, this project is very much inspired by compelling personal stories of daily life in the Soviet 1970s and 1980s, shared with me by the very same people who found my research topic so mysterious. In these narratives, going to school or work, watching television, reading a magazine or seeing a film, were completely 'normal' activities, regardless of the fact that they also constituted routine interactions with sources of official propaganda and initiatives designed to raise conscientious socialist citizens.[49] Furthermore, happy memories of interesting hours spent, say, curating the school Museum of Wartime Glory, have not all been tainted by retrospective assessments of Brezhnev-era society as stagnant and corrupt. '*Chistaya propaganda*' as they may have been, the heroic discourses and patriotic education programmes of the Soviet official organisations have not just disappeared into the closed stacks of the state archives of the Russian Federation. They have left traces outside, and not necessarily because every aspect of the enterprise was held in memorable contempt by legions of bored schoolchildren.

Historical background: The hero cult in Soviet propaganda

The hero legend was a significant genre of Soviet propaganda, one whose strong emphasis on personal stories gave it the potential to attract the attention of large numbers of people with little formal education and a very imperfect understanding of revolutionary ideals.[50] Robert H. Greene has described the passionate devotion to cults of Orthodox saints prevailing in peasant communities of late-imperial and immediately post-revolutionary Russia;[51] under such conditions, the imposition of hero cults most likely appeared to revolutionary agitators as not only possible (in the sense that the peasants

[49] For a similar argument, see Raleigh (2012), pp. 106-110.
[50] On the 'psychological sources of interest in great men, [which] may be regarded as means by which great men exert influence on their followers', see Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1945), pp. 21-24.
[51] Robert H. Greene, *Bodies Like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

were likely to be receptive to them) but necessary (in the sense that religious fervour and superstition needed to be supplanted by loyalty to a new system).[52] Even before the Bolsheviks had seized power, cults of revolutionary heroes were being used as incitements to action in the struggle for a new regime. Once the revolution had taken place, cultic representations of the new leaders, and of other heroic figures, formed part of the new government's efforts to 'construct legitimacy by investing ideas, events, institutions, particular offices and personalities with charisma.'[53] The strategy was overtly iconoclastic, felling old monuments and 'renaming […] places, things and people […] to avoid odious associations or to honor new heroes and commemorate dead ones'; yet it was enabled by a profoundly anti-iconoclastic and pedagogical current in the thinking of Lenin and Lunacharsky, who favoured the syncretic retention of certain cultural forms as the most effective vehicles for the revolutionary message.[54]

Despite the early employment of the heroic ideal as a form of propaganda, the first edition (published 1926-1947) of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (*Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*), the relevant volume of which appeared in 1929, contained no headword *geroizm*, suggesting that an ideology of Soviet heroism had not by that stage been sufficiently elaborated to justify its inclusion.[55] Radical revolutionary ideology had not

[52] On the 'sacramentalisation of politics' in a newly-established state, which 'has to be sanctified in some way, to legitimise itself', see also E. A. Rees, 'Leader Cults: Varieties, Preconditions and Functions', in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by Balázs Apor et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 3-28 (pp. 6-7).
[53] Rees (2004), p. 3.
[54] Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), quotation p. 66.
[55] An entry for *Geroi* [pl.] *truda* provided a factual description of the conditions under which the title might be awarded, and the benefits it conferred on the holder, while two separate entries headed *geroi* dealt with the *heros* of Greek myth, and a 'theatrical device deriving from classical French theatre' (*Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, ed. by O. Yu. Shmidt, 1st edn (Moscow: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1926-1947), XVI (1929), columns 452-453). By 1952, when volume XI (*Germanik-Golub'*) of the second edition appeared, a striking evolution had occurred. Absent now were the '*geroi*' of myth and theatre, their places taken by almost an entire page on '*geroizm*', plus several paragraphs each on the titles '*Geroi Sovetskogo Soyuza*' ('for personal or collective service to the state, linked with the performance of heroic deeds) and '*Geroi Sotsialisticheskogo Truda*' ('for particularly distinctive, innovative activity [resulting in] exceptional service to the Soviet state'). All three entries referred to the Great Patriotic War and the period of immediate postwar reconstruction as demonstrations of the heroism of Soviet people, with the clear

yet cohered into the discursive system of the 1930s.[56] Despite the preservationist inclinations of Lenin and Lunacharsky, and a prolific Lenin cult beginning even before his death in January 1924,[57] the 1920s 'embrace of abstract materialism and the avant garde produced an inaccessible mélange of schematicism and anonymous social forces that functioned poorly as mobilizational propaganda'.[58] At the same time, political upheaval and legal reforms, along with the 'ideological compromise' represented by the New Economic Policy, made room for social disruption and forms of behaviour that aroused serious concerns in the party and government.[59]

From 1929 on, as Stalin determined to enforce social discipline and his own authority, the heroic genre truly found its place at the heart of Soviet propaganda, through a teleological narrative of the Soviet peoples' engagement with the great task of communist construction, illustrated with hundreds of specific examples of shock workers, explorers, writers, Party workers and military commanders, discursively arranged in a 'feudal-like pyramid' with Stalin at the apex.[60] At the lower levels of this hierarchy, exceptional workers in crucial occupational fields were held up as civic heroes, model 'New Soviet Men' whom the ordinary person should seek to emulate. Newspapers detailed their prizes and awards as a signs of 'life as it ought to be' and 'life as it [was] becoming', a foretaste of the future when the entire population would work heroically, behave in a 'cultured' manner befitting their status as Soviet citizens, and enjoy the

implication that the Party and the institutions of state were ultimately to thank for any individual feats (*Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, ed. by B. A. Vvedensky, 2nd edn (Moscow: Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1949-1965), XI (1952), pp. 141-143).

[56] Jeffrey Brooks, 'Socialist Realism in *Pravda*: Read All about It!', *Slavic Review*, 53 (1994), 973-991 (p. 991).

[57] Catriona Kelly, 'Grandpa Lenin and Uncle Stalin: Soviet Leader Cults for Little Children', in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by Balàzs Apor et al., pp. 102-122; Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[58] Brandenberger (2011), p. 3.

[59] Hellbeck (2006), p. 25.

[60] Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 153.

abundant fruits of their labours.[61] Drawing on Evgeny Dobrenko's analysis of Socialist Realism as 'a populist corrective to the often arcane and inaccessible literature of the 1920s [which] had failed to win the hearts and minds of the poorly educated mass audience', Kevin Platt and David Brandenberger explicitly link new trends in mass journalism and non-fiction to the vision of Socialist Realism as an inspiration and rallying-call for the whole of society.[62] Though the approach broke with approved Marxist tactics, thereby arousing the disapproval of Party veterans, it 'populariz[ed] regime values and priorities with remarkable effectiveness', reinforcing and explaining the importance of revolutionary events and encouraging 'the New Soviet Person to identify personally with the history of the party and its struggle.'[63] It also showed Stalin in a particularly authoritative yet benevolent light, as a leader (*vozhd'*) whose 'care […] for every person, and love for all people […] lifts people and gives them wings', and a warrior (*bogatyr'*) of communism standing amongst his 'comrades in arms' 'at the commanding bridge of the great Soviet ship'.[64] In this sense, cults of lesser mortals fulfilled an important function as manifestations of the leader's intimate connection with his people.

Desiring 'a common narrative – a story of identity – that the entire society could relate to',[65] propagandists of the 1930s also turned their attention to the USSR's heritage of folklore and pre-revolutionary history, replete with 'classic cultural icons' such as

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[61] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 216-237.

[62] David Brandenberger and Kevin M. F. Platt, 'Introduction: Tsarist-Era Heroes in Stalinist Mass Culture and Propaganda', in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, ed. by Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 3-14 (p. 9).
On the Socialist Realist orientation of journalism, non-fiction and public discourse as well as the arts, see also Greg Carleton, 'Genre in Socialist Realism', *Slavic Review*, 53 (1994), 992-1009.

[63] Brandenberger (2011), pp. 4, 14.

[64] Davies (1997), p. 151. On Stalin's role as 'patron and protector', particularly of Soviet children, see Kelly (2004), p. 107; also Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 69-70.

[65] Brandenberger and Platt (2006), p. 9.

Pushkin, and military and state-building icons spurned by previous generations of revolutionaries.[66] According to Stalin, in a 1931 interview with the German biographer Emil Ludwig, there was 'no contradiction' between the materialist understanding of history and a recognition of 'a leading role for historic personalities'.[67] Thus, for example, Alexei Tolstoi's depictions of Peter the Great underwent a gradual transformation in step with changing political sensibilities. From 'a nadir of ugly and violent despotism' in Tolstoi's earlier work, Peter's influence on the course of history was gradually shown to be more significant and more deliberate, until his portrayal reached 'a zenith of inspired, charismatic leadership'[68] – but only via a complex process fraught with varied criticisms and multiple reworkings. Stalin could declare in 1929 that it was 'a pity that Peter wasn't depicted heroically enough' in the first version of the play *Na dybe*,[69] yet also inform an interviewer in 1931 that 'Peter the Great... is a drop in the ocean, whereas Lenin is the ocean itself.'[70] Although, by 1941, Peter had been canonised as an 'all knowing and omnipotent leader' with a 'divine ability to direct events in a superhistorical manner',[71] he and other heroes of the Great Russian past remained in a supporting role with respect to Stalin, 'part of an etatist and russocentric view of history that "conferred the legitimacy of a thousand-year pedigree upon the Soviet leadership."'[72]

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[66] Brandenberger and Platt (2006), p. 5. See also John B. Dunlop, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 11; also Katerina Clark and E. A. Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917-1953* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 432. On the new importance given to the *bogatyr'*, the 'fantastic knight of Russian fairy tale and folk epic', proclaimed in a 1936 resolution of the Politburo to be, in the 'national imagination', 'the bearers of the heroic characteristics of the Russian people', see Clark and Dobrenko (2007), pp. 249-260.

[67] Brandenberger and Platt (2006), p. 3.

[68] Kevin M. F. Platt, 'Rehabilitation and Afterimage: Aleksei Tolstoi's Many Returns to Peter the Great', in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, ed. by Platt and Brandenberger, pp. 47-68 (p. 54).

[69] Cited in Platt (2006), p. 54.

[70] Cited in Brandenberger and Platt (2006), p. 4.

[71] Platt (2006), p. 60.

[72] Platt (2006), p. 55, citing David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 53.

Hierarchies of heroism

As the cult of Stalin intensified over the course of the 1930s, the name of the *vozhd'* was linked with the great exploits of the new heroes of the epoch; not only did he bask in their reflected glory, he was shown to have made everything possible in the first place.[73] However, although many of the same personal attributes were emphasised, it cannot be said that non-leader hero cults differed from the cult of the *vozhd'* only in degree. As Katerina Clark has suggested in her discussion of the 'Stalinist myth of the "Great Family"', a qualitative difference existed, specifically, in the level of emulation expected of the public.[74] If the greatest of the Soviet political leaders were to be seen as 'fathers', supplying inspiration and guidance, it was the 'sons', those ordinary people, generally of humble background, who devoted themselves to becoming good Soviet citizens, whose biographies 'were meant to provide models for the populace to emulate.'[75] Nor were these 'sons' ever to grow up to become 'fathers' themselves: a 'father' was defined by his character rather than by his deeds, that is, by innate qualities that could not be learnt by even the most willing of ordinary individuals.[76]

Thus, although any Soviet person might theoretically ascend to a new position in the pyramidal hierarchy by means of enormous effort, devotion, and the correct attitude, the uppermost level remained closed. The highest measure of success for the citizen emphatically did not involve becoming in any way comparable to the *vozhd'*. The very fact of being declared a hero, of receiving awards in acknowledgement of feats, places the subject in a particular position in a state hierarchy: raised above other citizens, the

[73] Rees (2004), p.13; see also Brooks (1994), p. 981. Similar principles continued to operate in later periods, notably in the case of the relationship between the Khrushchev regime and Yuri Gagarin (see Andrew L. Jenks, *The Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling: The Life and Legend of Yuri Gagarin* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), pp. 151-173.
[74] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 114-135.
[75] Clark (2000), p. 124.
[76] Clark (2000), pp. 123, 126.

hero is subordinate, and retains a debt of gratitude, to the leader whose pleasure it has been to bestow such recognition.[77] Moreover, whereas for example in the United States the aspiration to be President has traditionally been considered a healthy sign of youthful ambition and patriotism,[78] Socialist Realist art made clear that the greatest prize for the Soviet citizen was the privilege of being received into the leader's presence.[79] If, as Balázs Apor has suggested, official biographies of leaders 'enlisted the official values and ideological tenets professed by the regime and provided an example, in an idealised form, of the behavioural patterns that it hoped to instil in the public',[80] there were strict limitations on the extent to which the leader was actually a model for the population. The trajectory of the Soviet citizen's life was intended to follow that of the Soviet hero on the journey towards an audience with the *vozhd'*, not that of the *vozhd'* himself.

This pattern has clear echoes of the schema laid out in what is still perhaps the best-known treatise on the nature of heroism: the Victorian polemicist Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, based on a series of lectures given in 1840. To be sure, Carlyle's sufficient and necessary condition for 'greatness' was to be a channel of divine agency in the world – a requirement that would immediately disqualify

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[77] Cf. Rees (2004), p. 5: 'Like monarchs[,] the leader dispenses state honours and awards for services rendered, serving to bind the subject to the leader and to the state.' For primary documents illustrating the 'demeaning protestations of loyalty and praise for the leader' that Soviet intellectuals were forced to adopt in their dealings with Stalin, see Clark and Dobrenko (2007), pp. 282-301, 322-335.

[78] For a twenty-first century example, see President Barack Obama's speech of 16th July 2009 to the Centennial Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People ('Obama's speech to NAACP', *Washington Times*, 17 July 2009, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/17/text-obamas-speech-naacp/> [accessed 4 January 2017]).

[79] For various examples of paintings showing the great leader Stalin surrounded by respectful, indeed awestruck, citizens, see *Vasily Efanov, Nezabyvaemaya vstrecha* (1936-37); G. Shegal', *Vozhd', uchitel', drug (I. V. Stalin v presidiume Vsesoyuznaya s"ezda kolkhoznikov)* (1937); Yu. P. Kugach, V. K. Nechitailo and V. G. Tsyplakov, *Velikomu Stalinu slava* (1950); B. Ioganson, *Nash mudryi vozhd', uchitel' dorogoi* (1952). For similar sentiments expressed through the medium of the poster, see V. Koretsky, *Lyubimyi Stalin – schast'e narodnoe!* (1950); Unknown Artist, *Velikii Stalin – znamya druzhby narodov SSSR!* (1950).

[80] Balàzs Apor, 'Leader in the Making: The Role of Biographies in Constructing the Cult of Mátyás Rákosi', in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by Balàzs Apor et al., pp. 63-80 (p. 65).

an atheist Bolshevik. However, if we disagree in principle with Carlyle's contention that a refusal to believe in God can result in 'nothing but a wretched love of Pleasure, fear of Pain; [and a] Hunger, of applause, of cash, of whatsoever victual it may be',[81] and consider that any fervent belief might have a similar effect, the revolutionary leaders venerated by Soviet propaganda appear to have much in common with Carlyle's descriptions of the Great Man, for example as 'the indispensable saviour of his epoch;—the lightning, without which the fuel never would have burnt.'[82]

Though much occupied with his revolutionary 'great men', Carlyle also concedes a latent heroism to be found in 'the poorest son of Adam' – who, longing 'not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's Heaven as a god-made man' – will recognise the truly great cause and submit himself willingly to its leader.[83] Carlyle, like Soviet propagandists after him, evidently treats heroism, whether of 'great' or 'little' men, as primarily a historical fact, rather than as a psychological phenomenon[84] or a propaganda strategy. Except that Soviet thought naturally privileged concrete contributions to the establishment and defence of a socialist society over a path towards some abstract and invisible God, the Soviet understanding of heroism as a potentially mass phenomenon arising from the willingness of each citizen to subjugate his or her own interests to those of the collective, accepting the leadership of a higher authority, is entirely consistent with Carlyle. Perhaps indeed, as Sidney Hook argued in his 1945 response to Carlyle, 'the overwhelming majority of people have little

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[81] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, n.d.), p. 160.
[82] Carlyle (n.d.), p. 12.
[83] Carlyle (no date), pp. 64-65.
[84] Having considered various psychological explanations for mass public interest in 'great men', Hook returns to the political: 'To the extent that knowledge of these elementary truths [of the problems of leaving political responsibility to others] spreads and is acted upon, interest in political leadership becomes critical. Identification with it is then a conscious process, not a quest for a father-substitute.' Hook (1945), p. 25. On psychoanalytic accounts of heroism, see Robert A. Segal, *Hero Myths* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 1-37.

desire to assume positions of power and responsibility';[85] in any case, the Soviet leadership was notable for its disinclination to seek out or nurture new 'great men'. In his study of the construction of revolutionary selfhood by Soviet diarists of the 1930s, Jochen Hellbeck writes of the playwright Alexander Afinogenov,

> It was not that Afinogenov was forced to submit to the laws of history decreed by Soviet leaders. He himself actively worked to create a historical existence for himself as a highest form of self-realization. And yet even the ideal subjectivity in the Soviet order, for which Afinogenov strove, could not transcend an object relation toward Stalin, who was the ultimate subject of history.[86]

From his position at the apex of Soviet society, the *vozhd'* could also destroy. To begin with, the rehabilitation of personalities such as Aleksandr Nevsky and Peter the Great – the 'epic revisionism' of Platt and Brandenberger's title – to provide precedents for Stalin's policies, was merely accompanied by a 'decline in official enthusiasm' for previously exalted peasant rebels and Cossack leaders. Then, between 1936 and 1938, the Terror 'devastated the party, state bureaucracy, the military high command, and the national republics, crippling the new heroic Olympus as the rolling waves of the purge swept away the leading lights of Soviet society'. Virtually the only heroic figures to survive the Great Purge, continuing to be lauded in official cultural productions as the threat of war with Nazi Germany loomed, were 'models from the tsarist past associated with defending or expanding Russian territory', like Nevsky or the military commander Suvorov,[87] or revolutionaries such as Dzerzhinsky and Bauman who had died before they could be perceived as a threat to Stalin's regime.

The sudden necessity of explaining how so many popular heroes were in fact enemies of the people caused dismay amongst the propagandists charged with carrying

[85] Hook (1945), p. 24.
[86] Hellbeck (2006), p. 328.
[87] Clark and Dobrenko (2007), p. 148.

out educational work amongst the population.[88] The campaign to build a sense of common identity based on a 'usable past' had enjoyed considerable mobilisational success, with many of its role models achieving popularity. However unassailable Stalin's position of authority, Hellbeck argues that the newly intensified campaign for the perfection of Soviet subjectivity, as exemplified by the individuals feted in public discourse, offered citizen subjects-in-the-making a creative agency not always acknowledged in accounts of Stalin's authoritarian rule.[89]

E. A. Rees' assertion that '[t]he cult of the party was especially powerful, requiring total obedience and obliging its members to reconstruct and re-educate themselves, to make themselves worthy members',[90] points to the intended function of heroic discourse as a catalyst for change. If membership of the Communist Party was the fullest expression of Soviet citizenship, the reconstruction and re-education of the self that was a prerequisite for acceptance as a Party member was to be the task of every Soviet citizen. Yet Rees' description of the task of self-change, with its emphasis on a rather unattractive-sounding demand by the Party for 'total obedience', leaves unanswered the question of why the heroic genre of Soviet official discourse was found to be so successful that it formed the backbone of propaganda campaigns right up until the 1980s. At best, Rees concedes that 'for the adherents of [a leader] cult, it invests their lives with a broader significance, a sense of wider purpose and achievement, and meets a longing for the fabulous, the mythopoeic, which transcends the mundane and the banal', but which essentially functions on the principle of 'foster[ing] anxiety, helplessness,

[88] Brandenberger and Platt (2006), p. 10. See also Brandenberger (2011), pp. 4-5. On the sudden irrelevance of public admiration, records and state awards when a sporting hero was unmasked as an enemy of the people, see M. Yu. Prozumenshchikov, *Bol'shoi sport i bol'shaya politika* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), p. 14.
[89] Hellbeck (2006), pp. 7-9.
[90] Rees (2004), p. 11.

conformity and a desire to evade personal responsibility'.[91] A much broader perspective is provided by Hellbeck's account of a project of 'revolutionary self-transformation' in which citizens were encouraged to engage in a conscious appraisal of the inadequacies and injustices of the old order – an appraisal that 'created an enlarged sense of individual self, filled with purpose, significance, and moral value.'[92] Filled with hope for the future, the exhilaration of participating in such a vast and radical endeavour, and a longing to prove themselves worthy of the revolutionary heritage, significant numbers of citizens in Stalin's USSR accepted the authority of the new Soviet heroes and devoted their efforts to remaking themselves in the same mould.

The Soviet hero after Stalin

The processes by which Khrushchev sought to remove Stalin from the pinnacle of the Soviet hierarchy, exposing the 'cult of the individual' and the conditions that had enabled it to thrive, and attempting (if not entirely successfully) to ensure that no such phenomenon could occur again, have been well documented.[93] According to Kristin Roth-Ey, in the Soviet media, official refutation of Stalinism encouraged media workers to 'replace the Stalinist kul't lichnosti with lichnosti', an instruction understood to mean the promotion of 'the ordinary person found to be extraordinary and exemplary', of individuals 'worth emulating [and] with something to teach'.[94] According to Roth-Ey, '[t]he search for young heroes was a leitmotif of Soviet culture' in this period.[95] Very plainly, conditions in the second half of the twentieth century were different to those in earlier decades: Ann Livschiz has shown that children and young people 'did not crave

[91] Rees (2004), pp. 12, 13.
[92] Hellbeck (2006), p. 18.
[93] See, for example, the essays collected in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Polly Jones (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), and Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
[94] Roth-Ey (2011), pp. 257, 266, 273 (transliterations without italics in Roth-Ey's text).
[95] Roth-Ey (2011), p. 257.

approval and guidance quite as much as their parents and grandparents had'; in the social and political climate of the Khrushchev years, they were not only much more likely to 'write in and question the authority of the cultural figures to act as arbiters of morality and good taste', but probably also more likely than previous generations to experience that scepticism in the first place.[96]

If the campaign to reforge the Soviet population into new Soviet men and women did not again reach the violent heights that it had during the revolution and under Stalin's rule, historians of the post-war USSR have nonetheless detected a new surge of enthusiasm for heroic activity during the period of Khrushchev's reforms, when citizens were encouraged to commit themselves to a project of 'permanent revolution' in order to bring about social change on a massive scale, and a generation did indeed '[experience] what seemed an authentic belief in Soviet socialism, a belief that sprang from the broad dissemination of new discourses on self, identity, and history'.[97] In his study of the postwar cohort of students, Vladislav Zubok describes a 'generation' of young intellectuals imbued with a wartime sense of patriotism and of the 'enormous possibilities' of the USSR after its victory over Nazi Germany. These sentiments, together with a belief that the 'value of their lives [was to be measured] by their ability to construct a better "socialist" society', survived both Stalin's later campaigns of repression and the severe material hardships of those years, 'stay[ing] with the postwar students as they grew up and began to occupy a prominent place in the intellectual and cultural life of Russia in the 1960s.'[98]

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[96] Ann Livschiz, 'De-Stalinizing Soviet Childhood: The Quest for Moral Rebirth, 1953-58', in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. by Jones, pp. 117-134 (p. 129).

[97] Stephen Hanson, cited in Wolfe (2005), p. 37. On the Soviet assumption that 'ending the terror did not imply the end of the Revolution', see Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 16.

[98] Zubok (2009b), p. 34. Zubok's concept of the 'generation' includes some war veterans and some people who experienced the Great Patriotic War as children, united by the experience of entering university together after the war's end. Obviously, the 'children of Zhivago' – that is, intellectuals – whom Zubok

Vail' and Genis have defined the 'Soviet sixties' as beginning in 1961, with the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, the removal of Stalin's body from the mausoleum on Red Square, and the propagation of the new (third) Party Programme, which revived the figure of the New Soviet Man and promised the realisation of communism within a generation.[99] In a speech introducing the third Party Programme to the Congress, Khrushchev emphasised the 'special significance' that the Party placed on the upbringing and education of youth. The Party and people (*narod*), he claimed, had already produced one 'generation of self-sacrificing builders of communism and heroic defenders of the Motherland, famed for all time'. The task now was to raise up another generation, equally heroic, the 'generation of communism.[100] The third Party Programme itself described the period of transition to communism as representing an increase in 'opportunities for the formation of the new person, in whom spiritual richness, moral purity and physical perfection (*dukhovnoe bogatstvo, moral'naya chistota i fizicheskoe sovershenstvo*) are harmoniously combined'.[101] The 'Moral Code of the Builder of Communism', a twelve-point enumeration of the demands of communist morality upon the citizen, was included in the Party Programme as a summary of the concrete attributes of the 'new people' of whom a truly communist society would be composed:

1. Преданность делу коммунизма, любовь к социалистической Родине, к странам социализма.
2. Добросовестный труд на благо общества: кто не работает, тот не ест.
3. Забота каждого о сохранении и умножении общественного достояния.
4. Высокое сознание общественного долга, нетерпимость к нарушениям общественных интересов.
5. Коллективизм и товарищеская взаимопомощь: каждый за всех, все за одного.

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follows represented only a (small) proportion of the young Soviet population of the period; for a study of a broader cross-section of the youth coming of age in the decade following the war, see Fürst (2010).

[99] Vail' and Genis (1996), p. 5.

[100] Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeevich, *O programme Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza. Doklad na XXII s"ezde Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza, 18 oktyabrya 1961 goda* (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1961), p. 92.

[101] *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza, prinyata XXII s"ezdom KPSS* (Moscow: Pravda, 1961), pp. 120-121.

6. Гуманные отношения и взаимное уважение между людьми: человек человеку друг, товарищ и брат.
7. Честность и правдивость, нравственная чистота, простота и скромность в общественной и личной жизни.
8. Взаимное уважение в семье, забота о воспитании детей.
9. Непримиримость к несправедливости, тунеядству, нечестности, карьеризму, стяжательству.
10. Дружба и братство всех народов СССР, нетерпимость к национальной и расовой неприязни.
11. Нетерпимость к врагам коммунизма, дела мира и свободы народов.
12. Братская солидарность с трудящимися всех стран, со всеми народами.[102]

The ground for Khrushchev's drive to realise communism had already been prepared by the USSR's success in achieving the first manned space flight, on 12th April 1961. In this era of ambitious development and charismatic leadership, Yury Gagarin's entry into the cosmos symbolised all the past and future successes of Soviet socialism, the increasingly credible possibility of transcending everyday mundanity in pursuit of 'life on a higher plane'. Gagarin was virtually the only public face of a top-secret scientific research programme whose results were now the envy of the world; for ordinary Soviet people listening to the radio broadcasts and celebrating their country's achievement, the fact that he was manifestly 'one of us', a 'simple Russian guy', encouraged new feelings of hope for the future and in 'the wonderful possibilities lurking somewhere within their society, and perhaps even within themselves.' Deliberately exploiting the public thirst for information about the cosmonaut, Soviet media coverage and other propaganda about Gagarin – his achievements, family history and personality – often echoed the Moral Code almost word for word, thereby constructing this most prominent and popular of public figures as an idealised role model for the communist morality the Party wished to see all citizens adopt.[103]

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[102] *Programma Kommunisticheskoi partii…* (1961), pp. 119-120.
[103] Jenks (2012), pp. 156-157; Trevor Rockwell, 'The Molding of the Rising Generation: Soviet Propaganda and the Hero-Myth of Iurii Gagarin', *Past Imperfect*, 12 (2006), <http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/pi/article/view/1579/1105> [accessed 9 March 2017].

Fortuitous as it was, the simultaneous appearance of such a monumentally heroic figure and the new Party Programme cannot fully explain the popular resonance which the latter enjoyed. Focusing on public outcry over a perceived wave of criminality washing over the USSR as Khrushchev amnestied inmates of the Gulag and pledged to see them reintegrated into Soviet society, Miriam Dobson has demonstrated that by 1961 – 'the year he was understood to be at the peak of his political career'[104] – Khrushchev was already backtracking on early commitments to the principle of 'legality', the rehabilitation of all offenders, and a massive reduction in the scale of the Gulag. The new Party Programme's promise of an 'aggressive fight […] against antisocial behaviour', returning to the idea of 'cleansing' Soviet society of offenders deemed unable to conform to its requirements, proved almost as attractive to many 'ordinary' members of Soviet society as did the actual goal of achieving communism.[105]

As 'disastrous errors and bureaucratic follies began to overshadow the victories in space and the successful policies of [his] New Deal',[106] and the leadership retreated from its stated commitment to 'legality', Khrushchev's relationship with the intelligentsia – never easy, since frustration, uncertainty and the possibility of arrest had remained fairly routine, even after mass terror had been renounced[107] – remained tempestuous. According to Thomas C. Wolfe's analysis of the Soviet press, however, the populist approach which Khrushchev deployed to replace his stalling reform programme, and which caused intellectuals such consternation, also created new opportunities for those same people to flourish in public life. Wolfe builds on George Breslauer's claim that by 1961, Khrushchev's 'personal political difficulties fed into his populist approach to political

[104] Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 185.
[105] Dobson (2009), p. 212.
[106] Zubok (2009b), p. 128.
[107] Zubok (2009b), pp. 82-83.

participation, leading him to sponsor a far-reaching redefinition of authority relationships between officials and masses', finding in Khrushchev's later approach a downgrading of the importance accorded to ideological argumentation, in favour of an emphasis on 'the actual achievement of economic and social plans'.[108] Into this 'theoretical void', Wolfe argues, stepped journalists eager to use the relaxation of ideological strictures as an opportunity to make 'reality' an 'ideal tool of instruction' in the new drive to achieve communism.[109] Wolfe thus portrays the whole period of Khrushchev's leadership as having 'positive moral connotations […] for a generation of intellectuals, artists, and writers', when journalists were able – indeed, required – to '[posit] new forms of subjectivity and us[e] new discourses and styles of representation, so that society might re-experience the cultural project of socialism'. Even the situation described by one of Wolfe's sources, of newspapers' 'relative helplessness on the macro-scale' during this period, allowed journalists to experience a previously unknown 'effectiveness' as they intervened in Soviet institutional processes in support of the 'little man' and his rights as a person.[110] In spite of all the visible imperfections of that age, suggests Zubok,

> The belief was widespread that with the help of better state policies and social activism the mistakes of the past could be rectified, and the Soviet Union would be once again on the historically correct path. Above all, the original promise of the communist project – transforming nature with the help of science, and perfecting human society and institutions with the aid of culture and education – still appealed to many.[111]

Intellectuals were in positions of influence in Khrushchev's USSR: as the journalists of Wolfe's narrative and the professional 'TV enthusiasts' of Roth-Ey's, they produced the media material which convinced millions of readers and viewers that 'scientific progress would help solve most social, economic, and political problems

[108] Cited in Wolfe (2005), p. 109.
[109] Wolfe (2005), p. 110.
[110] Wolfe (2005), pp. 34-35.
[111] Zubok (2009b), p. 122.

within their lifetime and bring about the final stage of communism', enabling them to have confidence that 'the future belonged to some kind of socialist society, and not to capitalism'.[112] The project was heroic in its scope and scale, yet it was to be enacted by millions of ordinary people whose devotion and conduct would make them extraordinary. Television, a medium prized as a means of allowing viewers to form an intimate connection with the people who appeared on its gameshows and talkshows,[113] offered exemplary *ordinary* people as role models embodying the qualities – optimism, intellect, seriousness of purpose combined with humour – desired of those who would realise the project of communism in the USSR.[114]

However, despite the post-Stalin determination that the 'kul't lichnosti [should be] purged from people's minds definitively by a culture that celebrated many lichnosti – worthy individuals who would serve as models for personal growth and civic activism'[115] – Khrushchev himself was not immune from accusations that he exercised an inappropriate degree of personal power over the direction of Soviet Marxism-Leninism. Wolfe has argued that Suslov and his colleagues perceived in the media presentation of Khrushchev and his programme a 'dangerous […] reorientation of the party away from its history and toward an idiosyncratic and charismatic interpretation of socialism', which could not be allowed to continue.[116] Khrushchev was recalled to Moscow from vacation for an emergency meeting of the Central Committee, where a number of allegations were made, including of the propagation of a 'cult of the individual', arbitrary decision-making, and other acts of the 'voluntarism' and 'capriciousness' that Khrushchev had

[112] Zubok (2009b), p. 122.
[113] Roth-Ey (2011), pp. 236-239.
[114] Roth-Ey (2011), pp. 256-273.
[115] Sokol (1966), p. 4 (without italics in original).
[116] Wolfe (2005), p. 107.

attributed to Stalin.[117] Khrushchev was relieved of his duties as Party First Secretary and sent into retirement with immediate effect.

Ideals of Soviet personhood under Brezhnev

Over the decades following Khrushchev's removal, during which Brezhnev slowly consolidated his position at the head of the Soviet government, Lenin was restored to the place of honour – where, despite a certain resurgence of Stalinist ideology in the communist party apparatus,[118] he remained as the 'master signifier of all authoritative discourse, through which this discourse was grounded externally and all other symbols and concepts were legitimized'.[119] The CPSU in the late-Soviet period simultaneously subordinated itself to Lenin and legitimised its own authority through its claim to be the keeper of his legacy. With a line of succession stretching to Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev, whose 'memoirs' of wartime heroism at Malaya Zemlya would eventually become required reading for Soviet schoolchildren,[120] and whose increasingly geriatric Politburo resolutely refused to make way for new leaders, the Soviet Union was plainly not engaged in a search for new great men.

From the point of view of the intellectuals of the 'sixties generation', the actions of the Brezhnev administration after the Prague Spring constituted a 'repudiation of the Revolution'[121] that was only confirmed over the course of the 1970s as the heroic dimensions of Khrushchev's project, delineated in the 1961 Party Programme, for the achievement of full communism by 1980, were de-emphasised in favour of a greater

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[117] Service (2009), pp. 376-379.
[118] Stephen F. Cohen, 'The Stalin Question since Stalin', in *An End to Silence: Uncensored Opinion in the Soviet Union from Roy Medvedev's Underground Magazine 'Political Diary'*, ed. by Stephen F. Cohen (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), pp. 22-50 (pp. 42-50). See also Bacon (2002).
[119] Yurchak (2006), p. 95.
[120] A. V. Davis, 'The Myth of Malaia Zemlia: Remembering World War II in Brezhnev's Hero-City, 1943-2013' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 2015); Nikolaus Katzer, 'Dans la matrice discursive du socialisme tardif: Les "Mémoires" de Leonid Il'ič Brežnev', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 54 (2013), 73-102.
[121] Zubok (2009b), p. 322.

focus on the state of 'developed socialism' (*razvitoi sotsializm*) that the USSR was already enjoying. Discussing this drop in momentum in the context of the new constraints experienced by Soviet journalists at this time, Wolfe seems to imply the cancellation of the attempt to reach a state of fully developed communism, and its replacement by a complacent and static insistence on the satisfactions of life under 'developed', or 'mature', socialism.[122] While perhaps an accurate description of the agenda of official journalism, Wolfe's primary subject, this assessment does not appear wholly accurate in terms of the *discourse* employed at the top levels of the Soviet political apparatus. In its front-page coverage of the opening of the 24th Congress of the CPSU, at which Brezhnev was to inaugurate the concept of developed socialism, *Pravda* continued in its customary style by referring to communist construction at least six times in the space of two columns, with phrases such as 'the Soviet people – the builder of communism' 'new horizons in communist construction', and 'new tasks in the construction of communist society'.[123] Rather, as Alfred B. Evans Jr. argued in a 1977 essay based on empirical analysis of numerous speeches, texts and articles produced by the Soviet leadership and Party ideologists during the 1970s, developed socialism was presented as a distinctive stage in the historical development of the Soviet Union on its path to full communism. According to Evans, '[t]he dangers of Khrushchev's timetable have been defused, without denying the validity of the transition to communism, with a formulation that

[122] Wolfe (2005), pp. 104-142. In his *A History of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991*, Geoffrey Hosking likewise seems to accord some significance to the concept, titling a chapter on Brezhnev's period in office 'Soviet Society under "Developed Socialism"'. Oddly, however, no discussion of the term or its significance then follows in the text (Geoffrey A. Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991*, final edn (London: Fontana, 1992), pp. 363-401).

[123] 'Pod leninskim znamenem', *Pr*, 30 March 1971, p. 1. Similar references are also to be found in Brezhnev's address to the 25th Congress of the CPSU of 24 February 1976 (see 'Doklad tovarishcha L. I. Brezhneva', *Pr*, 25 February 1976, pp. 2-9).

reasserts the party's knowledge of the present stage of Soviet society and of the main tasks of construction in the current stage.'[124]

As far as the USSR's leaders were concerned, then, narratives of Soviet heroism remained as valid and necessary as ever. Official discourse – including political speeches, memoranda and journalism, from regional newspaper features on local 'heroes of the five-year-plan' (*geroi pyatiletki*) to blanket coverage of the athletic 'heroes' and 'warriors' (*bogatyri*) who 'defended the honour of the Soviet Union' at the Olympics – remained full of reiterations of the heroic nature of life in the USSR, as the Brezhnev government persisted with efforts to cultivate a sense amongst Soviet citizens of belonging to a great people that had been forged in revolution, had saved the world from fascist takeover, and would continue its mighty struggle with the forces of (capitalist) reaction until communism emerged victorious. The public quest for personal development was also maintained. The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism was never cancelled; in fact, its precepts were reiterated and enshrined in the third Soviet Constitution of 1977, which contained an entire section devoted to civic duties.[125] Building themselves in order to build communism was emphatically still what Soviet citizens were supposed to be doing, and I contend (with scholars such as Neringa Klumbytė) that this text remained at the heart of officially-mediated discourses on 'Soviet' attitudes and behaviour.[126] Undeniably, though, the dialling-down of the urgent quest for full communism represented a sea-change in a public discourse which had previously been overwhelmingly future-oriented. And increasingly, as this thesis will

[124] Alfred B. Evans Jr., 'Developed Socialism in Soviet Ideology', *Soviet Studies*, 29 (1977), 409-428 (p. 417).
[125] Benjamin Nathans, 'Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era', in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 166-190 (pp. 183-187).
[126] See Klumbytė's account of the Moral Code as the foundational text of late-Soviet discussions about morality in the Lithuanian satirical magazine *The Broom*: Neringa Klumbytė, 'Soviet Ethical Citizenship: Morality, the State, and Laughter in Late Soviet Lithuania', in *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985*, ed. by Klumbytė and Sharafutdinova, pp. 91-116.

argue, continuing exhortations to the so-called ‘rising generation’ of Soviet citizens to take on the mantle of heroic socialist construction and defence were undermined by a lack of faith in contemporary youth’s reliablility, and a constant harking-back to to the moral qualities of earlier generations.

Chapter One of this thesis examines the Soviet armed forces as an institution where heroism according to an official model was to be both enacted and inculcated. Brezhnev-era public discourse made much of the need for citizens to be ready to defend their country militarily, and a period of compulsory full-time service in early adulthood was conceived of by the Party-state as an opportunity for making a concrete contribution to Soviet security, whilst growing in appreciation for its traditions and preparing for a lifetime as a conscientious citizen and reservist. However, a considerable amount of propagandistic and educational work needed to be done actually to get young people into the armed forces. This chapter uses archival and newspaper material to discuss some of the approaches by which the Komsomol and other state agencies attempted to secure youth involvement in what was presented as self-evidently heroic activity.

Chapter Two then continues the analysis of patriotic- and military-educational initiatives with a study of the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol’tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda* (All-Union Youth Hike to Sites of Revolutionary, Military and Labour Glory of the Soviet people), a campaign launched in 1965 to develop young people’s appreciation of their country’s heroic military history, and to begin preparing them physically for the rigours of defending the USSR themselves. Unsurprisingly, the state agencies involved had a clearly-defined sense of the values they wished to promote. Making substantial use of archival material, though, this chapter uncovers the wide variety of responses to the

initiative, showing how even the most loyally-intended participation could introduce considerable diversity into the official discourse.

In the second part of the thesis, the focus shifts to a more symbolic, yet no less significant site of the 'defence of the honour of the Motherland': the international sporting arena, particularly during the 1972 Olympiads in 'hostile' West Germany and Japan. Though readily described in the domestic press as 'heroes' and 'warriors' when victorious, Soviet athletes – almost invariably young – were considered by the Party-state to be no less in need of moral and patriotic education than their 'ordinary' peers. Chapter Three uses archival records of policy discussion, alongside newspaper material aimed at the Soviet reader, to examine the nature of the global threat that the Soviet people – represented by their elite athletes in international competition – were understood to be facing. Recognising the dialogic processes by which propaganda was constantly shaped and re-shaped, it also considers both Western media coverage of the gymnast Olga Korbut, an unexpected Soviet Olympic star, and Soviet responses to that Western commentary.

Finally, Chapter Four expands the Olga Korbut case study by analysing domestic media coverage of her performance in the light of internal discussions about the training and presentation of elite athletes. It argues that, while propaganda-makers still sought to control the Soviet definition of 'heroism', conditions increasingly allowed for the emergence of celebrity and a popular heroism based more on self-advancement and public acclaim than on established Soviet ethical models. As throughout the thesis, consideration of the interactions between propaganda, those who created it, and those at whom it was directed, allows for an exploration of still under-studied questions of the development of subjectivity under late socialism.

1. Militarisation and the Embodiment of Soviet Heroism

From the earliest days of Soviet power, militarisation was at the centre of propaganda for citizens of the new order. Public art graphically illustrated the magnitude and severity of the military threat, while depicting diverse sections of the population with weapons drawn.[1] But the shrill insistence of propaganda betrayed an awkward truth: recruitment to the armed forces was more of a struggle than it was supposed to be. Lenin's early expectation that 'the multitudes [would] flock to [the Bolshevik] cause', thus allowing the new government to offer the privilege of service exclusively to 'the most conscientious workers and peasants', foundered almost immediately. Failing to recognise their 'honourable duty' (*pochetnoe pravo*), workers displayed a hostility to enlistment and propensity to draft-dodging which had to be countered with tougher conscription drives.[2]

The coercive approach gathered pace in the 1930s, culminating in the 1936 Stalin Constitution's threat of removal of the rights of citizenship from anyone who failed to fulfil the obligations of conscientious labour, military defence, and even proper expression of joy in one's duties.[3] It is clear that terror was by no means the only driving force behind the mobilisation of (often young) Soviet people to the cause of building communism: in his study of 1930s diaries, Hellbeck has shown how 'the mandate to be socially useful' – which long predated the revolution, and required that the Russian 'rise above selfish pursuits and devote [his or her] life to society and history, so as to remake accursed, backward Russia through the power of personal example and an unflinching

[1] David King, *Russian Revolutionary Posters* (London: Tate, 2012): 'Palachi terzayut Ukrainu', p. 31; 'Smert' mirovomu imperializmu', p. 22; 'Rabotnitsy berite vintovku', p. 12; 'Tovarishchi Musul'mane!', p. 26; 'Send your sons…' (in Turkmen), p. 68.
[2] Reese (2000), pp. 8-12. For the term '*pochetnoe pravo*', see Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Soviet Citizenship, More or Less: Rights, Emotions, and States of Civic Belonging', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 7 (2006), pp. 487-528 (pp. 493-494).
[3] Alexpoulos (2006), pp. 516-518, 522-526.

orientation toward the future' – was expressed in the lives of working people from a variety of class backgrounds during the years of High Stalinism.[4] For many, the promise of the radiant communist future, the opportunity for self-improvement, and the excitement of committing themselves alongside others to such a vast cause, were effective inducements to even arduous toil and material hardship. However, Hellbeck's sources do not include any diaries of men recruited to serve in a Red Army where conditions were extremely difficult: where massive expansion was taking place against a severe shortage of officers, training resources and other facilities, and where conscripts, especially those of non-Russian ethnicities, were often forced to act against the interests of their families and local communities.[5]

Under conditions of actual war, attitudes to armed service altered. Admittedly, popular narratives of social unity during the war tend to overlook the evidence that certain sections of the population were so alienated from the Stalinist regime that they preferred the prospect of German rule, while others were persecuted en masse on collaboration charges that had been fabricated by the Soviet authorities.[6] However, the sudden invasion of the USSR by Nazi Germany, and the colossal scale of the fighting thereafter, gave the call to arms an obvious urgency even for those who had remained sceptical of the

[4] Hellbeck (2006), pp. 362-363.
[5] On conditions in the Red Army during the 1930s, see Roger R. Reese, 'A Note on a Consequence of the Expansion of the Red Army on the Eve of World War II', *Soviet Studies*, 41 (1989), 135-140 (pp. 135-136); on non-Russian conscripts, see Erica Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia: From Red Army to Independence* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 8.
[6] For an example of the popular loyalty myth making its way into Western scholarship, see Sartorti's statement (unsupported by any evidence) that '[b]eing confronted with a "real" enemy and not an imaginary ideological one at the outbreak of the war in 1941 made the people almost forget the times of terror during the Great Purges' (Sartorti (1995), p. 178). There is now ample documentation of the wartime persecution of particular Soviet ethnic groups deemed to be traitors to the USSR. On the Chechens, see Jeffrey Burds, 'The Soviet War against "Fifth Columnists": The Case of Chechnya, 1942-4', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42 (2007), 267–314. On the wartime deportation of the Kalmyks, and their postwar efforts to reconstruct a national culture specifically emphasising loyalty to the USSR, see Elza-Bair Guchinova, 'From the USSR to the Orient: National and Ethnic Symbols in the City Text of Elista', in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Bassin and Kelly, pp. 191-211. On the pre-war origins of Soviet ethnic cleansing activity, see Terry Martin, 'The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing', *The Journal of Modern History*, 70 (1998), 813-861.

revolutionary campaigns. The replacement of ideology by emotion is a common theme in accounts of participation in the conflict. While the survivor narratives related by Smith and Tumarkin minimise the role of propaganda in the 'real' war effort of the Soviet people,[7] Jeffrey Brooks' analysis of *Pravda* (like Richard Stites' discussion of wartime popular culture) shows how, in the first two years of the war especially, official media outlets themselves concentrated less on Stalin and his directives, and more on the individual stories of soldiers and civilians.[8]

The shift towards personal narratives in propaganda was not, of course, spontaneous. Much as Carlyle considered '[d]ifficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death' as incentives to heroic activity,[9] Soviet discourse systematically emphasised the voluntary and complete subjugation of the self to the needs of the country. In many cases, pre-war propaganda and educational work had laid solid foundations, preparing children and young people in particular to love and defend their homeland 'not [out of] fear or conformist obedience, but a genuine heartfelt sentiment and appreciation for what their country was doing for them'.[10] According to Kirschenbaum and Wingfield, 'the myth of the hero, no less than the myth of the martyr, employed feminized images of family connections and personal ties to heighten the pathos, to underscore both the difficulty and the necessity of sacrifice'.[11] Wartime propaganda thus continued many practices established before the war, at the same time as it differed by allowing a greater focus on personal motivations such as love for one's own family and community, aiming to reach as wide an audience as possible – men, women and children, whatever occupation they

[7] See Smith (1976), pp. 369-370; Tumarkin (1994), pp. 52-94.
[8] Jeffrey Brooks, 'Pravda Goes to War', in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. by Stites, pp. 9-27.
[9] Carlyle (no date), pp. 64-65.
[10] Olga Kucherenko, *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War 1941-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 74 (see also pp. 5, 28).
[11] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum and Nancy M. Wingfield, 'Gender and the Construction of Wartime Heroism in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union', *European History Quarterly*, 39 (2009), 465-489 (pp. 470, 471).

had been engaged in before the war – with the emergency call to rise to the defence of the homeland.[12]

Extreme circumstances produced different results in different individuals. Reese suggests that the survival tactic of keeping away from the fiercest fighting was sufficiently widespread as to necessitate threats of severe punishment, but that there existed many more positive inducements to serve. Rewards for good service proved effective 'carrots', while the active propagandisation of heroic Soviet deeds further served to boost the morale of troops. And soldiers' letters home attested that the brutality of the German occupation – experienced directly by some, and vividly recounted to others by propagandists posted to the front – played a huge motivating role, inspiring soldiers to risk their lives in the hope of liberating their loved ones and exacting revenge for Nazi crimes on Soviet territory.[13]

The vast numbers of wartime casualties were never held to diminish the significance of the eventual Soviet victory; rather, they emphasised it, since they proved the scale of the aggression that the USSR had managed to overpower. In the decade after the war's end, the armed forces continued to enjoy a combination of public respect and accommodating government policy. Officers were encouraged to continue in post, as a result of which the Army in particular remained large, its habitual problems with recruitment and staffing masked. It was not until after Stalin's death that the relationship between Soviet society and the armed forces began to alter significantly: Khrushchev's recognition of the changing nature of warfare drove a radical downsizing programme

[12] Kirschenbaum and Wingfield (2009); Sartorti (1995); Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 98-122; Weiner (2001), p. 20. On the wartime portrayal of the Soviet homeland as 'mother', and other propaganda invocations of a 'private' domestic sphere in need of defence, see Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, '"Our City, Our Hearths, Our Families": Local Loyalties and Private Life in Soviet World War II Propaganda', *Slavic Review*, 59 (2000), 825-847.
[13] Reese (2000), pp. 112-118.

with vastly different effects on those who had chosen armed service as a career, and on those who had expected to have to endure compulsory service. Large numbers of officers were suddenly made redundant without provision for pensions or alternative careers, while many conscripts rejoiced at having their periods of service reduced or cancelled altogether.[14]

As a new generation came of age, the wartime sense of popular devotion to the military was becoming diluted; moreover, as Zubok has pointed out, literature and film were now beginning to drop the triumphant rhetoric of the immediate postwar period, in order to tell the story of wartime (and even postwar) hardship and horror. Yet serious pacifism still remained the preserve of an urban intellectual minority; for the generation coming of age under Khrushchev, relief at being released from the unpleasant personal burden of military service tended to dominate over principled objection to state militarisation.[15] Nor was Khrushchev's decision-making impelled primarily by the determination to avoid future war, but rather by the pragmatic belief that nuclear weaponry would make ground forces obsolete.[16] Although the 1961 Moral Code of the Builder of Communism was notable for emphasising integrity in social relations, without any explicit discussion of defending society militarily (whereas the Stalin Constitution, still in force, devoted two of four articles on the Duties of the Citizen to the principle), it is clearly not the case that Khrushchev intended to abandon the USSR's militarised stance.

In the event, Khrushchev's interventions in this area – part of the reform project that eventually formed the basis of his Presidium colleagues' case against him in October 1964 – were short-lived anyway. Polyansky's 1964 report of the Presidium to the CPSU

[14] Reese (2000), p. 138.
[15] Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, new paperback edn (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009a), pp. 183-186.
[16] Zubok (2009a), pp. 183-184.

Central Committee, on the subject of Khrushchev's shortcomings, raised a raft of objections to the latter's foreign policy, discussing in detail the likely intentions of the 'imperialist camp' (meaning the USA, Great Britain, France and West Germany) and criticising anything that smacked of a preference for accommodation with the United States.[17] Although, according to Zubok, Brezhnev himself was desperate to avoid war, the hawkish disposition of his colleagues and advisers in the newly-renamed Politburo – who believed that a major war with the USA was inevitable due to the latter's 'beastly colonial nature, aggressiveness, war-mongering', and wanted to meet the challenge head on[18] – would now become the prevailing current in Soviet political discourse, including that of the emerging leader himself.

Brezhnev's speech to the 1966 Kremlin reception for graduates of the USSR's military academies – an oration clearly intended to inspire the new officers with special fervour, and reprinted in *Komsomol'skaya pravda* for the edification of all the country's youth – thus summed up the Soviet view of the international situation. Although the USSR was 'deeply confident' of its future, said Brezhnev, it would be an 'unforgivable error' to 'weaken [our] revolutionary vigilance or [our] efforts to strengthen the country's defensive power', since the 'general crisis of capitalism, the sharpening of its contradictions, [had] led to an increase in the adventurism and aggression of imperialism.' Specifically, he claimed, this was to be seen in the recent behaviour of the USA: its 'unending, criminal, barbarian war' in Vietnam, 'new provocations' by its 'warmongers' against 'revolutionary' Cuba, and what the Soviet leader described as 'American imperialism's excessively heartfelt kisses (*chereschur serdechnye lobzaniya*) with West German revanchists'. Brezhnev traced a direct line from these manifestations

[17] Zubok (2009a), pp. 193-194.
[18] On Brezhnev's desire to avoid war, see Zubok (2009a), p. 202; on the 'beastly colonial' USA, see Zubok, (2009a), p. 197.

of the 'cunning (*kovarstvo*) and cruelty of imperialism' to the 'bandit invasion by imperialist Hitlerite Germany and the beginning of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people' – a war which, he said, 'taught our Party and the entire Soviet people a great deal', including principally the 'sacred duty', appreciated 'by the entire people', of 'tirelessly strengthening the defensive power of the state.' Reflecting on the USSR's 'military might' was not a matter of 'bragging or trying to frighten anyone', but a reflection of 'the actual situation at the present time', which for the USSR – but not for the USA – was improving year on year.[19] As a result of 'crimes' committed in Vietnam, Brezhnev told his audience, 'the prestige of the USA [had] never been so low'.[20]

According to Serhy Yekelchyk, the whipping-up of popular hatred – a feature of the official response to Nazi occupation during the war that was transferred to American 'imperialism' towards the end of the 1940s – was an approach which 'Stalin's successors chose to abandon […] not just because it was linked to terror and total war, but also because [public hatred] was the least successful of the obligatory Soviet "civic emotions."'[21] In the decade following Stalin's death, Khrushchev's foreign policy did indeed emphasise 'peaceful coexistence' with the rest of the world; but from 1964 onward, discussion of international relations again began to take a harsher tone.

On the one hand, Brezhnev-era propaganda relied fairly heavily on positive civic and internationalist sentiment(ality), uncovering the heroism of peoples around the world who were fighting colonial powers, and playing up the USSR's own heroism by association with them. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* and other newspapers carried vast numbers of articles on the 'heroic Vietnamese

[19] 'Mogushchee edinstvo Armii i naroda. Rech' tovarishcha L. I. Brezhneva', *KP*, 3 July 1966, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).
[20] 'Mogushchee edinstvo…' (1966), p. 2.
[21] Serhy Yekelchyk, 'The Civic Duty to Hate: Stalinist Citizenship as Political Practice and Civic Emotion (Kiev, 1943-53)', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7 (2006), 529-556 (quotation p. 556).

people', with still more dealing with events in other countries. The results of independence struggles in Africa or Asia could be made to sound like completely natural extensions of the Soviet way of life: for example, a 1965 TASS evocation of celebrations in Khartoum for the 9th anniversary of the Sudanese declaration of independence – with their military parades, and a 'Fallen Heroes' Square' in which 'tens of thousands of inhabitants of the capital' gathered to hear the Prime Minister's speech – created an implicit parallel to solemn Soviet holidays.[22] Reports on practical manifestations of Soviet solidarity with such peoples portrayed the people, Party, and army of the Soviet Union as working to further the cause of justice and peace across the world – as in a *Pravda* article of 19 March 1968, which claimed that raising the equivalent of one worker's daily pay, every day, for a special fund in support of Vietnamese resistance efforts, had 'become a rule of life' in 'countless' factories and plants across the USSR.[23]

On the other hand, the more fiery newspaper articles were filled with rhetoric that far outstripped anything Brezhnev himself had to say to the newly-graduated officers of 1966. References to the monstrosity of Nazism were still current in recollections of the Great Patriotic War and – as an article published on Victory Day 1968 in the regional youth newspaper *Komsomolets Kubani* put it – there could be no forgetting, because the Nazi legacy was alive and well, hampered only by continuing Soviet vigilance:

> Порой хочется ее позабыть, отбросить, отговориться от нее, как от кошмарного сна. Но как забыть десятки миллионов людей, погибших на полях сражений, погребенных под развалинами городов и сел, расстрелянных и замученных фашистскими извергами? […]
>
> Многое в сегодняшней сложной и бурной политической жизнь заставляет вспоминать пепелища минувшей войны и держать порох сухим. Агрессоры тщетно пытаются поставить на колени героический вьетнамский народ,

[22] 'Natsional'nyi prazdnik v Sudane', *Pr*, 2 February 1965, p. 1.
[23] Irina Levchenko, 'Solidarnost'', *Pr*, 19 March 1968, p. 4. Campaigns such as the one reported here clearly did find resonance amongst the Soviet population: one of Donald Raleigh's informants recalls his own sincere conviction that 'all the people working in the Soviet Union [should] give a portion of their wages to help battle against American imperialism' in Vietnam (Raleigh (2012), pp. 256-257).

> тянутся к атомному оружию западногерманские неонацисты и реваншисты...[24]

An extraordinary level of pathos was kept up across the range of propaganda, often with little concern for nonviolent sensibilities or childish innocence. A widely-used history textbook for ten-years-olds, updated and reissued in many languages almost annually throughout the Brezhnev period, included graphic descriptions of Nazi violence against Soviet children, followed directly by first-person appeals to modern schoolchildren to be worthy of their predecessors.[25] In her work on literature and cultural institutions for Soviet youth, Lisa Ryoko Wakamiya has uncovered further examples of direct, second-person-singular appeals to the reader, high emotionalism, and insistence on the romance of Soviet life and the Soviet citizen's calling, this time in the Molodaya gvardiya publishing house series *Tebe v dorogu, romantik*, which between 1964 and 1979 re-issued a number of classic heroic narratives from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Citing the preface to the 1964 edition of Boris Polevoi's *Story of a Real Man* (*Povest' o nastoyashchem cheloveke*) (which informed the reader, 'A romantic – that is you. You likewise dream of victories for the glory of your Motherland […]. [O]ur books will help you find answers to many questions [about life]'), Wakamiya suggests that this Komsomol-backed discourse was an intentional response to the romanticism of *unofficial* youth activity during the 1960s. Yet according to Wakamiya, this response was only partial: 'Neither the address to the reader nor the foreword suggests how the young reader might use the novel to integrate war-era models of heroism into postwar life or make the

[24] I. Khalipov, 'Pust' pomnit mir spasennyi', *Komsomolets kubani*, 9 May 1968, p. 1. For another simultaneous verbal attack on '*amerikanskie imperialisty*' in Vietnam, see S. Matevosian, 'Bessmerten podvig naroda', *KP*, 22 June 1966, p. 3.
[25] T. S. Golubeva and L. S. Gellershtein, *Rasskazy po istorii SSSR dlya 4 klassa: uchebnaya kniga*, 6th edn (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1976), pp. 165-194.

transition from adolescence into adulthood, aside from treating the book as a venerated object.'[26]

More can be said about official expectations of young people in the Brezhnev period if the Molodaya gvardiya series is viewed in its context as part of a wider Party-sponsored discourse of youth heroism and romanticism. In 1966, the 23rd Congress of the CPSU declared 'revolutionary romanticism' to be the guiding spirit of Soviet youth, defining the concept as the love of 'feats of labour, human gratitude (*chelovecheskoe blagorodstvo*), high spiritual ideals, readiness to defend the Motherland from any encroachments by enemies.'[27] Thereafter, a wealth of newspaper articles and other propaganda materials bear witness to the twin convictions of those in power that the proper 'path' for Soviet youth was the 'road of our fathers' glory' (*doroga slavy ottsov*), and that any right-thinking young person would recognise his elders' 'footsteps' as marking the (only) way. And concrete actions were taken to set him on the right path. In addition to the 'voluntary' activities – such as sport, juvenile law-enforcement brigades, study of local history, and contact with veterans – that this thesis examines, new legislation sought to return military service to the centre of Soviet life. In-school military instruction for boys (abolished on 9th February 1962, as part of the programme of reductions in the scale of the armed forces) was re-established by the Conscription Law of October 1967 and the Military Service Law of June 1968, which mandated two hours per week of training, plus attendance at summer camps, for male pupils in the ninth and tenth classes.[28] These compulsory activities served as preparation for the military service

[26] Lisa Ryoko Wakamiya, 'Literature and Cultural Institutions by and for Soviet and Post-Soviet Youth', in *Russian Children's Literature and Culture,* ed. by Marina Balina and Larissa Rudova (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 113-126 (p. 117).
[27] *XXIII s''ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza. 29 marta–8 aprelya 1966 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet.* 2 vols (Moscow: Politizdat, 1966), I, pp. 94-95.
[28] Compulsory military training for girls and younger children had already been abolished by a decree of 13 August 1946, and was not reinstated. However, the new requirements of the mid-1960s were sufficient to generate an enormous network of training facilities and instructors (Mervyn Matthews, *Education in the*

requirement reinstated by the two laws, which lowered the draft age from nineteen to eighteen, reduced the period of active service from three years to two, and provided for a draft twice yearly instead of only once.[29]

The legislative push to get young men into the army was naturally accompanied by a campaign of propaganda and persuasion. However, the nature of the material is worth closer attention. One example, a February 1972 article from the Belorussian daily newspaper *Grodnenskaya pravda*, was published just prior to the spring conscription round, but focused instead on the excitement of life as an officer. Remarkably – given that the article was penned by V. Esaulov, an officer of the Grodno military command and thus a member of a military establishment vehemently opposed to any change in the USSR's stance towards the United States – this open letter to the boys of Grodno lacked any dire warnings about imperialist designs on the USSR, explicit discussion of the defence of the Motherland, or even mention of the legal obligation to perform military service. Claiming that 'the Party, the Soviet people see in the young generation the heirs and continuers of heroic revolutionary and military traditions, deeply committed to the work of communism, real heroes of our time', the article appealed to a presumed sense of filial piety and respect for tradition, alongside an enthusiasm for rockets, planes, and Leninist teachings:

> Профессия офицера – героическая и почетная. Для советского офицера нет выше и благороднее долга, чем жить и трудиться по-ленински, следовать его заветам.
>
> Юноша! Ты оканчиваешь школу, думаешь о будущей своей специальности.

Soviet Union: Policies and Institutions since Stalin (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 38 n. 9, 47.

[29] Reese (2000), p. 156. According to Reese, this attempt at universal conscription made draft-dodging a major pastime amongst young men, particularly those who had previously expected to progress uninterrupted through the education system and into professional careers. The irony of the situation – that efforts to involve more citizens in one of the state's main socialisation structures should result in mass illegal activity as those citizens scrambled to avoid it – is clear.

> Если влечет тебя романтика военной службы, если интересует ракетная техника, знай: свою мечту ты можешь осуществить, поступив в высшие инженерные зенитно-ракетные училища. […]
>
> Профессия военно-морского офицера всегда была овеяна романтикой подвига. И тем, кто мечтает служить на флоте, чьи горячие сердца полны отваги, советуем выбрать для учебы высшие военно-морские училища. […]
>
> Советскую молодежь всегда увлекала и увлекает героическая и романтическая профессия летчика. Отвага, воля, высокая идейная закалка и глубокие знания – неотъемлемые черты людей, которые связывают свою жизнь с авиацией. […]
>
> Дорогой друг! Если веришь в себя, если чувствуешь в себе силы для служения Отчизне, смело поступай в военные учебные заведения.[30]

Esaulov's article attempted to draw in young readers with mentions of named local boys who were 'following in the footsteps of their frontline fathers (*ottsov-frontovikov*)' by entering military academies in order to 'devote themselves to service in the Soviet Army', and an urgent second-person singular mode of address, but it conspicuously failed to give any concrete details of daily life in the military academy. The reader was simply urged to dream nebulous dreams of 'heroism' and 'honour', and to seek their fulfilment in officer training for a future purpose that was only vaguely alluded to. And there was no mention of the conscripted service which most young readers would in fact find themselves performing.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, military service had an indisputable image problem. For one thing, the return to universal conscription flew in the face of the reality, recognised and acted upon by Khrushchev, of the redundancy of substantial ground forces thanks to the rise of nuclear weaponry. Warfare was increasingly a job for professionals, yet the Brezhnev administration remained stubbornly committed to it as a tool for socialising youth into the heroic model of Soviet subjectivity. So how to sell it to a generation that had grown up watching the Great Patriotic War recede into history, and expected the military to play a lesser, rather than greater, role in their lives?

[30] V. Esaulov, 'Puti ottsov – dorogi synovei', *GP*, 2 February 1972, p. 4.

Surreptitiously shifting the propaganda focus from conscripted to professional service was one strategy. And others were being developed, in an ongoing attempt to capture young people's attention and draw them – as early as possible – into the heroic narrative of the Soviet people.

The border guard: A credible military hero?

If the Soviet soldier, a reluctant conscript to dangerous service in a poorly-organised army, was a problematic propaganda figure, the military establishment could at least offer an alternative in the person of the border guard. This was an essential heroic type in the Soviet imagination, not just responsible for checking identity documents and impeding the flow of contraband and undesirables into and out of the country, but as the Motherland's first line of defence against attack. In the 1930s, literature and educational material had emphasised the need for even children to display 'ceaseless "vigilance" towards the enemies of the state', and to report suspicious behaviour to the appropriate authorities. In typical 1930s fashion, the hierarchical order was carefully delineated: children might play at law enforcement, and help the authorities by providing information, but acting on that information was strictly the prerogative of the real officers whom children might dream of one day emulating.[31]

Olga Kucherenko has shown that the border guard cult increased in significance during the Great Patriotic War, when the entire Soviet population – including children – needed to be mobilised to fight the invader. In contrast to the enforced submissiveness of the 1930s, children in areas threatened with invasion were now presented with the opportunity to engage in defensive activity themselves, providing back-up to the guards struggling to repel the intruders at the border posts. As 'state frontiers became "the main

[31] Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 108-110 ('ceaseless "vigilance"' quotation p. 108).

lines of heroic manifestation" in both popular culture and public consciousness, [there emerged] an entire genre dedicated to the everyday lives and heroic deeds of border guards.'[32]

Long after the war was over, popular fascination with the border guard continued, nourished by the steady stream of propaganda reminding citizens of the threat posed by imperialist countries which, unable to reconcile themselves to the existence of socialist states, had tried and would continue trying to invade the USSR and re-establish capitalism. In commemoration of the founding of the border security force by Lenin in 1918, *Den' pogranichnika* was a fixture of the Soviet ceremonial calendar on 28th May, with short newspaper articles customarily devoted to a recapitulation of the most glorious moments in the history of the Soviet border guards, plus a reminder of the daily challenges faced by contemporary troops, who, according to one such article published in *Pravda* in 1962, 'guard the impenetrability of the Soviet border, cut off any attempts by imperialist reconnaissance to violate it'.[33]

A Komsomol report of 1966 on 'attracting young people to the defence of the USSR's borders' asserted a very definite need to increase television and radio coverage and engage 'young cinematographers, writers, poets and artists' to propagandise the efforts of the contemporary border guard.[34] Thereafter, material of fairly consistent content appeared in a steady trickle, peaking in May each year, throughout the Brezhnev period. In 1977, for example, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* serialised a seven-part 'Border Guard's Tale', ('*Povest' o pogranichnikakh*'), a series of vignettes and reports from the Soviet frontier. In the first, the popular Georgian author Nodar Dumbadze offered a nostalgic recollection of his months policing the border with Turkey, reminiscing about

[32] Kucherenko (2011), pp. 97-98.
[33] 'Chasovye sovetskikh rubezhei', *Pr*, 28 May 1962, p. 2.
[34] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, ll. 24, 26 rev.

the sense of 'unlimited' ('*bezgranichnaya*') protective love that he had felt as he stood on the watchtower looking down at an unusually big picture of everyday life. In Dumbadze's romantic portrait, every border guard looked down at the small part of the border to which he was posted and saw what was dear to him: the Georgian saw life in a Tbilisi courtyard; Ukrainians assigned to the same Adzhar village observed it knowing that their work there, far from Ukraine itself, was just as much about protecting their own plains and cornfields. Drawing a contrast between the 'calm wisdom of the people, their sturdy houses, flooded with electricity' on the Soviet side of the border, and the poverty of the dusty Turkish settlement across the trout stream marking the frontier, Dumbadze described the professional pride in knowing that those on the other side could observe not only the fact that the border guard was defending his homeland, but also the very advances that made the USSR so worthy of protection. And the differences between the two could be grave indeed:

> Граница – это еще такая речка: один берег – мир и жизнь, а другой берег – их отрицание. И по какому-то неслучайному случаю вдруг эти берега смыкаются вплотную, и происходит гибель человека.

Imagery of violence and death on the other side of the border was not confined to stories about periods of declared warfare. One of Dumbadze's colleagues, 'young, strong, brave' Petr Shcherbina, had perished falling from a rock-face as he pursued an offender, an event that Dumbadze claimed had seared into the rest of the unit the importance of protecting their country against criminal incursions. From civilian life the writer now rhetorically asked, 'How to describe the courage of these guys? It's so difficult to praise one's sons in public'.[35] The thrill of adventure was cut with the pathos of death in the defence of important ideals, a 'romantic' combination which the *Komsomol'skaya pravda*

[35] Nodar Dumbadze, 'U istoka tishin', *KP*, 12 May 1977, p. 2.

editorial staff claimed was influenced by letters from young readers keen to hear the details of arrests and the offensive weapons involved.[36]

This series, like other propaganda about Soviet military heroes, highlighted the physical and technical preparedness of the force, and related a number of stories of successful pursuits and arrests with an obvious relish for the danger inherent in its work. Glorifying danger and heroic death obviously meant acknowledging that no one individual was invincible. Rather, with every citizen ready to do his (and articles about the Soviet military inevitably did focus almost exclusively on men and boys)[37] duty without thought for personal safety, the Soviet collective would prevail as it had in the Great Patriotic War. That conflict, familiar from the storytelling of the 1970s, reappeared in the second instalment of the 'Border Guard's Tale' (by the secretary of the border guards' Komsomol organisation) complete with many of the accepted clichés. In its presentation of its hero, the sketch validated the Stalinist axiom that to fall into enemy hands was in itself treason, and death the only honourable outcome:

> До последней капли крови, не жалея сил и самой жизни, будем бить ненавистного врага, клялись они. И клятву свою выполнили. Тяжело раненный снайпер Морозов, чтобы не попасть в плен к врагу, подорвал себя гранатой. В окопе был убит лейтенант Азанов…
>
> Двадцать дней и ночей держалась лесная крепость. Четырнадцать из них – в полном окружении. Двадцать дней мужества вошли в историю пограничных войск.

[36] B. Pilipenko, 'Strazhi otechestva', *KP*, 28 May 1977, p. 2.

[37] In the early summer of 1977, one article focused on women in connection with the contemporary Soviet military: entitled 'Lyubit – ne lyubit?', and apparently prompted by the 'very personal' letters of lovelorn soldiers imploring the editorial board for advice, it filled almost half a page with 'thoughts on the "eternal" theme of soldiers' letters' – and, in particular, the reluctance of modern girls faithfully to wait out their boyfriends' military service. The article carefully weighed up the positions of both sexes, but the men-on-duty, women-supporting-in-the-rear axiom remained unquestioned even in the discussion of male-female relationships during the Great Patriotic War (M. Voznesensky, 'Lyubit – ne lyubit?', *KP*, 16 June 1977, p. 4). During the same period, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* published one article illustrated with a picture of a woman holding a gun: a strongly negative piece on the militarisation of Israeli society. The photograph caption read, 'Woman instructor leads class for new recruits', its gender marking implying that the routine involvement of women in military service was the undesirable product of a generally disordered system (V. Simonov, 'Pravee nekuda', *KP*, 27 May 1977, p. 3).

Returning to the present, the author described the memorial monuments and practices by which the wartime unit's 1970s successors remembered the earlier generation and resolved to emulate them.[38]

Themes of benevolent paternal authority and filial piety surfaced in later instalments, too: Part five, for example, surveyed the career of a decorated thirty-year-old border guard captain who had made his unit into such a *kollektiv* that conscripts were reluctant to leave when their military service came to an end.[39] The sixth instalment, a selection of diary entries by a lieutenant newly posted to the border guard unit where he had been born during his father's tour of duty, likewise hinted at the socialising functions of Soviet military service. The diarist recorded his pleasure at receiving a letter from the Party organiser at the factory in Dneprodzerzhinsk where one of the unit's former conscripts now worked, thanking the border guards 'for bringing up [*chto vospitali*] a good worker'. Family-like ties within the larger Soviet community also featured in the description of the unit's relationship with the local kolkhoz, which viewed the guards as 'sons' of its older generation and 'older brothers' for its youth, and provided regular gifts of fresh produce in gratitude for the help that the guards provided on kolkhoz *subbotniki*.[40]

Alongside the focus on the military socialisation process and the development of proper relationships between members of society, the 'Border Guard's Tale' sought to foster a sense of pride in belonging to the largest country on Earth, with its enormous, varied and sometimes intimidating terrain guarded by military outposts located on steppes, mountain ranges, farmlands and frozen seas. Part three of the serial evoked the

[38] V. Makartsev, 'Zastava pomnit', *KP*, 13 May 1977, p. 2. For a slightly earlier account, this time from a local newspaper, strikingly similar in its depiction of border guards 'represent[ing] the multinational family of the Soviet peoples' swearing oaths of allegiance before a bronze bust commemorating a 1930s officer killed in the line of duty, see '28 May – den' pogranichnika', *GP*, 27 May 1972, p. 1.
[39] L. Kapelyushny and B. Pilipenko, 'Tishina vzryvaetsya mgnovenno', *KP*, 22 May 1977, p. 4.
[40] V. Vorob'ev, 'Pervyi mesyats na zastave ottsa', *KP*, 25 May 1977, p. 2.

breathtaking vistas of the Tian Shan Mountains on the border between Kyrgyzstan and China: 'No human foot had stepped here before. This place, all coloured brown on geographical maps, was known as the kingdom of the snow-leopard and the argali [mountain sheep].' If such places justifiably inspired awe, suggested the essay, they were nonetheless the rightful province of the *komsomol'tsy-otlichniki* of the Soviet border force, who, with all their powers of movement across treacherous terrain – 'nimble and silent, like the mountain leopard' – also inspired legends of their own as they tackled mountain passes with bulldozers. During off-duty periods, members of the unit were collecting materials for their own museum of military history, proving themselves exemplary models for other Komsomol groups across the USSR.[41]

Parts four and seven offered more visions of the border guards overcoming extremes of geography and climate at the farthest edges of the country: racing to rescue the crew and cargo of a Soviet freighter wrecked during one of the nine-month winters typical of the Bering Strait, or offering aid to icebound locals in Kamchatka even as they scoured the seas in search of malefactors.[42] While musical entertainments tinkled across the airwaves from neighbouring Alaska, the seventh instalment suggested, the Soviet military on Ratmanov Island – on the International Date Line, the first place on Earth to start the new day – were checking the apparatus and honing the skills that would give them mastery over their hostile physical environment.[43] Taken together, the sequence of vignettes depicted a military force encircling a territory of staggering proportions, its disciplined members drawn from every part of the USSR and perfectly distributed across the varied terrains so as to make best use of their talents. Sophisticated equipment was at their disposal, they were fast and fit and determined to pursue those who would threaten

[41] P. Medvid','Chasovye perevala', *KP*, 14 May 1977, p. 2.
[42] A. Vinogradov, 'Takaya trudnaya ataka', *KP*, 15 May 1977, p. 4.
[43] N. Dadabaev, 'Ostrov Ratmanova', *KP*, 27 May 1977, p. 4.

the good order of the USSR, and Soviet civilians could be assured of their protection and help whatever the situation demanded.

Even having published this intensive series, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* admitted, in an interview with Major General Yu. A. Neshumov, head of the Soviet Border Force, that the subject was 'far from exhausted'. Neshumov, agreeing, expressed hope that the paper would continue to devote attention to the border guard theme, and 'not just on the eve of our holiday [*Den' pogranichnika*]'. While recognising both the desire of the young reader for a good adventure story, and that of the *Komsomol'skaya pravda* editorial staff to oblige, he reminded the interviewer of a legendary veteran's observation that 'the natural state of the border is quiet', and cautioned against an excessive interest in thrilling pursuits and arrests. Instead, Neshumov stressed the 'difficult, sometimes unremarkable everyday work, which at first glance is not really very romantic', but which required skill, mental acuity and a high degree of ideological preparedness on the part of the guard. This head of the Soviet border force (which was administratively a division of the KGB) laid much importance on the work of guards at customs checkpoints, who contributed to the defence of the USSR by inhibiting the passage of those who sought entry 'to put it mildly, not with good intentions', bearing 'brochures, books with anti-Soviet content, hidden […] in the most inaccessible places.' Since such incidents were in fact rather common, said Neshumov, it was 'wholly natural that our border guard must have high moral and military qualities, ideological resilience, so that in the battle with ideological saboteurs [he should] always emerge victorious'.[44]

Stories of the border guards across the USSR were explicitly intended to function as an inducement to military service, and were integrated into the programmes of military-patriotic education that all Soviet schools were expected to deliver. By the 1960s

[44] Pilipenko (1977).

and 1970s, veteran *pogranichniki* of the 1941-1945 war were scattered all over the country and corresponded with school groups by letter, but schoolwork involving the history of the border force was still most effective for pupils living relatively near to the country's international frontiers. Prior to the 'liberation of Western Belorussia' in 1939, wrote V. I Dikevich, director of a secondary school in Minsk Oblast' in a 1970 pedagogical manual, the school's proximity to the then-border had allowed it to form close links with the local military unit. The relationship had been maintained even as the border and its guards shifted west, and since 1964 pupils from the fifth to the tenth classes had been involved in in the '*Poisk*' club led by a council of senior officers from the unit. Beginning with letters to authors of books devoted to the Soviet border guards, and visits to veterans of the Brest siege still resident in the locality, club members had sought out other survivors to request accounts of their experiences. According to the school director, when the former border guards and partisans told their stories of kidnapping enemy officers and blowing up supply lines, there was no need to draw any artificial 'educational (*vospitatel'nye*) conclusions': the teenage listeners would gaze upon the storyteller 'with admiration and envy'.[45] Whether listening to veterans or to soldiers currently serving on the Belorussian border, the pupils of the school in Minsk Oblast' had come to expect an interesting and unusual story, claimed Dikevich. And when school groups were taken to visit the units in action, they got to see all of it for themselves:

> На заставах ребята вместе с пограничниками идут на охрану границу. Какая это прекрасная школа бдительности и дисциплинированности! И с какой силой повседневные дела пограничников воспитывают любовь к Родине! Побывав на заставах, говорят учащиеся, мы стали лучше понимать истоки героизма часовых нашей Родины. Ведь днем и ночью, в любую погоду они на посту. Вслушиваются в каждый шорох и всматриваются буквально в каждую

[45] V. I. Dikevich, 'Shkol'nyi muzei, posvyashchenyi geroicheskim traditsiyam pogranichnikov', in *Voenno-patrioticheskoe vospitanie v obuchenie istorii pri izuchenii Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soyuza (1941-1945 gg.). Sbornik statei*, ed. by N. G. Dairi (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1970), pp. 126-132 (p. 130).

> пядь земли. И все это – с неотступной мыслью о Родине, с сознанием величайшей ответственности за ее безопасность![46]

The approach as Dikevich described it appeared to be working: in the 1967-68 academic year, his school had been able to congratulate itself on sending eleven leavers on to military academies, while others still studying joined Komsomol *agitbrigady* spreading stories of war heroes into other local schools.[47] These would have been significant achievements in the geographical context, given the historical lack of trust between the Bolshevik government and its borderland population.[48] If, by the 1970s, the loyalty of the western Belorussians was perhaps less questioned than that of some of the other 'peripheral' Soviet ethnic groups, the significance of contact with the armed forces as part of the socialisation of unformed youth remained.

Like Nodar Dumbadze and his co-authors in their later *Komsomol'skaya pravda* serial, the school director Dikevich collapsed the infinite variety of the Soviet territory into the experience of the generic, all-seeing *pogranichnik*, painting an attractive picture of the virtually unlimited possibilities awaiting the new recruit to the force. The representation of space thus played an important role in the cult of the Soviet border guard. In the watchtower (built by the state) which enabled his superior powers of vision and hearing, the heroic *pogranichnik* literally occupied an elevated position to which young people could aspire. Stories of contemporary border policing, aimed at young people of the 1960s and 1970s, often made more of the guard's protective gaze over his own people than of the invaders he was supposed to be protecting them against. In some cases, for example in the Tian Shan mountains, intruders were said to be very rare, the

[46] Dikevich (1970), p. 131.
[47] Dikevich (1970), p. 132.
[48] Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1917-1993* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), p. 5.

suggestion being that only the Soviet border guards really enjoyed mastery over such inhospitable territory:

> О трудностях службы здесь рассказывать не любят. Нарушителей границы в этом году не было. Пока. Но они могут быть. В любую минуту. Поэтому пограничники начеку.[49]

Along other sections of the Soviet frontier, located in less extreme terrain, the job of border policing required similar dedication to the security of the country, but fewer expert skills. Even children could do it. In this, border-guarding activity was consistent with the general thrust of officially-mandated social life in the 1960s, wherein citizens were expected to join '*druzhiny*', or unpaid civilian patrols, to police behaviour and enforce aspects of the law.[50] A series of reports of the Komsomol Central Committee from the summer of 1966, for example, shows that the Soviet youth movement was keen to involve increasing numbers of young people from frontier areas of the USSR in frontier work assigned as a matter of routine rather than emergency. Focusing on the Azerbaijani SSR, the authors of one submission boasted of 70 brigades involving 1500 school pupils at the Prishibin and Lenkoran outposts alone.[51]

The Komsomol considered the work of '*pogranichnye druzhiny*', including Pioneer-aged children (who were apparently even taught how to check the documents of individuals wishing to cross the Soviet frontier),[52] to be of genuine value in the fight against border violations.[53] The report cited a number of cases, including that of eighth-

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[49] Medvid' (1977), p. 2.

[50] On the tasks and functions of *druzhiny* and their place in Khrushchev's scheme for the self-administration of communist society, see Kharkhordin (1999), pp. 279-328, and Robert G. Wesson, 'Volunteers and Soviets', *Soviet Studies*, 15 (1964), 231-249. For a discussion of the work (and failures) of *druzhiny* in the context of the BAM construction project – which, like the border *druzhiny*, employed children and young people to perform law-enforcement tasks of special relevance to a geographically specific (albeit very large) zone – see Ward (2009), pp. 49-53.

[51] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, 'Zapiski, spravki otdela po rabote komsomol'skikh organizatsii po privlecheniyu molodezhi k okhrane gosudarstvennoi granitsy SSSR', l. 6.

[52] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 6.

[53] On '*revolyutsionnaya bditel'nost'*', see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 8. For the report's observations on the improvements to border security resulting from the involvement of schoolchildren, including some statistics, see ll. 21-22.

grade schoolgirl Mardzhan Alieva, who was working on a tea plantation in the Astara region of Azerbaijan when she spotted an unknown woman mingling among the locals. Alerted by the vigilant Komsomol member, the authorities found that 'she' was actually a man, disguised in traditional women's garb in an attempt to cross the border illegally.[54] Most studies of Soviet politics and society, however, emphasise reinforcement of social expectations and socialisation of young people into the mechanisms of mutual surveillance as the most important function of *druzhina* activity. In the Komsomol's own documents about the work of the '*Yunye druz'ya pogranichnika*' ('Young Friends of the Border Guards'), these goals are expressed chiefly as increasing children's 'revolutionary vigilance (*revolyutsionnaya bditel'nost'*)' and, as a particularly useful effect of working alongside real military units, a solid preparation for service in the Soviet armed forces.

Yet for all the self-congratulation over the effectiveness of such schemes, the Komsomol's internal documents highlight the loyalty of borderland populations as a continuing source of concern to the authorities. In Komsomol programmes for the continuing training of serving border guards (including lectures with titles such as 'The State Frontier of the Motherland: Sacred and Impenetrable'),[55] as in propaganda for Soviet civilians, the existence of a strong border presence was always understood to be necessitated by the possibility of the peaceful USSR's invasion by hostile outsiders. Of the examples of successful border control missions mentioned in the Komsomol's internal reports of 1966, however, not a single one involved imperialists trying to infiltrate the Soviet Union from outside. Though the reports never openly admit as much, from the evidence they cite it would appear that in reality, Soviet border guards spent most of the time apprehending not dangerous invaders, nor even freeloaders desiring to

[54] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 7.
[55] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 26 rev.

take advantage of the USSR's superior social systems, but their own disaffected (or just bored) compatriots. And even if among the latter was occasionally to be found a 'dangerous criminal, recidivist, who had tried to get over the border twice already',[56] many were simply young people curious about life on the other side – like the three misguided young Azeri men, all in their late teens or early twenties, who had watched too much bourgeois television emanating from the USSR's southern neighbours and were caught one day attempting to cross the border from Azerbaijan in order, wrote one investigator with heavy irony, to 'reach that paradise'.[57]

Involving children and youths in frontier work, with practical action supplemented by lectures and meetings with distinguished veterans of that branch of the military,[58] was thus seen by the Komsomol as partly a prophylactic measure, educating them in the importance of so-called 'border hygiene' before they too fell prey to counterpropaganda from the Soviet Union's unfriendly neighbours. Perpetuating a heroic image of the border guard was crucial to the success of such an endeavour. Unfortunately, however, the Komsomol's own findings also gave the lie to the claims being made about the character of the *pogranichnik* himself. Komsomol reports indicated that 'inadequacies' in Soviet border policing were not limited to a lower-than-hoped-for output of verse about the romance of life at the frontier post. Rank-and-file border guards were for the most part ordinary young people who, due to a lack of suitable resources in the languages of the various Soviet nationalities, were not even necessarily particularly well educated in political and social theory. This made them vulnerable to many of the same 'ideological diversions' as their friends not employed as border guards, a danger which was only

[56] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, ll. 5-6.
[57] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 11.
[58] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 23.

intensified by the fact that they spent their entire working day staring over the frontier at (misleading, but nonetheless superficially attractive) bourgeois cars and houses:

> [Н]а особо опасном направлении государственной границы находится застава No. 16 [...]. Воины-пограничники ежедневно видятся с жандармами иранской полиции, несущий охрану иранской границы, видят их объекты, жилые строения и т.д. Но ни в ленинской комнате, ни библиотеке, ни спальных помещениях не найти стенда, подборки методических материалов, которые бы воспитывали в советском пограничнике ненависть к классовому врагу.[59]

In chapters Three and Four, I show how elite athletes, another social group characteristically celebrated as the cream of Soviet youth and the country's great hope in the face of external hostility, provoked a very similar anxiety. Many of the same stock educational strategies for ideological training and re-training were employed in their case as well. One difference was that whereas the inadequacies of athletes were used as material for moralistic articles in the press, those of soldiers, sailors, airmen and border guards were not. If, in Kharkhordin's words, 'the army served as a primary means of resocialization',[60] by definition working with human material only partially formed by the school and the Komsomol, it was nonetheless virtually unheard of for the media openly to criticise conditions in or members of the armed forces. Findings such as those in the Komsomol's reports on border guards were strictly for the information of officials, not the general public. The only acceptable public context for even the suggestion of improper behaviour by members of the Soviet armed forces was the *bildungsroman*-type article illustrating the socialising power of the military, in which a recruit's progress from callow youth to responsible citizen – from 'spontaneity' to 'consciousness', in Katerina Clark's schema[61] – was outlined, with the focus firmly on a satisfactory result already guaranteed.

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[59] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, l. 13; see also ll. 14-18.
[60] Kharkhordin (1999), p. 310. For a more detailed discussion of the army as an institution of political and general education (and of its typical failure to deliver on that score), see Reese (2000), pp. 71-77.
[61] Clark (2000), pp. 15-24.

While formulaically setting out various 'inadequacies' (some in fact rather serious) in the work of the border guard, even the authors of the Komsomol's confidential critical reports largely still subscribed to the notion that the occupation was an inherently heroic one, which ought to be presented to the public as such. It was seen as entirely right, for example, to involve cultural workers in painting for the population at large the same kind of mythologised, romanticised portrait of the defender of the Soviet soil that had been circulating with such vigour since the Great Patriotic War. Komsomol discourse addressed to border guards themselves also sought to perpetuate this image, as in the address to officers graduating from the Moscow Military Border Academy (*pogranichnoe voennoe uchilishche*).[62] In fact, so much of the heroic discourse surrounding the figure of the border guard was directed at border guards themselves, that it is entirely possible that Komsomol officials simply hoped to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, with continuously-invoked reminders of their glorious predecessors would inspiring new generations to be ready to give up everything in defence of their Motherland.

Such an approach was consistent with the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism of 1961, which set out the expected relation of the Soviet citizen to society so as to facilitate the transition to full communism. Since its authors had recognised the need to codify the rules of social engagement in the first place, it is fair to assume that they saw the attainment of these principles as a gradual, if imperative, process, and anticipated further propaganda campaigns directed at specific sections of the population. For its part, the Komsomol acknowledged its role in the educational process, and formulated numerous programmes designed to achieve the required objectives. Attempting to involve young people from frontier areas in border policing, while

[62] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 6, ll. 1-3.

constantly reiterating to them the necessity and inevitability of socialism, was one such; as we shall see, there were also heavily publicised alternatives for the majority not fortunate enough to have the excitement of being in the first line of potential enemy attack.

How, in practice, the *pogranichnik* or other 'defender of the Motherland' would demonstrate readiness to protect the USSR at all costs, in the absence of the promised imperialist invader, is a different and more problematic question. While particularly acute for the citizen employed in a role specifically devoted to military defence, the problem touched a range of propaganda target groups to a greater or lesser extent. Did internalising the desire to live up to the example of past generations leave the soldier, the border guard, the Komsomol member or the Pioneer in the uncomfortable position of having to long for the horrors of war to be unleashed on the Soviet Union once again, in order that he or she might have the opportunity to demonstrate his or her devotion and be a hero in the same way?

Ready for Labour and Defence

As the remaining chapters of this thesis will show, the Party-state continued to have demanding expectations of Soviet youth (who continued to respond in a multiplicity of ways). Organising citizens into *druzhiny* in order to involve them in the work of law enforcement was, according to Kharkhordin, an important feature of Khrushchev's drive to realise a fully communist society by developing people's ability to police and reform themselves and each other so as to make the state redundant. However, it is clear from the language in which the Komsomol discussed the work of the border-policing *druzhiny* that, by the latter half of the 1960s, the intention was to train young citizens not to *take over* functions thus far considered the prerogative of the state, but to work with and fulfil obligations towards a state that had no immediate plans to wither away. Membership of

the *Yunye druz'ya pogranichnika* was intended to offer opportunities for acquiring some of the skills and attitudes required for successful service in the Soviet armed forces and wider society. But it was far from the only means of engaging the population with regime priorities. Other methods with greater reach were available, most notably Union-wide programmes for physical culture and sport, designed to include all age groups and be provided at places of work and education.

The place of physical culture in Soviet plans for the development of a new breed of citizen, capable of building and defending socialism, has been well documented.[63] In Russia immediately after the 1917 revolution, sport was subordinate to the exigencies of civil war. The decree establishing Vsevobuch (*Vseoobshchee voennoe obuchenie grazhdan SSSR*), the organisation that would control Soviet sport until 1923, emphasised physical culture as part of a general course of 'compulsory military instruction' for 'citizens' (again meaning workers and peasants) aged 18 to 40.[64] A similarly utilitarian perspective was in evidence in the Party's first document devoted wholly to sport, the resolution of the *orgburo TsK RKP(b)* of 13 July 1925, which defined the following purposes of Soviet physical culture:

> физическое воспитание трудящихся, их оздоровление, культурно-хозяйственная подготовка (часть культурно-просветительной работы и повышение производительности труда), военная подготовка, морально-волевое воспитание, организация и объединение трудящихся масс вокруг партии и общественных организаций, содействие укреплению международного единства трудящихся.[65]

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[63] See, for example, Susan Grant, *Physical Culture and Sport in Soviet Society: Propaganda, Acculturation, and Transformation in the 1920s and 1930s* (New York: Routledge, 2013), James Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 68-182; 'GTO. Vserossiiskii fizkul'turno-sportivnyi kompleks 'Gotov k trudu i oborone', n.d., Ministerstvo Sporta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://gto.ru/history> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[64] 'Dekret VTsIK ob obyazatel'nom obuchenii voennomu iskusstvu, prinyatyi v zasedanii Vserossiiskogo Tsentral'nogo Ispol'nitel'nogo Komiteta Soveta rabochikh, soldatskikh, krest'yanskikh i kazach'ikh deputatov 22 aprelya 1918 g.', Istoricheskie istochniki na russkom yazyke v Internete (Elektronnaya biblioteka Istoricheskogo fakul'tete MGU im. M. V. Lomonosova), 2 January 2010, <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/DEKRET/18-04-22.htm> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[65] *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' po fizicheskoi kul'ture i sportu,* ed. by G. I. Kukushkin. 3 vols (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Fizkul'tura i sport', 1962), II, available online at

Even as ideas of leisure and recreation emerged, the state's own purposes in providing sports facilities were never far from view. James Riordan has argued that as the 1930s progressed, the expansion of mass sporting facilities and 'all manner of competitive sports […] with mass spectator appeal [had] all the appendages of a sub-system consciously designed to provide general recreation for the fast-growing urban populace.' Recreation could be put to the larger purpose of encouraging a collective spirit amongst newly industrialised populations, distracting them from the difficult conditions of everyday life, and fostering a belief in the ability of socialism to create human happiness.[66] All told, perhaps the best overall description is Susan Grant's: the purpose of Soviet sport was to encourage all Soviet citizens to 'interact with the state's cultural programmes on a physical and emotional level', turning them away from harmful activities and into citizens in step with the Party's aspirations for the country as a whole.[67]

In 1930, having identified a need to involve young citizens more systematically in physical culture, and to measure their progress against concrete indicators, the Komsomol proposed a formal 'unified all-Union sporting classification system', entitled *Gotov k trudu i oborone* (GTO), or 'Ready for Labour and Defence'. Adopted by the All-Union Council for Physical Culture of the USSR Central Executive Committee and introduced across the USSR on 11 March 1931, the programme consisted of standardised tests in which all citizens were supposed to participate under the strapline '*massovost' i masterstvo*' (mass involvement and mastery). Performance was measured according to age category in fifteen physical disciplines – from the straightforwardly athletic, such as running, jumping and swimming, to unmistakeably defence-related activity such as throwing a hand grenade and carrying a heavy ammunition box (not to mention riding a

<http://sport-history.ru/physicalculture/item/f00/s02/e0002135/index.shtml> [accessed 4 January 2017].
[66] Riordan (1977), pp. 148-150 (quotation p. 148).
[67] Grant (2013), p. 56.

horse for one kilometre while wearing a gas mask).[68] According to Riordan, the title of the GTO programme was accurate in naming labour first and defence only second, since '[t]he Soviet leaders were dealing with a still predominantly rural population and were concerned with transforming a relatively raw labour force in the throes of a giant industrialisation campaign.'[69] Increasingly, however, regime priorities for population engagement were coming to reflect Stalin's perception of an increasing threat of 'military attack and attempts to restore bourgeois relations' by capitalist enemies, requiring 'the entire people to be kept in a state of combat-readiness'.[70]

In Riordan's assessment, the 1930s system of civilian physical training did indeed prove successful (if unquantifiably so) in forming 'reserves of people who were physically fit, who could endure long months of fatigue, thirst and hunger, and who had been trained in the sort of discipline and moral qualities valuable in war.'[71] Similarly, in the decades after the 1941-1945 war, physical culture was seen as an essential part of reconstruction efforts. In the relative privacy of a seminar organised by the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee for political leaders of the 1972 Olympic sports teams, A. I Golubev, deputy head of the USSR Department of Health Protection, described the significance of understanding sport and physical culture as part of 'the sphere of health protection' as its potential to help reduce state expenditure on the medical treatment of preventable illnesses, and to increase the economic productivity of a country that had still not fully recovered from wartime damage.[72] This rationale was expressed in publicly available material too, but slightly less baldly: just as the newspapers of the 1930s had done, late-Soviet propaganda operated in Socialist Realist mode. Writers glossed over the

[68] 'GTO. Vserossiiskii fizkul'turno-sportivnyi kompleks 'Gotov k trudu i oborone', n.d., Ministerstvo Sporta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://gto.ru/history> [accessed 4 January 2017].
[69] Riordan (1977), p. 152.
[70] I. Stalin, 'Otvet t-shu Ivanovu Ivanu Filippovichu', *Pr*, 14 February 1938, p. 3.
[71] Riordan (1977), p. 154.
[72] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 45-79.

economic and social problems that made action imperative, focusing instead on the expected results in order to offer readers a glimpse of 'life as it is becoming'.[73] As late as 1987, the authors of the Raduga Press volume *Soviet Sport: The Success Story* echoed the earliest Bolshevik propaganda for production gymnastics as they quoted sociologists' claims that sport aided Soviet economic productivity by improving not only workers' physical fitness and stamina, but also the mental agility of those in white-collar jobs, 'promot[ing] initiative and enterprise among managers.'[74]

Propaganda for the international readership certainly did tend to imply that universal high-quality provision of sports facilities was the current reality for all citizens, describing it as a manifestation of 'the paramount distinguishing feature of our society, [the fact] that it cares for all its members without exception'.[75] Evidence to the contrary is easily found, not only in archived government and Party documents that were never intended for public consumption, and in oral history work with informants from the former USSR,[76] but also in mass-circulation Soviet publications of the period. Here, critical articles by the newspapers' own journalists, as well as critical Letters to the Editor

[73] Fitzpatrick (1992), pp. 216-237.

[74] V. Gerlitsyn and Valerii Shteinbakh, *Soviet Sport: The Success Story* (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1987), p. 46. For a further example of the Socialist Realist aesthetic at work in writing on Soviet physical culture, see Kh. Khamzin's 1966 *Komsomol'skaya pravda* article, which described how the long-imagined 'era of machines and high speed', of human activity 'in the Far North, on the wild taiga, or in the infinity of the cosmos', now coming of age along with the youth of the 1960s, required not only the cosmonauts but also the engineers and doctors of the future to have the 'strong nerves, quick reactions' that could only be attained through improved programmes of school physical education (Kh. Khamzin, 'Zdorov'e – vsemu golova. Razmyshleniya vracha o fizicheskom vospitanii shkol'nikov', *KP*, 6 September 1966, p. 4).

[75] Gerlitsyn and Shteinbakh (1987), p. 11; for other similar examples, see N. Georgiev, *Soviet Union Today* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo agenstva pechati Novosti, 1971), and M. Kondrat'eva and V. Taborko, *Children and Sport in the USSR* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979)).

[76] For the government official Golubev's admission to Komsomol leaders that construction of the 'material-technical base' for sporting activity was often poorly co-ordinated, leading to uneven distribution of facilities, see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 72. For discussion, based on oral history work, of the sporting opportunities in practice available to Soviet children, see Kelly (2007), pp. 485-489, and Raleigh (2012), pp. 122-123. On the obstacles, arguments and falsifications troubling Soviet sport during the 1930s, see Grant (2013), pp. 2, 43-44, 62-67; and on similar issues present right up to the late 1960s (at which point some serious attempts were made to rectify the situation), see Riordan (1977), pp. 212-215, 262-264, 267. Finally, for a work looking in detail at the experience of sports participation within the USSR, see Robert Edelman, *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

(for example, urging 'increased effort' in providing the mandated school athletics facilities, or lamenting that children still spent too much time sitting down and that not enough students achieved the required standards in sport) were published for all to read.[77] Indeed, according to Robert Edelman, 'one of the historic staples of Soviet sports journalism was the 'raid' on facilities for mass participation. There was no moment in Soviet history when such exposés did not reveal highly inadequate amenities and insufficient participation.'[78]

Yet even these 'raids', and other revelations or public admissions of imperfection, were not to be treated as evidence of abject failure. Rather, they continued the tradition of self-criticism in operation since the 1930s, which Jochen Hellbeck has described as 'firmly embedded in a dialectical frame of struggle and transformation'.[79] A similar logic of progress towards a desired state of affairs was at work in portrayals of sport as an important tool for shaping socially acceptable behaviour and inculcating collective values. If youth indiscipline was tacitly understood to be a serious social problem in the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s, propaganda and the accounts of those involved in running youth sports clubs were keen to make clear that 'so-called problem teenagers' really only acted up in the absence of anything better to do, and that successfully providing socially useful outlets for their energy was the natural endeavour of citizen-volunteers acting in harmony with the ideals of the state. Behavioural problems were thus reliably, if perhaps not immediately, solved when 'attendance of the [sports] club becomes ['problem'

[77] Despite the attempts at improvement noted by Riordan (1977), newspaper articles dating from the 1970s indicate that sports facilities and participation were still not quite as the propaganda books suggested. For a professional response to a reader's fears about the sedentary lifestyle of children, see A. Galaeva, 'Azbuka zdorov'ya', *Iz*, 22 May 1974, p. 5. For criticism of implementation of the GTO programme in Novosibirsk, see 'Gde ptitsei, a gde cherepakhoi', *Pr*, 8 April 1972, p. 6. On unsatisfactory levels of physical training amongst students, see N. Petrov, 'Znachok poluchen. A dal'she?', *Pr*, 3 December 1973, p. 4. On unacceptably slow implementation of GTO programme in schools, 'Zdorov'e shkol'nikov – zabota vzroslykh', *Iz*, 16 January 1974, p. 1.
[78] Edelman (1993), p. 216.
[79] Hellbeck (2006), p. 241.

teenagers'] first real interest in life.'[80] Just as the military was invested with a defence *and* a socialising function, sport too was to work on both the physical and behavioural levels, pushing Soviet society ever further into the future.

The fact that many youth sports clubs operated as branches of DOSAAF (the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation and Navy), or with the direct support of military units, also provided a convenient means of shunting young men along a direct path towards the military service that the Constitution required of them. During the mid-to-late 1960s and the 1970s, as the government emphasised anew the threat from 'imperialist' and 'neo-fascist' enemies of the USSR, discussion of possible changes to the GTO programme placed much stress on the military value of such training:

> ГТО [и]меет своей целью способствовать формированию морального и духовного облика советских людей, их всестороннему гармоническому развитию, сохранению на долгие годы крепкого здоровья и творческой активности, подготовке населения и высокопроизводительному труду и защите Родины.
>
> Задача ступени – достижение высокого уровня физического развития и физического подготовленности для высокопроизводительного труда и выполнения священного долга по защите Родине.[81]

[80] Kondrat'eva and Taborko (1979), pp. 57-58; see also pp. 92-94 on combating the 'problem' of undisciplined outdoor kickabouts through the establishment of an organised children's football league, thus introducing principles of regulation, discipline and 'rational control'. For the Olympic samboist David Rudman's account to a political organisers' gathering of his experiences running a 'military-sporting' club for 'difficult' teenagers (all of whom had stopped smoking, started to behave better, and improved their performance at school as a direct result of attending the club), see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 31-44. For a similar story from the leader of a DOSAAF club in Altai Krai, see S. D'yakova, 'Chasovye maloi zastavy', *KP*, 23 June 1977, p. 4.

[81] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 468, l. 5. It is worth noting that the USSR was not alone in considering the maintenance of a physically fit (and thus potentially combat-ready) civilian population imperative during this period. At the opening ceremony of the 1950 Maccabiah Games, David Ben-Gurion, prime minister of the newly formed State of Israel, told the assembled crowd that 'Existence in our ancestral home requires physical might no less than intellectual excellence' (Ken Stein and Rich Walter, 'Today in Israeli History: September 27, 1950: Third Maccabiah Games', Center for Israel Education, n.d., <http://israeled.org/third-maccabiah-games/> [accessed 4 January 2017]). In the USA, meanwhile, special physical education programmes for adolescent males were designed in response to fears that young men of the postwar generation lacked the strength and stamina necessary to defend America if international hostilities should intensify again (Jeffrey Montez de Oca, 'The "Muscle Gap": Physical Education and US Fears of a Depleted Masculinity, 1954-1963', in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. by David L. Andrews and Stephen Wagg (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 123-148).

Such was the perceived importance of the issue that the GTO scheme was now only one of a number of programmes aimed at developing youth's fitness for military service.[82] For the Komsomol and other state agencies of the Brezhnev era, educating Soviet youth about heroic acts performed by previous generations, and providing them with the physical 'tempering' and training necessary to become heroic themselves, was high on the list of priorities.

[82] For discussion of programmes that were essentially spin-offs from GTO proper, see 'GTO. Vserossiiskii fizkul'turno-sportivnyi kompleks 'Gotov k trudu i oborone', n.d., Ministerstvo Sporta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://gto.ru/history> [accessed 4 January 2017]; 'GTO – proshloe, nastoyashchee i budushee', Regional'noe otdelenie Obshcherossiiskoi obshchestvenno-gosudarstvennoi organizatsii 'Dobrovol'noe obshchestvo sodeistviya armii, aviatsii i flotu Rossii', g. Blagoveshchensk, Amurskaya oblast', 6 November 2015, <http://dosaaf28.ru/sport/gto-proshloe-nastojaschee-i-buduschee.html> [accessed 4 January 2017].

2. ‘In Our Fathers’ Glorious Footsteps’: The Defenders of the Future Meet the Defenders of the Past

The physical mobilisation of the country’s youth to defend the Motherland, whether militarily or metaphorically, remained a constant theme throughout the period of the USSR’s existence. Under Brezhnev, however, another approach also came to the fore: the fostering of loyalty to the Soviet project as embodied by generations of elders. Schattenberg has identified consensus-building activity – Brezhnev’s careful assembly of a client base of loyal supporters with a personal appreciation of his activities earlier on in his career – as central to the leader’s strategy for maintaining his position within the Politburo.[1] As Brezhnev ordered the highest levels of the political hierarchy according to this method, so the whole of Soviet public culture became oriented towards the admiration and consolidation of the work of older generations. Above all, this required the retrieval of the memory of the Soviet performance in the Great Patriotic War. This chapter examines the meeting of physical and ideological formation in new educational initiatives of the Brezhnev period.

In 1977, as the wording for the new constitution – the first since the Stalin Constitution of 1936 – was finalised ready for adoption at the 7th (Special) Session of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union Ninth Convocation on 7 October, newspapers were full of discussion of the duties incumbent on those fortunate enough to be citizens of the world’s first socialist state. The assertion of duties would indeed feature heavily in the new document. If Articles 39 to 58 set out the rights and freedoms individuals could expect, the next item suggested that none of the Constitution’s guarantees were unconditional:

> Article 59. Citizens’ exercise of their rights and freedoms is inseparable from the performance of their duties and obligations. Citizens of the USSR are obliged to

[1] Schattenberg (2015).

> observe the Constitution of the USSR and Soviet laws, comply with the standards of socialist conduct, and uphold the honour and dignity of Soviet citizenship.[2]

The remainder of the chapter, to Article 69, listed those duties: the citizen's obligation to work conscientiously, to protect socialist property and the USSR's natural and cultural heritage, to uphold and promote norms of social behaviour (particularly concerning the upbringing of children), and to 'safeguard the interests of the Soviet state, and to enhance its power and prestige', by fulfilling the 'sacred duty' of defending the 'Socialist Motherland'.

While clear about the uncompromising nature of the law, officials expressed faith that citizens would not, in fact, find the new constitution's demands excessively onerous. In an article of June 1977, R. Baltrušaitis, secretary of the central committee of the Lithuanian Komsomol organisation, told readers of *Komsomol'skaya pravda* that already, many of the listed duties 'appear to many members of our society not as obligations, but as everyday moral norms of behaviour; they have become an actively-lived position.' According to the article, Brezhnev himself had told the 25th Congress of the CPSU that the formation of such a position was the very goal of moral education – whose foundations, the Lithuanian secretary continued, were laid in the home before 'develop[ing] into the lofty principles of the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism.' The clear implication was that only (state-sponsored) social organisations could bring the parents' early work to fruition, in a virtuous circle that would see official values being reinforced in the home through the influence of growing children exposed to wider forms of social organisation. As ideal means of socialising young people such that they themselves could take on responsibility for the moral shape ('*moral'nyi oblik*') of the family units in which they were growing up, Baltrušaitis named two particular forms of

[2] 'Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Chapter 7' (trans. Novosti Publishing House, 1985), <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/77cons02.html#chap07> [accessed 19 February 2017].

youth activity: the 'Timur movement', through which Pioneers assisted aging war veterans with everyday tasks, and *poiskovaya rabota*, or 'search work' – the practice of locating remnants of Great Patriotic War battles, burying human remains, and using other found items to reconstruct the histories of soldiers still listed missing in action.[3]

By the time of Baltrušaitis' article, search work and Pioneer involvement with veterans were enmeshed in a system of 'military-patriotic education' that aimed to develop physical and mental capacities for service to the Motherland. This chapter examines these and other related activities carried out under the banner of the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda* (All-Union Komsomol and Youth Tourist Hike to Sites of Revolutionary, Military and Labour Glory of the Soviet People),[4] formally established in 1965 as an all-Union joint venture of the Komsomol, the Central Council for Tourism, and DOSAAF. With organisers from the spheres of youth policy and political education, recreational sport, and military training, the initiative was administered by a *Tsentral'nyi shtab* (Central Staff) of senior officials from the military and the three organising agencies.[5] The objective was to encourage groups of young people – known as *krasnye*

[3] R. Baltrušaitis, 'Grazhdaninom byt' obyazan', *KP*, 21 June 1977, p. 2.

[4] Robert Hornsby has recently published an article on the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda*. However, the RGASPI archival holdings on the initiative are extensive, as a result of which there is little overlap between the precise documents that Hornsby's article and this thesis respectively cite. Having arrived at a broadly similar understanding to Hornsby's of the activities involved in the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, the present chapter probes more deeply into the institutional structures and mechanisms by which the initiative operated in practice, thus coming to somewhat different conclusions about the significance of participants' accounts of their own experiences. See Robert Hornsby, 'Soviet Youth on the March: The All-Union Tours of Military Glory, 1965–87', *Journal of Contemporary History* (2016), 1-28, DOI: 10.1177/0022009416644666.

[5] The first head of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* was Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Stepanovich Konev, with Lev Mendelevich Gurvich, a long-time activist in the proletarian tourism movement, as secretary. The deputy president of the Central Council for Tourism was also a member. (Grigorii Usyskin, *Ocherki istorii rossiiskogo turizma* (Moskva; Sankt-Peterburg: Gerda, 2000), p. 188 The body appears to have been named to call to mind the partisan movement of the Great Patriotic War – on the *Tsentral'nyi shtab partizanskogo dvizheniya*, see 'Tsentral'nyi shtab – partizanskii', Ministerstvo oborony Rossiiskogo Federatsii: Entsiklopediya, n.d., <http://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/history/more.htm?id=11203644@cmsArticle> [accessed 4 January 2017].

sledopyty (red pathfinders) when they were participating in the initiative – to learn about sites of significant events in the history of the Soviet Union, to plan expeditions to them, to help ensure that they were kept in good order so as to honour the memory of those concerned and allow future visitors to pay their respects appropriately, and to carry out search work. In doing all this, the *krasnye sledopyty* would develop various outdoor and physical skills deemed useful for citizens who might themselves shortly be called upon to defend the country in inhospitable conditions.[6]

Lofty objectives were followed through with an abundance of instructions and suggestions. Groups participating in the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* followed recommended tour routes[7] or explored their own, on completion of which they were expected to write up their findings and send in reports, scrapbooks and posters for assessment by the *Tsentral'nyi shtab*. As an incentive for participants, and for the collective reinforcement of the official objectives of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, the materials submitted to the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* were entered into a competition. The prize was the opportunity to attend the *Vsesoyuznyi slet pobeditelei pokhoda* (All-Union Rally for Winners of the Hike) – an event held annually between 1965 and 1968, and thereafter at intervals of a few years, at sites of major historic importance in the history of the USSR.[8] Regional and

[6] These activities and goals were enumerated in a report on a 1970 fact-finding mission from the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee to the Komsomol organisation of the Tadjik Republic. See RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 457, l. 63.

[7] For example, 'in order to make youth hikes even more interesting and purposeful', the *voenkomat* of Ul'yanov oblast' issued maps of local battle sites of various wartime divisions, each map having a supplement 'in which all memorial sites [were] discussed in detail.' (See N. Kleshchin, 'Provozhayut v armiyu synov', *Pr*, 13 May 1968, p. 3).

[8] The first *Vsesoyuznyi slet* took place at Brest Fortress; the second, on the 25th anniversary of the defence of Moscow, in the capital; the third, dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, in Leningrad, and so on. For a first-hand account of participation in all twelve *Vsesoyuznye slety* by a former Komsomol member, see Usyskin (2000), pp. 187-196. For an amateur film of the first *slet*, see Brestskaya krepost' 1965. Dorogoi ottsov-geroev. YouTube, 4 April 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KI2ji2KMe8> [accessed 4 January 2017]. See also 'VIII Vsesoyuznyi slet pobeditelei pokhoda po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda na ivanovskoi zemle', Komsomol37, n.d., <http://комсомол37.рф/8_slet> [accessed 4 January 2017], for a collection of photographs and coverage from the local Komsomol newspaper, *Leninets*, of the eighth *Vsesoyuznyi slet* held in Ivanovo in 1977. Komsomol37 is an online project documenting the history of the Ivanovo Komsomol through material from the State Archive of Ivanovo Oblast' and the D. G.

republic-level tourist authorities, Komsomol bodies and branches of DOSAAF also held their own similar rallies for groups within their jurisdictions.[9]

Among patriotic education initiatives, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was unusual in having a stand-alone administration and a programme of all-Union events. In practice, however, execution of the prescribed activities was devolved to a variety of organisations – local Komsomol sections, Pioneer brigades and groups from summer Pioneer camps, school 'historical circles', tourism clubs and youth 'military-patriotic unions' – in operation across the USSR, and was only one of a number of schemes which, in the words of their proponents, provided young Soviet people with the opportunity for 'first-hand contact [*neposredstvennogo soprikosnoveniya*] with the glorious inheritance of the past'.[10] This, combined with the retrospective manner in which local *pokhody* were registered with the *Tsentral'nyi shtab*, meant that there was considerable overlap between the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* and other projects in which groups were already engaged, for example corresponding with war veterans, assisting disabled veterans and their dependants with domestic chores (similar to the work of the Timur Movement, usually referred to as *shefstvo nad invalidami voiny* by the Komsomol), or the playing of large-scale war games. The arrangement of the archival material also suggests that Soviet archivists did not observe any strict delineations between different schemes for what was generally referred to as military-patriotic education: in the *fondy* of both the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions of the All-Union Council of Professional Unions

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Burylin Ivanov State Historical *Kraevedenie* Museum; I am grateful to the website editors for their response to my request for more material about events held in Ivanovo.

[9] See, for example, 'Spravka o provedenii IV kraevogo yubileinogo sleta molodezhi i prizyvnikov Kubanii, posvyashennogo 50-letiyu leninskogo komsomola' (and associated material), GARF, f. r-9520, op. 1, d. 1267, ll. 16-42. I thank Alan Roe for directing me to this *fond*.

[10] Tsentral'nyi sovet po turizmu i ekskursiyam: Upravlenie samodeyatel'nogo turizma, *Metodicheskie rekomendatsii po provedeniyu vsesoyuznogo pokhoda komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy kommunisticheskoi partii i sovetskogo naroda,* ed. by Yu. S. Konstantinov and T. A. Krotova (Moscow: Tsentral'noe reklamno-informatsionnoe byuro 'Turist', 1983). See also a newspaper's claim that 'visiting historical sites, [participants] brush up against the feats of older generations with their hearts' ('Nikto ne zabyt, nichto ne zabyto', *FB*, 3 July 1976, p. 1).

(held at GARF, the State Archive of the Russian Federation) and the Department of Sport and Mass-Defence Work of the Central Committee of the all-Union Komsomol (held at the centre for documents of youth organisations, a branch of RGASPI, the Russian State Archive for Socio-Political History), accounts of activities mentioning the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* by name are filed together with documents in which it is never mentioned.[11] It seems highly likely that some ventures that might easily have come under the auspices of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* were never officially registered as such; conversely, the official lists of suggested activities were so varied that it was easy for local participating groups to come up with still others, and make a case for their relevance.

In view of that overlap, in the discussion that follows, of the military-patriotic education of the late Soviet period, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* is examined in conjunction with a number of other initiatives and practices to which young people were exposed as the Party-state sought to impose a definite understanding of the nature of the past and its heroes, and to mould the subjectivity of a new generation.[12] The discussion does, however, take into account some of the specific institutional features of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, particularly the supervision mechanisms in operation, in order to argue that the administration of the scheme left participants significant room for manoeuvre in both choice of activity and ideological interpretation.

[11] For a few examples, see the large files GARF, f. r-9520, op. 1, d. 1267; RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 468 ('Informatsii TsK LKSM soyuznykh respublik ob uchastii komsomol'skikh organizatsii v obsuzhdenii proekta novogo Vsesoyuznogo fizkul'turnogo kompleksa "Gotov k trudu i oborone SSSR"; predlozheniya kafedry fizichekogo vospitaniya i sporta VKSh pri TsK VLKSM o proekte novogo fizkul'turnogo kompleksa'); RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 12 ('Pis'ma molodezhi ob uluchshenii voenno-patrioticheskoi raboty, pokhody po mestam slavy') and numerous other similarly-titled *dela* from the same *opisi*.

[12] The emphasis on contemporary youth's own heroism seems to have diminished over time. By the time Konstantinov and Krotova's manual (cited above) was published in 1983, the emphasis was almost exclusively on the heroes of the past (see Konstantinov and Krotova (eds) (1983), p. 1).

Origins of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*

In terms of nomenclature, the late-Soviet initiative dealing with Sites of Revolutionary, Military and Labour Glory of the Soviet People was the descendant of the early *Vsesoyuznyi kul'turnyi pokhod komsomola*, part of the great push for literacy and 'culture', broadly construed, of 1928-1931. In September 1928, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* published Mayakovsky's hortatory poem 'Vsesoyuznyi pokhod' with the following explanation:

> В наш МЮД [Международный юношеский день] комсомол Страны Советов выступает в культурный поход. Это – начало великой борьбы за изгнание водки, грязи, неграмотности и бескультурья из пределов советской страны'.[13]

Other *Vsesoyuznye pokhody* addressed the pressing issues of the day at various times in the USSR's history: in the 1980s, for example, the Pioneer movement ran a '*Vsesoyuznyi pokhod uchashchikhsya za ekonomiyu i berezhlivost'*', encouraging young people to take a stand against waste and overconsumption of resources such as food, water and paper.[14] In all these cases, the word *pokhod* was clearly used in the sense of the English 'campaign' or 'crusade', picking up on the military connotations that Dal''s

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[13] V. V. Mayakovsky, 'Vsesoyuznyii pokhod ("V revolyutsii v kult'turnoi…")', in V. V. Mayakovsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1955-1961), IX (1958), pp. 282-284, in *Fundamental'naya elektronnaya biblioteka: Russkaya literatura i fol'klor* <http://feb-web.ru/feb/mayakovsky/texts/ms0/ms9/ms9-282-.htm> [accessed 4 January 2017]. In Komi-Permyak Okrug, to take one example of actual Komsomol activity during the 1928-1931 campaign, the 'cultural' issues about which brigades addressed the local population included sanitation and hygiene, 'cultural enlightenment', and agriculture (see 'Novaya arkhivnaya kollektsiya "Komi-Permyatskaya okruzhnaya organizatsiya VLKSM"', *Komi-Permyatskoi okruzhnoi gosudarstvennoi arkhiv*, 11 November 2014, <http://www.komi-permarchiv.ru/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=197&cntnt01returnid=15> [accessed 4 January 2017]).

[14] 'Pioneriya – 80-e gody', *Komsomol37*, n.d., <http://комсомол37.рф/catalog?id=273> [accessed 4 January 2017]. For the 'Azbuka berezhlivosti' poster illustrating all the resources Pioneers could help to conserve, see Dom antikvarnoi knigi v Nikitskom, 'Katalog. Auktsion No. 64. 22 oktyabrya 2015 goda. Redkie knigi, rukopisi, avtografy i plakaty', <http://www.vnikitskom.ru/antique/auction/69/30066/> [accessed 4 January 2017]. Despite the existence of other similarly-named initiatives, however, for simplicity's sake and to preserve the multiplicity of associations in the word *pokhod*, this thesis uses the abbreviation '*Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*' to denote the centrally-administered *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda*, and '*pokhody*' for the individual expeditions organised at the local level.

dictionary, for example, foregrounds almost to the exclusion of any other possible meaning:

> ‘Отправка и самый путь войск, сухим путем или морем; передвиженье их, в составе, с места на место; [...] Морской поход, плаванье, кампания; Военный поход против неприятеля, война: Поход 1814-го года [...].’

With a vocabulary of ‘striving’ and ‘struggling’ towards a higher purpose, the Komsomol’s *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol’tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda* sought to combine earlier campaigns’ zealous busyness and insistence on the righteousness of the Soviet cause with literally militarised activity. As a declaration of intent, a resolution of the eighth plenum of the Komsomol Central Committee of 28th December 1965 stated the following:

> Пленум ЦК ВЛКСМ подчеркивает необходимость усиления работы комсомольских организаций по военно-патриотическому воспитанию юношей и девушек, всесторонней пропагандой героических боевых традиций советского народа, привития любви и уважения к Вооруженным Силам СССР, готовности к защите Родине. [...] Поход должен стать важной вехой в подготовке к 50-летию советской власти, открыть миллионам молодых людей героические страницы истории нашей страны, ярко запечатлеть в их сердцах подвиги революционеров, героев войны и труда, воодушевить молодежь на новые совершения во имя коммунистического строительства.[15]

The terminology used to describe the initiative was loaded with significance. To begin with, ‘*turizm*’ in the Soviet Union had long meant something rather different to the kind of relaxed holidaymaking associated with tourism in the West. One of the goals of tourism as promoted in the 1920s and 1930s was to encourage citizens to venture out into the Soviet Union’s vast and varied expanses of scenic environment for a physically and mentally improving excursion which, even more effectively than gymnastics in the workplace, would ultimately help to increase workers’ productivity. The conviction that leisure was ‘a matter for society and the state’ endured throughout the Soviet period: on

[15] *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 1966), p. 1.

the one hand, it was said, 'good, fully-fledged (*polnotsennyi*) leisure not only restores capacity for work (*vosstanavlivaet rabotosposobnost'*), but increases it, since it trains the organism'; and, on the other, properly directed leisure – especially 'excursions' of various types – constituted a 'very strong means' by which the Party could achieve the 'formation of a communist worldview amongst the wider mass of workers.'[16] It did not take long after the end of the Great Patriotic War for domestic tourism to be employed as a tool to turn people's minds away from the stories of life in the West that returning soldiers were inconveniently bringing back with them, and, more positively, to 'engage the tourist in rituals of public self-admiration, in which the prestige of the Soviet Union was perpetually re-affirmed'.[17] To this end, public bodies including the Komsomol Central Committee and the Secretariat of the Central Trade Union immediately began to encourage expeditions to battlefields and war memorials – which were erected long before any attempt was made to reconstruct the cities whose devastation they marked. In the newly annexed republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, meanwhile, officially recommended tour routes taking in key sites in the workers' movements and the Soviet 'liberation' of the region acted to colonialise and 'sovietise' the Baltic nations, proving to the Baltic peoples and their visitors the legitimacy of the new regime.[18]

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[16] Quotation: T. M. Mikhailova, *Otdykh – delo obshchestvennoe* (Moscow: Meditsina (Isp. kom. Ordena Lenina Soyuza obshchestv Krasnogo kresta i krasnogo polumesyatsa SSSR), 1970), pp. 5, 7. For details of excursions organised by trade unions in the late-Soviet period to assist the Party in the *formirovanie kommunisticheskoe mirovozzreniya*, see 'Protokol zasedaniya Tsentral'nogo soveta po turizmu i ekskursiyam g. Moskvy, 25 aprelya 1972 g.: [Doklad] tov. Artamonova, Predsedatelya Volgogradskogo oblastnogo soveta po turizmu i ekskursiyam', GARF, f. r-9520, op. 1, d. 1602, l. 151. For a late-Soviet description of leisure regimes of the 1920s and 1930s, see I. Z. Sarkizov, *Otdykhaite v Podmoskov'e. Spravochnik o domakh otdykha i sanatoriyakh* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochi, 1962), pp. 3, 49. I thank Catriona Kelly for sharing the book sources with me.

[17] Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 34.

[18] Gorsuch (2011), pp. 35, 52-53. On a 'growing emphasis on organised rather than independent tourism' as indicated by the rise in the proportion of museum visitors taking guided tours between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s, see Victoria Donovan, '"Going Backwards, We Stride Forwards": Kraevedenie Museums and the Making of Local Memory in North West Russia, 1956-1981', *Antropologicheskii forum/Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, 7 (2011), 211-230 (pp. 222-223).

Both relaxational visits to sanatoria, and so-called *dikii turizm* ('wild' tourism – taking off independently, without an official voucher, for a self-directed vacation) were known phenomena in the USSR of the 1960s, but they existed in contrast to the 'rational', highly organised, ideologically motivated tourist activity planned by state agencies as a means of enlightening the population. A July 1967 article in the journal *Molodoi kommunist*, by B. Fadeev, deputy chair of the Central Council for Tourism, expressed the state's disapproval of *dikii turizm* in no uncertain terms:

> Досадно видеть, как бесцельно, попусту тратятся энергия и время людей, досадно, что подлинная романтика, которая учит настоящей жизни, остается где-то в стороне.
>
> Число таких 'туристов' пока очень велико. Только из Москвы в летнее воскресенье в туристские походы в пригородной зоне выезжает около сто тысяч человек, большую часть которых составляет молодежь. Десятки тысяч групп, никем не организуемые и не управляемые, отправляются в путь с одной-единственной целью – провести время на 'природе'. Как правило, большая часть таких 'туристов' не оплачивает проезд по железной дороге, многие берут с собою полные рюкзаки спиртного. Нередки случаи хищении колхозного добра, бессмысленного уничтожения леса, пожаров. Такие же явления происходят порой и в дальних путешествиях. [...]
>
> Походы в воскресные дни, когда их участники ставят перед собой только одну цель – отдых, быстро надоедают.[19]

Different authors approached the question of the 'authentic romance' of Soviet tourism in different ways: one 1960s leisure manual, for example, waxed lyrical about the power of a weekend hike with just one night out in the open to 'foster a taste for longer expeditions':

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[19] B. Fadeev, 'Turizm? Eto ne tak prosto', *Molodoi kommunist*, July 1967, 122-127 (p. 124). See also Gorsuch (2011), pp. 4-10; Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, 'Introduction', in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism*, ed. by Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 1-14. On disagreements in late-Soviet nature-protection circles over whether streams of urbanised tourists, seeking 'active recreational pursuits' and the opportunity to become acquainted with the natural environment, represented 'human locusts, little less destructive than acclimatizers, flocks of sheep, and belching refineries', or 'potentially powerful all[ies] in the fight to save natural amenities', see Douglas R. Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 396-397.

> Хорошо посидеть вечером у костра на опушке леса, послушать рассказы товарищей, бывалых людей, помечтать, попеть. Понаблюдайте за ночной жизнью в лесу, в степи, за зверями и птицами, за ночным звездным небом.[20]

However, the underlying beliefs – that tourism's great value lay in its educational potential ('Tourism is a powerful source of knowledge, a splendid method for the formation of resourcefulness, initiative, friendship and collectivism, an excellent method of physical tempering, an amazing kind of leisure'),[21] and that would-be tourists needed plenty of instruction if the experience was to be all worthwhile – were uniformly in evidence. Describing the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* as '*turistskii*' therefore implied something more than a sightseeing holiday: it meant deliberate travel towards a defined goal, with a specified educational purpose in view. Similarly, while Gorsuch and Koenker have discussed popular associations of the term *pokhod*, noting that '[i]n the late Soviet Union, the "tourist hike" (*turistskii pokhod*) was a euphemism for a boy and a girl's weekend getaway, with tent and sleeping bag, for sex',[22] it is clear from material such as Fadeev's righteous tirade that the Komsomol and its partners had a much more disciplined, indeed militarised, type of activity in mind.

Soviet tourism manuals also mention the 'value for the study of local history' (*kraevedcheskaya pol'za*) of a well-planned expedition, and this points to another precedent for the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*. During the early 1960s, the educational journal *Narodnoe obrazovanie* – which would carry regular items on the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* from its founding in 1965 until the demise of the USSR – published a number of articles describing very similar-sounding *pokhody* around local battle sites and the graves of war

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[20] *Otdykh po dushe, po interesam* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1961), p. 56. I thank Catriona Kelly for sharing this source with me.

[21] *Otdykh po dushe, po interesam* (1961), p. 51.

[22] Gorsuch and Koenker (2006), p. 3. It is perhaps not surprising that none of the Soviet archival and newspaper sources that have come to my attention give any indication of impromptu activities of quite this nature occurring within the framework of the officially-organised *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*. As I discuss in detail in the section entitled 'Heroism and late-Soviet youth', however, there are many hints of other non-prescribed meanings being attached to the official initiative.

heroes. Detailing a collaboration between Orel schools 17 and 25 and the Veterans' Council of the 129th Orel Infantry Division, which had taken place in summer 1964, for example, Z. Bonks, director of the Orel Oblast' Children's Tourist-Excursion Station, described the high emotion of an entire community awaiting information about the later life of a wartime pilot whose life had been saved by a local kolkhoznitsa:

> С огромным интересом и нетерпением ждала вся Башкатовская школа, да и все село, сообщения из Министерства обороны о дальнейшей судьбе Василия Белышева. Особенно волновалась [колхозница] Екатерина Афанасьева Жилина. И вот пришло известия … капитан Белышев В. И., верный воинской присяге, геройски погиб в воздушном бою. В день получения этого известия вся школа как-то притихла, было грустно – ребята надеялись, что Белышев обязательно к ним приедет.
>
> Но юные краеведы не оставили поиска. Они нашли жену Василия Ивановича, которая живет в г. Оса Пермской области. Анна Ивановна написала, что Василий Иванович не забывал орловцев, спасших ему жизнь, и прислала в Башкатовскую школу копию письма воинов кавалерийской дивизии, которые были очевидцами героической гибели капитана Белишева.[23]

Significantly, the children involved were referred to throughout as '*yunye kraevedy*', suggesting that the impetus for this particular type of *pokhod* had its roots in the *kraevedenie* movement, which experienced a revival at the beginning of the 1960s as part of 'a state-sponsored strategy to strengthen the legitimacy of the Soviet regime during a period of ideological restructuring [by exposing] [l]ocal communities […] to visions of regional life, history, and traditions in an attempt to reinforce collective identity and to make communities aware of their own role as a cog in the larger machinery of the Soviet state.'[24] New museums opened across the USSR, to be staffed by a new breed of excursion guides capable of effectively communicating a detailed knowledge of their subject and its theoretical underpinnings. In addition to illustrations of ethnography and folk art, regional museums provided authoritative sources of information about historical

[23] Z. Bonks, 'Dorogami slavnykh pobed', *Narodnoe obrazovanie*, 6 (1965), 74-76 (p. 75). For another example of '*pokhody*' predating the foundation of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, see G. Mukhamedtsev, 'Muzei, rasskazyvayushchii o slavnykh lyudyakh', *Narodnoe obrazovanie*, 3 (1965), 80.
[24] Donovan (2011), p. 227.

events and persons of local significance – subject matter whose relevance to contemporary life was recognised not just by enthusiastic cultural workers, but by local residents themselves, who asked for and received detailed information on various topics of interest.[25]

At the same time as this expansion in the provision of municipal museums, schools, young workers' groups, and professional and technical colleges were encouraged to set up their own museums and display areas filled with their own work on topics of local historical interest. In its small article on the inaugural conference of VOOPIiK, the All-Russian Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments, in June 1966, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* reprinted A. Kamshalov's boast that '23 million Komsomol members and 24 million Pioneers [to wit, all of them] will be the perpetual stewards and supporters (*vsegdashnimi oberegatelyami i revnitelyami*) of the new and ancient riches of our Fatherland.'[26] From its inception in 1965, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was thus hitched to a pre-existing phenomenon that was already being practised in local settings across the USSR. While the contemplation of the artefacts and information on display was important, the *process* of furnishing and researching them was supposed to be of particular value in developing and refining a sense of Soviet patriotism in young citizens and those approaching adulthood.[27]

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[25] Donovan (2011), pp. 221-223. On mass public interest in historical information and artefacts during this period, described as 'a quest to explain and define collective and individual identities in the midst of a challenging present', see Denis Kozlov, 'The Historical Turn in Late Soviet Culture: Retrospectivism, Factography, Doubt, 1953-91', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2 (2000), 577-600 (pp. 598-599).

[26] 'Adresovano budushchemu', *KP*, 10 June 1966, p. 4.

[27] Even by the mid-1970s not all adults supervising such museums quite understood this premise, as evidenced by a 1974 letter from one Vasil'kevich, director of Professional and Technical College No. 34 in Primorskii Krai, to the Komsomol Central Committee. Apparently considering it his duty simply to set before his students an impressive display of didactic materials, regardless of the fact that they had no direct connection with the local area, Vasil'kevich expressed outrage that none of the state-level museums and institutions to which he had applied had been able or willing to provide materials for his students' edification (RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, l. 129).

Among all the types of local historical work carried out by young people, Kamshalov's report had given special mention to one in particular: the identification of 'thousands' of soldiers killed during the Great Patriotic War, and the establishment of no fewer than 2,625 'museums, rooms, and corners of military glory' in the Belorussian Republic alone. Of all possible prisms for the interpretation of Soviet history and heroism for a youth audience, the war had emerged as dominant by far, particularly following the 1965 commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of Soviet victory, at which the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was launched. Despite the initiative's catch-all title, then, the occasional record of a Komsomol official's insistence on the importance of remembering 'the labour victories of the Soviet people' simply reinforces the impression that comparatively little attention was paid to the 'revolutionary' and 'labour' aspects of the enterprise. Attempts were made to encourage tourism to sites of revolutionary and civil war significance, while the fifth *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was dedicated to Lenin, passing through locations 'linked with the name of Lenin and with the life and work of his close associates', and ending in Ulyanovsk.[28] In general, however, material about these other activities is in short supply compared to the voluminous records of excursions to Great Patriotic War battlefields and memorials; indeed, an article published on behalf of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* in *KP* in 1966 urged participants, 'Study the feats of labour of your fathers and mothers in the name of victory. Find people who produced weapons, provisions and uniforms for soldiers who protected the hero-cities', suggesting that the 'labour' part of the title was firmly oriented towards war history too.[29]

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[28] On tourism to sites of revolutionary and civil war significance, see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 97 (A. L. Novikov, *Turistskie marshruty po putyam boevoi slavy nashikh ottsov v gody Grazhdanskoi voiny* (Kazan, 1966)). On the *pokhod* devoted to Lenin, see E. M. Tyazhelnikov, 'Uchit'sya kommunizmu!', *Ogonek*, 26 October 1968, pp. 1-2.

[29] 'Imena geroev – v letopis' otchizny. Vsesoyuznyi pokhod po dorogam ottsov prodolzhaetsya', *KP*, 14 June 1966, p. 4. Cf. Clark and Dobrenko (2007), p. 349: 'The new cult of "holy war" and victory, [introduced during the war itself and] largely derived from prerevolutionary Russian tradition, persisted in the media and the official platform for half a century and essentially replaced the cult of the Revolution'. See also Tumarkin (1994), p. 132.

Material explaining the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* to educators promoted the initiative as being attractive to school pupils and teachers alike: for the children there was the draw of 'an enjoyable expedition, scientifically-based search and research work, surrounded by romance (*oveyannaya romantikoi*)', while the teachers would value it as 'an inexhaustible source for the pedagogical creativity of the teacher'.[30] And indeed, at least as far as it was described in the literature, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* amalgamated a wide variety of pedagogical approaches. The report on the 1965 'pilot' season, published in booklet form as a general guide for future participants, gives an overview of the various activities – some of them seemingly quite elaborate – organised by local groups that year, and which might serve as inspiration for future organisers. In a number of cases, activities focused on known local heroes: in Petrozavodsk, for example, local Komsomol members held a mock trial of fascism at the grave of the partisan Lyuba Tumanova, while in the port city of Nikolaev in Ukraine, young people staged a re-enactment of the night-time landing of sailors of the Black Sea Fleet. Mass war games were organised in Stavropol', and in Murmansk and Sevastopol' joint expeditions were organised between youth groups and soldiers completing their military service in the city, an activity intended to function as a pre-call-up training exercise for boys approaching the age of eighteen.[31] As the involvement of DOSAAF – which had as its stated goal to 'increase the defensive capability of the country and prepare workers to defend the socialist Fatherland' – might suggest, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* had a strong paramilitary and military service preparation component, and war games and the development of 'applied military skills', such as shooting from various types of weapon, were expected to form a significant part of the experience.[32]

[30] Bonks (1965), p. 75.
[31] *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod…* (1966), p. 4.
[32] GARF, f. r-9520, op. 1, d. 1267, l. 17. It is clear that participation in the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was intended to inspire young men to enter military colleges (and hence the professional sections of the armed forces)

Given the ideological load that had long been attached to officially-approved tourist activities, it was no great leap for the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* to include a significant cerebral element alongside the more physical activities. In addition to the outdoor activities listed above, the inaugural 1965 season had seen readers' conferences and festivals of war films take place, plus a military history conference organised by the Komsomol committee of Vladimir oblast'.[33] But perhaps the most strongly emphasised activity was the completion of tasks relating to the study of local history, investigating and recording wartime episodes and the biographies of those who had been involved in military activity in the area. Ideally, the actual *pokhody* were to take place along routes carefully mapped out in advance, retracing the wartime footsteps of local military units. A joint declaration of the Bureau of the Komsomol Central Committee, the Central Council for Tourism and the Presidium of DOSAAF of February 1966 boasted that in the first year alone, 'over three million young men and women followed the paths of the Great Patriotic and civil wars, and became acquainted with the feats of Soviet people in the rear.' The direct results it claimed were impressive:

> создано более 27 тысяч музеев, комнат и уголков боевой славы, установлено около 6 тысяч памятников, обелисков и мемориальных досок на местах сражений, приведены в порядок тысячи братских могил, установлены имена неизвестных героев войны.[34]

There is an obvious possibility that some activities carried out under the auspices of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, such as battle re-enactments and mock trials of fascism, were

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of their own volition, rather than awaiting their call-up notice with passivity or reluctance. Local *pokhod* organising groups were indeed considered to have failed somewhat in their mission if the youths in their charge were not so inclined (see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, l. 7).

[33] *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod…* (1966), p. 4.

[34] *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod…* (1966), pp. 2-3. Newspapers, and letters from citizens to organisations, regularly reported young people's work in 'putting fraternal graves in order', clubbing together to sponsor a memorial marker with their own money, and returning regularly to keep the place tidy. For examples, see N. Fedyukov, 'Vospityvayutsya patrioty', *GP*, 4 November 1972, p. 3; 'Nikto ne zabyt, nichto ne zabyto' (1976). On the sometimes very elaborate plans (involving architectural competitions, expensive materials, and so on) for war memorials supposedly arranged by Pioneer and Komsomol groups, see 'Obelisk nad Kshen'yu', *KP*, 14 June 1966, p. 4; F. Matveeva, 'Pamyat' o geroev vechno zhiva', *GP*, 13 September 1972, p. 4; RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, dd. 120, 146, 174, 214, 287, 326 and other *dela* from the same *opis'*.

pre-scripted and choreographed – how, after all, could the outcome of a Soviet 'trial of fascism' possibly have been left to chance? However, the historical research aspect was presented as an opportunity to do something new and essential to the proper understanding of the course of Soviet history. The *krasnye sledopyty* were commonly said to play an active role in the 'compiling of the chronicles (*sostavlenie letopisei*) of their industrial collectives',[35] to the benefit of both their own education and the wider cause of Soviet historiography:

> Глубокое изучение молодежью революционных, боевых и трудовых традиций советского народа, воссоздание малоизученных страниц героического подвига социалистических людей способствовали выработке у юношей и девушек коммунистического мировоззрения, лучшему пониманию ими своего гражданского долга по защите Родины.[36]

Such statements do, of course, require further interrogation. To what extent were the young *sledopyty* and *kraevedy* actually able to participate in the interpretation of history? A term like '*vossozdanie*' rather implies that they were merely furnishing the odd missing word in a script about the heroism of the Soviet people that had already been written, while '*letopis'*' translates into English as 'annals' or 'chronicle' – not as 'narrative', 'interpretation', or 'emplotment'. Hans Kellner has argued that '[a] chronicle is the result of a pre-existing narrative; it is not the origin of such a narrative. [...] [C]hronicles depend on pre-existing narratives that tell us which facts are proper and which are not.'[37] In the late-Soviet case, a powerful pre-written narrative existed in the form of the assertion of the '*geroicheskii podvig*' of the Communist Party and the '*sovetskii narod*', to the complete exclusion of any competing interpretation. Any tension between Soviet youth actively 'reconstructing the narrative of the Soviet people' and

[35] For examples in published and unpublished discourse, see RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 457, l. 63; Tsentral'nyi shtab Vsesoyuznogo turistskogo pokhoda komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda, 'Imena geroev – v letopis' otchizny. Vsesoyuznyi pokhod po dorogam ottsov prodolzhaetsya', *KP*, 14 June 1966, p. 4.
[36] *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod…* (1966), p. 3.
[37] Hans Kellner, '"Never Again" is Now', *History and Theory*, 33 (1994), 127-144 (p. 138).

more passively 'following in their fathers' glorious footsteps' was thus resolved: there was but one path for the Red Pathfinders to find, and their footsteps as they applied all their efforts to pushing on into the glorious communist future would be a perfect continuation of their forebears' endeavours in the glorious communist past.

For all the talk of glorious military endeavour, the human dimension of the war story was never lost on those who promoted it so assiduously in later years. The Soviet 'people', rather than the 'state' or even the 'country', was overwhelmingly the entity named in accounts of the war years. Even more than this, propaganda material of all kinds matched descriptions of the emotional life of the people at war with an insistence on the poignancy of these stories for the audience of the 1960s and 1970s. A 1966 *Komsomol'skaya pravda* article on the fun to be had at summer Pioneer camp, for example, suddenly grew solemn as it took a supposedly Pioneer's-eye view of a war memorial just up the road from the camp:

> Тысячи пионеров по всей стране создают сейчас экспедиционные отряды, собираясь в поход боевой славы. А разве ребят отдыхающих в лагере, это не касается? Стоит у дороги над братской могиле памятник. Фамилии указаны, но не все. Как пройти мимо, не украсить его, не привести в порядок? А может, удастся узнать, кто здесь похоронен, в каком бою погибли люди, и написать родным?[38]

Where more column space was available for depiction of amateur war-studies work, the story of the contemporary young people finding out about their country's history was often combined with an edifying personal story about a heroic Soviet character. In October 1972, for example, *Grodnenskaya pravda* described the letters sent 'from all corners of the Motherland' to one Petr Andreevich Khomenko, a survivor of three separate German concentration camps. According to the article, Khomenko daily received letters from schoolchildren and *krasnye sledopyty* enquiring after his health and

[38] 'Vstretit nas veselyi veter', *KP*, 8 June 1966, p. 1.

urging him to 'write to us a bit more often'. A few months later, the same newspaper reported that Grodno School No. 15 had taken a special interest in the wartime deeds of Hero of the Soviet Union General Dmitrii Mikhailovich Karbyshev, who died in the Mauthausen concentration camp in February 1945. The school's museum group maintained correspondence with around 60 other schools from around the USSR which also bore the name of Karbyshev, and enjoyed an 'especially friendly relationship' with the general's daughter, Alena Dmitrievna, who had donated a number of personal items now cherished as 'precious relics' (*tsennye relikvii*).[39]

Keeping up a correspondence with the families of war dead or missing was strongly encouraged. Given the emphasis, by this time, on the role of parents in bringing up loyal Soviet citizens who would be prepared to serve the Motherland with devotion, parents deemed to have done a worthy job could enjoy a kind of heroism by association if their children performed some special feat or gave their lives for the USSR. In 1945, a letter sent to the mother of the young soldier Aleksandr Yakovlevich Firsov advising her of his posthumous designation as a Hero of the Soviet Union read as follows:

> Командирование благодарит Вас, Анастасия Кирилловна, за воспитание сына-героя, мужественно отдавшего свою молодую жизнь за счастье и независимость нашей Родины.
>
> Мы понимаем, как тяжело матери перенести утрату сына. Знаем, что горе матери велико. Но Ваш сын САША совершил такой героический поступок солдатской доблести, который будет жить долгие годы в сердцах наших людей. Герои не умирают. Они живут в народе.[40]

Letters to the families of dead soldiers expressing gratitude for their sacrifices are, of course, a common feature of military procedure in many cultures. However, this does

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[39] M. Minich, 'Volya k borbe pobedila', *GP*, 6 October 1972, p. 3; 'Pamyat', kotoraya vechna', *GP*, 16 February 1973, p. 3. Note that neither of these articles presents the fact of having been imprisoned in a German camp as a cause for suspicion or shame; to the contrary, being punished with the worst horrors of Nazism for fighting for the Soviet Union appears as a type of martyrdom. However, there is no mention either of Khomenko's treatment in the Soviet Union following repatriation.

[40] Letter from Major V. Okunev, politotdel, 384th Army (n.d., but refers to decree of the Supreme Soviet of 8 September 1945), seen on public display in the Central Museum of the Armed Forces, Moscow, March 2012.

not mean that maintaining links between public organisations and the families of war dead could not have special propaganda value in the Soviet context. By the late 1960s, the Komsomol had organised a programme of 'assistance (*shefstvo*) to those disabled in war and labour, and to families of fallen soldiers'. The scheme was held to be of value for everyone involved: schoolchildren and Komsomol members would provide at no cost the practical assistance with day-to-day tasks that the state had proved so woefully unable to deliver by normal means,[41] and in doing so they would simultaneously learn the importance of service to the collective, and be exposed to the influence of those who had either given loyal combat service themselves, or brought up those who had. Veteran families, especially mothers of dead soldiers, were naturally of special value to the Soviet authorities if, in spite of their own losses, they would speak out urging young people to be prepared for the military defence of Soviet soil.[42] Encouraging children to spend time in their company was thus considered an important means of instilling patriotic values in the young generation.

Living heroes

The official enthusiasm for intergenerational acquaintanceships notwithstanding, attributing heroism to persons still living was a rather more complex business than

[41] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 464; RGANI, f. 5, op. 66, d. 166. Of course, the state did not openly admit to being unable or unwilling to take proper care of those who had served it in wartime. In spring 1972 *Grodnenskaya pravda* published an investigation in response to a reader's letter on behalf of a neighbour disabled in combat and left without a pension. The newspaper found that the veteran had indeed been unfairly forgotten (though suggested that it was partly his own fault for boycotting the doctor after his initial disability pension had been cancelled due to improved health), but devoted most of the article to showing how the case was an exception that proved the rule, and enumerating the many ways in which the Party and government *did* 'demonstrate constant care for invalids of the Great Patriotic War.' It concluded, 'Much has been done. And therefore it's all the more upsetting that one of the veterans of the war has been forgotten' ('Pomnit' o soldate', *GP*, 10 March 1972, p. 4). On the Soviet authorities' actually very widespread failure to keep promises of material compensation and assistance for veterans, especially those disabled in combat, see Edele (2008), pp. 186-214.

[42] On the role of soldiers' mothers at rituals of initiation into the Soviet armed forces, see Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society: The Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 107. For a contemporary report of an event held by the Lida city military commissariat specifically to recognise the mothers of serving conscripts, see S. Yakubovsky, 'Slet soldatskikh materei', *GP*, 5 October 1972, p. 4.

propagandising the exploits of the dead. Late-Soviet newspaper features on, say, 'heroes of the five-year-plan', celebrating exemplary workers and community activists, often referred to an individual's war record as further evidence of good socialist character and a career begun in the right way, with military service.[43] By the same token, war veterans tended to receive positive coverage only if they continued to contribute to society through conscientious labour in a civilian occupation or, having retired due to age or disability, engaged in some other kind of socially useful work.[44] By the mid-1960s, the Komsomol and other communist organisations across the USSR were offering them just such an opportunity, making significant efforts to involve veterans or soldiers' families in the campaign to train up a new generation of patriots dedicated to the cause of a *sovetskii narod* that would completely transcend any ethnic loyalties. As officials of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party earnestly put it, children participating in organised war games needed more structure and direction than just a good game of Partisans, or their own untrammelled interest, could give them:

> О войне, о народных мстителях и героических подвигах народа знают из кинофильмов, книг, отцовских рассказов. Наша молодежь интересуется героическим прошлым советского народа. Но проявляется этот интерес часто стихийно. А сколько полезного ребята могли бы узнать, будь рядом с ними взрослый, который с оружием в руках внес лепту в победоносное завершение Великой Отечественной войны. И еще лучше, если разговор о тех суровых

[43] A. Sadovnichny, 'Geroi pyatiletki: Vernost' dolgu', *GP*, 30 September 1972, p. 2.

[44] Thus the protagonist of the article 'Pomnit' o soldate' (see above) actually came in for mild criticism, even as it was acknowledged that he was a deserving veteran who '*po svoei skromnosti*' had (mostly) refrained from making a fuss about being left without a pension. Conversely, amongst the numerous petitions that the Komsomol Central Committee dealt with in 1970 was a request from Tat'yana Novoselova, a disabled pensioner and mother of a daughter who died in active service during the Great Patriotic War, who was now struggling with life in a seventh-floor flat. The Komsomol official in charge of her case recommended that she should be offered more suitable accommodation – not simply on the basis of her demonstrated need, but because 'Lyuba heroically died, saving the lives of wounded soldiers, in battle near Smolensk', and because 'Tat'yana Georgievna keeps up a strong relationship with the collective of School No. 10, and a great correspondence with schoolchildren in Smolensk' (RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, ll. 135-136). On the uneasy relationship between Soviet ideology and an individual's inability, howsoever caused, to be part of the workforce, see Stephen Lovell, 'Soviet Russia's Older Generations', in *Generations in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. by Stephen Lovell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 205-226; Stephen Lovell, 'Soviet Socialism and the Construction of Old Age', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 51 (2003), 564-585.

> днях пойдет на месте исторического сражения, у памятника, у боевого знамени.[45]

Heroic tales, deaf ears?

For all the determined rhetoric about the respectful relations between generations, though, there is ample evidence of tensions arising between war veterans and younger people with no memory of wartime and – despite the Komsomol's efforts – little interest in the subject. Referring to the 1980s, Mark Edele claims:

> Members of what [Aleksei Yurchak] has called 'the last Soviet generation' were frequently irritated by the high symbolic status of veterans and their privileges within a context of material scarcity. Younger Soviet citizens frequently resented the constant war stories of those they derisively called the *vovy* [...]. Veterans' privileges, now thoroughly endorsed by the state, were challenged in everyday life, in those central sites of Soviet public life: the *ochered'* and public transport.[46]

If resentment at the exercise of veterans' privileges was particularly widespread in Soviet society by the 1980s, such reactions were far from unique to that 'last Soviet generation'. This specific type of conflict between generations was already in evidence when the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was instituted in 1965, and intensified over the course of the 1970s.

Indeed, the campaign to institute concessions and benefits in the first place was already in part a response to thoughtless or uninterested attitudes on the part of the general public. In the 1970s, veterans complained to the authorities about both the inadequacy of state measures in their favour, and the resistance of younger people to the concessions already in place – often in more or less the same breath. In a collection of letters to the editor of *Pravda* on the subject of celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the 'historic feat of the Soviet people', forwarded to the CPSU Central Committee's propaganda department in 1975, the usual proposals for commemorative coins, performances and so on were predictably in evidence. There were also a fair number of suggestions for greater

[45] A. Kairialis and V. Koiala, 'Vnuki partizan', *KP*, 9 June 1966, p. 4.
[46] Edele (2008), pp. 208-209.

involvement and recognition of those who had supported the war effort in the rear, and requests for a lowering of the pension age for 'third-group invalids' (those with the lowest level of impairment recognised by Soviet disability law) – essentially, more or less tactful demands that the state improve its treatment of veterans. Behind the requests for urgent action by the state, though, was often a deep resentment of veterans' treatment at the hands of 'healthy people'. In their grumpy accounts of personal bugbears, some letter-writers painted a vivid picture of the frustrations of everyday life among a largely non-disabled and indifferent population:

> В нашей стране существует бесчисленное количество всевозможных знаков, которые отражают те или другие событие. Но почему нет знака, отличающего инвалида Отечественной войны I, II и III групп. Если бы он существовал, то инвалиду не нужно было бы каждый раз предъявлять удостоверение в транспорте и очередях. Особенно в очередях. В железнодорожные кассы, поликлиники и другие учреждения. *Это заставило бы* здоровых людей уступить инвалиду место в транспорте. *Обязывало бы* всех работников в сфере обслуживания более внимательно относиться к его просьбам. Знаки должны быть строго пронумерованы и занесены на пенсионные удостоверения.[47]

Similar letters had been received from a number of citizens; underlying them all was the bitter complaint of the older generation against the younger: we gave up our youth and our health for them, and they don't care. There is also, again, a hint that some individuals were beginning to find the state's repeated affirmation of veterans' heroism rather hollow since it was accompanied by so little in the way of concrete benefits or compensation for the life-changing injuries they had received.[48] Much resentment was directed at young people, whether as members of the public or as representatives of the state bureaucracy,

[47] RGANI, f. 5, op. 76, d. 76, ll. 27-28 [emphasis added].

[48] Not all communications were delicately worded. Quite separately, in 1970, a letter reached the Komsomol Central Committee complaining about delays in war invalids' receipt of aid and benefits. Claiming the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth as inspiration, the writer placed the blame squarely on bureaucrats who were – at best – inefficient and inclined not to use funds for their proper purpose, admonished that 'Vladimir Il'ich fiercely hated (*lyuto nenavidel*) bureaucrats and red-tape-wielders (*volokitchikov*), arrogance and conceit', and ended his missive, 'and therefore I think the Komsomol had better show the same kind of decisiveness in helping disabled people, and not limit itself to idylls with flowers' (RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, ll. 149-155).

who had no experience of disability and refused to make concessions that would allow invalids of war simply to carry out the same day-to-day activities that able-bodied citizens took for granted.[49]

Some veterans continued to live in hope, or at least to put an optimistic face on for the authorities. Also on the eve of the 1975 victory celebrations, one Vladlen Brazhnikov ('Former sergeant-major, 333 Infantry Division, Stalingrad Front, now Group II invalid') wrote to the Komsomol Central Committee acknowledging that 'for certain reasons' it had not been possible for the state to make immediate concessions for those who had fought, but declaring that, thirty years later, the time had come. Brazhnikov's exhaustive list of desirable concessions, complete with suggested percentage price reductions for different categories of pensioner, and detailed eligibility requirements, was not exclusively about benefit to persons such as himself – in fact, the majority of his suggestions were for recognising the unique challenges faced by women who had served at the front. Pointedly asking the authorities to 'really bring to life' the 'deeply respected' motto '*Nichto ni zabyto i nikto ne zabyt*', Brazhnikov then attempted to ingratiate himself by presenting his requests as an important contribution towards the patriotic education of the young. When they observed the benefits accruing to those who devoted themselves to the service of the Motherland, he maintained, younger generations would willingly apply themselves in the coming 'battles and victories in the global arena, for the full victory of communism'.[50]

Whatever the likelihood of benefits such as those Brazhnikov recommended having the desired effect on Soviet youth, the archives do also record instances of apparently genuine inter-generational co-operation. In May 1971, for example, a group of around

[49] Edele (2008), pp. 185-214.
[50] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, ll.17-19.

twelve veterans, all that remained of a detachment of Air Force parachutists active on the Western Front of the Great Patriotic War, wrote to the Komsomol Central Committee applauding the fact that the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* had become 'a true mass movement, raising up our youth to follow the example of the older generation', and expressing their feelings 'of deep gratitude' for the assistance and attention of students at their local college of professional and technical education:

> Как итог этого похода, это то, что сегодня 9 мая 1971 г. мы все однополчане, оставшиеся в живых собрались в вместе на рубеже, где приняли мы первый бой с фашистами. И помогли нам собраться следопыты из профтехучилища № 24 Климовска Московской области. Это они, будущие рабочие, установили за 4 года три памятника погибшим, да не простых памятника-обелиска, а высокохудожественных, изготовленными [*sic*] своими руками. Это они собрали богатейший и уникальный материал о парашютно-десантном отряде СТАРЧАКА И. Г., это они открыли музей боевой Славы нашего отряда, выпустили свои, очень интересные три журнала – 'Подвиг'.
>
> Желая быть похожими на нас – десантников, 70 учащихся ежегодно проходят парашютную подготовку в училище.
>
> Сегодня в день ПОБЕДЫ вместе с нами у памятника, установленного учащимися ГПТУ № 24 присутствуют ребята и девчата из этого училища. Нескольким из них вручены сегодня комсомольские билеты и паспорта, ветеранами войны.
>
> Просим вас как-то отметить этот коллектив, возможно наградив его памятным значком или вымпелом ЦК ВЛКСМ.[51]

It is characteristic that while this letter expressed genuine appreciation for these efforts and requested that the students receive some kind of honour, the group of veterans also made sure to take the opportunity to recapitulate their own story in very heroic terms. Accompanying the letter was a declaration by the veterans addressed to the Central Committee of the Komsomol, describing themselves as devoted Komsomol members of the 1940s:

> Здесь, на этой реке, без приказа, по собственной инициативе, верные сыны Родины, комсомольцы-добровольцы ценой жизни в октябре 1941 года преградили врагу путь к Москве.

[51] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 180, l. 42.

Having quoted Marshal Zhukov's highly positive assessment of their activity, they ended with a heartfelt, if fairly standard exhortation to the generation of the seventies:

> Комсомольцы-ленинцы! Свято храните боевые и трудовые традиции комсомольцев старших поколений! Вперед под знаменами нашей партии к победе коммунизма![52]

Veterans took an active part in the telling and retelling of the Great Patriotic War story in the Soviet Union of the late 1960s and 1970s, with a variety of motivations. Some, such as Anatolii Nikolaevich Yakovenko, who wrote to the Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee in 1971, expressed no motive other than ensuring that their own experiences were recorded in some kind of official account of the war. In a written style of dubious literary quality, but with a very definite sense of how communications with the authorities ought to be conducted, Yakovenko began confidently by acknowledging the work of the Komsomol in both war and peacetime:

> Гражданин секретарь ЦК ВЛКСМ,
>
> К Вам лично я решил обратиться по поводу давно минувших событий, но которые не забываются и не должны быть забыты.
>
> Наша партия и правительство, а также ЦК ВЛКСМ, вдохновляют наш народ на трудовые и боевые подвиги во имя мира, жизни, справедливости. Учат нашу молодежь бороться с невзгодами, быть во всем передовыми, быть преданными делу партии в построении коммунизма. Очень много героев воспитал Ленинский Союз молодежи в духе преданности Родине. О некоторых из них я хотел написать.

According to his letter, Yakovenko had as a thirteen-year-old been forced to 'take the difficult but glorious military path' as a member of an 'underground-diversionary' group led by Vera Umanskaya in his native Donbass region, then under German occupation. In 1943, his cell was responsible for organising the escape of a second underground group including Nikolai Monchenko of the Ukrainian Komsomol central

[52] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 180, l. 46.

committee, together with a number of other communists, from the camp in which they had been imprisoned by their Nazi captors. In conclusion, Yakovenko wrote,

> Вот мне и хотелось узнать почему в книге о разведчике Колодине замалчивают о действительных героях подполья таких как, Монченко, Уманская и др.? Ведь именно эти группы достали и передали командованию Красной Армии карту укрепрайона Донбасса, схемы аэродромов […], разработали контроль передвижения вражеских войск по железной дороге, производили диверсионные акты, подрывая боевую мощь противника и т.д. Почему нет ни строчки об этих отважных людях?[53]

Two months later Yakovenko wrote again, this time to the Komsomol Department for Propaganda and Agitation, and in rather less patient tones. By now, no thanks to the Central Committee, a writer had been found to record the story of the Donbass underground for limited circulation in a Donetsk journal. However, there was as yet no prospect of reaching a wider audience via an all-Union newspaper like *Komsomol'skaya pravda*. Yakovenko's ostensible complaint was that in failing to take an active role in propagating this episode in the history of the war, the Komsomol was failing in its unquestionable duty both to honour its war dead, and to appropriately educate the youth of the 1970s:

> Я прошу Вас, как руководителя и указателя верного пути нашего комсомола, где Вы даете путевку в жизнь подрастающему поколению, напутствуете на верность партии и народу быть преданным идеям нашей Ленинской партии. Такими были комсомольцы Донбасса, которых забыли и затоптали некоторые руководители. […]
>
> Я прошу Вас еще раз взяться за это дело серьезно, это большое дело для будущего поколения, оставать [*sic*] это незамеченным будет нехорошо и стыдно. Надо поднять журналистов и кинематографистов, нельзя от народа скрывать правду; надо написать, показать о стойкости и мужестве донбассовских комсомольцев. […] Я думаю, что по получению моего письма, примете срочные меры к опубликации [*sic*] о героях донбассовского подполья. Надо строго спросить с секретаря обкома комсомола Донецкой области, почему они молчат о донбассовском подполье или их это не касается. Прошу Вас, узнайте по этому вопросу у секретаря обкома. Посылаю

[53] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 174, ll. 57-58. Yakovenko's cause, although sharing many details, appears to be entirely separate from that of the Donbass underground group celebrated in Aleksandr Fadeev's 1945 novel *Molodaya gvardiya*. In his letters, Yakovenko did not mention Fadeev's famous protagonists at all.

> Вам письмо, в ЦК партии докладную записку об умышленном молчании о героях подпольщиках, я думаю, ЦК партии найдет кто виноват в этом.[54]

Despite – or perhaps because of – the increasingly frenzied tone of Yakovenko's communication, in which the matter began to take on the dimensions of a criminal complaint, the Komsomol Central Committee and the Central Council of the Pioneer Organisation now responded with a serious plan of action. Plans were made for a film, interweaving the story of Yakovenko's Donbass underground group with footage of 1970s *krasnye sledopyty* to give the film 'even greater educational significance', to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Pioneer organisation. The established screenwriters V. A. Alekseev (recipient of a 1952 Stalin prize) and M. K. Pismannik were engaged and sent off on a fact-finding trip to the Donbass region, where they interviewed witnesses and gathered other 'valuable factual material'.[55] Ultimately, in a fittingly strange end to an altogether peculiar episode, the film was never made: no further paperwork was added to the file after the screenwriters' report, and I have been unable to find any trace of a film or other propaganda material publicising the story of Umanskaya and Monchenko's underground groups as Yakovenko requested. Even without Alekseev and Pismannik's promised film, however, the case shows how high emotions could run when it came to war survivors' perceptions of their treatment, and how fast the Komsomol could escalate matters – even to the extent of dispatching screenwriters on a fieldwork mission – when there was further propaganda value in responding to a vociferous complaint.

An exceptionally traumatic chapter in the country's history, the war had been the defining event of its participants' lives, and one that – if they were fortunate enough to survive it – more often than not left physical and mental scars that dictated the entire course of the rest of their existence. Given the multiple indignities to which, as Edele has

[54] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 174, l. 59.
[55] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 174, ll. 67-70.

shown, Soviet former combatants were subjected in the decades following the war – the continuing insistence that prisoners of war were probably traitors, the abject failure to provide adequate housing, disability aids and pensions, and the authorities' dogged avowal, all the while, that the Soviet veteran could not possibly have any complaints because the party and government took the very greatest care of absolutely everything – these individuals' reiteration of their claims to heroic status must surely be at least in part a reaction to the enormous difficulties and negations of their experiences that they had encountered in the previous decades. On a purely practical level, too, a record of heroic activity was of significant instrumental use in actually securing the social security benefits that were supposed to be available as a matter of course.[56]

Indignity and inconvenience still remained part of many elderly and disabled people's lot, well into the Brezhnev era. However, the Soviet authorities in general and the Komsomol in particular were by this time more than keen to involve veterans and have them tell their stories as part of the patriotic education programme for young people. In marked contrast to the future-oriented discourse of the early Soviet period, propaganda of the Brezhnev era involved a great deal of looking back along the 'roads of glory trodden by our fathers and grandfathers', with constant admonitions to children and youth to prove themselves worthy of the heroic older generation. Veterans of war and labour were now wheeled out for all sorts of public occasions: to give talks in schools, to assist

[56] Edele (2008), pp. 186-214 (for specific discussion of former prisoners of war, see pp. 103-129). See also Mark Edele, 'Soviet Veterans as an Entitlement Group, 1945-1955', *Slavic Review*, 65 (2006), 111-137; Lovell (2007). In an interesting counterpoint to the examples of correspondence cited above, the Komsomol Central Committee received in 1970 a request for assistance from one Leonid Proviryakov, a young veteran and Komsomol member who had suffered disabling injuries in the Sino-Soviet border conflict of 1969. Unusually amongst the petitions I have seen, Proviryakov did not explicitly refer to any heroic status of his own, restricting himself to a description of his injury and his desire to return to study in order to be of further service to the *Rodina*. Again, however, it was his service record, rather than need alone, that mattered to the Komsomol: Proviryakov eventually received a car, driving lessons and an enhanced pension, but only after a Central Committee investigation had revealed a number of decorations '*za muzhestvo i otvagu*' (RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, ll. 10-33).

at Soviet rites of passage such as entry into the Pioneers and Komsomol, school leaving ceremonies and entry into a new work collective, and for Solemn Presentation of the Passport to those sixteen-year-olds who through diligent attention at school and involvement in 'socially useful work' had earned the right to a ritualised conferral of citizenship rather than just picking up their new adult identity document from an office at the police station.[57] At a time of heightened concern about threats to the Soviet Union from outside, repeated insistence on the heroic nature of the Soviet citizen's calling – the 'rituals of public self-admiration' that Gorsuch describes – may have been considered a necessary and effective means of renewing the Soviet population's confidence in itself and persuading people that the Soviet path was indeed the correct one.

For many veterans, this kind of work was important not only for personal reasons, but as part of their continuing duty to their country – just as the Komsomol said it should be. In January 1965, as preparations were underway for the first season of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, *Pravda* published a substantial article under the name of a Great Patriotic War veteran from Alma-Ata, reflecting on the differences between those young people who had a clear sense of their fathers' wartime activities and those who did not (and calling for almost exactly the kinds of activities that would later be recommended as part of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*). The article described the author's personal upset and incredulity at discovering that a number of tenth-class pupils at a local school had no idea what roles their fathers had played in the war, 'what feats [they] performed, what medals they had been awarded!' Railing against the replacement of serious values by the trivialities of popular culture, it rhetorically asked how one could fail to become annoyed with young people 'who know all the names of all the film actors, collect cards with their photos, but

[57] On the Solemn Presentation of the Passport, see Albert Baiburin, 'Rituals of Identity: The Soviet Passport', in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, ed. by Bassin and Kelly, pp. 91-109; also Lane (1981), pp. 99-102.

hardly know [anything] about Karbyshev and Dovator, Gastello and Talalikhin', and can only 'vaguely imagine the feats of the heroic Panfilov [men], Manshuk Mametova, and other brave sons and daughters whose names are sacred to our people'. Was it not the case, it continued, that such ignorance bred 'indifference to the military glory of the people'? While expressing concern at the evident failure of the school, the Pioneer and Komsomol organisations and DOSAAF to fill in the gaps left by parental reticence or negligence, the article proposed that the need to cause children to 'see how much romance [there is] in the daily life of Soviet soldiers, dream about feats, nurture in themselves boldness, endurance, courage' could best be fulfilled by 'more frequent' school visits by veterans and serving soldiers. In the words of the article, 'We are all responsible for forming the rising generation in a spirit of patriotism.'[58]

Ten years later, similar sentiments were expressed – in somewhat less standardised language, but still with a sense of confidence in the importance and ideological integrity of their work – by the veterans of the 87th Perekop Division in their communication with the Komsomol Central Committee. Between 1972 and late 1974, the veterans wrote, they had spent 27 months (with some breaks) on their own *pokhod*, retracing the entire 1494 km of their wartime footsteps: from Mamaev Kurgan across to the Don, along through the Donbass to Perekop and Sevastopol', and then, during the summer and autumn, from Šiauliai in Northern Lithuania towards Liepaja in Latvia. Their purpose was not simply a private pilgrimage to the places where they had fought, though commemorative reunions were as important to Soviet veterans as to members of armed forces of other countries, and the Komsomol appears to have been a willing facilitator of veteran former members' gatherings during this period.[59] According to the report the 87th Perekop

[58] Fedor Egorov, 'Nasledniki ottsovskoi slavy', *Pr*, 10 January 1965, p. 4.
[59] For accounts of reunions supported or organised by the Komsomol, chiefly for the benefit of the veterans themselves, but apparently also with a view to their educative value for the youth of the Brezhnev period,

Division submitted, over the course of their journey through 28 regions of the USSR, with stops at over 150 towns and villages, they made around 1000 public appearances to a combined audience of over 63,000 local residents, 'including many young people'. The veterans also claimed not to have missed a single school in their path, holding 117 meetings with schoolchildren and making 309 further appearances to a total of around 15,000 pupils. They distributed approximately 3000 photographs for display in school museums and albums of wartime glory, and recorded that, as a result of their visits, 'In a number of schools Pioneer brigades were named after the division, its regiments and heroes who fell fighting for the Motherland.' The veterans' report also accorded much importance to their attempts to develop emotionally resonant, familial relationships with specially selected young people, to whom they would entrust the special task of keeping their memory alive:

> В ходе похода у ветеранов возникла мысль из числа лучших учеников избрать внуков дивизии. Мы избрали около 100 внуков. Поручили им изучать историю дивизии, подвиги ее героев, а в дни 50-летия Победы в войне, когда они станут взрослыми, выступать от имени ветеранов перед потомками. Мы намерены подружить внуков ветеранов с избранными внуками. Намереваемся при помощи райкомов комсомола в будущем провести слеты внуков по изучению подвигов героев.
>
> Еще весной 1974 г. в районных газетах на пути дивизии было опубликовано с Перекопа наше обращение к ученикам. После похода написали специальное письмо в школы. Сейчас во всех 137 школах развернуто движение за право называться внуком или внучкой дивизии. Первым внукам вручены специальное удостоверения. Всем остальным внукам такие удостоверения будут вручены в день 30-летия Победы.[60]

Heroism and late-Soviet youth

> Я стала вспоминать, как нас принимали в пионеры в Музее погранвойск […]. Нас повели по музею и стали рассказывать его историю, но я ничего не запомнила, кроме того, что мы когда-то делили с японцами какую-то речку и

see G. Samolis, '60.000 mil' za kormoi', *KP*, 11 June 1966, p. 3; RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, ll. 117-119; RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, ll. 1-13.

[60] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, l. 102.

> даже разодрались. Однако до войны дело не дошло. А может, я что-то путаю. Я такие вещи вообще не запоминаю. Мне это совершенно не интересно.[61]

Passing on knowledge and values to younger generations, a phenomenon that psychologists refer to as generativity, was a major concern of war veterans in the 1960s and 1970s, and has remained so well into the twenty-first century.[62] In this basic objective – if not always in the details, or in their preferred methods of achieving it – Soviet veterans coincided with the Komsomol and the state. But what did the young people themselves think about the activities in which they were engaged? Did late-Soviet teenagers share the boredom of Viktoriya Tokareva's fictional 1980s schoolgirl, quoted above – who, after some reflection, decides that the most satisfactory way to spend a day is alone or with her family, with the door firmly closed on the public obligations of life in Soviet society?[63] Whereas the files of the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee's *obshchii otdel* contain much correspondence from interested adults on the subject of military and patriotic education, the fostering of socialist values in youth, and examples of Soviet heroism, it is more difficult to find sufficient evidence to say anything about the attitudes of young people to the Komsomol's vision of appropriate military-patriotic education. Even where documents do exist, younger letter-writers seem to have been more circumspect than their elders in their communications with the authorities. Whereas Ann Livschiz has found instances of chirpy, if not downright cheeky, correspondence written by children of the late 1950s in the personal archives of certain Soviet writers,[64]

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[61] Viktoriya Tokareva, 'Samyi schastlivyi den', rasskaz akseleratki', *Novyi mir*, 2 (1980), 177-183 (p. 177).
[62] A psychological study of 50 Russian and Russian-speaking Ukrainian World War II veterans (the oldest aged 91), conducted in 2002-2003, found that the sense of helping to guide a new generation was central to informants' sense of wellbeing. By and large, the informants felt fulfilled in this aspect of their existence, though some lamented that post-Soviet society had less use for their stories than had previously been the case – incidentally implying that they recall late-Soviet society as being receptive to their memory practices (Peter G. Coleman, and Andrei Podolskij, 'Identity Loss and Recovery in the Life Stories of Soviet World War II Veterans', *The Gerontologist*, 47 (2007), 52-60).
[63] Tokareva (1980), pp. 182-183.
[64] Livschiz (2006).

and robust, if necessarily respectfully addressed, correspondence was also accepted at times for publication in *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, these findings are not replicated in the samples of late-1960s and 1970s correspondence from the *obshchii otdel* of the Komsomol archive which I have examined. There is, for example, no information recording the commemorative activities of the 87th Perekop Division from the children's own perspective and answering such questions as whether there was really a surge of activity in the schools when the veterans visited, whether it really was as huge an honour as the veterans hoped to be one of the hundred 'grandchildren' selected from among the fifteen thousand pupils they came into contact with, whether it was entirely predictable which member of the class would be adding this to his or her collection of awards, or whether in actual fact it was slightly embarrassing to be singled out from among one's peers and invited to go on special journeys with a group of old soldiers who were passing through town.

Even where original materials such as scrapbooks have been preserved in the archives, it is not always easy to gauge the precise level of involvement of young participants in the work of 'their' school or other institutional projects. Albums sent to the Komsomol Central Committee by the 'Istorik-kraeved' museum group, based at Gudermes School No. 1 in the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, conformed exactly to the established pattern of following up leads on little-known participants in local battles by writing to as many informants as possible until the group had managed either to reconstruct the biography of a dead hero, or get in touch with a living one. The albums created by the group contained drawings and decorations obviously done by children, but all of the substantive materials such as letters of enquiry, and, indeed, the introductory

essay describing the project, were proficiently typed and bore the signature of the teacher in charge of the group.[65]

Other communications, handwritten on exercise-book paper and giving a more authentic impression of youthful origins, did reach the central authorities. But generally speaking, there is no sense in which these can be interpreted as frank accounts of young people's likes and dislikes either; rather, they offer information about how their young authors understood the requirements of the discursive environment in which they were operating, and did their best to produce an appropriate contribution. [66] In early 1970, eighth-year pupils from Talnakh School No. 20 wrote to Komsomol First Secretary Evgeny Tyazhel'nikov, informing him of their school Komsomol organisation's research on and attachment to the figure of Viktor Novitsko, a wartime Pioneer who 'for several hours single-handedly repelled the enemy onslaught on the city of Novorossiisk'. The letter incorporated various stock phrases: 'The Komsomol organisation of our school is fighting for the right to bear the name (*boretsya za prisvoenie ei imeni*) of Viktor Novitsko'; 'He fell. But his glory lives on and will live throughout the ages'; 'We swear to be people like Viktor, to love our Motherland as he loved it', and ended with a request for Evgenii Mikhailovich to 'petition N. V. Podgorny for Viktor Novitsko to be awarded the Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union on the eve of the 30th Anniversary of Victory (posthumously).' The pupils did not get a personal reply from Tyazhel'nikov; nor, as it turned out, was Nikolai Podgorny their man – the local Party organisations of Krasnodar Krai would be responsible for determining whether to make a posthumous

[65] 'Materialy muzeya boevoi slavy srednei shkoly No. 1 g. Gudermesa Checheno-Ingushskoi ASSR' (1966), RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 91.
[66] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, ll. 116-118 obv. For discussions of Soviet citizens' language choices when corresponding with the authorities, and of the historical interpretation of these communications, see Miriam Dobson, 'Letters', in *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History*, ed. by Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 57-73.

award to Novitsko. However, the reply from N. Chesnokova of the Central Council of the Pioneer Organisation, who had already been in touch with Krasnodar for a progress report on the case, conveyed warm approval along with exhortations to the group to continue their research, to 'open a monument or memorial plaque in time for 9th May', and ('most importantly', said the letter) to 'prepare handmade gifts and souvenirs to distribute to veterans living in the vicinity of the school.'

Some more detailed – and either post-Soviet or ostensibly private – accounts by young participants also repeat official declarations about the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* and related initiatives, thereby making much the same impression as articles from the Soviet press. In his *Ocherki istorii rossiiskogo turizma*, for example, the historian Grigorii Usyskin, a participant at every single *Vsesoyuznyi slet pobeditelei pokhoda*, quotes his own childhood diary of the second *slet*, held in Moscow:

> 11 сентября. Нам предоставлено почетное, волнующее право прийти на Красную площадь столицы, чтобы здесь, в сердце Родины, дать партии и народу клятву на верность. Нет места более святого на всей раздольной нашей земле! В самые сокровенные минуты мы приходим на Красную площадь.
>
> И сегодня на площади, как в грозные годы войны, гремит в динамиках голос Ю. Левитана:
>
> – Вечная слава героям, павшим в боях за свободу и независимость нашей Родины![67]

Usyskin does not say for whom he was writing: whether his journal was a school assignment, a project for display as part of his club's activities, or a personal and private undertaking. There is no reason why it should not be the latter; as Jochen Hellbeck has pointed out in relation to his Stalin-era subjects, 'their cultural environment […] supplied the very categories of speech, thought, and action that went into the production of their diaries',[68] and Soviet exhortations to individuals, to devote themselves to the collective

[67] Usyskin (2000), p. 192.
[68] Hellbeck (2006), p. 356.

project, exercised a powerful influence that play out on the pages of private diaries as well as in public. Observing life in Moscow between 1971 and 1975, the *New York Times* journalist Hedrick Smith found that the concept of the Motherland and its defence, so beloved of Brezhnev-era propagandists, exerted a similar pull on Russians from all walks of life, whatever their opinion of the state, the Party, and the propaganda itself.[69] A quarter of a century later, Catherine Merridale's research team came to a similar conclusion about their war-veteran informants, finding that 'the weight of years and of the patriotic myths, of a self-image that was manufactured for the soldiers in the very midst of war, was hard to lift now in people's extreme old age.'[70]

The echoes of propaganda in the young Usyskin's journal are accompanied by some interesting observations by Usyskin the post-Soviet historian about the popularity of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod,* which, he claims, saw the participation of 'hundreds of thousands' of tourists, principally young people. For many of these, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* constituted the 'most interesting mass form of participation in [planned] tourist routes', with the historical dimension representing a genuine and significant source of attraction:

> [П]оход искренне привлекал участников романтикой приобщения к героическим страницам истории. Почти каждый поход был связан с поисковой, следопытской деятельностью. В этом был его смысл.[71]

Even with all the military-patriotic content that formed such an important part of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* as it was officially constituted, the fact that participating clubs operated from Pioneer palaces and holiday camps does not particularly contradict Catriona Kelly's assertion that, in the post-Stalin era, out-of-school Pioneer institutions tended to focus more on providing opportunities for 'rational leisure' than on political education.[72] Sport, tourism and even local history could be extra-curricular pursuits with

[69] Smith (1976), pp. 369-397.
[70] Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939-45* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 8.
[71] Usyskin (2000), p. 187.
[72] Kelly (2007), p. 577.

which young Soviet people – like children and teenagers in many other twentieth-century cultures – willingly engaged.[73] Memoirs of participation in so-called '*poiskovaya rabota*' leave little doubt that the possibility, indeed likelihood, of finding bodily remains of soldiers listed as missing in action (*propavshie bez vesti*) and simply abandoned in the chaos of fighting, left deep imprints. Out on the battlefields, bland formulations about memorial plaques and 'fraternal graves' could suddenly give way to the serious and emotionally resonant business of burying the dead, while the surrounding fragments might present the basis for a really serious research project, tracking down the missing soldiers' families and informing them of the final resting places of their loved ones.[74]

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[73] One has only to look at the Guiding and Scouting movements for Western examples of voluntary extracurricular activity (or 'informal education', as Mills describes it), propelled by the serious social, political, and/or religious objectives of the adults offering them, yet often very successful in attracting young participants (including the author of this thesis, who in 1999 expended considerable effort on the production of a scrapbook fulfilling the requirements of the 'Local History' Girl Guide badge). For the array of 'interest' badges available to individual Scouts of the 1960s – including 'Explorer', 'Pioneer', and 'Civics' – see *Scout Badge Series*, 1st edn (Glasgow, 1967). On the aspirations of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) to use their World Centre at Cuernavaca, Mexico to further the cause of 'greater social stability through international friendships', see Marcia Chatelain, 'International Sisterhood: Cold War Girl Scouts Encounter the World', *Diplomatic History*, 38 (2014), 261-270. On the interactions between the British 'voluntarist tradition', in particular the uniformed youth movements, the state, and civil society, see Sarah Mills, '"An Instruction in Good Citizenship": Scouting and the Historical Geographies of Citizenship Education', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38 (2013), 120-134. For the argument that Western Guiding and Scouting organisations themselves serve amongst the numerous 'state-sanctioned institutions that [produce] more malleable subjects for the nation', see Sherrie Inness, 'Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and Woodcraft Girls: The Ideology of Girls' Scouting Novels, 1910-1935', in *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls' Series*, ed. by Sherrie Inness (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997), pp. 89-100 (p. 91).

[74] Tumarkin's historical/anthropological study-cum-memoir, in many ways as heavily romanticised as the patriotic-educational propaganda it criticises, is highly sceptical of the Komsomol's motives in 'involv[ing] itself in the work of "Red Pathfinders" who led schoolchildren on trips to search for human remains and wartime relics as part of their military-patriotic upbringing', implying that the Komsomol colluded with the state in ignoring or dissimulating wartime losses so as not to lose face and become liable for compensatory benefits to families of soldiers confirmed killed. As far as I have been able to determine from the archival and published data now available, however, '*krasnye sledopyty*' was in fact the Komsomol term for participants in its own initiative, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*. Moreover, the emphasis throughout the Komsomol material (including correspondence from grassroots participants), however infelicitously expressed, on finding, identifying and decently burying soldiers' remains, is one reason why I cannot concur with her dichotomy between authentic, independent volunteers searching for unburied remains out of a sense of duty to their fellow humans, and a monolithic slab of Komsomol acting in bad faith. As I explain in detail in the main text in this section, the decentralised execution of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, and the largely retrospective mechanisms by which diverse groups were encouraged to make their own local *pokhod* 'official', is a second reason for my disagreement on this point. Nonetheless, Tumarkin's work provides a valuable account of the moral and emotional impact of involvement in so-called 'search work' (Tumarkin (1994) (quotation p. 14)). See also the account of some of Tumarkin's glasnost'-era informants (the majority of whom were intellectuals), for example the educationalists Oleg and Ada Lishin: O. V. Lishin, and A. K. Lishina, *Eto nuzhno zhivym* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1990). Ongoing post-Soviet efforts

Although the rather pompous and infinitely reproducible nature of Soviet official discourse arguably served to mask the genuine affective potential of the enterprise; post-Soviet accounts by Usyskin and other Komsomol members or *krasnye sledopyty* turned professional historians,[75] and many of the reports submitted to the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* during the 1960s and 1970s, integrate the discourse of *romantika* – which pervaded official information about the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* just as it did other forms of propaganda discussed in this thesis[76] – in such a way as to suggest that they perceived even that as meaningful.

To be sure, the educational dimension of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* appears to have hollowed out somewhat over the 25 or so years of its existence; Usyskin notes, for example, that the 12th *Vsesoyuznyi slet pobeditelei pokhoda*, held in Leningrad in 1987, was generally referred to as the *Vsesoyuznyi slet komsomol'tsev i molodezhi*, having run out of momentum for actual *pokhody* and existing principally as an opportunity for Komsomol functionaries and others to enjoy a 'big colourful spectacle'.[77] As with many

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to identify, bury and honour missing soldiers from the same conflict were discussed by Catriona Bass in her unpublished seminar paper, 'Beyond the Blockade: Present Day Civic Engagement in Redressing Post-War Injustices in the Leningradskaya Oblast'', presented at the University of Oxford Russian Graduate Seminar on 4 December 2014. Finally, for accounts of the work of one highly successful school Museum of Wartime Glory turned 'Obshchestvennyi narodnyi muzei' (based at school No. 73 in Izhevsk), spanning the period from 1971 to the twenty-first century and supervised for the whole of that time by one veteran of the Great Patriotic War, see Raisa Sonina, *Dorogoi pamyati* (Izhevsk: Urdmurtiya, 2006), and Lyubov' Katkova, 'Chelovek podviga', *Udmurtskaya pravda*, 21 July 2009, <http://archive.udmpravda.ru/default/article?article=1237815513> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[75] I refer specifically to the team behind the website *Komsomol37* <http://комсомол37.рф/>, who describe their purpose as to 'collect living, real evidence of the activities of the Komsomol of Ivanovo Oblast' during the years of its existence […] from all for whom the Komsomol was part of life', and to publicise and offer help to new youth initiatives with similar social principles (*Komsomol37*, n.d., <http://комсомол37.рф/> [accessed 4 January 2017]).

[76] For a further example of the discourse of *romantika* in propaganda relating to the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, see A. A. Abakumov, N. P. Kuzin, F. I. Puzyrev, and L. F. Litvinov, *Narodnoe obrazovanie v SSSR. Sbornik dokumentov 1917-1973 gg.* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1974), p. 305.

[77] Usyskin (2000), pp. 195-196. Something similar can be said for the Pioneers' war game Zarnitsa, introduced in 1967 with the intention of developing children's ability to survive and contribute to a possible future war effort and described by Hedrick Smith (whose 11-year-old daughter played it at her Moscow school) as 'very much like a summer camp game of capture the flag except for the deadly earnestness with which it was done', the players first being 'drilled by a uniformed army instructor in formation marching and making right faces and left faces.' A glimpse of the gusto with which school pupils entered into the exercise was provided by an American acquaintance of Smith's, who 'was amazed one day to have spotted one group of [school] students, dressed in dark navy uniforms, not only capture their rivals but go through

other phenomena of the Soviet public sphere – and, indeed, in human society in general[78] – the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was invested with all sorts of divergent meanings by its participants, in a dialectical process which brought about constant evolution in the public understanding of the campaign itself and of the values it promoted. It is quite possible that certain local children's history groups, ostensibly devoted to similar activities as those which registered themselves with the *Tsentral'nyi shtab*, dissociated themselves from Soviet ideology and developed into tightly knit, determinedly independent-minded and apolitical circles like the Leningrad 'archaeological circle' which Yurchak describes in his analysis of the 'last Soviet generation'.[79] The archive of the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee is hardly likely to hold records of such groups' activities. For other groups, however, the discourse of *romantika* and the state-mediated community, belief in the objective social importance of their activities, and, undoubtedly, the desire for official recognition and a trip to the *slet pobeditelei*, exerted an irresistible pull. While Hornsby suggests that, 'unfortunately for the researcher, the content [of participants' reports] was mostly rather anodyne and quite clearly intended for the eye of Komsomol

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the ceremony of lining the captured partisans up against a wall and pretending to shoot them. The victims fell and died very realistically' (Smith (1976), pp. 390-391). Today, there is ample evidence from the Russian online community that the game is remembered with fondness by (many, though not all) former players – who simply loved disappearing into the fields for entire days to play at being partisans and spies, whether or not they appreciated the educational function of the exercise (for examples, see landgraf77, '"Zarnitsa" v SSSR', blog post, 22 March 2011, <http://landgraf77.blog.ru/115787539.html?attempt=1> [accessed 4 January 2017]; 'Nostal'giya po Sverdlovsku – 50. "Zarnitsa" – 1970, 1977', www.1723.ru, 13 March 2007, <http://www.1723.ru/photo/sverdlovsk-50.htm> [accessed 4 January 2017]). However, the large number of recent attempts by local authorities to resurrect Zarnitsa for twenty-first-century children also demonstrates the belief of contemporary adults that the games they played as Soviet children have an important role to play in, for example, combatting a 'negative dynamic in the fitness of conscripts for service in the army', See 'Munitsipal'nye novosti. Nostal'giya po Zarnitse', Severoural'skii gorodskoi okrug, 21 April 2014, <http://adm-severouralsk.ru/in/md/news2?mode=news&news=1247680> [accessed 4 January 2017]; also 'Novosti – Na starte – "Zarnitsa", Park kul'tury i otdykha im. S. M. Kirova, g. Zheleznogorsk, 24 September 2014, <http://www.kirovpark.ru/novosti/?nid=188> [accessed 4 January 2017]; '"Zarnitsa" Nostal'giya po proshlomu i nashemu detstvu', Munitsipal'noe obrazovanie – Abanskii raion, 27 February 2013, <http://www.abannet.ru/news/«ЗАРНИЦА»-ностальгия-по-прошлому-и-нашему-детству> [accessed 4 January 2017]. For an article with an interesting selection of readers' positive and negative comments about the Soviet practice of Zarnitsa, see rakita, 'Igra "Zarnitsa"', Muzei SSSR "20-i vek", 21 September 2011, <http://20th.su/2011/09/21/igra-zarnica/ [accessed 4 January 2017].

[78] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1984).

[79] Yurchak (2006), pp. 137-139.

officialdom',[80] I argue that such correspondence *can* in fact shed valuable light on the motivations and convictions of its authors. In the remainder of this discussion, I examine the evidence of local groups who, in responding to exhortations to make themselves known to the organisers by sending in reports of their work to the *Tsentral'nyi shtab*, inscribed themselves into the officially-propagated discourses of patriotism and heroism using the Komsomol's own language of '*romantika*' and '*torzhestvennost'*', yet in ways that did not always conform to the expectations of those in charge.

In March 1975, the 'Iskra' tourist club, made up of 'over 500 Komsomol members' from the Armenian city of Leninakan (now Gyumri), sent the head of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab*, Marshal of the Soviet Union Ivan Khristoforovich Bagramian, a report detailing their activities – including many recommended activities such as 'meetings, excursions, discussions, war games (*voenno-sportivnye igry*)', plus 17 hikes 'along various routes across the USSR' – over a ten-year period from 1965 to 1975. Expertly deploying the Soviet language of public formality, the club's leader proclaimed their conformity to the Komsomol's stated values:

> Целью проводимых мероприятий является воспитание подрастающего поколения на революционных и боевых традициях отцов, которые шли на муки и смерть во имя Отчизны и, погибая, оставались победителями.

Proud of the stash of 'over 14, 000 exhibits' that they had amassed – the bullets, *smertnye medal'ony* (soldiers' identification tags, often discarded by their owners out of superstition), and other small personal items that still littered the Soviet countryside and were, in the hands of approved collectors, referred to as 'precious relics' (*tsennie relikvii*)[81] – club members had also put a great deal of effort into the work of providing families with final news of their war dead.

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[80] Hornsby (2016), p. 17.

[81] Again, this turn of phrase was – and still is – an established feature of discourse about war commemoration: for further examples, see 'Pamyat', kotoraya vechna' (1973); 'Tsentral'nyi muzei MChS Rossii', 2015, <http://www.mchs.gov.ru/dop/museum> [accessed 4 January 2017].

Amongst all the club's activities, one 'particularly difficult' hike stood out: a 25-day journey following the Great Patriotic War path of the 89th (Taman) Rifle Division (a distinguished Red Army division with a high proportion of ethnic Armenian soldiers), taking in Groznyi, Vosnesensk, Malgobek, Mozdok, Prokhladnyi, Krasnodar, Verkhnii-Bakansk, Novorossiisk, Kerch' and Sevastopol', which 'covered extremely difficult terrain – more than once the kids stared death in the face'.[82] Not turning back when things got tricky was a commonplace of public discussion of Pioneer activities, especially hikes and the like;[83] so, as we have seen was the insistence on the inherent *romantika* of Komsomol work, tourism, and the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*. The romanticism that the writer managed to work into his submission was therefore quite in keeping with the spirit of the initiative as officially expressed:

> Солдатские каски, лежавшие более 30 лет на ледниках, простреленные вражескими пулями, долгое время оставились забытыми в окопах, заросших ковылем. Их поливали дожди, проедала ржавчина. А ребята бережно перенесли их в свой музей. Это самые святые реликвии в музее. В этом походе найден медальончик рядового Ашота Маркосяна с восемьсот десятого полка 394 дивизий, он был безвести пропавший. Детские руки собрали много костей на ледниках, и захоронив их, сделали надпись: 'Здесь могила солдата'.

Still, there was an important way in which the Iskra report departed from the official line. Whereas propaganda exhorted young people to work at *becoming* heroic citizens worthy of the Soviet Union – a result that always seemed to be deferred indefinitely – the report made a case for immediate recognition of the heroism of the young *iskrovtsy*. To prove his point, the author cited one of the 'numerous' letters to Soviet newspapers (in addition to 'over 7500' addressed to the group itself) by grateful relatives, expressing appreciation of the club's work:

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[82] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, ll. 110-115.

[83] *Komsomol'skaya pravda* writing of the 1960s described the ideal Pioneer *vozhatyi* as someone who 'takes the kids off on a route march and doesn't make them turn around when things get tough' ('Vstretit nas veselyi veter' (1966)). Other, less positive articles from the same period suggest that the practice of abandoning a hike at the first sign of discomfort was something that the paper's editorial staff saw as a persistent problem to be publicly discouraged ('Volkov boyat'sya?', *KP*, 24 June 1966, p. 4).

> Дорогая редакция! А и мои дети в годы Великой Отечественной войны пережили много трудностей, как все советские люди. С трудом воспитала я 5 детей без мужа. И мы до сих пор не знали о судьбе мужа и отца. Благодаря героическому подвигу красных следопытов клуба 'Искра' через 33 года мы узнали, когда погиб и где похоронен мой муж.[84]

There were other cases in which the central archive of the Komsomol, approached for help in finding out the fate of a loved one lost in wartime, recommended local groups and school museums as possible sources of assistance.[85] What is so interesting about the letter quoted here, however, is that the writer, who was keen to establish her own credentials as one who had sacrificed a husband and raised five children alone for the benefit of the Soviet Union, used the vocabulary of heroic discourse usually reserved for the war itself to describe the young people who, thirty years later, had finally brought news of her lost husband. In the eyes of the Iskra leader, such an accolade was fully deserved, since over the years the club had won numerous prizes and awards for work on reconstructing wartime history, been the subject of 18 radio programmes, eight television broadcasts, 11 films and 437 newspaper articles across the USSR, and produced a European champion in shooting as well as numerous professional soldiers who 'excelled in military and political training'.[86]

According to their own report, the Iskra club had received prizes at several previous *Vsesoyuznye slety*. On this occasion, however, representatives of the central authorities paid no special attention at all to the group's alleged *podvigi*. From V. Pogrebnoi, the deputy head of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab*, the club leader received a short and rather dry communication – which might have been interpreted as an exhortation not to rest on their laurels, except that it scarcely acknowledged any laurels in the first place:

> Просим передать всем членам туристского клуба наши пожелания успехов в поисковой работе, учебе и труде в дни подготовки к тридцатилетнему юбилею Победы советского народа в Великой Отечественной войны.

[84] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, l. 113.
[85] See, for example, RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, ll. 258-272.
[86] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 332, l. 115.

The leader of the Iskra club had produced an extensive and earnest reworking of the dominant heroic discourse; in doing so, he had provoked neither the enthusiasm of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* that his club might have hoped for, nor humiliating censure. A contrast is provided by the case of the 1st Kiev Student Guards' Brigade, who in 1970 submitted an official complaint about the fact that they had not received a single prize for that year's scrapbooks and display stands. The jury at the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* acknowledged that the Guards' expeditions were long and complex: over the previous five years they had travelled to the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Poland, as well as Kazan, Leningrad and Moscow; they had collected a large quantity of material and arranged it into 'colourful' albums and displays, as well as donating some to other museums at schools and Pioneer Houses; and they had supplemented their hikes with a programme of meetings 'with prominent state and military figures'.

In addition to all this, the young people had received various medals and awards from their club, including badges 'for military valour' – and the wording of the report suggests that it was partly this that aroused the jury's disapprobation. The Brigade in question was a 'youth military-patriotic association' (*yunosheskoe voenno-patrioticheskoe ob"edinenie*)[87] attached to a Pioneer House – but in the view of the jury, it was failing to achieve the fundamental purpose of preparing participants for service to the USSR. The verdict was damning:

> Не дается подросткам необходимых навыков военно-прикладного характера, не исключено, что стремление посетить многие города СССР и страны мира влечет ребят как развлекательное занятие, в то же время *мало изучается ими свой край*, его боевые дела. Может быть неслучайно из двухсот человек

[87] According to proponents of the large number of military-patriotic groups currently in operation in the Russian Federation, Soviet clubs began to appear in the mid-1970s, on the initiative of Great Patriotic War veterans' organisations. They became more numerous, setting the scene for present-day activities, in the 1980s, when soldiers returning from Afghanistan, 'without any direction from above', founded more organisations to deal with what they had themselves experienced as 'numerous deficiencies in the system of youth pre-conscription training in the USSR' (A. V. Baranov, 'Rol' voenno-patrioticheskikh klubov v dukhovno-nravstvennom vospitanii molodezhi', *Srednee professional'noe obrazovanie*, 2 (2011), 28-29).

> воспитанников этой бригады в шестьдесят девятом и семидесятом годах лишь восемнадцать человек изъявили желание пойти учиться в военных училищах.[88]

Inciting young men to enter officer-training establishments, or at the very least preparing them for enthusiastic and competent compulsory service, was so central to the mission of military-patriotic clubs that they were considered completely pointless if they failed to achieve it.[89] In short, the 1st Kiev Student Guards' Brigade was having too much fun.[90]

Researchers in the archives of Soviet organisations regularly come across evidence that despite the abundance of 'educational' and 'prophylactic' measures supposedly in place, it was often not possible to prevent the occurrence of 'mistakes' and 'inadequacies'. Although the tourism, military-preparation and historical-research groups I have investigated here were 'official' associations, run under the auspices of schools, Pioneer Houses, and other state or Komsomol institutions, and although advice on the proper conduct of local *pokhody* was forthcoming, in quantity, via mass media and more specialist publications, there was actually very little direct supervision by more senior officials. The *krasnye sledopyty* and their leaders were volunteers, and the evidence suggests that in many ways they were able to take autonomous decisions on their schedule of activities. The *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was organised in such a way that participating groups generally came under the control of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* only *after* completing their work, when they submitted their reports and other work for consideration by the

[88] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, ll. 1-9 (l. 7) [emphasis added].
[89] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 45, d. 155, ll. 1-9 (l. 5).
[90] Indeed, at the 'Ofitsial'noe i neofitsial'noe v sovetskoi kul'ture' workshop at the European University at St. Petersburg, where I presented some of this material in September 2014, members of the majority-Russian gathering expressed amazement that the 1st Kiev Student Guards' Brigade had not considered journeys as far afield as Czechoslovakia and the GDR to be their own reward, but had had the reckless audacity to seek applause from further up the hierarchy – and in doing so potentially endangered their own freedom to continue. I thank the organisers for the opportunity to attend this workshop, and the participants for their very interesting observations.

jury. And when they did this, of course, they were free to describe their activities in the manner of their own choosing.

3. Elite Sport as Symbolic Combat

If sport was conceived of partly as a means of physical strengthening, and partly as an instrument of mass socialisation, the drive for universal participation had another important goal: an exhaustive search for talent that could be cultivated so as to guarantee Soviet success in elite international athletics competition. For all the talk during the consultation period for the 1972 GTO relaunch of an increase in the 'military-applied' content of the scheme,[1] the finalised programme strongly reflected this latter priority, reducing the number of sports in which proficiency was required, in order to allow for greater specialisation at a younger age.[2]

As usual, the results of internal 'raids' and investigations, coupled with insiders' allegations that coveted places on the USSR's international teams were substantially more likely to go to those with the right kind of money or influence behind them,[3] were at variance with idealised propagandistic accounts. No matter what its relationship to the reality of citizens' lived experience, however, propaganda does illustrate how the Soviet authorities envisioned a sporting system in which *massovost'* would lead seamlessly to *masterstvo* for exhibition on the international stage.[4] In the regular press articles on major sporting events, the successes of Soviet elite athletes were presented as merely the tip of the iceberg, the natural result of the mass nature of Soviet sporting endeavour exemplified by enrolment in a GTO scheme repeatedly altered in the hope of fostering high

[1] See RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 468.
[2] Riordan (1977), p. 229.
[3] For an example of such allegations, see Olga Korbut and Ellen Emerson-White, *My Story: The Autobiography of Olga Korbut* (London: Century, 1992), p. 95.
[4] Riordan provides a diagram of the USSR Sports Pyramid of 1976, illustrating the single system of levels – from 'active sportsman' to the awards of the GTO programme and into the national rankings, followed by the achievement of 'Master of Sport' titles, and finishing with the state honorific award of 'Merited Master of Sport of the USSR' – through which any individual could in theory progress (see Riordan (1977), p. 230). Note, however, that although *anyone could*, there was clearly never any expectation that *everyone would* – hence the pyramidal structure.

achievement.[5] In newspapers and magazines, reports from Olympic and world championship contests sat side-by-side with regular features on everyday physical culture for the ordinary person, often illustrated with photographs of happy workers enjoying their days off at well-equipped communal leisure facilities, as well as details of the scientifically-informed regimes at state-of-the-art training facilities for potential future champions.

The early identification and intensive training of these most talented individuals was a serious business indeed once the USSR had entered the international Olympic movement in 1952. At this time, International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials still insisted that the only type of athlete eligible to take part in the Games should be 'one whose connection with sport is and always has been solely for pleasure and for the physical, mental and social benefits he derives therefrom and to whom sport is nothing more than recreation without material gain of any kind, direct or indirect.'[6] The founders of the modern Olympic movement had mistrusted even the idea, now so central to the conduct of Olympic competition, of athletes competing on behalf of their country, instead advocating individual striving towards personal goals.[7] Once again, however, the cause

[5] Amendments to the GTO scheme, in 1947, 1955, 1959, and 1965, for example, chiefly involved reducing the number of disciplines that the individual was required to demonstrate in order to receive an award, thus allowing earlier specialisation and intensive training in a single sport (see 'Vsesoyuznyi sportivnyi kompleks GTO. Spravka').

[6] Future IOC president Avery Brundage's contribution to IOC debates over the centrality of amateur status as the USSR began applying for entry in the late 1940s, cited in Jenifer Parks, 'Verbal Gymnastics: Sports, Bureaucracy, and the Soviet Union's Entrance into the Olympic Games, 1946-1952', in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. by Andrews and Wagg, pp. 27-44 (p. 30). For critical discussions of the concept of amateurism and its application over the course of the twentieth century, see Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*. 2nd edn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 12; Stephen Wagg, '"If You Want the Girl Next Door…": Olympic Sport and the Popular Press in Early Cold War Britain', in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. by Andrews and Wagg, pp. 100-122 (pp. 101, 107-108).

[7] See Frances Houghton, 'Latin America and the Olympic Ideal of Progress: An Athlete's Perspective', in *Sporting Cultures: Hispanic Perspectives on Sport, Text and the Body*, ed. by David Wood and P. Louise Johnson (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 20-38 (p. 22); Kay Schiller and Christopher Young, *The 1972 Munich Olympics and the Making of Modern Germany* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2010), p. 15.

of recreation was little more than a peripheral concern to the authorities in charge of Soviet sporting activity, and the idea of apolitical competition anathema.

In an otherwise extremely sophisticated discussion of the political circumstances of the Munich Games, Schiller and Young make the strange assertion that 'Soviet adherence to the Olympic creed was absolute':

> [T]he Soviets […] embraced international and Olympic competition for the same reasons as other totalitarian regimes before the Second World War: a belief in 'modernity and social improvement,' which they shared with the IOC, and the desire to showcase the superiority of their system through athletic prowess. The Soviets soon perfected the language of Olympism, their representative Konstantin Andrianow railing at the IOC Executive Board against 'the forces hostile to sports traditions and friendships among athletes,' which he deemed to be 'turn[ing] sports into a political weapon.' […] While by the 1960s the West Germans cherished the Olympics merely as one of those 'islands of peace where political calm is maintained as much as possible,' the Soviets remained true to the totalizing vision of the founder and his loyal successors.[8]

It would be rather more accurate to say that Soviet adherence to the Olympic creed was absolutely on the USSR's own terms. Soviet public discourse had little place for romantic notions of world peace attained through disinterested individual friendships; as Brezhnev would later declare at the 24th Party Congress, the 'policy of peace and friendship among the peoples', to which the USSR was committed, involved 'continu[ing] to wage a resolute struggle against imperialism and administer[ing] a firm rebuff to the intrigues and sabotage of aggressors.'[9] Soviet ideology thus made the 'struggle for peace' the inherently political concern of every citizen, an approach that ideological educators would drum into athletes during the Stalin and Brezhnev periods alike.

As the USSR submitted its application for inclusion in the Olympic movement, late-Stalin-era newspapers talked of advertising the virtues of socialism to the rest of the world by 'struggl[ing] for national and world records for the glory of our homeland'.[10]

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[8] Schiller and Young (2010), p. 161.
[9] Cited in Mike Bowker, 'Brezhnev and Superpower Relations', in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, ed. by Bacon and Sandle, pp. 90-109 (p. 91).
[10] *Sovetskii sport*, 20 August 1947, cited in Edelman (1993), p. 122.

The other side of this coin was Stalin's own conviction that the sight of Soviet athletes unable to secure outright victory at sporting contests abroad would do serious damage to the USSR's hard-won international prestige, and that it was therefore better not to participate at all if first place could not be guaranteed.[11] However – as Nikolai Romanov, chairman of the USSR Sport Committee, evidently realised from his dealings with the IOC – not only failure, but also the mechanisms for producing *successful* athletes, could lead to unwelcome judgements from authorities and commentators abroad. In an attempt to ensure that, as Jenifer Parks has put it, 'control of the Soviet Union's image [would] rest with the Central Committee and not with Western journalists', information about Soviet participation in international sport was to be released to the outside world through only two possible channels: the state news agency TASS (following clearance by the Central Committee Propaganda Department), or on occasions of 'well organized, strategically timed displays of hospitality designed to further increase the Soviet Union's international prestige'.[12] Over the two decades between the USSR's entry into Olympic competition and the Munich (Summer) and Sapporo (Winter) Games of 1972 – whose multiple political complexities make them an ideal case study – Western sports journalism increasingly gave the USSR reason to believe in the non-communist world's implacable and undiminishing hostility to its efforts. By the late 1960s, when preparations for the 1972 Games began, policy- and propaganda-makers were more convinced than ever that the performances of Soviet athletes needed to constitute a victorious struggle against dangerous imperialist attitudes.

[11] Parks (2007), pp. 31-33, 36.
[12] Parks (2007), p. 38.

Western journalism vs Soviet sport

Romanov and others involved in the governance of Soviet sport in the 1950s were not wrong in foreseeing the likelihood of a Western backlash against Soviet training practices, but it was optimistic to hope that TASS and the Propaganda Department could between them act as an adequate filter for material about the workings of the sporting establishment. No means of regulating the flow of information was sufficient to prevent foreign journalists drawing their own conclusions from whatever evidence was available; moreover, the USSR's conspicuous efforts at secrecy only inflamed observers' curiosity and hostility. The upshot was visible on the pages of newspapers across the Western world until the Soviet Union's eventual collapse – and with particular clarity in the United States, the most intense focus of Soviet political, military and sporting rivalry.

A study of American press coverage of sporting engagement with the USSR between the late 1950s and the early 1980s reveals, above all, the immense complexity of the relationship. If, as I will claim, a 1976 *New York Times* article on Soviet sports schools was fairly typical in its uncompromising description of 'the system' (said to 'nourish, encourage and control [talented children] until they are no longer of competitive worth, then recycle them as coaches'),[13] it is equally clear that US commentators, officials, athletes and audiences were unable to keep up the pretence that sparring matches with the USSR were beneath America's dignity. To be sure, newspaper contributors freely disputed Vice President Humphrey's televised 1966 claim that the US would be 'humiliated as a great nation' if it failed to win international sporting events; according to a pithy response in the *Washington Post*, there was simply no need to strive for Olympic medals in obscure sports of little interest to most Americans.[14] However, political engagement with sport had already led one senator to call for an investigation

[13] Robin Herman, 'How Youngsters are Recruited for the Future', *NYT*, 11 July 1976, p. 153.
[14] 'Wait a Minute', *WP*, 24 May 1966, p. A20, in *PQHN* (database accession number 142748101).

when athletes' absences from the national team meant the USSR might 'reap a propaganda victory by defeating a U.S. team that lacks […] top talent', and to demands that the State Department answer when Soviet defeats of a touring US basketball squad allegedly threatened to 'injure the American image'.[15] Perhaps slightly less obsessed with total victory than were their Soviet counterparts, Americans were nonetheless determined that the other should not score points at their expense.

Moreover, the US hungered for competition with the very best its rival could produce. From 1958 onward, an annual USA-USSR athletics meeting – vigorously contested, an opportunity for intense displays of patriotism by US and Soviet audiences, and the occasion of long-running arguments between officials over the proper scoring system – provided considerable impetus to both sides, resulting in some of the key developments in the organisation of competitive sport during that period. Until 1966, when Soviet opposition to the Vietnam War brought about a two-year hiatus from which the series never really recovered,[16] mutual excitement at the standard of competition between the two 'natural enemies' was so great that for two days every year an entirely friendly mood prevailed among athletes, spectators and even journalists.[17] According to

[15] On Senator Clair Engle's demand for an enquiry into American Athletic Union's selection practices for tours to the USSR, see 'AAU Trip to Moscow Under Fire', *WP*, 8 July 1961, p. 11, in *PQHN* (141369536). On criticism of the State Department (though the newspaper did not specify by whom), see Bus Ham, 'Russian Victories Not Surprising Here', *WP*, 23 April 1964, p. B4, in *PQHN* (142288220).

[16] The series resumed in 1969, to continue with numerous spin-offs until 1985. However, although the prospect of the yearly competition continued to have an enormous impact on the development and organisation of track-and-field athletics in the USA, for example in the areas of women's sport and the relationship between athletes and sports governing bodies, the contests themselves gradually diminished in importance. See Joseph M. Turrini, '"It Was Communism Versus the Free World": The USA-USSR Dual Track Meet Series and the Development of Track and Field in the United states, 1958-1985', *Journal of Sports History*, 28 (2001), 427-471.

[17] For American sports journalist Pete Axthelm's comment, after lacklustre attempts to compensate for the USSR's Vietnam-era absence with contests against other countries, that 'an international dual meet lacks appeal unless the rival teams consist of natural enemies, like the US and the Russians', see Turrini (2001), p. 440. A firm two-days-per-year friendship between the arch-rivals, expressed in commentator Shirley Povich's assertion that 'Russian victories were applauded with all the hoo-rah and sometimes even more than the U.S. ones' at Franklin Field in 1959, seems to have been characteristic of the entire series until 1966. (Shirley Povich, 'This Morning… with Shirley Povich', *WP*, 20 July 1959, p. A16, in *PQHN* (141627067)).

Joseph M. Turrini's study of the annual contest's impact on American sport, much of the disappointment of the 1970s meetings stemmed not from irreconcilable political differences, but from the fact that the two countries' best athletes were now directing their energies towards other competitions.[18]

On other occasions, too, American journalists sought and found signs of friendship between the two sides. The *Washington Post* reported that during a US all-star basketball team tour to the USSR in 1961, coach John McClendon 'conducted many clinics' for Soviet basketballers and enjoyed a Russian hospitality so generous 'you couldn't believe it', while the Soviet medal winners at the 1964 Winter Olympics threw a party in the Olympic Village for their single American counterpart, speedskater Terry McDermott, who returned the favour by presenting them with gifts.[19] The exception only seemed to prove the rule when the US team arrived in Moscow for the 1965 dual track contest, and complaints about Russian disorganisation and a 'long wrangle over passports and luggage' paled in comparison to the disappointment of a reception 'unusually proper and lacking in excitement or fanfare'.[20] But social mishaps, mulled over in the pages of the American press, continued to illustrate the tense and anxiety-ridden nature of the relationship. The Associated Press (AP) expressed indignation on behalf of the US women's basketball team, whose attempts to treat their Soviet guests to a beauty therapy – 'considered a luxury, because cosmetics were banned in the Soviet Union during the Stalin regime and even today are looked upon by some as a capitalistic evil', as the AP

[18] In a sense, the annual US-USSR competition had become a victim of its own success: having bolstered American athletes' status and negotiating power with their sport's governing body, it suffered when they then used that power (and the increasing commercial opportunities also resulting from their new visibility) to avoid a contest that did not suit their schedules (see Turrini (2001), esp. pp. 446-455). As Turrini points out, however, the gradual decline of this particular institution did not signify the end of the cold-war-influenced rivalry between the two countries, as evidenced by Soviet-US confrontations at the Summer Olympics in 1972 and Winter Olympics in 1980 (see Turrini (2001) p. 466 n. 167).

[19] 'Reds Vow to Beat U.S. in '64', *WP*, 13 May 1961, p. A13, in *PQHN* (141297874); 'U.S. Team Goes to Soviet Party', *WP*, 8 February 1964, p. B4, in *PQHN* (142343278).

[20] Will Grimsley, 'Track Stars Receive Cool Russian Welcome', *WP*, 28 July 1965, p. B5, in *PQHN* (142590497).

carped – were rebuffed by a haughty Soviet team reportedly more interested in museums and endless sports practices.[21]

For although their effect could still veer more towards the comical than the truly frightening, sinister depictions of Soviet training methods were becoming commonplace in American newspapers. An August 1960 AP report on the Summer Olympics in Rome made much of the metallicity – metaphorical and even literal – of the contingent accompanying the 'robot[s] off a giant assembly line' who were representing the USSR:

> Soviet athletes and even officials are constantly surrounded by a cordon of steely-eyed operatives monitoring every move and word. These watchdogs usually wear black hats. They have glistening steel teeth – like most Russians who have had dental work. They are suspected of being members of the secret police.

The apparent gleefulness of this description is misleading: the tone of the AP report, 'based on an 8-day tour behind the Iron Curtain – visiting Soviet training sites, studying their development methods and talking with leading athletes and officials', and therefore clearly the result of an interaction approved by the Soviet side – was sombre, using the narrative of phoney amateurism to tell American readers a sad story about the lot of ordinary Russians not in receipt of the Sport Committee's largesse:

> […] the Russian athlete is an aristocrat in a drab society where luxuries are almost nonexistent. The average Russian family subsists on 700 rubles ($70 at the tourist exchange rate) a month. They eat bread and drink cheap wine. The men rarely wear ties, seldom have a coat and pants to match. The women are dowdy in their loose-fitting dresses and absence of make-up. The sportsmen, because there is propaganda value in strength and international victories, enjoy a mode of living denied almost all Soviet citizens except scientists and politicians.

Even for athletes, the price – for what, after all, the implied American reader would consider just a normal standard of living – was a heavy training regime that entailed many personal sacrifices, the article explained. The 'Olympic gold medal or a triumph over the United States' that, 'to the average Russian', was 'almost as important as putting a

[21] 'Russian Girls Get Beauty Treatment, Give U.S. Hosts a Lot of Lip in Return', *WP*, 30 April 1966, in *PQHN* (142924197).

Sputnik into orbit', was thus made to sound a pitiful consolation prize, particularly for the child-athletes sucked into total training, or athletes' children left virtually orphaned by their parents' lifestyles. At the end, the reader was left to reflect in solitude on the pathetic zeal of beleaguered, mechanical Soviets apparently unable to question the morality of their government's priorities.[22]

Common as industrial and metallurgical metaphors were in describing Soviet sporting activity, they were not always used consistently. Excoriating both the USSR's performance at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 – which, he claimed, saw 'the collapse of the Russians in the running, jumping and hardware-throwing phase' – and the system behind it, Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* used the 'assembly line' image in quite a different way, evoking America's efficiency and constant renewal:

> If this was an eminently satisfactory meet for the Americans, it had to be close to disaster for the Red brothers. They have slipped back, and it has to be mortifying for them to realize that the American way is the better way. That's even harder to accept. [...] In the United States, [Olympic champions] come streaming off the assembly line.

Though unusual, the reversed metaphor was not ineffective in implying the contrasting torpor of the lumbering Soviets, who 'saw their athletes grow old and never even recognized the fact'. Daley likened the Soviet head coach, Gavriil Korobkov, to the recently displaced Nikita Khrushchev – 'given the sack because he was guilty of too much bragging, too much miscalculation and too many failures' – and found only the

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[22] Will Grimsley, 'Soviet Olympic Team Hardened, Dedicated', *WP*, 14 August 1960, p. C3, in *PQHN* (141048981). The article also appeared in numerous other publications across the US, each time with a unique headline reflecting the local editor's take on the subject. For an indicative but not exhaustive selection, see 'Olympic Showdown Nears: Are Russians Robots?', *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, 14 August 1960, p. 1B, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1873&dat=19600814&id=JooeAAAAIBAJ&sjid=gcwEAAAAIBAJ&pg=6030,2131775&hl=en> [accessed 4 January 2017]; 'Russ May Not Match '56 Total in Olympics', *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 14 August 1960, p. 3-S; 'Russian Athletes Trained, Fervent, Protected', *Abilene Reporter*, 14 August 1960, p. 125, <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/45246398/> [accessed 4 January 2017]; 'Soviet Athletes Best Trained, Trail in Techniques: Beating U.S. is Goal', *Sunday Gazette-Mail*, 14 August 1960, p. 61, <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/42504488/> [accessed 4 January 2017].

faintest of praise for the Soviet gold-medal-winners Tamara and Irina Press. Here was the USSR succeeding only when the discipline called for brute strength, whose display by a woman was itself proof of the unnatural effects of communist ideology on the human subject's very body:

> Russian muscle molls won only three [events], all by the Press sisters. A shot and discus double was achieved by Tamara Press, who is big enough to play tackle for the Chicago Bears. At the rate the Bears are going this season, they probably could use her, too. The women's pentathlon went to Irina Press, who is about the size of a running guard.[23]

Sport and the female body

The manifestation of such characteristics in female bodies specifically had long been a source of special consternation in the West. Early in the twentieth century, women's absence from the ancient Greek Olympics had served as a convenient pretext for their exclusion from the modern Games,[24] whose founder Pierre de Coubertin spoke for many in continental Western Europe when he described the relationship between women and sport as one that society ought to control as tightly as possible:

> In public competition, their participation must be absolutely prohibited. It is indecent that the spectators should be exposed to the risk of seeing the body of a woman being smashed before their eyes. Besides, no matter how toughened a sportswoman may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks. Her nerves rule her muscles, nature wanted it that way.[25]

Social mores gradually evolved around de Coubertin, for although he continued to maintain that 'the ruggedness of male exertion, the basis of athletic education when prudently but resolutely applied, is much dreaded when it comes to the female',[26] gains started to be made in women's Olympic participation. At the 1928 Games in Amsterdam,

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[23] Arthur Daley, 'Sports of the Times: The Red-Faced Reds', *NYT*, 23 October 1964, p. 47, in *PQHN* (115620310).
[24] Kristine Toohey and A. J. Veal, *The Olympic Games: A Social Science Perspective*. 2nd edn (Wallingford: CAB International, 2007), p. 197.
[25] Cited in Rob Beamish and Ian Ritchie, 'The Spectre of Steroids: Nazi Propaganda, Cold War Anxiety and Patriarchal Paternalism', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22 (2005), 777-795 (p. 786).
[26] Cited in Toohey and Veal (2007), p. 198.

290 women (out of a total of 3014 athletes), representing 25 different countries, had competed in 14 events. However, the fear that female sporting 'ruggedness' could be achieved 'only when the most precious feminine characteristics are nullified',[27] evidently persisted among the Olympic organisers, for at Los Angeles in 1932 (where admittedly the overall number of participants, male and female, was only about half that of 1928), the number of sports in which women were eligible to compete had fallen again from four to three.[28]

Jennifer Hargreaves has argued that women's participation in the modern Olympic Games may be divided into three distinct chronological phases: from 1896 to 1928 women were largely excluded from competition, though some efforts were made to resist this exclusion; from 1928 to 1952, women consolidated their gains and continued to fight for more, while 'their events were confined to those that met the criteria of acceptability'. Finally, the period from 1952 to the present has represented 'the period of challenge to masculine hegemony [...] triggered by the entry of the Soviet bloc into the Games and the resulting influence of their political medal agenda, wherein it was immaterial to their national governments whether their nation's medals were won by male or female athletes.'[29] International Olympic Committee data on women's participation reveal the huge increase in sporting disciplines and events open to women, and attendant rise in the number (and proportion) of female Olympic competitors since 1952, that Hargreaves describes. Joseph M. Turrini has also shown that the intense rivalry of the annual US-USSR athletics meet, in which the US usually claimed victory in the men's competition but was hardly able to field an adequate women's team at all, led to mounting political pressure for and the eventual establishment of women's training programmes on a par

[27] Toohey and Veal (2007), p. 198.
[28] Data from IOC Department of International Cooperation, 1998, 2005, reproduced in Toohey and Veal (2007), p. 199.
[29] Cited in Toohey and Veal (2007), p. 198.

with those available to American men. However, as Turrini makes clear, the picture is complicated by the extreme slowness with which high schools and colleges, the main providers of sports training in the United States, opened up high-level training opportunities to female athletes.[30] Moreover, political considerations did not always serve the cause of increasing American women's involvement in elite sport. Amid the escalation of Cold War hostilities, an interwar sense that serious sportswomen were 'too mannish because they […] exhibited men's vigorous and overly heterosexual drives,'[31] received a new boost from noisy public debates over whether the Soviet or the American cultural system served women better, and newspaper reports on women's sport frequently involved discussion of matters at best peripheral to athletic performance.

In a 2003 study of journalistic representation of women's sport, Emma H. Wensing and Toni Bruce list five 'key techniques', observed in Western media over the previous two decades, for subordinating women athletes into 'appropriate' feminine roles: the gender marking of women's events but not men's; the portrayal of women as sex objects or by reference to their relationships with men (e.g. as wife or girlfriend); the search for feminine characteristics to counterbalance the female athlete's sporting success; infantilisation; and the practice of delving into non-sport-related aspects of the female athlete's life.[32] Wensing and Bruce's analysis deals with the intersection of gender and nationalism or nation-building at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, finding that in Australian newspaper coverage, the status of Aboriginal 400 m gold medallist Cathy Freeman as a symbol of racial reconciliation for Australia meant that the customary

[30] Turrini (2001), p. 435.
[31] Rob Beamish and Ian Ritchie, 'Totalitarian Regimes and Cold War Sport: Steroid "Übermenschen" and "Ball-Bearing Females"', in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, ed. by Andrews and Wagg, pp. 11-26 (p. 18).
[32] Emma H. Wensing and Toni Bruce, 'Bending the Rules: Media Representations of Gender during an International Sporting Event', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38 (2003), 387-396 (pp. 387-388). On issues of ambivalent or negative print media coverage of women in sport, see also Jennifer Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-9.

belittling of female athleticism fell almost completely by the wayside. The idea that other national interests might supersede gendered discourses in importance, especially in the journalism of the athlete's home country, is one that I return to in the next chapter. What Wensing and Bruce do not make explicit, however, is the likelihood that in many other cases, journalistic reinforcement of gender norms is in fact a contribution to the maintenance of a national identity in which distinct sex roles play an important part. During the 1960s and early 1970s, I argue, heavily gendered portrayals of US and foreign (particularly Eastern bloc) athletes were essential to the construction of an oppositional American identity that would withstand pressure from the USSR.

All of the 'techniques' listed by Wensing and Bruce are readily visible in Western press coverage of the period from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s (and probably beyond): few female athletes escaped a treatment whose supposed naturalness could be reinforced through portrayals of sportswomen themselves subscribing to the values of 'appropriate femininity', for example by announcing their retirement from competitive sport upon marriage.[33] The devaluing of their achievements was in many ways simply the continuation of the beliefs that had earlier prevented them from participating at all. And again, acceptance of women's participation in sport was not following a linear trajectory.

In her study of the gendered social conventions of the 1950s USA, Elaine Tyler May has found that the prevailing ideology of domesticity – which encouraged young men and women to build up an ideal American way of life, women by making the home their career, and their husbands by understanding work as a means of providing the family with the consumer goods and access to professional expertise essential to a contented existence – was already 'beg[inning] to crumble under its own weight' in the early

[33] See, for example, the 1964 coverage of British Olympic medallist Ann Packer, quoted in the *Daily Mirror* as justifying her imminent retirement from competitive sport with the words, 'I couldn't run well – and run a home well' (cited in Wagg (2007), pp. 113-114).

1960s.[34] As their fear of nuclear annihilation at the hands of the USSR receded, May argues, the white middle-class Americans living out the dominant discourse began to question the gendered norms that had appeared to offer security against the physical and social threat of communism. However, my analysis of sports journalism finds something of a time-lag in politically-charged portrayals of Soviet and American women's sport: physical attributes that had been acceptable (or only lightly satirised) in the 1950s gradually became the objects of scorn, mistrust, and more concrete disciplinary efforts in the 1960s.

In US sports journalism of the late 1950s and very early 1960s, physical descriptors did not yet have the absolutely firm positive and negative connotations that they were soon to acquire, nor had the binary conventions for juxtaposing 'Western' and 'Eastern' athletes fully evolved. Sports reporters routinely referred to sportswomen of any nationality as 'girls', or discussed their romantic prospects, with little if any discursive distinction between 'Russia's rather attractive girl athletes' and 'the wonderful little chickadees on the U.S. girls teams';[35] and if youth, beauty, and a dainty physique were clearly preferred, epithets such as 'hefty' and 'husky' were not necessarily derogatory, nor applied only to athletes of certain nationalities.[36] Over the course of the 1960s, however, female bodily aesthetic and appropriate female activity would become one of

[34] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 209.

[35] On romantic prospects, George Minot, 'Stella Walsh Lauds U.S. Discus Damsel', *WP*, 7 August 1964, p. B2, in *PQHN* (142204779); for 'attractive girls', see Joseph M. Sheehan, 'Soviet's Performances Impress and Disturb U.S. Track Coaches', *NYT*, 21 July 1959, p. 34, in *PQHN* (114771326). For 'chickadees', see Povich (1959).

[36] On 'hefty' Soviet athletes, see 'At the Olympics', *WP*, 23 August 1960, p. A17, in *PQHN* (141083509); 'Press Equals Record', *WP*, 13 September 1962, p. D7, in *PQHN* (141627067). Both examples describe Tamara Press, whose 'No. 1 physique, [...] a sight all by itself' Shirley Povich (writing from the USSR-USA athletics contest at Franklin Field in 1959) evidently viewed with fascinated amusement rather than fear or mistrust (Povich, (1959)). A comparison with the *Washington Post*'s description of American shot-putter Earlene Brown as a 'hefty Los Angeles housewife' is outside the scope of this project because Brown was African-American (see 'Rain Keeps Kuznetsov from Decathlon Mark; Soviet Girls Triumph', *WP*, 20 July 1959, p. A16, in *PQHN* (149225229)), but nonetheless it seems clear that at this point in time, female 'heftiness' was not yet a universal shorthand for sinister communist intent.

the key themes in an increasingly fraught conversation about alleged communist perversions of the natural order. Beamish and Ritchie have traced sports journalists' preoccupation with the subject to a series of unsubstantiated rumours, given credibility through repetition in prominent US medical journals during the 1950s, about Nazi use of steroid injections to raise soldiers' aggression to unusual levels. From these derived further rumours about drug use in the other great 'totalitarian' regime – Stalin's USSR, which had managed to become a sporting superpower with striking rapidity, and where success in international athletics was clearly understood to be a matter of political significance almost on a par with military activity. Again, repeated publication in respected scientific outlets elevated assumptions to the status of facts that US reporters could not ignore. Emphasis on Western women's natural displays of femininity, in contrast to the brutally enforced masculinity of the Eastern bloc, thus became prominent in Western public discourse – in Beamish and Ritchie's words, '[i]n the United States, a super-heterosexualized Cold War family ideal was used as a 'psychological fortress' against the fear of communist aggression from without, and communist intervention from within.' On the other hand, even without the immediate threat of invasion or infiltration, the threat to the 'free world' remained, since Western sportswomen seemingly now faced the choice of abandoning either their femininity (and with it the ideologically important idea of female emancipation from men's work) or any chance of elite sporting success.[37]

Western public discourse expressed a certain amount of indignation on behalf of the Soviet citizens – particularly the women who appeared to be worst affected – believed to be forced to undergo testosterone-derived treatments to increase body mass and aggression at the cost of their health and dignity. On the other hand, the unnaturalness of the alleged practices often led to ambiguous markers of gender identity being interpreted

[37] Beamish and Ritchie (2007). For quotation, see p. 19.

as deficient humanity. Despite these occasional expressions of pity for the women caught up in state-sponsored drug programmes, then, those female athletes whose womanliness was deemed inadequate were punished with derisive comments, press speculation on the causes of their apparent disorder and, increasingly, biological investigations by sports governing bodies. The discourse surrounding compulsory 'sex verification' tests for female athletes, introduced by the International Amateur Athletic Federation at the 1966 European Games in Budapest following 'complaints that some competitors, principally from communist countries, were of questionable femininity',[38] is indicative of the confusion surrounding the issue: while rumours abounded that among the 'four notable absentees: Tamara and Irina Press and Tatyana Schelkanova of the Soviet Union, and Iolanda Balas of Rumania,' the Soviets would 'not have passed' the required tests, in the end no-one seems to have been able to agree whether this was because 'the three Russians [...] had been taking male hormones to increase their strength', or because at least one of them 'was born a hermaphrodite.'[39]

The USSR strikes back

The introduction of 'sex verification testing' (now itself widely considered an inadequate and dehumanising tool)[40] represented a concrete attempt by sports authorities headquartered in the West to challenge the way Soviet sport was understood to operate. It stoked the hostile rhetoric of the Western press, and despite the determined self-congratulation of domestic discourse, which constantly proclaimed new sporting

[38] 'Sex Test Disqualifies Athlete: Six Doctors Rule on Miss Klobukowska Polish Sprinter', *NYT*, 16 September 1967, p. 28, in *PQHN* (117634952).
[39] On male hormones, see *NYT*, 16 September 1967; for allegations of hermaphroditism, see Neil Amdur, 'Women Facing More Than an Athletic Struggle', *NYT*, 21 December 1980, p. S1, in *PQHN* (117634952). Speculation about the 'real' biological sex of Tamara and Irina Press, never publicly substantiated one way or the other, exercised such a hold on the public imagination that it still dominated obituaries of Irina Press in 2004 (see, for example, 'Irina Press', *Telegraph*, 31 May 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1463233/Irina-Press.html> [accessed 4 January 2017].
[40] For a cultural critique of more recent sex/gender controversies in international sport, see Jaime Schultz, 'The Accidental Celebritisation of Caster Semenya', *Celebrity Studies*, 3 (2012), 283-296.

victories for the USSR, sports officials of the late 1960s and early 1970s felt these slights keenly. In the broader political context, too, Olympiads in West Germany and Japan – two countries with which the USSR had a history of extremely hostile relations – presented the worrisome prospect of Western 'psychological warfare' and 'imperialist' strategies to destabilise the USSR and its satellites through '*kontrpropaganda*' aimed at Eastern European Olympic audiences and – especially – participants.[41] In the face of these challenges, the Soviet Union mounted a multi-pronged campaign designed both to convince the outside world of the heroism of the Soviet athlete, and to make sure those heroes really were up to the job.

Outside the USSR, and especially in West Germany, where the Summer Games were to take place, Soviet officials set about the task of making the environment as propitious as possible for Soviet success. First of all – as is evident from a memorandum from I. I. Udal'tsov, chair of the board of governors of Novosti Press Agency (APN), to A. N. Yakovlev of the CPSU Central Committee Propaganda Department – this meant trying to dam the dangerous tide of anti-communist broadcasting expected to flood the airwaves before and during the Games:

> АПН исходит из того, что Олимпийские игры будут сопровождаться обострением идеологической борьбы в ФРГ, ростом реваншистских и националистических настроений, подстрекательской деятельностью антикоммунистических радиостанций 'Свобода' и 'Свободная Европа', активностью левацких организаций прокитайского полка.[42]

Communist countries throughout Eastern Europe were put on the alert to ensure the adequate supply of propaganda 'analysing the political situation surrounding Munich 1972', with Soviet officials exerting so much pressure that their East German

[41] According to Nikolai Kiselev, editor of *Sovetskii sport*, for example, 'Munich is the capital of Bavaria, and the most reactionary political organisations are found in Bavaria' (RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 83).
[42] RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 72, ll. 22-23.

counterparts were more than once forced to defend their efforts.[43] APN's own contribution to the resistance campaign, as outlined in the communication between Udal'tsov and Yakovlev, would be a range of booklets, brochures, and postcards, with photo exhibitions for display 'in different countries', and special magazine issues apparently designed for distribution both at the Olympics and within the USSR.[44] Given the centrality of television to coverage of the 1972 Games, plans were also made for the production of up to ten short films 'on the most promising candidates for Olympic medals', in the hope of propagandising 'the social achievements of socialism', and Moscow's bid for the 1980 Olympics, on West German television channels. As Udal'tsov pointed out, it was important to be at least somewhat optimistic about the possibilities that an Olympiad in the Federal Republic might present:

> Благодаря проведения Игр в Европе, и в частности, в ФРГ создаются возможности для широкого освещения завоевания социализма и советского образа жизни через показ достижений нашего спорта и всей системы физической культуры в нашей стране. Наряду с активной пропагандой решений XXIV-го съезда КПСС и 50-летия советского государство первостепенное значение приобретает разъяснение Программы, мира и идей европейской безопасности и сотрудничества.
>
> С учетом широких задач информационно-пропагандистской работы в периоде подготовки и проведения Олимпиады, по нашему мнению, было бы целесообразно воздействие на общественное мнение ФРГ.[45]

The APN chair's rather cautious way of framing his optimism was, on the face of it, out of keeping with the grandiose appeals that were made to Soviet athletes and the public. As the Games loomed, athletes in particular received vast numbers of messages –

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[43] RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 90, ll. 36-38, 58-62.

[44] The memorandum specifies 43,000 copies of the special publication *Sovetskii soyuz segodnya*, of which 10,000 were earmarked for distribution at Munich and Kiel (where the Olympic sailing events were to take place). RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 90, l. 22. The English-language version, *Soviet Union Today*, was a full-colour brochure without page numbering, heavily illustrated with photographs of 'everyday life' in the USSR, with fifteen full-page spreads answering fifteen 'frequently asked questions' about Soviet life – such as 'Is health a private concern?', 'Is sport popular in the USSR?', 'Can young people handle responsible work?', and 'Who gets the best of everything?' (the last of these being about Soviet childhood) (Georgiev (1971)).

[45] RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 72, l. 23.

in the form of newspaper articles, Komsomol handbooks, and letters from all across the country – exhorting them to self-sacrifice and outstanding performance. In many cases, the language employed expressed a clear understanding of sport as analogous to military activity, with admonitions to 'defend the honour of the Soviet Union'.[46] In her letter to the Olympic figure skating team, Valentina Nikolaeva-Tereshkova was clear that Soviet cosmonauts (officers in the Air Force) and Olympians were united by far more than just the 'cosmic health' (*kosmicheskoe zdorov'ya*) and 'cosmic jumps' (*kosmicheskie pryzhki*) that she affectionately wished them:

> Есть одно заветное слово, которое роднит нас космонавтов с вами – спортсменами. Это слово 'Старт!'. Оно требует от нас с вами максимального напряжение воли, умения, силы, мужества. Вам предстоят очень ответственные олимпийские старты в Саппоро. Помните, что каждый счастливый старт и финиш самого красивого вида спорта, – это торжество нашего Гимна, нашего Государственного флага, нашего спорта. Это ваш золотой подарок золотому юбилею нашей Родины и большая радость для всех советских людей.[47]

Other communications to the Olympic team included even more explicitly military language: describing the USSR as 'our great sporting power (*derzhava*)', the collective letter from Soviet cosmonauts wished the athletes 'courage, steadfastness, persistence in the sporting struggle (*uporstvo v sportivnoi bor'be*); bravery and resourcefulness in well-earned victory […]';[48] while the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee reminded them, 'Upon you, the guards (*gvardeitsy*) of Soviet sport, has fallen a high and honourable role – to defend the sporting glory (*zashchishchat' sportivnuyu slavu*) of our socialist Fatherland'.[49] Constantly reproduced in newspaper articles and Komsomol materials from the centre, the discourse of martial interaction and personal struggle on behalf of

[46]The phrase 'to defend the sporting honour [of one's club, republic, country, etc.]' was in regular usage, and had been for some time: after a first appearance in *Pravda* in 1935, its frequency increased over the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, as is evident from a search of the *East View* database.
[47] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 542 (Materialy ob uchastii sovetskikh sportsmenov v XI Olimpiiskikh igrakh v Sapporo), l. 45.
[48] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 542, l. 37.
[49] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 542, l. 38.

the collective was if anything intensified in the documents of local organisations – as in the following telegram from the Komsomol members of the Krasnodar Polytechnical Institute:

> Дорогие наши олимпийцы поздравляем вас с высоким доверием Родины защищать спортивную честь нашей страны на Олимпийских играх и желаем со студенческой выносливостью преодолеть тернистый путь спортивной борьбы сдать Олимпийскую сессию только на высший балл высоко несите знамя советского спорта возвращайтесь с победой.[50]

Yet the excitement and bombast of these communications belied deep-seated concern about athletes' ability to represent their country in the manner required. It is clear, for example, that in the context of foreign reactions to Soviet sport, Stalin's overriding conviction – that failure to secure victory at sporting contests abroad was harmful to the USSR's international standing more generally – remained just as strong at the end of the 1960s as it had been in the early 1950s. As the USSR Committee for Sport and Physical Culture put together its training strategy for the 1972 Olympics, its members noted with disapprobation a gradual slippage in the standard of Soviet performances abroad:

> […] к сожалению, иногда в поездки за рубеж отправлялись заведомо слабые спортсмены и команды, которые и не могли рассчитывать на успех. […] Надо ли говорить, какой ущерб это наносит и спорту, и престижу нашей страны. […] Мы убеждены, что бесцельные поездки за рубеж ничего, кроме вреда, принести не могут. Необходимо каждый раз тщательно взвешивать, насколько целесообразна с точки зрения интересов социалистического спорта та или иная поездка, насколько серьезно, капитально подготовлены спортсмены, какие наблюдения, опыт необходимо и возможно привести и только после этого решать вопрос в направлении нашей молодежи за рубеж. Каждая поездка за границу советских спортсменов должна безусловно служить благородным целям пропаганды завоеваний нашей страны, социалистического строя.[51]

[50] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 542, l. 64.
[51] GARF, f. r-7576, op. 31, d. 41 (Stenogramma soveshchaniya rukovodyashchikh fizkul'turnykh rabotnikov strany po itogam uchastiya sovetskikh sportsmenov v Olimpiiskikh igrakh 1968 g. i o zadachakh po razvitiyu massovogo sporta i vysshego sportivnogo masterstva (2-4 April 1969)), l. 67.

Alongside the repetition of the Stalinist maxim that appearances at sports competitions abroad were opportunities to show what socialism could do, the reference to Soviet athletes as 'our youth' (*nasha molodezh'*) is especially striking here. Soviet elite athletes were portrayed as ambassadors both for and to the young people of the USSR: the disciplined embodiment of Soviet citizenship and the fruit of an all-round *vospitanie* that, in the words of the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism (repeated in many official documents and publications about sport during the 1970s), privileged 'spiritual richness' and 'moral purity' in addition to 'physical perfection'. As such, they were also the instruments of foreign policy, engaging in a symbolic form of combat on behalf of the USSR and the communist project. As one individual (anonymous in the archived transcript) explained to a pre-Olympic meeting for Komsomol organisers of the 1972 teams, Soviet success at the Games – especially in Munich and Sapporo – needed to be viewed as an essential contribution to the USSR's task of spreading peace and security throughout the entire world:

> Ведь не секрет, что победа спортсменов с гербом страны Советов на земле, где дважды разжигали факел мировой войны, – это самая убедительная агитация за наш строй, за самые гуманные коммунистические идеи, это – действенная пропаганда наших успехов, это огромная идеологическая помощь силам, борющимся против возрождающихся сил фашизма и реваншизма.[52]

Yet precisely because of their youth, considered likely to indicate the vulnerability of a consciousness that was not yet fully formed, elite athletes were the objects of a greatly intensified anxiety about the havoc certain 'circles' in the West could wreak by luring high-profile Soviet citizens away from their Motherland. As both published and archival sources show, this sensibility was so deeply ingrained that it persisted even through the important developments in high politics between 1969 and 1972, when

[52] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 21-29 (l. 26).

Brezhnev successfully pursued rapprochement with Willy Brandt's Federal Republic of Germany and Richard Nixon's USA.

The moral formation of the Soviet athlete

Pierre de Coubertin's vision of the Olympics as 'a celebration for the youth of the world' was not without its challenges for the USSR.[53] Sending very young athletes into the fray of international competition was not the country's favoured approach – as Soviet sports psychologist, former elite athlete, and coach Norman Schneidman would inform the Applied Sciences Symposium at the 1978 conference of the Canadian Society of Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology, official policy favoured stability and predictability, in this area as in other aspects of Soviet life:

> First of all it is necessary to remember that a Soviet sport psychologist attached to a national team is a state employee assigned an important task of national significance. Similarly the subjects of his study and care, the athletes, are individuals assembled and supported by the state for what is considered an important social, national, and ideological pursuit, and their cooperation is always assured. *The composition of Soviet national teams is stable and changes slowly, and the psychologist usually has enough time to study the athletes and to establish a good working relationship with them.* In addition, most team psychologists have coaching qualifications and a good understanding of the sport concerned. Important also is the fact that the psychologist usually works with a highly qualified coach. Most Soviet national team coaches are themselves professional specialists, often with advanced academic degrees, who are able to utilize the contributions of the psychologists and physicians and work with them as a team.[54]

Evidently, the strategy itself was still fundamentally stable at the end of the 1970s.[55] It had, however, been subject to interrogation over the preceding decade and a half. In

[53] Cited in Schiller and Young (2010), p. 128.

[54] Cited in Natalia B. Stambulova, Craig A. Wrisberg, and Tatiana V. Ryba, 'A Tale of Two Traditions in Applied Sport Psychology: The Heyday of Soviet Sport and Wake-Up Calls for North America', *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 18 (2006), pp. 173-184 (p. 180) [emphasis added].

[55] Stambulova, Wrisberg, and Ryba (2006) describe the psychological training programme outlined by Schneidman as 'an advanced and systematic approach to service provision for elite national team athletes and coaches', and a demonstration that 'what some in the North American contingent were aspiring to achieve in the area of applied sport psychology was already fully operative in the Soviet Union' (p. 180). The USSR did indeed, as those authors point out, '[reach] a zenith during the 1976 Olympic Games when they won 49 gold medals, 41 silver, and 35 bronze', a victory constituting 'a wake-up call for North Americans that provided impetus for the resurgence of applied sport psychology during the 1980s and

1964, Arthur Daley had crowed in the *New York Times* over the failures that the Tokyo Olympics had exposed in the policy of populating the Olympic team with veteran athletes:

> [...] are there any explanations for the collapse of the Russian in the running, jumping and hardware-throwing phase of the Olympic Games? If there is one, it has to be that Soviet sports authorities saw their athletes grow old and never even recognized the fact. Not even for the Kremlin does time stand still. The turnover in personnel on every American Olympic team is enormous from one Olympic Games to another. Perhaps it is as high as 90%. The Russians jeered at so hopelessly inefficient a system after the Rome Olympics because their state-subsidized Masters of Sport, showing steady improvement, cut heavily into U.S track domination and made a runaway of the games on an all-over basis. […] [But] [t]he pace of competition throughout the globe has quickened so tremendously in the last four years that few winning performances at Rome could have won at Tokyo.[56]

To their country's chagrin, Soviet athletes again failed to top the medal table at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968. In 1969, after a thorough post-mortem, the State Committee for Physical Culture and Sport recognised that the Olympic team needed to be made up of 80% new competitors in every four-year cycle.[57] But the move towards including large numbers of younger athletes brought with it the problem of their psychological and political preparation. The country's comprehensive sports psychology systems, such as that elaborated by the pioneering Avksenty Tsezarevich Puni of Leningrad's Lesgaft Institute of Physical Culture, recognised a need for 'general psychological preparation' (including 'the development of moral and volitional qualities (e.g. patriotism, goal-directedness, determination and courage, independence and initiative, persistence) as well as the learning of self-regulation skills'), in addition to the 'specific psychological preparation' (defined as 'the development of a state of psychological readiness or optimal performance state') to which most professional sports

1990s' (p. 181). However, their article does not include discussion of the problems of this long-termism (principally the ageing of the athlete) that both US and Soviet sources identified in the 1960s and 1970s.

[56] Daley (1964).

[57] GARF, f. r-7576, op. 31, d. 41, l. 42.

psychologists devoted most of their time.[58] Long-term relationships between athletes, psychologists, and coaches were typically understood to be key to meeting the conditions required to secure sporting victory. Now, with the forthcoming Olympiads to be held on hostile territory, younger athletes would have to prepare for greater struggle outside the arena as well as in it.

Throughout the USSR, specialists in political education planned their work on the basis that 'bourgeois ideologues are doing everything to undermine our people's faith in communist ideals, to sow doubts about the possibility of its full realisation', even when dealing with ordinary young workers in least direct contact with 'bourgeois elements'.[59] As citizens who inevitably came into repeated contact with foreigners and often travelled abroad, the highest-profile representatives of Soviet youth were felt to be at far greater risk of being made to question or abandon their socialist upbringing, and in very public circumstances – a threat that sports coaches were not necessarily competent to address alone. The mid-1960s had therefore seen the creation of an Institute of Komsorgs [Komsomol organisers] of the National Teams, and in 1969, as they analysed the Soviet performance in Mexico City and turned their attention to future engagements in Munich and Sapporo, Sportkomitet's panel of 'leading physical culture workers' expressed hope that the Institute would expand its provision to 'significantly raise the standard' of 'political-formation and moral and character [*moral'no-volevaya*] preparation work […] at all levels of the national teams and the teams of physical-culture collectives'.[60]

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[58] Stambulova, Wrisberg, and Ryba (2006), p. 175. On the work of Puni, founder and first chair of the Lesgaft Institute's Department of Sports Psychology, and Petr Antonovich Rudik at the Central Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow, see Tatiana V. Ryba, Natalia B. Stambulova, and Craig A. Wrisberg, 'The Russian Origins of Sport Psychology: A Translation of an Early Work of A. C. Puni', *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 17 (2005), pp. 157-169.

[59] E. L. Chernikov, *Ideino-politicheskoe vospitanie rabochei molodezhi (na materialakh Voronezhskoi oblasti v period mezhdu XXIII i XXIV s"ezdami KPSS)* (Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1973), p. 6.

[60] GARF, f. r-7576, op. 31, d. 41, l. 33.

As the next chapter of this thesis shows, those who met in early 1972 for the Institute's two seminars on 'organisation of political-formation work with Olympic athletes', still saw much work to be done in the creation of an integrated sports system for athletes at all levels across the entire USSR, in which physical culture and political education would be inseparable and mutually reinforcing aspects of the Soviet educational process. In the immediate term, however, the various speakers – including players, coaches, Komsomol activists, representatives of government departments, and the editor of *Sovetskii sport*, Nikolai Kiselev – had the very pressing issue of the upcoming Olympic Games to attend to. In an opening speech to the first of the two komsorgs' seminars, one V. T. Eremenko stressed that 'the ruling circles of the Western powers, and especially the FRG, the USA and Japan' sought to target Soviet young people because of their importance to the USSR's future:

> Наши враги делают ставку на идейное разоружение молодежи, пытаются ослабить ее революционный энтузиазм, притупить классовое самосознание, противопоставить молодежь старшему поколению, посеять в ее среде скептицизм и аполитичность, преклонение перед чуждыми нашему обществу буржуазными правами и моралью. [..]

According to Eremenko, 'these facts underline once again that in [developing] the general potential of Soviet physical-culturists and athletes, ideological maturity, political consciousness, moral and ideological tempering (*ideinaya zrelost', politicheskoe soznatel'nost', moral'naya i ideologicheskaya zakalka*) must take the most important place'.[61] Kiselev of *Sovetskii sport*, though generally one of the more humorous and less dogmatic speakers, sounded a similar note of caution: certain 'circles' of the FRG operated in a manner so unethical that even West German citizens were moved to protest. Despite some recent improvements in the relationship between the USSR and FRG, he

[61] V. T. Eremenko, 'O sostoyanii i merakh usileniya ideino-vospitatel'noi raboty v sbornykh komandakh SSSR na zaklyuchitel'nom etape podgotovki k Olimpiiskim igram 1972 g.', RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 1-10 (ll. 4-5).

said, it remained likely that hostile groups in the FRG, and perhaps also Japan, would attempt to 'fill the Olympiad with sex (*vnesti na Olimpiady mnogo seksa*), so as to attract young people, attract a mass of athletes to their side'.[62] Kiselev was not the only speaker to warn of the dangers of what was understood as a faux youth culture which – unlike the supposedly organic culture of socialist youth – was designed by professional anti-communists for the purposes of diversion. At the second seminar, Professor Yu. V. Vorontsov – doctor of philosophical sciences and author of the 1971 book *Operatsiya 'Breinuashing'* [*Operation Brainwashing*], a highly critical analysis of the 'disinformation systems' at work in the American mass media[63] – elaborated the orthodox position on 'bourgeois propaganda' and the insidious threat of seemingly innocuous light entertainment: even in the absence of 'propagandistic filling' (*propagandistskaya nachinka*) as such, a late-night music show on Radio Free Europe got its listeners used to tuning in, preparing them to be receptive to its other, more dangerous content.[64]

Overall, however, the seminar presentations evinced far less concern about 'hearts and minds' propaganda than they did about cold hard hostility and denial of the USSR's key role in rescuing Europe from fascism. Designed in accordance with this way of thinking, Soviet sports policy for the 1972 Olympic cycle thus aimed at far more than a vague and circular process of inculcating essential personal qualities key to achieving the victories that would show the rest of the world what Soviet personal qualities were. It sought to develop an army of proselytisers who would defend the 'anti-imperialist' creed in deed *and word*, representing and defending their country as much in informal dealings in the Olympic village as they did on the field. As the West German organisers were

[62] Nikolai Semenovich Kiselev, 'Rol' pechati v kommunisticheskom vospitanie fizkul'turnikov i sportsmenov', RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 80-102 (ll. 83-84).
[63] Yu. V. Vorontsov, *Operatsiya 'Breinuashing'* (Moscow: Moldaya gvardiya, 1971).
[64] Yu. V. Vorontsov, 'O nekotorykh formakh i metodakh burzhuaznoi propagandy', RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 195-212.

putting together their final preparations for a 'Cheerful Games' – complete with a '*Spielestrasse*' hosting actors, musicians, dancers, and pantomime and circus acts whose performances would '[woo] spectators to abandon their passive spectatorship [and] immerse themselves in play'[65] – to definitively supersede the Nazi past, the Komsomol leadership anticipated an endless rehashing of competing historiographies forming the mainstay of Olympic discussion. With Munich (and Sapporo) providing inescapable reminders of conflict, claimed the chair of the second komsorgs' seminar, communists would also be buffeted by questions from former allies denying the magnitude of the USSR's sacrifice and dissimulating their own present imperialist sympathies:

> То, что разговор о Великой Отечественной войне будет в Мюнхене, будет обязательно, будет с обывателями, будет с людьми, будет с недругами. И вас наверняка засыплют вопросами: а что ваш Сталинград? а вот битва под Эль-Аломейном решила исход второй мировой войны, а битва американцев с японцами во... тоже решила исход второй мировой войны, и куда вы суетесь, и Сталинград – это ничто, и вы ничего не сделали. И вам придется на эти вопросы давать ответы. И нужно знать, какие вопросы давать на эти ответы. Почему такие аргументы выдвигаются. Когда мне приходилось сталкиваться с этими фактами, то буквально приходилось зарываться в литературу, для того чтобы выяснять, а где же истина находиться. А истина находиться там, что Сталинград – это действительно Сталинград, и битва африканского корпуса Роммеля в пустынях – это крупная битва, но это дивизия, а не 300 тысяч окруженных в 1942 году под Сталинградом. Надо быть готовыми к таким вещам, надо быть готовыми к таком[у] разговору.[66]

Lists of equipment required at every Olympic training camp, drawn up by the Sport and Physical Culture Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers, reveal more about the authorities' concrete plans 'for the improvement of political-training work and the organisation of athletes' leisure periods'. In addition to libraries stocked with the usual 'classics of Marxism-Leninism, of Russian, Soviet, and foreign authors, political literature, popular and methodological titles on sport, and textbooks', plus 'cinema equipment for showings of artistic and educational films', teams training for world

[65] Schiller and Young (2010), p. 135.
[66] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 128-129.

championship, European championship or Olympic competitions were supposed to have access to quite a variety of hardware enabling them actively to produce material, as well as to absorb it from a variety of sources not necessarily Soviet-made. Televisions, cassette recorders, and radio receivers were to sit alongside 'telephones for international calls' and radio relay equipment 'for broadcasting *radiogazety* and [information about] current events'; Soviet newspapers and other periodicals would be provided, as would 'photographic laboratories' and 'stationery sets for the production of wall newspapers, photographic newspapers, and so on'.[67] As with activities connected with the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, discussed in the previous chapter, there is little to suggest that the authorities intended any negotiation over the content of the materials produced, though the conditions they planned to provide were ones that would enable non-standard discourse to be reproduced. The indications are all that the Komsomol and other state agencies planned, for athletes as for the rest of Soviet youth, a programme of learning by doing that would inculcate habits by guiding them in performance, rehearsing them until they were word-perfect in the speech and actions of Soviet citizenship. According to the chair of the second seminar for komsorgs of the national teams, the key thing was to give the country's young representatives the firmest possible sense of what it was they were representing:

> Есть известная фраза Льва Николаевича Толстого. Он сказал, что я не представляю своей Родины без Ясной Поляны. Ну, если ее перевести на наш с вами язык, наверное, действительно трудно говорить о Родине абстрактно. Родина – это семья, это спортивный клуб, это спортобщество, город, республика и твоя страна. Вот эта цепочка букв, из которых в общем-то и выстраивается само слово 'патриотизм'. И я сам по себе судил, что без знания культуры, без знания истории своей страны в общем-то за рубежом приходится очень тяжко.[68]

[67] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469, ll. 26-32.
[68] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 125-126.

Rituals and campaigns designed for the whole of Soviet youth were thus one of the pedagogical tools of choice for those involved in educating athletes for the Olympics. Along with the war victory and anti-imperialist orientation, even the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the USSR was seen as a likely target for Western critics in 1972. In his session on preparing athletes for these awkward conversations, Viktor Mikhailovich Baibikov, deputy chair of the Central Staff of the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda*, suggested that the USSR's visibly multi-ethnic teams should begin by studying the history of their own republics, regions and collectives, in order to answer the 'provocations' of 'enemies' with 'concrete facts' about the development of Soviet society.[69] Perhaps overemphasising the extent to which athletes training for the Olympics were active in their assigned industrial positions, Baibikov encouraged komsorgs to take notice of the 'Great Patriotic War participants, participants in the first five-year-plans, those who rebuilt from the ashes the industrial enterprises destroyed in the war' working alongside youth in the factories, and urge the athletes themselves to see these veterans as living examples of the unity of the Soviet peoples.[70]

Like other speakers at the seminars, Baibikov suggested a strict hierarchy amongst the contemporary heroes of Soviet society, the athletes not qualifying for heroic status at all until, at some point in the future, they could prove themselves in all aspects of their Olympic performance against 'powers (*sily*) which do not agree with those conclusions of history which were reached on 3rd September 1945'. Amongst all the examples of the 'mass heroism' of the Soviet people, the leading sportsmen and students of physical culture who died fighting in the war were singled out as the best objects of study for the

[69] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 118.
[70] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 119.

Olympians of the 1970s. Ideally, Baibikov suggested, 'not a single match or meeting of the Olympic teams should pass without the participation of our glorious veterans'; there was 'nobody better placed [to] tell the story of their destinies, the destinies of the generation to which they belong'. Meetings with Party and soviet workers, veterans of war and labour, deputies to the Supreme Soviet, and other 'glorious people' should take place regularly as part of the Komsomol's training work with athletes.

The Komsomol's planning had something in common with the *shturmovshchina* so prevalent in Soviet industry. Available records describe republic- and regional-level political education plans, submitted to the all-Union Central Committee, from 1970 and 1971, and the komsorgs' seminars did cite a few illustrations of good Soviet practice – for example, the visit to the Khatyn memorial complex organised by the Minsk obkom for competitors at the 1969 USSR Freestyle Wrestling championship.[71] However, the seminars discussing the need to intensify political-educational work among athletes took place with barely six months to go before the Munich Games were due to begin. In contrast with the complaints of CPSU Central Committee representatives about the adequacy of the GDR's Olympic-season propaganda for the mass audience, Komsomol officials reported that, 'curiously', their East German counterparts were 'leading' the USSR in the 'anti-fascist education' of all their athletes – almost putting the Soviets to shame by chartering a ship to bring the entire East German Olympic team to Leningrad, where they asked the Komsomol to facilitate their programme. At the request of the Freie Deutsche Jugend, it was claimed, the Komsomol had taken East German athletes to the Piskarevskoe cemetery 'to see what the war victory meant to the Soviet people', screened

[71] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 127-128. Note that the seminar speaker was referring to Khatỳn' in Belorussia (site of a massacre of Soviet villagers by Nazi troops), as opposed to Kàtyn' in Smolenskaya oblast'. For a discussion of allegations that vigorous Soviet promotion of the memorial complex at Khatyn' (opened 1969) was 'a smokescreen, a cynical ploy exploiting a phonetic and orthographical similarity to obscure the crime of Katyn', see Alexander Etkind, Rory Finnin et al., *Remembering Katyn* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), pp. 80-81.

a film about the Leningrad Blockade, and shown them around local industrial sites 'so that they could judge the economic potential of the Soviet Union'.[72]

The Komsomol had done all this to promote the security of a fraternal socialist state, but had not made any similar arrangements for its own athletes; similarly, Baibikov could give detailed accounts of the best educational work he had come across, but all his examples were several years out of date. The transcripts of the komsorgs' seminars show the participants half-recognising these facts – yet Nikolai Kiselev of *Sovetskii sport* was notable as virtually the only speaker to translate an acknowledgement of the situation's urgency into concrete plans. Even where Baibikov gave examples of the work to which he attached such importance, his listeners were left to make their own inferences as to exactly how the recommended activities would achieve the desired effect. From the wider context of the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, however, it would seem that the activities Baibikov described to the seminar – carting loads of earth around in briefcases to make a Mound of Glory (*kurgan slavy*) in the Belorussian city of Orša, or unexpectedly attracting 8000 people to the unveiling of a new monument to soldiers found in an unmarked grave in Lipetsk[73] – were envisaged as stimulating a spiritual fervour deriving from a heightened sense of community, which would carry over into the Games.

In practice, as both Soviet and Western newspapers made their readers aware, rather different motivational techniques prevailed. The 1970s saw a strident campaign, spearheaded by IOC president Avery Brundage, against the 'shamateurism' understood to be endemic in Eastern European sport – and though Soviet officials resolutely denied sanctioning the infringement of international regulations, investigations by newspapers and Party bodies were somehow never enough to stamp out 'unauthorised' practices.[74]

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[72] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 126.
[73] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 120-123.
[74] See Edelman (1993), pp. 125-154. For a US journalist's weary-sounding take on a *Komsomol'skaya pravda* investigation into 'a typical case of supposedly illegal payments': David Minthorne, 'Russian

Given all this, Lyudmila Turishcheva's admission, in a 2000 interview with the Ukrainian newspaper *Fakty i kommentarii*, that she was paid 1000 rubles for her 1972 Olympic gold and 300 for a gold medal at the World Championships, was probably only newsworthy for revealing the precise sums involved. Her assertion that 'a silver got you nothing',[75] was more revealing of the treatment to which she had been subject. Whereas a 1974 Soviet television documentary had shown the exemplary Turishcheva – komsorg and women's gymnastics team leader from 1970 – talking of the 'responsibility' of competing on behalf of her country,[76] her 2005 appearance on the Ukrainian television show *V gostyakh u Dmitriya Gordona* laid bare the immense pressures of representing the USSR at Munich:

> Людмила Турищева: Я никогда не забуду, когда… вторая в жизнь моя Олимпиада, которая проходила в Мюнхене в 72-ом году, где я стала абсолютной чемпионкой Олимпийских игр.
> Дмитрий Гордон: Да.
>
> ЛТ: Вот, все говорили, это логово фашизма, мы там победили, а вот, если ты, вот, если ты не победишь, каждый из членов советской команды, значит, вот, преступник. Вот таки, вот так, вот, намечалось, что выступать было тяжело морально. Ты не имел права, ты обязан. Это накладывало дополнительное

Sports: "Political Investment"', *Toledo Blade*, 19 July 1980, p. 14, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1350&dat=19800719&id=dz1PAAAAIBAJ&sjid=lAIEAAAAIBAJ&pg=4916,75134&hl=en> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[75] Sergei V. Datsenko, 'Lyudmila Turishcheva: "za pobedu na olimpiade-72 ya poluchila okolo 1000 rublei. 'zoloto' na chempionate mira otsenivalos' v 300 rublei, a 'serebro' voobshche ne kotirovalos'", *Fakty i kommentarii*, 20 October 2000, <http://fakty.ua/104774-lyudmila-turicsheva-quot-za-pobedu-na-olimpiade-72-ya-poluchila-okolo-1000-rublej-quot-zoloto-quot-na-chempionate-mira-ocenivalos-v-300-rublej-a-quot-serebro-quot-voobcshe-ne-kotirovalos-quot> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[76] Mgnoveniya i gody. TO "Ekran". 1974. YouTube, 23 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxtp2ceOcHM> [accessed 5 January 2017]. For further examples of Turishcheva's self-presentation (e.g. interviews and documentaries) in the Soviet media, see 'Chempiony bespokoinye serdtsa', *SS*, 5 January 1973, p. 3; Bol'shaya gimnastika. Dir. V. Nikitina. TO "Ekran". 1975. YouTube, 15 January 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrINfQF2FhU> [accessed 5 January 2017]. For contemporary Soviet assessments of Turishcheva's exemplary sportsmanship and citizenship, see both the newspaper articles cited above, and the biographical report (*kharakteristiki*) compiled for the Komsomol following the 1972 Olympics: '[…] За время занятий она проявила себя трудолюбивой дисциплинированной спортсменкой, успешно сочетает занятия гимнасткой с учебой в Грозненском государственном университете на протяжении последних лет она является ведущей гимнасткой нашей страны. Она чемпионка мира, Европы и Олимпийских игр 1972 г. За высокие спортивные результаты ей присвоено почетное звание Заслуженный мастер спорта СССР, среди спортивной общественности пользуется заслуженным авторитетом. Очень скромна, отзывчива, политически грамотна и морально устойчива. Принимает активное участие в общественной работе по развитию спортивной гимнастики, она член грозненского горкома ВЛКСМ, делегат 16 съезда ВЛКСМ.' (RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 545, l. 90).

напряжение, вот, по себе сужу. Возможно где-то особое волнение и чересчур контроль за своими движениями, сложно было выступать.

ДГ: Ну, хорошо, а что было с теми, кто не смог победить в логове фашизма? Ведь это люди, живые люди!

ЛТ: Ну, Вы знаете, всегда планировали, кто, что должен завоевать, и вот, если не завоевал золото, серебро, на него смотрели, как изменил Родине.

ДГ: Серьезно?

ЛТ: Да.[77]

26 August – 11 September 1972: The Games of the XX Olympiad

Arguably, events proved a certain truth in the Soviet insistence that a West German Olympiad would be politically complex and inescapably bound to the past. Early on the morning of 5th September, unsuspected by Mossad or any of the major Western intelligence agencies, members of the Palestinian terrorist organisation Black September took advantage of the 'Cheerful Games'' deliberately light-touch security arrangements to enter the Israeli athletes' accommodation in the Olympic village, murdering two team members in their apartment before demanding to be flown to Cairo with nine further Israeli hostages. During a rescue operation fraught with confusion and error, all nine athletes and one West German police officer were killed at the NATO airbase outside Munich to which they had been transported by German military helicopters. A horrible echo of the slaughter of the European Jewry left West Germany 'watch[ing] Munich shade into Dachau as Jewish blood trickled over the ruins of their Games',[78] and diplomatic relations between the countries involved (including a number of Arab states with which the FRG had been seeking closer ties) were cast into a disarray that 'would take months to clear'.[79]

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[77] *V gostyakh u Dmitriya Gordona*, 2005. Gordon, 16 June 2014, <http://gordonua.com/heroes/ljudmila_turischeva.html> [accessed 5 January 2017].
[78] Schiller and Young (2010), p. 208.
[79] For a detailed discussion (on which this brief description is based) of the attack and its aftermath, see Schiller and Young (2010), pp. 187-220 (and on the subsequent state of diplomatic relations between the parties involved, see pp. 207-208).

But Soviet historiography of the Second World War had never made much of the spilling of Jewish blood, and now Soviet journalism from the Munich Olympiad minimised it again. On 6th September, as coverage of the massacre dominated front pages across the rest of the world, *Pravda* filled its own with harvest-time proclamations about Soviet agriculture. It would be fascinating to know what, if any, discussions took place in the editorial office about the publication on page 4 of a (presumably long-planned) report on the 17th Congress of the Israeli Communist Party (CPI), penned by the (Israeli Arab) secretary of the CPI Central Committee and replete with bold assertions about the friendship and mutual aspirations between the CPI and communists in Arab countries. In any case, that article was by far the most prominent discussion of any matter pertaining to Israel. The paper devoted approximately one-quarter of a column on the back page to an impressively obfuscatory TASS report that the Olympiad had been 'interrupted' – not by the attack itself, but by an *announcement* from the Olympic Organising Committee about an attack, by an allegedly Palestinian extremist group on 'an Olympic village building occupied by members of the Israeli delegation', that had claimed 'human victims'. Noting the 'aforementioned group's' demands that Israel release some 200 Palestinian prisoners, TASS declined to mention the number or nationality of persons actually killed, but did claim that athletes from Uruguay and Hong Kong had also been trapped in the building.

If the Olympic village was anything like the international camps organised for young spectators – where 'casual sociability counted more than political discussion [and] [t]he Russian delegation always had the samovar ready for visitors from the West in their impromptu "Café Katjuscha"'[80] – then the USSR's obsessive campaign to prepare

[80] Schiller and Young (2010), p. 146. For Korbut's account of the light-hearted international atmosphere in the Olympic village itself, see Korbut and Emerson-White (1992), pp. 72-74.

apologists for its wartime operations was probably already overblown. Once the hideously drawn-out massacre of the Israeli team was underway, the great clash between the USSR and its American and West German adversaries, so carefully constructed by the USSR's sports officials and journalists, became virtually irrelevant in the face of a real international crisis in which the Soviet Union had some interest but no direct involvement.[81]

After the horror of a terrorist attack, the immense success of a handful of contestants evidently struck some observers as a comparatively trivial outcome of Munich 1972. Interviewing America's 'new hero with a big ego' Mark Spitz, a few months after his record-breaking, seven-gold-medal-winning performance in the Olympic pool, Norma Lee Browning of the *Chicago Tribune* was manifestly unimpressed by the (Jewish) swimmer's failure to pay tribute to the dead Israelis.[82] Yet despite the horror of the attack, and its decisive blow to West German hopes of overcoming the legacy of Berlin 1936, discourses surrounding subsequent Olympiads suggest that the Munich Games have not, after the passage of four decades, been remembered for that alone.[83] Spitz's performance reliably featured in the lists of all-time 'Stunning Olympic Moments' compiled in honour of the London 2012 Games[84] – as did that of the Soviet gymnast Olga Korbut.

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[81] 'Olimpiada prervrana', *Pr*, 6 September 1972, p. 6 (see also T. Tubi, 'Protif politiki agressii i reaktsii', *Pr*, 6 September 1972, p. 4). For Olga Korbut's allegation that 'the Sports Committee and our interpreters did not choose to inform' even the Soviet team members present in the Olympic village about the atrocity, see Korbut and Emerson-White (1992), p. 77.

[82] Norma Lee Browning, 'Mark Spitz: A New Hero with a Big Ego', *Chicago Tribune*, 3 December 1972, p. 10.2, in *Chicago Tribune Archives*, <http://archives.chicagotribune.com/1972/12/03/page/477/article/mark-spitz-a-new-hero-with-a-big-ego> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[83] See Schiller and Young (2010), p. 230: 'Around the world, Munich is remembered for Mark Spitz, Olga Korbut, the terrorist attack, and the fact the West German "organizers were determined that everything about their Games should be different from those of 1936." It is indicative of the shadow cast by 5 September that the organizers' *determination to show* a new Germany rather than the world's *realization that one existed* has become the historiographical default.'

[84] Simon Burnton, '50 Stunning Olympic Moments, No. 37: Mark Spitz Wins Seven Swimming Golds', *Guardian*, 8 June 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2012/jun/08/50-stunning-olympic-moments-mark-spitz> [accessed 4 January 2017]; Jonathan McEvoy, '50 Olympic Moments that Stunned the World, 25-26: Olga's Winning Smile and Daley's Cheek', *Daily Mail*, 25 March 2011,

Over the five years following her Olympic debut at Munich, until her retirement from the sport in 1977, Korbut's public appearances drew enormous attention in both her homeland and the Western countries where she and her teammates appeared in display tours aimed not least at earning the USSR some much-needed hard currency. Her image graced the covers of sports, teenage and current affairs magazines,[85] and James Riordan's pioneering 1977 study *Sport in Soviet Society*. She was one of only three non-North American athletes to feature in the *Superstars!* series of books for American school libraries, in a volume which described her as 'a celebrity to millions of people all over the world – a lustrous superstar in the galaxy of modern sports heroes and heroines',[86] and became the subject of a number of other unofficial biographies and booklets for English-speaking fans.[87]

Less positive material (like an unflattering photo, captioned 'Olga Korbut: from athlete to actress?' on the April 1976 cover of the American *womenSports* magazine)[88] did begin to appear in the Western press as Korbut started to lose ground to the younger Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci, the sensation of the 1976 Olympic competition. Over the next three-and-a-half decades, which Korbut spent largely in obscurity in the United States, occasional US and British newspaper features recalled her past Olympic glory chiefly in the context of lurid stories of divorce, debt, shoplifting and counterfeit money scandals in seedy Atlanta suburbs, lamenting that '[i]t is difficult to believe that the haggard, sunken-eyed woman who still moves with the grace of a gazelle despite agonising injuries, is the same person who captivated the world when she won three

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/olympics/article-1366942/50-Olympic-moments-stunned-world-25-16-Daley-Thompson-Olga-Korbut.html#ixzz4B62Jpo6c> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[85] *Sports Illustrated*, 19 March 1973; *Seventeen*, February 1975, *Sputnik*, August 1973.

[86] Jay H. Smith, *Olga Korbut* (Mankato, Minn.: Creative Education, 1974), p. 19.

[87] For some indicative examples, see Linda Jacobs Altman, *Olga Korbut: Tears and Triumph* (St Paul: EMC Corp., 1974); Gwen Evans, Eastern Superstar, Olga Korbut (Milwaukee and Chicago: Raintree Editions, 1976); Michael Suponev, *Olga Korbut: A Biographical Portrait*. 1st edn (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975).

[88] *womenSports*, April 1976.

gymnastics gold medals at the 1972 Munich Olympics'.[89] To this day, none of this appears to have been sufficient to destroy the imprint of her championship gymnastics on Western popular memory: even the gloomiest articles seldom failed to mention the 'daring backflips and megawatt charisma' of Korbut's glory days,[90] and, as Annette Vowinckel has found, the YouTube video of Korbut's medal-winning performance on the bars was viewed more than 450,000 times between February 2006 and May 2009.[91] British media outlets preparing for the 2012 Olympic Games in London included pictures and footage of her Munich performances in their articles and broadcasts commemorating highlights of Olympic history,[92] and she made personal appearances at events including an exhibition at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.[93] Sports historian Jennifer Hargreaves appropriately sums up the lasting effects of Korbut's career: she 'captivated the imagination of people across the world at the 1972 Olympics, increased the visibility and popularity of sports for women, and stimulated the expansion of women's

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[89] Olga Craig, 'Olga Korbut Comes Crashing Down', *Telegraph*, 3 March 2002, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1386628/Olga-Korbut-comes-crashing-down.html> [accessed 4 January 2017]; see also Jere Longman, '30 Years of Hard Falls for Olga Korbut, After the Gold and Glory', *NYT*, 10 February 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/10/us/30-years-of-hard-falls-for-olga-korbut-after-the-gold-and-glory.html> [accessed 4 January 2017]; Jason Burke and Edward Helmore, 'Shoplifting Charges Floor Olympics Darling Olga', *Guardian*, 3 February 2002, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/feb/03/sport.jasonburke> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[90] Stephanie Simon and Edith Stanley, 'Arrest Tarnishes Gymnast Korbut's Golden Past', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 February 2002, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/feb/09/news/mn-27173> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[91] Annette Vowinckel, 'Cold War Television: Olga Korbut and the Munich Olympics of 1972', in *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies*, ed. by Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenburger (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), pp. 112-125 (p. 119).

[92] See, for example, 'Olga Korbut Charms the World', video clip from *Faster, Higher, Stronger*, episode 2/4, BBC2, 29 June 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00vhw3d> [accessed 5 January 2017]; Paul Doyle, '50 Stunning Olympic Moments, No. 47: Olga Korbut Redefines Gymnastics', *Guardian*, 6 July 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2012/jul/06/50-stunning-olympic-moments-olga-korbut> [accessed 4 January 2017].

[93] Lottie Butler, 'Legendary Gymnast Meets Fans at ROH: Olga Korbut Greets Visitors to The Olympic Journey', Royal Opera House, 3 August 2012, <http://www.roh.org.uk/news/legendary-gymnast-meets-fans-at-roh> [accessed 4 January 2017].

international sports'.[94] Individual charisma proved durable in a way that all the Komsomol's attempts at attitudinal homogenisation did not.

Olga Korbut in the West

Mark Spitz's post-Munich reputation rested on a then-unprecedented collection of gold medals and an unabashedly abrasive demeanour. The Olga Korbut phenomenon was different: even without equalling the four gold medals achieved by her Olympic coach, Larisa Latynina, at the 1956 Games in Melbourne, Korbut was – according to one contemporary US commentator who generally made a point of criticising Soviet policies and practices – the 'undisputed darling of all spectators at the Munich Olympics as well as the clear favourite of television viewers throughout the world.'[95] Famously shedding tears in public after making several mistakes on her signature apparatus, the uneven parallel bars, Korbut recovered to produce an unprecedented performance for a score of 9.8 out of 10. Upon the judges' failure to award a perfect score, the mainly West German arena audience (who might have been expected to prefer their fellow German Karin Janz, competing on behalf of the GDR) reacted with scorn, creating a disturbance that interrupted proceedings for some minutes.[96] Korbut eventually left Munich with three gold medals and one silver, having overturned assumptions about the appeal of women's sport, gymnastics, and Soviet athletes for Western audiences.

The activities of Western journalists during the early stages of the Munich Games clearly shows where they expected their audience's interests to lie. American print media discussion of the 1972 Olympic gymnastics competition was slow to take off, lagging

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[94] Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 224-225.
[95] John Nelson Washburn, '84-Pound Soviet "Soldier"', *NYT*, 5 November 1972, p. S4, in *PQHN* (119497237).
[96] Vowinckel (2012), p. 117. The suggestion that West German audiences might have been likely to support any German competitor, regardless of the East-West divide, is Vowinckel's.

well behind television coverage. Gymnastics itself had never commanded a significant audience in the US, and American sports journalists had tended to take it for granted that the sport was too feminine ever to do so. Bill Shirley, head of the *Los Angeles Times* sports department from 1964 to 1981, was later quoted as saying that his reporters 'felt gymnastics were not macho enough', and 'didn't even have a ticket' for the gymnastics events at Munich; *Newsweek* editors, searching for Associated Press material at the end of the week in which Olga Korbut became a television star, were said to have found to their dismay that hardly any was available.[97] Korbut's first ever appearance in the *New York Times* had come in a short report on the 1970 Tokyo Cup, where she was mentioned merely as one of 'two Russians' placed above the US gymnast Cathy Rigby.[98] Neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post* featured her again until 30th August 1972, when the gymnastics competition at the 1972 Olympics was well underway, and an Associated Press photograph of Korbut in a leotard, holding aloft a gold medal from the team event, appeared in both newspapers' full-page spreads on the news from the Munich Games.[99] Later on 30th August Korbut would suffer her disaster on the uneven parallel bars in the all-around event; on the 31st she would repeat the routine for the bars event, coming second (tied with Erika Zuchold of the GDR) to Zuchold's compatriot Karin Janz. On 1st September the *New York Times* described the contest under the headline 'Petite Russian Glamour Girl Is Big Winner in Gymnastics':

> Everything about Olga Korbut of the Soviet Union is tiny except her talent as a gymnast, and that was big enough to win her two gold medals and one silver in individual competition at the 20th Olympics tonight. Miss Korbut so dominated the evening performances that East Germany's accomplished Karin Janz, who also won two gold medals and one bronze, was only mildly acknowledged.

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[97] Robert J. Donovan and Ray Scherer, *Unsilent Revolution: Television News and American Public Life, 1948-1991* (Washington, DC and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 290.
[98] 'Miss Rigby of U.S. Takes Third Place in Gymnastics', *NYT*, 13 December 1970, p. 212, in *PQHN* (118969459).
[99] Neil Amdur, 'Spitz Wins 3d [*sic*] Gold Medal', *NYT*, 30 August 1972, p. 27, in *PQHN* (119552136); 'Disgruntled U.S. Coach Decries Cooperation', *WP, Times Herald*, 30 August 1972, p. D4, in *PQHN* (148235113).

> Miss Korbut, 17 years old, 4-feet 11-inches tall and weighing only 84 pounds, was adopted by the fans from her first appearance in the preliminary exercises earlier this week. She then proceeded to show them she had the ability to match her charm.[100]

The article was accompanied by a photograph captioned, 'Olga Korbut of the Soviet Union crying after a poor showing Wednesday. Yesterday, she won two gold medals and one silver.' This, plus a roundup report indicating that 'Little Olga Korbut, the Soviet teen-ager who cried on worldwide television Wednesday night after she botched a routine in the all-around, returned to win gold medals in the balance beam and floor exercises and a silver in the uneven bars',[101] was in fact the closest either the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* came to a direct report of an episode that had made its main impact on network television.[102] At the time of the competition, therefore, the emotion was never more of a story than the ability. However, as these passages indicate, Korbut's youth and small stature received considerable attention in the vast majority of American coverage of her performances; moreover, as time went on, the single instance of public tears was recalled with almost every new appearance she made.

At least two separate scholarly essays have already considered the Cold-War-era political significance of Western media treatment of these events. In her study of the television coverage, Annette Vowinckel has argued:

> [Korbut] was the declared darling of the public because she succeeded in being 'most present' – despite the fact that she competed directly with (East) German Karin Janz, who won the gold medal in this competition. […] [T]he very special atmosphere that was generated by the Munich audience and commented upon by sports journalists of different nationalities [shows] that sports events – within certain limits – managed to establish an autonomous sphere that transcended political borders between blocs and nations instead of confirming and reproducing them.[103]

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[100] 'Petite Russian Glamour Girl Is Big Winner in Gymnastics', *NYT*, 1 September 1972, p. 10, in *PQHN* (119559226).
[101] 'Other Olympic Highlights', *NYT*, 1 September 1972, p. 9, in *PQHN* (119570772).
[102] For the *Washington Post* report, see 'Miss Korbut: Twice a Golden Girl', *WP, Times Herald*, 1 September 1972, p. D7, in *PQHN* (148287522).
[103] Vowinckel (2012), p. 113.

While acknowledging that, 'in the context of the Cold War, both Socialist and democratic governments tried to ideologically exploit the Olympics. Hence the sports competition was always also a competition of political systems',[104] Vowinckel interprets the significance of live or televised sport as being principally in the 'shared aesthetic experience'[105] it provides – for the commentators as well as for the audience. Such a conclusion may very well be accurate with respect to television viewing and stadium attendance, where viewers or spectators get to watch for themselves and commentators also react spontaneously, reporting on the action as it happens. Even now, watching videos of Korbut's performance, one can hardly fail to appreciate either the thrilling nature of the routine itself, the astonished delight of the commentators and spectators watching it, or the genuine public agitation when she made her mistakes.[106]

The impact of a 'shared aesthetic experience' is somewhat diminished in the printed material that Ann Kordas considers in her discussion of 'images of girls, especially girl gymnasts, [deployed] to serve the ideological purposes of their respective regimes'.[107] If, as Vowinckel claims, television and live viewing provide entertainment 'not *because of* but *despite* the [accompanying] propaganda',[108] then print media coverage, by journalists who have had some time to digest what they have witnessed, itself forms *part* of the accompanying propaganda. This was the self-declared aim of the Soviet articles examined below, and, as Kordas shows, the same was true of the American material. However, placing the Korbut coverage in the wider context of US reporting on Soviet

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[104] Vowinckel (2012), p. 114.
[105] Vowinckel (2012), p. 116.
[106] Incredible Performance from Olga Korbut "Darling Of Munich" - Munich 1972 Olympics. *YouTube*, 22 October 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2NGqI6FqeQ> [accessed 5 January 2017]; Olga Korbut Uneven Bars with Korbut Flip Slow Motion Replay (1972 Olympics). *YouTube*, 13 April 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZYPcdj_wn4> [accessed 5 January 2017]; *Faster, Higher, Stronger*, 29 June 2012.
[107] Ann Kordas, 'Rebels, Robots, and All-American Girls: The Ideological Use of Images of Girl Gymnasts during the Cold War', in *Girlhood: A Global History*, ed. by Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 195-213 (p. 196).
[108] Vowinckel (2012), p. 115 [emphasis in the original].

sporting 'heroes' suggests that American print journalists did not entirely drop their spontaneous reactions to Korbut and her performances. Against Kordas' assertion that the American media used its coverage of young female gymnasts 'to convince American citizens, and presumably citizens of the unaligned nations of the world as well, of the benevolence and superiority of the United States and the evil nature of the Soviet Union and its Eastern-bloc allies',[109] I argue that the tone of American sports journalism was determined by a complex mixture of politics and emotional response. In contrast with the Soviet material, it was not unusual for its ideological content to be implicit rather than explicit, revealed in normative discourse rather than overtly political statements.

Kordas reads US sports reporters as deeply attentive to the 'cold warriors not willing to accept or believe in the possibility of friendlier relations with the Soviet Union, [in whose opinion] American admiration of Olga Korbut might potentially lead to admiration of the USSR and the Soviet way of life'. Obediently, and probably not unwillingly, these journalists therefore set about the task of 'Americanising' the Soviet gymnast by portraying her as a free spirit whose stressful life at the hands of the Soviet authorities could be soothed by an afternoon's shopping and beauty therapy in New York City – in short, 'depict[ing] her as possessing interests and personality traits that were approved of and valued by Americans [and dissociating her] as much as possible from the nation she represented and the government that sponsored her training'.[110] Conceding that 'Olga gave a human face to the Soviet Union and convinced Americans that friendship between East and West was possible'[111], Kordas nonetheless finds US journalists hard at work manipulating Korbut's image, leading her ultimately to conclude that 'Americans liked Olga because Olga was like Americans'.[112]

[109] Kordas (2012), p. 196.
[110] Kordas (2012), p. 199.
[111] Kordas (2012), p. 199.
[112] Kordas (2012), p. 200.

For another piece of the puzzle, though, we also need to attend more closely to issues of gender and maturity. Americans didn't *only* like Olga because Olga was like Americans; they also liked her because she was like a child. Journalists summed up Korbut's main features for the Western audience, dealing with the different – but equally troubling – possibilities of burgeoning sexuality and opposition to the West in a single sweep:

> She has no steady boyfriend, loves all fruits from watermelons to grapes and understands enough English to cherish the thousands of affectionate letters she continues to receive from enthralled Americans.[113]

Even after the decisive statement of one silver and three gold medals, Korbut's open display of emotion in Munich, together with the fragility that her age and 'tiny 4-foot-10-inch, 83-pound frame'[114] were held to imply, was almost invariably invoked to remind Americans what it was they loved about her:

> Her pigtails, held at attention by rubber bands, could hardly be seen yesterday through a tight ring of security people as tiny Olga Korbut entered New York. Miss Korbut is the 17-year-old gymnast who enchanted a half-billion people who saw her Olympic performances on television from Munich last year. She captured three gold medals and finished second in the uneven parallel bars event after falling and then breaking into tears.[115]

This *New York Times* report of March 1973, in which childish pigtails capture the onlooker's attention even before 'tiny Olga Korbut' herself, seems a clear enough example of the practice of infantilisation, described by Wensing and Bruce (cited above) as a key discursive means of downplaying female achievement in order to temper the 'symbolic threat' posed to the established order. The language employed to narrate Korbut's post-Munich trajectory followed a well-worn pattern of portraying female athletes as children at play rather than as professionals. If a Soviet contestant could retain

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[113] Neil Amdur, 'A Soviet Pixie Invades the United States', *NYT*, 8 August 1973, p. 47, in *PQHN* (119662549).
[114] Amdur (1973).
[115] Gerald Eskenazi, 'Even her Quotes are Guarded', *NYT*, 23 March 1973, p. 32, in *PQHN* (119650432).

her girlish looks, and even trade on them, then Americans could still hold out hope of their own women competing without renouncing their much-prized femininity. Better still, the child-Korbut also avoided representing fully-fledged working womanhood, the USSR's apparently determined assault on domestic life as America understood it. If a knowing nod had occasionally to be made to her future eligibility (as when *New York Times* writer Gerald Eskenazi, reporting from a 1973 exhibition performance at Madison Square Garden, rather creepily described the 'idolatry by the pre-teen-aged girls in the audience – and some of the more carefully groomed men – that hadn't been seen since Judy Garland's time'),[116] there was no need yet to see her as the embodiment of Soviet contrarianism. Rather, as an individual who was both recognisably Soviet and recognisably woman, yet not fully either, the Olga Korbut constructed in the Western media appeared to be divesting herself of the worst of both identities.

Korbut was far from being the only Munich Olympian to be feted for her tender years or diminutive physique. In the US press as a whole, repeated references to the competitor's age and perhaps inexperience in the international arena, certainly present in coverage of Korbut, were equally characteristic of articles on other young athletes making their Olympic debut – including American males. Throughout the Games, reports using terms such as 'teenaged' or 'highschooler' emphasised the role of teachers, parents and cuddly mascots for young athletes, regardless of their nationality or gender.[117] Indeed, journalists often made a point of highlighting the prodigious feats of America's youngest: still professing commitment to the high ideals of amateurism, and conveniently blind to the comfortable arrangements enjoyed by varsity athletes on sports scholarships, they

[116] Gerald Eskenazi, 'Olga: Overshadowed; 19,694 Don't Care', *NYT*, 24 March 1973, p. 23, in *PQHN* (119650375).
[117] For examples, see 'Olympic Personalities: On Top', *NYT*, 3 September 1972, p. S2, in *PQHN* (119568947); Neil Amdur, 'Spitz Swims to His Seventh Gold Medal; Doping Charge Bars DeMont from 1,500', *NYT*, 5 September 1972, pp. 1, 47, 49, in *PQHN* (119420246); Arthur Daley, 'Off the Mark', *NYT*, 29 August 1972, p. 25, in *PQHN* (119483733).

played up the image of the footling college kid revealing extraordinary talent through artless play:

> A hurdler and long jumper in high school, [Jeff Bennett] became a pole vaulter and intermediate hurdler – what an extraordinary combination – at Oklahoma Christian, one of the top small-college track schools. Coach Ray Vaughan noticed this bundle of energy fooling around with shot and discus. It gave him an idea. 'Would you be interested in trying the decathlon […]?' asked the coach of his midget marvel. Bennett tried it, didn't do especially well, but found himself bitten by the decathlon bug.[118]

Unlike their counterparts in the USSR, American sports writers seemed to be articulating a longing for international sport truly to provide Pierre de Coubertin's 'celebration for the youth of the world',[119] where the young could simply make friends and enthral spectators with their remarkable feats. Indeed, the idea that youth, novelty, personality, spectacle – a combination approximating to the artistic 'presence' posited by Vowinckel – should result in an audience 'connection' completely independent of ideological concerns, has endured despite a twenty-first-century resurgence in appreciation for more experienced gymnasts.[120]

Even in the 1970s, however, some commentators were beginning to suspect that the admiration for child sports stars was not quite as innocently apolitical as it appeared. For Janice Kaplan, writing in the *New York Times* in 1979, the issue was most sharply focused through the prism of gender. Kaplan commented sardonically on the popular habit of referring to professional sportswomen as 'girls', but her chief concern was not the use of such epithets for athletes in their teens – as Korbut had been at the peak of her

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[118] Arthur Daley, 'Decathlon Marvel in Miniature', *NYT*, 5 September 1972, p. 47, in *PQHN* (119417018).
[119] Schiller and Young (2010), p. 128.
[120] See, for example, a 2012 *Atlantic* article praising the trend towards longer competitive careers in women's gymnastics, which nonetheless quoted the view of Valerie Kondos-Field, head coach of the UCLA women's gymnastics team, that 'It's human nature to be attracted to something younger', before concluding. 'It would be wonderful if ten years of training could be channeled towards more than one Olympic Games. But we also want a chance to see the next young phenom twist and flip on the sport's biggest stage' (Dvora Meyers, 'The Rise (and Fall?) of the Little-Girl Gymnast', *The Atlantic*, 24 July 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/07/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-little-girl-gymnast/260123/> [accessed 4 January 2017]).

career – or even their deployment to patronise and belittle adult sportswomen. Rather, it was the possibility that the teenage years should be the peak of *anyone's* career. According to Kaplan, the 'nymphet syndrome [which] probably began in the 1972 Olympics when Olga Korbut […] captured the spotlight with her elfin body and innocent grin' was damaging the entire principle of sport by drawing attention to the sexualised body of the prodigy rather than to real skill:

> The American press loved [Olga Korbut], but the commodity being admired and sold was image rather than sheer talent. Miss Korbut's older and well-muscled team-mate, Lyudmila Turisheva, was a better gymnast. We like our female athletes in huggable packages. When they are cute, they are not threatening. But when victory constantly goes to the very young, it is a sign that something is wrong.

Kaplan was adamant that the situation was not even beneficial to these celebrated prodigies, each of whom would find herself swiftly discarded when a newer replacement came along. But the infatuation with the young had its most pernicious effects in the disparagement of sportswomen in their twenties, whose greater strength and more developed technique were either pilloried as the product of chemical enhancement or dismissed as insufficiently interesting. To the detriment of their sports, American women were being pressured to end competitive careers long before their physical peak – an insult that the men's games simply did not suffer.[121] In arguing (as have many scholars since) that this was a power-maintenance strategy of white-male-dominated discourse, Kaplan was thus making a persuasive case for understanding apparently innocent and spontaneous preferences as overwhelmingly culturally determined, with far-reaching political implications.

[121] Janice Kaplan, 'Women Athletes are Women, Too', *NYT*, 4 March 1979, p. S2, in *PQHN* (120963984). I am grateful to Amanda Wrigley for her illuminating comments on this discussion.

Making the best of it: The USSR exploits its athletes' popularity

Documents of the CPSU Central Committee Department of Propaganda and Agitation, and of the all-Union Komsomol Central Committee, make clear what was expected of Soviet athletes abroad. Above all, they were not to indulge in any activity that would bring their country – and, by extension, the entire communist endeavour – into disrepute. More than that, though, they were to be circumspect in their dealings with foreigners, ensuring that they did not co-operate with anyone who might find unintended meaning in their words or actions.[122] But if American journalists pointed out to their readers the conventions of censorship and self-censorship by which they understood Olga Korbut to be bound, it was surely because they recognised familiar and attractive personal qualities on the point of bursting their banks. Korbut's charismatic presence was not so powerful and unique as to be invulnerable to exploitation for political ends; on the contrary, as Kordas suggests, the presence of these attributes in a Soviet citizen provided the American press and public with ideal support for a variety of arguments and interpretations, both conscious and culturally determined.

The very details that made Korbut so attractive to American audiences were a source of consternation to Soviet officials responsible for the education of both athletes themselves and the young people for whom they served as role models. Yet the fact that the USSR's arch-rivals were so enamoured of her forced the Soviet press to take a strange dual approach. On the one hand, as the next chapter explores, those performances –

[122] CPSU CC Propaganda Department documents of this period contain some discussion of the principles according to which the Soviet athlete ought to conduct him- or herself in relations with 'bourgeois' journalists. In 1972-3, officials investigated the Swedish publication of a book entitled *Hockeyn mitt liv* [*Hockey is My Life*] under the name of A. V. Tarasov, father of Soviet ice hockey and legendary coach of the TsSKA and USSR teams. In response to Tarasov's protestations that the book had been compiled from previously published materials, by a Swedish journalist working without the Soviet coach's consent, the Propaganda Department censured Tarasov 'for [the fact] that he has not always been serious and responsible when approaching the establishment of acquaintanceships with certain foreign journalists, [and] has displayed excessive trust during his discussions with them, which has given grounds for the use of his name in the bourgeois press.' (RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 89, l. 19).

sporting or behavioural – that were visibly out of line with Soviet social norms, had to be processed into appropriate lessons for the domestic audience. On the other, it was important for the readers and listeners to know of the esteem in which their athletes were held abroad, and what it all meant. As the Munich Games receded into the past and a new round of Soviet international sports tours began, negotiations towards détente were reflected in the presentation of international sport. The USSR's star athletes – including, in 1972, the women's gymnastics team – were despatched as 'ambassadors of goodwill', to 'play their part in establishing firm foundations of mutual understanding and respect between […] peoples'.[123]

Friendship and goodwill do indeed seem to have been high on the agenda for many of those involved. Though coming at the topic with a very mixed set of motivations and prejudices, American journalists were, as we have seen, perfectly content to report the joyous atmosphere amongst the thousands of fans packing out every arena that hosted the Soviet gymnasts. Similarly, Olga Korbut, sharply critical of the Soviet administrators who pushed the team into undertaking foreign tours instead of recovering after major competitions, described her actual contact with American audiences and officials as 'fantastic.'[124] Brezhnev's own exploits in America – which, according to Zubok, involved '[driving] American cars at high speeds with a terrified Nixon at his side, hugg[ing] Hollywood celebrity Chuck Connors, and play[ing] like a child with a toy six-shooter and a cowboy belt he got from the president'[125] – might have been setting the tone for a tremendous friendship. Yet somehow that friendship was never quite able to come to fruition.

[123] *Sovetskii* sport, cited in Riordan (1977), pp. 378-379.
[124] Korbut and Emerson-White (1992), pp. 92-106.
[125] Zubok (2009), p. 230.

The fact – as Zubok, Mike Bowker, and other scholars have shown – is that for all the friendly gestures, the pursuit of détente was deeply competitive on both sides.[126] This position is clearly reflected in the documents of those in influential positions in Soviet sport, including both Party-state officials and journalists. Whatever *Sovetskii sport* might have said about the theory of Soviet-American friendship through athletics, there was little break with tradition in coverage of actual sporting events in the major papers: the absence of material actually critical of American sportsmanship during this period was compensated by the relentless pursuit of evidence for the superiority of communism over capitalism. After several weeks of decidedly ambivalent coverage of Korbut's Olympic performances, for example, *Pravda*'s regular team of E. Grigor'ev, I. Mel'nikov, and V. Chertkov apparently saw no contradiction in noting that 'Olga Korbut [had] added the title of "popular favourite" to her collection of prizes.'[127] When Korbut beat American tennis star Billie-Jean King to the title of Associated Press Woman Athlete of the Year in early 1973, a TASS report made much of the gymnast's success in attracting attention to a sport that American audiences had often ignored in favour of tennis and swimming;[128] and a few months later, *Pravda*'s special correspondent in New York, N. Kurdyumov, was pleased to inform his readers that 'Olga Korbut – the "little angel", as they call her here – won the hearts of many thousands of Americans' on the team's first exhibition tour of the United States.[129]

Kurdyumov's article, a 750-word piece published on 18th April under the title 'Obmen rasshiryaetsya', was typical of a stream of journalism selectively quoting Western newspaper articles to convey the glory of exhibition halls packed with adoring

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[126] Bowker (2002).
[127] E. Grigor'ev, I. Mel'nikov and V. Chertkov, 'Nash pobednyi finish', *Pr*, 12 September 1972, p. 6.
[128] 'Vse simpatii – sovetskoi gimnastike', *Iz*, 19 January 1973, p. 6; see also 'Vse simpatii – Ol'ge Korbut', *SS*, 19 January 1973, p. 1.
[129] N. Kurdyumov, 'Obmen rasshiryaetsya', *Pr*, 18 April 1973, p. 4.

fans, and foreign government officials full of admiration.[130] To prove his point about the value of cultural exchanges aiding the efforts toward improving the political climate between the USSR and the USA, Kurdyumov quoted a (with hindsight, rather optimistic) assertion made by the American *Daily News*:

> Когда энтузиасты стоя слушали гимны Советского Союза и Соединенных Штатов, охватывало чувство, что наконец-то наступил конец эры... конец ожесточения и горечи периода 'холодной войны'.

A similar approach was taken by *Sovetskii sport*, which devoted a fair amount of attention to the tour, and did not hesitate to recount the success that Korbut in particular had enjoyed with audiences. Towards the end of the gymnasts' visit, the paper published a roundup of US coverage, prefaced with a meditation on the difficulty of 'surprising the American press' as the team had done, and noting how much of the unprecedented quantity of material had focused 'on the warm welcome that was extended to the gymnasts at the White House by the US president Richard Nixon, and on the significance of the Soviet sportswomen's trip for better mutual understanding between the youth of the two countries.'[131]

On the face of it, these articles corresponded strongly with the Moral Code's calls to 'humane relations and mutual respect among people' and 'fraternal solidarity with the labourers of all countries, from all nations', not to mention the insistence on the USSR's peaceful intentions that characterised many examples of newspaper reportage and public artworks of the period.[132] The Soviet gymnasts were thus ostensibly ambassadors for

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[130] For further Soviet coverage of the tours, see: 'Gromovye ovatsii gimnastkam', *Pr*, 24 March 1973, p. 6; 'Protivit'sya progressu bessmyslenno', *SS*, 24 March 1973, p. 4; 'Triumfal'noe shestvie', *Iz*, 29 March 1973, p. 4; V. Chertkov, 'Shest' gratsii, pokorivshie amerikantsev', *Pr*, 20 April 1973, p. 6; 'Teploe techenie u beregov gimnastiki', *SS*, 25 April 1973, p. 4; '"Erlz kort" prinimaet gimnastiku', *SS*, 9 May 1973, p. 4; '"Pamyatnoe i vydayushcheesya sobytie"', *SS*, 11 May 1973, p. 4; B. Fedosov, 'Korolevy, prezidenty i futbol', *Iz*, 11 May 1973, p. 6; G. Vasil'ev, '"Oni plenili serdtsa"', *Pr*, 13 May 1973, p. 6.

[131] '"Russkie, my lyubim vas!"', *SS*, 25 April 1973, p. 4.

[132] The fraternal 'public' attitude towards international sports competition, according to which the USSR wished success to all competitors as participants in the international effort for peace, was summed up in the final paragraph of a *Pravda* article heralding the start of the 1973 World University Games in Moscow: 'Советские люди, гостеприимно встречая гостей, желают им успехов на соревнованиях, верят, что

peace and friendship. On closer inspection, however, the articles are clearly less about international *cooperation* as such, than about what Soviet performers might teach American audiences:

> Выступления советских спортсменок в ряде американских городов вызвали восхищение их мастерством, вылились в демонстрацию искренних дружеских чувств американцев к стране и народу, воспитавшим таких замечательных мастеров.[133]

Kurdyumov's formulation was typical of an approach paying only the scantest attention to American contributions to the 'exchange', and certainly not entertaining the notion that Soviet society might itself have anything to learn from another system. Mutual benefit, in this scenario, did not mean both parties had to experience the benefit in the same way: rather, the USA would profit from the opportunity to observe Soviet expertise, while the USSR profited from the opportunity to propagandise itself abroad.

Московская Универсиада послужит укреплению сотрудничества молодежи в ее борьбе за мир и социальный прогресс.' (L. Lebedev and V. Otkalenko, 'I vspykhnet ogon' universiady', *Pr*, 15 August 1973, p. 6).

[133] Kurdyumov (1973).

4. The Athlete and the Soviet Authorities

As editor of *Sovetskii sport* and president of the Federation of Sports Journalists of the USSR, Nikolai Kiselev was more familiar than most with the less heroic side of sporting life. In his report to the first seminar for komsorgs preparing teams for the 1972 Olympic Games, Kiselev reflected on the prudence required in selecting material for publication, and the real need for Soviet athletes to behave in a manner befitting their status as ambassadors for socialism. Reminding the closed meeting of several embarrassing incidents – one involving twenty-kilogram packages of mohair smuggled in from France by 'speculators' on the Soviet football team ('*Eto zhe gromadnyi tyuk […] ved' odnomu cheloveku ne nuzhno 20 kilogramm mokhera*'), and another in which the diver Boris Polulyakh had gambled away money 'borrowed' from a Mexican 'friend' at the 1968 Olympiad in Mexico City – Kiselev stressed the danger of allowing illicit activity by Soviet participants to come to public attention at the forthcoming Games. Unlike in Mexico – where knowledge of Polulyakh's misdeeds had been confined to the Soviet delegation 'and a few other people', and the miscreant flown discreetly home to meet his punishment – the 1972 Games would place the USSR under greater and more hostile scrutiny:

> А в Мюнхене каждый факт станет предметом гласности. Это будет позером для нашей страны. В этом отличие мексиканской внешней обстановки от мюнхенской. Поэтому основная задача – подготовить олимпийцев абсолютно чистыми в моральном отношении, чтобы были бойцами, чтобы могли выступить так, чтобы показали лучшие результаты.[1]

[1] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 95-97. Although Kiselev's speech dealt chiefly with the likely situation at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, other archival documents make clear that Soviet officials felt similar apprehension about the location of the Winter Olympiad in Japan. However, as attested by an exceptionally amusing KGB report to the CPSU Central Committee Propaganda Department, detailing the '*nenormal'naya obstanovka*' prevailing between the figure skaters Andrei Suraikin, Lyudmila Smirnova and Aleksei Ulanov, the quiet repatriation of the disgraced was possible even from Sapporo. Having discovered that his regular skating partner Smirnova had been cultivating '*intimnye svyazi*' with the gold medallist Ulanov, 'Сурайкин 8 февраля с.г. в 3 часа ночи проник через балкон в квартиру Уланова в поисках Смирновой, в результате чего произошло ссора между ним и Улановым. Уланов и проживавший с ним Благов пытались раздеть Сурайкин и сбросить его в обнаженном виде с балкона 4 этажа.' Suraikin – who suffered what can only be described as a character assassination in the KGB

These words seem to emphasise good behaviour for the sake of making a good impression on the rest of the world, not for its own sake as a fundamental aspect of communist morality. There was, as we have already seen, a considerable amount of show in the USSR's sporting ambition. However, Kiselev's other comments, those of fellow speakers and officials in the sporting establishment, and the published output of the Soviet media, all express a general commitment to the use of sport as a tool for honing socialist morality and good citizenship. The pedagogical approach these sources advocated was highly prescriptive, assuming and requiring a significant degree of editorial control over the material provided to readers. Muckraking was off-limits precisely because it had nothing to teach; other information about athletes' misdemeanours needed to be carefully assessed for its potential to offer a useful lesson rather than a titillating scandal.[2] But, though Kiselev acknowledged a certain difficulty in selecting appropriate material for his newspaper's lessons in citizenship (even as he himself appears to have seen the funny side of some of the transgressions he described), criticism and self-criticism remained inescapably part of the Soviet way of doing things:

> Если говорить о причинах моральной, волевой подготовки. Если человек везет 20 штук фотообъективов, ему не до прыжков в высоту. Он думает, как бы не стащили, пока не успел продать. Он как олимпиец конченый человек, эти вещи взаимно связаны между собой. И мы выступаем по этому поводу, говорим. Но вы сами понимаете, что газету нельзя заполнять такими фактами. И так слишком много говорится. Хуже бывают случаи с другими категориями наших граждан, но о них в газетах не пишут. А как напишут о наших спортсменах, так идет большой разговор среди обывателей. Но не писать об этом нельзя, потому что иначе появляется безнаказанность, которая приводит к этим явлениям.

report – and Smirnova were returned to the USSR early 'under the pretext of preparation for the forthcoming world championship', an episode from which Suraikin's career apparently never really recovered. Testament to the thoroughness of the officials involved, I have been unable to find any trace of this scandal in either the Soviet or the Western press. (See RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 99).

[2] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 98.

This chapter examines the tensions of the USSR's dual model – sport for show vs. sport for ideological formation – through a study of archived records of the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Communist Youth League (Komsomol), the Propaganda Department of the CPSU Central Committee, and the Committee on Physical Culture and Sport of the USSR Council of Ministers (Sportkomitet SSSR), where officials organising and supervising international sporting activity discussed the political and social problems involved in sending delegations of athletes to the West under the gaze of an increasingly sophisticated global and Soviet audience. As they debated the best way to prepare elite athletes for their special roles as ambassadors for and to Soviet youth, they also discussed how information about them should be presented to the domestic public so as to maximise its pedagogical potential. To understand how policy-makers and propagandists conceptualised the relationship between the sporting champion and the Soviet audience, and the means by which they attempted to manage that relationship, I compare records of these discussions (particularly those involving senior figures in the Soviet media) with material on the subject of athletes and their performances published for a general domestic readership.

Having established the context in which Soviet press coverage of young athletes appeared, I then return to the case study of material produced about Olga Korbut once it had become clear that the USSR's youngest Olympic gymnast of 1972 – the person at the very bottom of the strictly observed team hierarchy[3] – was attracting unprecedented international attention, whether or not her performances brought the USSR victory. Despite Korbut's later protestations of grossly unfair treatment at the hands of the Soviet

[3] Soviet newspapers' reinforcement of a team hierarchy, particularly evident in comparisons (direct or implied) between Korbut and the team leader Lyudmila Turishcheva, is discussed below in the section entitled 'A surprise at the Olympics'. The strength of Korbut's own perception of unfair treatment is illustrated by her allegations of a pecking order rigidly imposed both within the team and, thanks to Soviet domination of the International Gymnastics Federation, through pre-determined results at major competitions (see Korbut and Emerson-White (1992), pp. 74-76).

authorities, it should be noted that I have uncovered no archival evidence of any kind of *skandaly* involving her that were felt to warrant special attention from officials. Rather, she emerges, from the small amount of archival information and copious press coverage available, as an athlete who was doing her job adequately in terms of bringing home international titles, but whose psychological and political development, like that of most of her young compatriots, required a programme of interventions as consistent and intensive as her gymnastic training regime. I therefore treat this chapter as an opportunity to look in detail at how policy discussions played out in journalistic practice, paying particular attention to the ways in which a high-profile representative of Soviet youth could be both the subject and the object of political-educational efforts.

'Producing moral purity'

If the approaching Olympiads, with their perceived potential for either the great glory or the great humiliation of the USSR, dominated sports officials' thoughts in early 1972, they were also only a hyper-intensified model of the challenges that all young Soviet people might face as they came of age in an increasingly interconnected world. It followed that the elite athlete, though exceptional, was not to be viewed as qualitatively different; rather, she or he stood as a magnified version of a recognisably Soviet kind of personal development. As Kiselev told the seminar of the Institute of Komsorgs of the National Teams, the champion athlete should 'not only run and jump well', but also 'be a leading (*peredovym*) Soviet person, a representative of Soviet youth, ideologically tempered (*ideino zakalennym*), armed with knowledge (*vooruzhennym znaniyami*)'.[4] Alongside the stress on Sovietness, the choice of passive participles (*zakalennym*, *vooruzhennym*) was no accident: like all other young people, athletes needed external

[4] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 82.

input to bring about the required state of consciousness. With Kiselev among the most prominent speakers at the Komsomol's seminars on athlete education, the role of the media – especially print – was foregrounded in the discussion.

Kiselev's declaration that Soviet newspapers were not merely a means for distributing information about sport to the non-Olympic-going masses, but should be engaged in supporting and educating athletes as they prepared to go abroad, was consistent with a long-established Soviet tradition of using newspapers to convey instruction to the front lines.[5] Providing resources in the form of articles suitable for discussion by sports teams led by their komsorgs – such as a recent article 'on the theme of the moral resilience of our athletes, their readiness to fight to the end, even when it's physically hard and there are a string of unexpected circumstances'[6] – would be an important way of reaching out to athletes cut off from their normal sources of information and guidance during tournaments abroad.[7] The task of supporting and guiding athletes, as Kiselev described it, would sometimes necessitate a 'tough love' approach. Robert Edelman has written that *Sovetskii sport* 'maintained a critical tradition long before 1985. Over the years, coaches, athletes, fans, and sports bureaucrats came under severe scrutiny, even condemnation. One could even speculate that these critical practices played a role in the Soviet Union's sports success.'[8] In front of the Institute of Komsorgs audience at

[5] During the first weeks of Soviet involvement in World War II, for example, the Glavnoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie instructed newspapers to be active not only in publicising Party and government declarations, mobilising troops and propagandising their country's requirements of them, but actually in 'training the troops in heroism and in the perfection of fighting skills' (Louise McReynolds, 'Dateline Stalingrad: Newspaper Correspondents at the Front', in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. by Stites, pp. 28-43 (p. 30)). On the same didactic orientation at a variety of points in Soviet history, see Brooks on *Pravda* (Brooks (1995)); Edelman on *Sovetskii sport* (Edelman (1993), pp. 198-199); Sheila Fitzpatrick on the role of newspapers in promoting the emergence of *kul'turnost'* in the 1930s (Fitzpatrick (1992), pp. 216-237); Thomas C. Wolfe on the work of *Izvestiya* and regional general-interest newspapers after the death of Stalin (Wolfe (2005)).

[6] Kiselev, 'Rol' pechati', RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 80-102 (l. 88).

[7] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 81.

[8] Edelman (1993), p. 198. For the April 1969 acknowledgement by Gossport's panel of 'leading physical culture workers' of 'necessary correctives' made to Soviet sports practice and policy as a direct result of 'critical observations published in the newspaper *Sovetskii sport*', see GARF, f. r-7576, op. 31, d. 41, l. 40.

least, Kiselev was keen to present this work as part of his newspaper's enduring, if sometimes imperfect, commitment to the wider task of shaping Soviet citizenship. Proclaiming that good technical and physical skills went hand-in-hand with a high level of personal morality, Kiselev publicly deplored the behaviour that sometimes made the two appear mutually exclusive, and admitted that *Sovetskii sport* was wrong to focus on 'purely sporting themes' at the expense of the 'educational (*vospitatel'naya*) theme'. Following the lead of *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, whose work in that area Kiselev acknowledged, *Sovetskii sport* would renew its commitment to athletes' socialist *vospitanie*.[9]

However, criticism of the media did not begin and end with Kiselev's admission of his own paper's 'shortcomings'. According to one speaker, unnamed in the archived transcript of proceedings, the excitability of some sports journalism risked producing a dangerous sense of entitlement in the politically immature athlete:

> […] факты малодушия, факты духовной бедности должны волновать нас прежде всего. Должно волновать и то, что у некоторой части спортсменов появилось скептическое отношение к выполнению своего долга, элементы благодушия, успокоенности. Встречаются и такие, у которых начисто отсутствует чувство меры и скромности; они считают себя чуть ли не мифическими героями, которым все можно и все позволено.
>
> Зачастую 'медвежью услугу' таким спортсменам 'светилам' делают наши журналисты, не знающие порой предела своим дифирамбам и громким эпитетам. Иной спортсмен у них – и 'великолепный', и 'прекрасный', и 'неподражаемый'. И вот этот 'прекрасный' и 'неподражаемый' начинает требовать к себе повышенного внимания: дайте ему немедленно квартиру в центре города, с окнами на юг и непременно на втором или третьем этаже, обставьте ее мебелью, да обеспечьте еще автомобилем без очереди и по государственной цене, определите детей в детские сады или детские ясли и т.д. и т.п.[10]

[9] Kiselev, '*Rol' pechati*', RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 80-102 (ll. 85-88). Compare Kiselev's public confession with Edelman's argument that *Sovetskii sport* enjoyed its immense popularity precisely because 'it was the one Soviet newspaper whose journalistic practices most closely resembled those of its counterparts in the West. The reporters of *Sovetskii sport* attended events, recorded what happened, and then straightforwardly described it to their readers. They did this with comparative accuracy and honesty; often, but far from always, without regard to questions of immediate politics.' (Edelman (1993), p. 198).
[10] RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 22-23.

These reservations about material reward and press acclaim were repeatedly expressed in discussions of policy towards elite sportsmen and -women. Though evidently content to reinforce important international victories with cash prizes, and to see high achievers released from the regular obligations of labour and military service to train full-time in the best workplace sports facilities, officials were determined that the perks should be strictly limited to what the state deemed appropriate. Over and over again, powerful sports clubs were censured for the 'worthless practice' of *peremanivanie*, or promising better conditions in order to 'lure' athletes away from the collectives that had trained them. According to Sportkomitet experts, the knowledge that they could just 'buy in' top performers encouraged the biggest clubs to neglect the long-term task of inculcating 'sporting skills, feelings of responsibility and patriotism, conscientiousness and honour'.[11] Transfers themselves were said to 'cause serious damage to all formation work with athletes',[12] damaging team cohesion. And, as the anonymous speaker at the komsorgs' seminar suggested, excessive material comfort was felt to present a distraction from the primary tasks of winning at sport and exhibiting patriotism.

In theory, then, the athlete's treatment at the hands of Soviet authority – as manifested everywhere from the media to the Sports Committee to the club – was to be measured and controlled. It ought to provide just enough reward to act as an incentive, but never so much as to allow for self-indulgence, or to encourage the athlete to attribute heroic status to him- or herself. Journalism, in particular, was to take seriously its role as a leveller, educating spectators and athletes alike as it pricked the illusory bubbles of the 'amazing' (*velikolepnyi*), 'wonderful' (*prekrasnyi*), and 'inimitable' (*nepodrazhaemyi*).

[11] GARF, f. r-7576, op. 31, d. 41, l. 58.
[12] Response of V. Bogatnikov, secretary to the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (VTsSPS), to the request for Olympic champions Valerii Borzov and Nikolai Andrianov to transfer from Burevestnik (the student sport society) to Dinamo (the Ministry of Internal Affairs club) following the 1972 Games. RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 89, ll. 62-69.

Yet however non-specific these authorities' ritual criticism and self-criticism might have been, it suggests the ways in which the Soviet press (for one) was not the monolith either its proponents or its detractors liked to claim. For the criticism to have been necessary in the first place, deviation from the prescribed pattern must already have occurred. In fact, it is not difficult to see how this could come about: for one thing, with so many papers issued by so many local organisations across such an enormous geographical area as the USSR (7700 newspapers and nearly 4000 periodicals in 1966, according to Brezhnev's report to the 23rd Party Congress),[13] even the best efforts of the censorship agency Glavlit were unable to guarantee consistent pre-emptive control from the centre. Amongst officials in the central Party organisations, discussions of Soviet editorial policy frequently involved criticism of the way this or that newspaper had handled this or that affair, with CPSU Central Committee members sometimes denouncing as 'ideologically harmful' material that had actually appeared in print via state publishing houses.[14] When it came to coverage of the Soviet Union's elite athletes, sufficient variation existed to offer the possibility of quite heterodox understandings of their significance.

Celebrity in the Soviet Union?

Given the degree of official concern over the role of the media in fashioning the athlete's self-understanding and public image, it is worth asking whether – and how – Soviet media activity allowed the emergence of any kind of 'celebrity culture' comparable to that identified by scholars of modern Western, capitalist societies. The

[13] *XXIII s"ezd Kommunisticheskoi Partii Sovetskogo Soyuza. 29 marta – 8 aprelya 1966 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet*. 2 vols (Moscow: Politizdat, 1966), I, p. 105.

[14] RGANI, f. 5, op. 64, d. 81, ll. 129-136; f. 5, op. 65, d. 72, ll. 75-83. For other public criticism of journalistic trends, see RGASPI f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, l. 23. Kristin Roth-Ey draws a similar conclusion in relation to the postwar Soviet broadcast media: Roth-Ey (2011), pp. 12-13. For David Brandenberger's argument that 'despite the priority that the party hierarchy placed on ideology, it was often treated in a clumsy, haphazard way by members of the ideological establishment, the creative intelligentsia, the press, and party activists' under Stalin, see Brandenberger (2011), p. 2.

prevailing account of 'celebrity' as 'the essential product of a decadent twentieth century, disparagingly contrasted with a prelapsarian golden age of great men who achieved great things', has already been questioned.[15] Contending that the development of a recognisable celebrity culture depended chiefly on the availability of mass-produced consumer goods bearing the likenesses or histories of those whose outstanding features had already made them the subject of public discussion, Simon Morgan suggests that interest in such individuals was itself 'vital to stimulating demand for new mass-produced commodities', thus facilitating the birth of consumer society – beginning not in the twentieth century, with Hollywood film and its stars, but as early as the eighteenth century.[16]

The exploration beyond the confines of established temporal boundaries also encourages us to question spatial ones. In point of fact, the issue is less the geographical designation – 'Western' – than the political, economic and social conditions by which the West came to define itself in relation to the communist 'other'. Questioning the assumption that 'the emergence of a "mass society", characterized by urbanization, consumer capitalism, political democracy, mass literacy and the growth of the mass media'[17] was a prerequisite for the emergence of celebrity culture, and suggesting instead that public interest in famous figures helped to drive the 'modernization' process, Morgan's work implies that forms of celebrity culture could begin to take root in other societies in which some of these characteristics were not fully developed. For Morgan, the essential requirement is the existence of consumers – and these the USSR certainly had, no matter how reluctant it might have been to describe its citizens as such. In terms of consumer goods, it is admittedly difficult to find online many examples of Soviet-

[15] Simon Morgan, 'Celebrity: Academic 'Pseudo-Event' or a Useful Concept for Historians?', *Cultural and Social History*, 8 (2011), 95-114 (p. 102).
[16] Morgan (2011), p. 104.
[17] Morgan (2011), p. 98.

produced '*olimpiiskie suveniry*' dating from before the Moscow Games of 1980 – apart from print publications. State policy ensured that (periodic paper shortages notwithstanding), published material about Soviet sporting champions was widely and cheaply available to the consumer, who then had the opportunity to construct his or her own meaning from it.[18] Undoubtedly, however, it was the work of propagandists to try to influence that process of meaning-making as heavily as possible. This they did in a variety of ways, from critical commentaries on Soviet cultural phenomena and the foreign cultural products now becoming more visible to Soviet audiences, to detailed dissections of individual performances.

It is as an essentially alien concept that the term *znamenitost'* (in established use in a flourishing post-Soviet 'celebrity press')[19] appeared in the public discourse of the USSR. The *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* contains no entry for *znamenitost'* in any of its three editions of 1926-1947, 1949-1965 and 1969-1981. Meanwhile, a search of the *East View* database of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, looking for the search term '*znamenitost"*, produces a list of 7701 matches for dates between 1 January 1965 and 1 January 1980 (as compared to 32649 for "*geroï* OR *geroi*") – very few of which actually contain the noun itself. In a sample of the top 150 results (sorted according to the database's criteria for 'relevance'), only seven contained instances of the noun in any declension.[20] Thus, many of the results are actually for forms of the adjective *znamenityi*: describing this or that celebrated/famous city, novel, football team, construction site, work brigade etc. This usage was common – yet acknowledging the fame of an inanimate object or a work

[18] For a similar argument about the consumption of film memorabilia, such as picture postcards ('an invitation to cinema's personalization and possession') and material from the magazine *Soviet Screen* (*Sovetskii ekran*), see Roth-Ey (2011), pp. 110-121 (quotation p. 112).
[19] See, for example, 'Yubilei so zvedami: zhurnal *Hello!* nagradil "Samykh stil'nykh v Rossii"', *Hello! Rossiya*, 22 April 2014, <http://ru.hellomagazine.com/moda/samye-stilnye-v-rossii/2738-zhurnal-hello-nagradil-samykh-stilnykh-v-rossii.html> [accessed 4 January 2017].
[20] This is a surprising finding, given my use of the 'exact phrase' tool, but may be explained by the fact that the database is not tagged for parts of speech. Attempts to elicit an explanation from the database publishers were unsuccessful.

collective, or even making a passing reference to a *znamenityi* musician or novelist, is quite a different thing to devoting whole paragraphs or features to a single individual.

Occasional articles that did use the noun did not necessarily refer to *znamenitost'* simply as an abstract concept. One notable example offering analysis of some 'real' *znamenitosti*, written by a 'fraternal socialist' Hungarian commentator on current affairs and published in *Pravda* under the headline '*Nashi znamenitosti*' in August 1965, opened:

> Знакомый педагог рассказывал мне, как ученики его класса ответили на вопрос: 'Кто сейчас знаменит?'. Меньше половины их написало сочинение о знаменитостях из мира литературы и искусства, большинство – о героях труда, строителях социалистической Венгрии. Причем о людях, лично знакомых ребятам.
>
> Явление отрадное. Поразмышлять есть над чем. Кто же все-таки в наше время знаменит?

Although given concrete characterisations, the individuals mentioned were far from glamorous – and that was just the point. *Znamenitost'* under socialism was presented in stark opposition to the glorification of the 'harsh exploiters of the labourers' that had regularly appeared in the 'bourgeois press' of 'the old Hungary'. Considering the present, the author now conflated *znamenitost'* with the heroism said to be characteristic of socialist peoples:

> *Героем* нынешней, социалистической Венгрии стал народ. Ежедневно я листаю газеты и вижу на их страницах сталеваров и текстильщиц, химиков и животноводов, ученых и врачей – тех, кто строит новую жизнь в стране. Они, эти беззаветные труженики, становятся знаменитыми.

After a few paragraphs describing an unusually productive combine operator, an engineer whose round-the-clock work had saved large areas of the country from flooding, and others, the author concluded,

> Итак, вот они, знаменитости новой Венгрии: комбайнер, командир осажденного водой острова, ученый, сапер, летчик, лингвист, актриса. Очень разные люди. На первый взгляд, у них одно общее: они знамениты. Но роднит их не это. Со многими я разговаривал, задавал вопрос о том, как они стали

> знаменитыми. Ответы были всегда примерно одинаковы: ‘Не знаю. О славе не думал. Старался (или старалась) как можно лучше выполнить свой долг’.[21]

The experience of *znamenitost’* was not something to be sought out in itself: in a socialist society it might arise as an unintended consequence of dedication to duty, but the right-thinking person – the true *znamenitost’* of the article’s title – would shrug it off as irrelevant and even puzzling. In fact, this slightly paradoxical piece – clearly part of the established discourse about civic heroes that was maintained throughout much of the Soviet press – was unusual in suggesting that the term could be used positively at all. More often, Soviet commentators, propagandists and political organisers took Boris Pasternak’s memorably austere approach to questions of fame and celebrity to its fullest conclusion, as in a reflection on the teacher’s role in the career of the talented young musician, published in *Pravda* in January 1975. According to V. Gornostaeva of the Moscow State Conservatory, the active pursuit (or improper attribution) of *znamenitost’* would lead to distraction from the real task in hand and, ultimately, to failure. Warning particularly of the dangers of being ‘prematurely made a celebrity’ by the media, Gornostaeva quoted the 1956 poem as she cautioned the young musician against ignoring Pasternak’s advice that ‘It is unseemly to be famous’ (*Byt’ znamenitym nekrasivo*).[22]

Does the very sparing use of the word *znamenitost’* – by papers that, as these examples show, clearly understood the potential meaning of ‘celebrity’ – speak to a reluctance to acknowledge the existence of the phenomenon in Soviet society? More likely, *znamenitost’* was simply not the linguistic term of choice for the journalist of the 1960s and 1970s. The word *kumir*, or ‘idol’ – with its faint suggestion of the waywardness

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[21] Ishtvan Kul’char (István Kulcsár), ‘Nashi zamenitosti’, *Pr*, 25 August 1965, p. 4, in *East View Universal Databases* (hereafter *EVUD*) (21437080) [emphasis added].

[22] V. Gornostaeva, ‘Ispytanie uspekhom’ *Iz*, 6 January 1975, p. 5, in *EVUD* (24666284). For an interesting discussion of the disingenuousness of such a famous poet’s repudiation of celebrity – an aspect of the question that Soviet commentators largely ignored – see Michael Wachtel, *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 56-57).

or inanity of the idolater's preoccupation[23] – was more commonly used.[24] One early instance – a 1966 column offering excerpts from the 'thousands of responses' to a *Komsomol'skaya pravda* Institute of Social Opinion survey about 'principal directions in the work of the VLKSM', together with commentary presumably intended to provide an expert ideological gloss on respondents' views – suggests the concept of the *kumir* as oppositional to the authentic 'heroism' of Soviet socialism:

> У каждого поколения — свой возраст самосознания и свой путь к зрелости. Бессмертны традиции Октября, героика социалистического строительства. Прекрасно само дыхание далеких лет, сам облик и образ жизни ветеранов революции и социализма. Новое молодое поколение верно их заветам, их кристальной нравственной чистоте и стойкости, оно непримиримо к буржуазной морали и нравам, к ложным кумирам, к гримасам инфантилизма и мещанства. Вбирая опыт, традиции и достижения своих предшественников, новое поколение по закону истории призвано сделать больше и лучше, чем они. В этом — преемственность священного революционного идеала и дела, к этому прикованы мысли комсомольцев.[25]

During the period surveyed here, numerous *Pravda* pieces used the term with negative connotations, with 17 instances of an enemy political leader (past or present) being described as the *kumir* of political groups opposed to the USSR. References to the prominent West German politician Franz Josef Strauss, and to Ronald Reagan, become more frequent and strident over the course of the 1970s; other examples include a mention of Friedrich I Barbarossa as a Nazi *kumir*, Hitler as the *kumir* of West German neofascists, and Mao, Hitler and Bismarck as the *kumiry* named by contemporary Chinese 'chauvinists'.[26] On some of the immediate social problems affecting Soviet society, three

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[23] The Biblical commandment '*Ne sotvori sebe kumira*' was even quoted occasionally in newspaper articles of the period, though (naturally) without attribution.

[24] A search of the *East View* archive of *Pravda* (as at 29 October 2016) returns 113 results for articles containing the word *kumir* in any grammatical case, published in that newspaper between 1 January 1965 and 1 January 1980. Nine misreadings by text-recognition software (for example, involving the Tash-Kumyrskaya hydroelectric station), one repeat result, and three illegible scans, leave 100 results. These reveal the diversity of contexts, both positive and negative, in which the term was used.

[25] The survey was undertaken, and the overview published in *Pravda*, on the occasion of the 15th All-Union Komsomol Congress. 'Putevka v zhizn'', *Pr*, 17 May 1966, p. 3, in *EVUD* (21447119).

[26] The following articles were all published in *Pravda* (dates as stated), and accessed via *EVUD* (accession numbers as stated) on 30 October 2016. On Reagan (as Governor of California and increasingly prominent

articles – at least one of them a thinly veiled criticism of Chinese policy – discussed the problem of only children raised as the family '*kumir*'.[27] Using the term to denote concepts rather than persons, separate articles named capitalism, the abandoned gold standard, and money and possessions, as the harmful *kumiry* of Western society.[28] However, other concepts named as *kumiry* were positively connoted – for example, exactitude in measurement of space and time, the longed-for goal of scientists in Soviet research institutes.[29]

If some articles presented the *kumir* as a relentlessly negative phenomenon, others used the term matter-of-factly, as a simple statement of the level of popular acclaim enjoyed by a star of sport or popular culture. *Pravda* took the general line that the elevation of audience favourites to *kumir* status was an inevitable feature of popular culture, though articles on the sad last years of Elvis Presley, and the commercial success

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Republican spokesman), see S. Vishnevsky, 'Nichego ne zabyli, nichemu ne nauchilis'', 5 September 1966, p. 5 (21445769); G. Ratiani, 'Vertikal'noe obshchestvo', 13 November 1966, p. 5 (21446182); G. Vasil'ev, 'Spory v partii "slona"', 12 October 1977, p. 5 (21511957). On the five-term Republican Senator and close associate of Reagan, Barry Goldwater, see N. Kurdyumov, '"Ul'tra" aktiviziruyutsya', 29 March 1965, p. 5 (21437261); G. Ratiani, 'Oshibsya adresom', 11 February 1972, p. 5 (21717110). On Joseph McCarthy: N. Kurdyumov, 'Toska po inkvisitoru', 7 July 1979, p. 5 (21722292). On Franz Josef Strauss: Yu. Kuznetsov, 'Maska, my tebya znaem', 19 January 1967, p. 3 (21448519); E. Grigor'ev, '"Olimp" Shtraussa', 22 August 1972, p. 5 (21776461); E. Grigor'ev, 'Razvod po-bavarski?', 27 November 1972, p. 3 (21776553); E. Grigor'ev, 'Arifmetika po Shtraussu', 19 August 1975, p. 5 (21728696); E. Evgen'ev, 'Mnogotselevaya okhota', 3 April 1977, p. 5 (21510179). On the Russian-born Zhabotinsky's influence on Zionist ideology: V. Bol'shakov, 'Antisovetizm – professiya sionistov', 18 February 1971, p. 4 (21719588). On Cecil Rhodes: I. Pogodina, 'Eti kovarnye predki', 5 March 1971, p. 5 (21710630). On Chinese 'chauvinists': 'Po puti klassovogo predatelya', 26 September 1975, p. 5 (21727714). On Barbarossa, see V. Men'shikov, '"Zakony Barbarossy"', 20 January 1967, p. 5 (21448906); and on Hitler, see V. Mikhailov, 'Yadovitye griby neofashizma', 15 November 1967, p. 5 (21448592). On Ben-Gurion as the *kumir* of Tel-Aviv 'hawks', see I. Belyaev, 'Otpor avantyuristam', 19 June 1967, p. 1 (21449862); and on the manner in which 'pseudo-heroes of the Sinai adventure have become the *kumiry* of the most inveterate imperialist reactionaries in the West', see 'Pozor Izrailya', 24 September 1967, pp. 1, 4 (21449269).

[27] The following articles were all published in *Pravda* (dates as stated), and accessed via *EVUD* (accession numbers as stated) on 30 October 2016. 'My i deti', 11 October 1970, p. 1 (22048657); A. Shvetsov, 'Slepaya lyubov'', 17 May 1973, p. 6 (27059410); L. Bogopolskaya, 'Vospityvaya uverennost'', 1 December 1975, p. 4 (21722848).

[28] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 30 October 2016. On capitalism: V. Sedykh, 'Pered gryadushchimi valyutnymi bitvami', 26 September 1971, p. 5 (21722316). On the gold standard, V. Ermakov, 'Kogda leto na iskhode', 22 August 1971, pp. 1, 4 (21710352). On money and possessions: V. Tkachenko, 'Ne pereidi gran'', 24 December 1973, p. 4 (21721328).

[29] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 30 October 2016: A. Pokrovsky, 'Atom merit vselennuyu', 15 April 1971, p. 6 (21710764); P. Barashev and E. Evladov, 'Sekundy… naprokat', 26 August 1971, p. 2 (21710561).

of ABBA (said to have 'overtaken the Beatles in terms of records released, but never reached the Liverpudlian quartet's artistic level'),[30] suggested that the machinations of bourgeois '*shou-bizness*' exerted a corrupting influence on Western public taste and condemned former favourites such as Elvis to miserable obscurity. Whereas a 1966 article on English youth culture had described the Beatles in more or less factual terms as the *kumiry* of their young compatriots and – like English youth in general – more politically progressive than their elders,[31] the 1977 piece on ABBA seems to represent the dashing of hopes that the West's 'sixties generation' would take a more discriminating attitude to cultural production. Where these *kumiry* were concerned, then, *Pravda* reserved the right to pass its own judgement on popular taste.

In the Soviet environment, supposedly free from cultural distortions like those caused by the capitalist system, and where citizens were guided from an early age in the proper reception of cultural artefacts, the *kumir* could indeed be a force for good. In 1973 (though with no clear reason for the coincidental timing), a cluster of articles celebrated prominent cultural figures – among them Rachmaninov and Scriabin, Sergei Mikhalkov and Pushkin – and described each as a *kumir* to the Soviet people.[32] Such usage pointed to the possibility of using the term not in opposition to, but interchangeably with, *geroi* – as did an interview in which grandmaster Anatoly Karpov noted the influence of his chess *kumiry* Capablanca and Botvinnik.[33]

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[30] On Elvis: E. Rusakov, 'Zhernova "Shou-biznesa"', *Pr*, 26 August 1977, p. 5, in *EVUD* (21513043). On ABBA: Yu. Kuznetsov, 'Musikal'naya mashina kommertsii', *Pr*, 14 August 1977, p. 5, in *EVUD* (21511442).

[31] O. Orestov, 'Dumy i trevogi angliiskoi molodezhi', *Pr*, 2 September 1966, p. 5, in *EVUD* (21445696).

[32] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 30 October 2016. On Rachmaninov: A. Murzin, 'Povstrechai krasotu', 17 September 1971, p. 3 (21724945); on Rachmaninov and Scriabin: E. Svetlanov, 'Velikii muzikant', 1 April 1973, p. 3 (21718029). On Sergei Mikhalkov: B. Polevoi, 'Nerzhaveyushchee pero', 12 March 1973, p. 4 (21721803). On Pushkin: V. Beketov, 'Doroga k Pushkinu', 28 October 1973, p. 3 (21720825).

[33] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 30 October 2016: E. Fadeev, 'Podozhdem do aprelya', 10 February 1974, p. 6 (21723550). On *kumiry* for a new generation of chess players: 'Samaya yunaya "koroleva"', 6 October 1978, p. 6 (21523209).

In a similar spirit, throughout the period under study, *Pravda* published material about the *kumiry* who contributed to the education of others through personal contact with them. I. D. Papanin, a Soviet polar explorer, scientist, Rear Admiral and twice Hero of the Soviet Union, reportedly beloved of his young neighbours and looking just right for a 'kindly children's *kumir*', was unusual among these for his public prominence.[34] More often, the *kumir* in question was known only in his (almost always his) immediate locality: a remarkable teacher; a Pioneer *vozhatyi* (worshipped by all except one child, who was portrayed as being in need of remedial attention); a youth bound for military academy who inspired younger schoolmates; a kolkhoz chairman who commanded such warm respect that all the local teenagers wanted to emulate him; a child soldier of the Great Patriotic War who stirred other children to action; the 'real heroes' (*nastoyashchie geroi*) of the Revolution who had been the childhood *kumiry* of a now-decorated Hero of Socialist Labour.[35] The use of the term *kumir* in these articles, taken as a group, echoes the Hungarian communist's rehabilitation of *znamenitost'* to describe modestly well-known, yet wholesome and respected models for the new generation.

Interestingly, given the enormous importance accorded to sport in the educational process, those *Pravda* articles which directly referred to sports stars as *kumiry* (fifteen, at fairly regular intervals, over as many years), described them almost exclusively in terms of spectators' spontaneous reactions, rather than as role models for developing citizens. Hardly any of the athletes or fans so described were Soviet: the term was used neutrally to describe unnamed Japanese wrestlers adored by Japanese fans and Hungarian and

[34] L. Pochivalov, 'V gostyakh u Papanina', *Pr*, 24 November 1974, p. 6, in *EVUD* (21723990).
[35] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 30 October 2016. The teacher: L. Sadovsky, 'Budut novye vskhody', 12 December 1976, p. 3 (21511015). The Pioneer vozhatyi: T. Kozhevnikova, 'U kostra', 17 April 1972, p. 4 (21717504). The military academy entrant: V. Serov, 'Den' prisyagi', 21 April 1976, p. 6 (21510917). The kolkhoz chairman: Yu. Baklagin, 'Komu byt' naslednikami', 18 August 1977, p. 2 (21512695). The child soldier: A. Krushinsky, 'Na beregakh Grona', 20 April 1977, p. 4 (21512215). Heroes of the Revolution: Yu. Shpakov, 'Positsiya v zhizni', 28 November 1979, p. 3 (21529460).

Brazilian footballers,[36] while further articles about sport made very general references to athletes as the *kumiry* of fans both within and outside the USSR.[37] A very small number of articles named specific athletes, again usually describing the attitudes of fans in their respective home countries: thus Yukio Kasaya was called the 'idol of local sports lovers' (*kumir mestnykh lyubitelei sporta*) at the Sapporo Winter Olympics and Juha Mieto the *kumir* of crowds at the 1978 Skiing World Championships, while another article reported that Swedish ice-hockey fans had at one match been forced to see their *kumir* Holmqvist left 'powerless' by his Soviet opponents.[38] Neither here, nor at the 1976 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck (where the Soviet athletes were themselves the *kumiry*), did *Pravda* writers make too much effort to contain their satisfaction at the USSR's impact on international crowds: 'we won't pretend it wasn't pleasant to see many Soviet athletes [feature] among the idols of local spectators'.[39] All the same, there was no in-depth analysis of the ways the Soviet athlete might demonstrate the might of his or her homeland. Spectacular athleticism and the crowds' applause were all the articles depicted.

Among all the Soviet athletes whose performances were reported in *Pravda* between 1965 and 1980, the only individual who appears to have her name linked directly with the word *kumir* was Olga Korbut. The ascription was qualified: for one thing, the report was only talking about her position with respect to American fans – and, as we

[36] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 31 October 2016. Japanese wrestlers: 'Debyut – 30 iyulya', 29 July 1965, p. 4 (21436981). Hungarian footballers: M. Merzhanov, 'SSSR – Vengriya – 3:0', 12 May 1968, p. 6 (21721411). Brazilian footballers: N. Starostin, 'Uroki futbol'nogo foruma', 7 August 1966, p. 6 (21445798).

[37] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 30 October 2016: N. E. Tiffozi and M. Semenov, 'Mnenie bolel'shchika', 3 August 1966, p. 6 (21445714); 'Fabbri diskvalifitsirovan', 23 December 1966, p. 6 (21446545); Yu. Ban'yat, B. Fedosov and L. Filatov, 'Slovo v zashchitu futbola', 5 August 1968, p. 6 (21698418); M. Odinets, 'Pozolotite nozhku!', 3 March 1975, p. 4 (21724490).

[38] From *Pravda*, accessed via *EVUD* on 31 October 2016. Yukio Kasaya: A. Biryukov, L. Lebedev and V. Ryzhkin, 'Pobednyi duel' na olimpiiskoi lyzhne', 7 February 1972, p. 4 (21718158). Juha Mieto: Anon., 'Syurprizy lyzhi', 22 February 1978, p. 6 (21523962). Holmqvist: A. Pokrovsky, 'Schastlivyi nomer Borisa Mikhailova', 26 March 1969, p. 6 (21704212).

[39] L. Lebedev and I. Mel'nikov, 'Nash gimn zvuchit nad Al'pami', *Pr*, 6 February 1976, p. 6, in *EVUD* (21508875).

have seen, Soviet papers were inclined to emphasise signs of American admiration for the USSR. Moreover, Lyudmila Turishcheva and Nikolai Andrianov, the two more conventional Soviet heroes of the gymnastics squad, were hastily brought in, though the designations '*lyubimitsa*' and '*kumir*' clearly were not being applied to them:

> Ну и, конечно, больше всего аплодисментов досталось любимице и кумиру американских юных болельщиков – Ольге Корбут, а также Людмиле Турищевой и Николаю Андрианову. Однако нельзя не согласиться с мнением «Нью-Йорк таймс», которая писала, что все советские гимнасты и акробаты – это просто великолепная команда.[40]

Acknowledging Korbut's extraordinary significance in popular culture, the article nonetheless emphasised her role as only one member of a greater collective. Whereas lower-profile local *kumiry* like the teacher, the Pioneer *vozhatyi*, or the kolkhoz chairman were treated with enthusiasm, there was little sense here that Korbut's personal story was something for young Soviets to study or emulate.

Star sickness: The pathologisation of celebrity

Propagandists' wariness of celebrity was even more evident in another term used to describe fame and its effects: '*zvezdnaya bolezn'*', or 'star sickness', coined by journalists at *Komsomol'skaya pravda*[41] and in occasional use by the major all-Union daily papers from about 1963 onwards.[42] The malady, it seemed, could afflict anyone: 'not only famous footballers', but top workers made documentary film stars before they had developed a political awareness sufficient to protect them,[43] or brilliant young scientists awarded top prizes more usually given to 'veterans' in the profession.[44]

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[40] 'Triumf sovetskikh gimnastov', *Pr*, 10 December 1975, p. 5, in *EVUD* (21727800).
[41] Valery Agranovsky (brother of the more famous Anatoly), a longtime *Komsomol'skaya pravda* journalist, regarded the creation of this and other terms, such as '*stilyaga*', as an example of Soviet journalists' contribution to the modern Russian literary language (V. A. Agranovsky, *Radi edinogo slova. Zhurnalist o zhurnalistike* (Moscow: Mysl', 1978), unpaginated text available at <http://bookz.ru/authors/agranovskii-valerii/radi-edi_722.html> [accessed 5 January 2017].
[42] An *East View* search of *Pravda*, *Izvestiya* and *Krokodil* finds nine instances of the term from 1963 to 1975, and twenty-four between 1980 and 1989.
[43] B. Galich and N. Skvortsov, 'Bremya slavy', *Iz*, 11 February 1963, p. 4.
[44] O. Gusev, '"Tvorit' – znachit vnedryat"' [interview with V. M. Glushkov], *Pr*, 12 February 1971, p. 2.

Immaturity, whether of years or of consciousness (though the two were often depicted as going hand-in-hand), often emerged as a principal risk factor.

Whereas most articles explicitly about *zvezdnaya bolezn'* described genuine high-achievers made vain by unthinking praise, an *Izvestiya* piece of 1964 diagnosed the condition, 'as dangerous as the plague', in the altogether more serious-sounding case of one V. N. Osokin – an 'ordinary civil servant' whose wrongheadedness was clearly not born of an excess of public adulation. Having spent many late nights poring over 'scientific' work of dubious worth, Osokin finally committed suicide after shooting dead the director of a research institute who had refused to acknowledge his 'discovery'. If the self-delusion, secretive behaviour, and eventual murder-suicide were highly atypical, though, the supposed causes closely fitted the established pattern. In the view of the writer, Osokin had really been failed by society: it was the duty of each person 'to attend more carefully to our comrades and friends […] not only to back them when they are rightfully climbing higher, but also to restrain them on occasions when they've overstepped the mark.'[45]

Similar social causes of severely disordered behaviour were identified in another *Izvestiya* piece of 1964, which claimed to be responding to a desperate approach from the ten-year-old son of Trofim Lomakin, one-time Olympic weightlifting champion turned drinker and domestic abuser. According to the paper, even the most extraordinary physical strength was simply not enough to deal with the moral challenges of public life:

> Самую тяжелую штангу он поднял, а бремя славы не осилил. Не понял, что богатырем человека делают не стальные мускулы, нужна и душа богатырская. Исследованная уже 'звездная болезнь' — возникло этакое сверхуважение к себе, ощущение того, что 'все дозволено'. Раз он талант, значит, ему все должны все обязаны.[46]

[45] Yu. Rytov, '"Genii" s obrezom', *Iz*, 13 June 1964, p. 5.
[46] E. Ivanova and E. Rubin, 'Syn chempiona', *Iz*, 3 March 1964, p. 4.

The article highlighted the heartache involved when the father-son relationship, still a prominent trope in Soviet public culture, was disrupted: central to the narrative was the likeable, earnest Serezha's pain at being unable to respect his champion father in the way that Soviet boys normally expected to look up to their 'closest male ideal'. After a series of sad vignettes 'about the destruction of a personality' from the boy, his mother Ekaterina Vasil'evna, his teacher, and a local policeman, all of them powerless in the face of Lomakin's disorder, *Izvestiya*'s writers again found the roots of the problem in the excessive veneration of the community that had surrounded the young weightlifter at his peak. Back in 1953, Lomakin's sporting 'autobiography' *Put' shtangista*, issued by the Komsomol's Molodaya gvardiya publishing house, had claimed to recognise a debt to 'our country's weightlifting [tradition] and the experience of our older comrades', without which 'we surely could not have achieved success as fast [as we did]'.[47] Without referencing it directly, the *Izvestiya* article echoed the book as it accused the weightlifter of forgetting, in the decade since his Olympic victory, that 'Champions arise from hundreds of thousands of talented and strong [people], precisely because each of those hundreds of thousands contributes something of their own, discovered and worked out by themselves, to the development of gymnastics, weightlifting, slalom, [or] sprint.' But although it was consistent with *Put' shtangista* in the values upon which it insisted, *Izvestiya* also gave the lie to the 1953 narrative's dutiful tribute to the collective responsible for putting this gifted but reluctant sportsman on the path to international glory. The newspaper's reporters laid much of the blame for Lomakin's character flaws with a society – including friends and, most crucially, enraptured officials – that had abdicated its responsibility for the young man's moral formation:

[47] Trofim Lomakin, *Put' shtangista* (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 1953), unpaginated text available at <http://www.olympic-weightlifting.ru/lomakin1.htm> [accessed 12 January 2017].

> Так откуда же ‘звездная болезнь?’ В чем ее истоки?
>
> В друзьях и товарищах, которые, преклоняясь перед ‘звездами первой величины’ и боясь потерять их дружбу, не умеют вовремя остановить человека, у которого началось головокружение от успехов. В болельщиках-начальниках, все прощающих хорошим спортсменам сметающих пылинки с их звездного пути. Вспомните опубликованное в ‘Известиях’ письмо ‘Остановите болельщиков!’, в котором рассказывалось о том, как футболистов во Владивостоке приняли в вуз с плохими отметками из преклонения перед их спортивными талантами. Или еще. Городская команда заняла призовое место в чемпионате. И вот влиятельные поклонники везут футболистов в новый дом, предлагают им выбирать квартиры посолнечнее. Это двадцатилетним-то юношам! А люди, которые давно ждут, когда будет построен этот дом, пусть потерпят...
>
> Вот они, истоки ‘звездной болезни’.[48]

Reading into the *Izvestiya* narrative, the canonical ‘fathers and sons’ relationship had clearly received its first blow with this failure by the young Trofim’s mentors, forming a pattern of inadequate ‘fathering’ that was repeating itself in the next generation. Fortunately, however, Trofim’s son had other watchful figures, including his mother, his teachers, a conscientious policeman, and now the staff of *Izvestiya*, to take an interest in him. For breaking the cycle, Serezha Lomakin – generous to his classmates and a help to his mother at home – emerged as the hero of the article. The boy and his fellow Pioneers were ‘resolute little men’ filled with ‘courage and a struggle for justice’, ‘firmly convinced’ that ‘such [behaviour as Trofim exhibited] cannot exist in our society’. In appealing to *Izvestiya* because ‘“they don’t write about bad grown-ups in *Pionerskaya pravda*”’, the children were seeking the help of the wider social collective to correct the mistakes of the past and set the former athlete back on the right track; and in intervening to publicly expose Trofim’s failings and urge him to remember that ‘glory fades, but [a person’s] reputation [*imya*] remains’, *Izvestiya* was acting in the guiding and educating role that it carved out for itself over the course of the 1960s.[49]

[48] Ivanova and Rubin (1964).
[49] Wolfe (2005), pp. 33-70.

Trofim Lomakin's case was unusually severe (and *Izvestiya*'s intervention arguably fruitless, since he died nine years later, at the age of 48, in an alcohol-related incident in Moscow),[50] but essentially typical of the numerous instances of 'star sickness' discussed by newspapers and ideological educators during the following two decades. By and large, these accounts of society's failings did not feature ritual self-criticism on the part of the journalistic profession specifically. At the seminars for komsorgs of the Olympic teams, however, the editor of *Sovetskii sport* was ready to accept some of the reproaches levelled by other speakers. As he articulated his plan for increasing the guiding, and when necessary admonishing, function of the media, Nikolai Kiselev was admitting that at least some sections of the industry had not properly fulfilled their duties. The archival documents record a consensus among the speakers that, with such testing events ahead, Soviet journalism needed to be much more intentional about its part in the formation of the country's athletes.

A surprise at the Olympics

As a study of the way the print media handled their responsibilities in this increasingly pressurised atmosphere, Olga Korbut provides an ideal case. Unpredictable in almost every way – from her quadruple-medal-winning Olympic debut as the most junior member of the team, to her emotionally-involved presentation, to her somewhat consistent levels of inconsistency in major competitions – Korbut was challenging material for journalists writing in a political culture that saw outward performance as indicative of inner submission to the requirements of Soviet morality, and morality as a matter for the collective. Having been lauded as a hero by Olympic crowds and the Soviet journalists watching them, she had to be publicly assessed to see how well she really

[50] Boris Valiev, '"Zolotoe boloto" Trofima Lomakina', *SovSport.ru*, 22 December 2001, <http://www.sovsport.ru/gazeta/article-item/70747> [accessed 5 January 2017].

deserved the greatness that had been thrust upon her. But to what extent did the different parts of the Russian-language press – national and regional, specialist and general-interest – agree in their judgements and approaches to perceived shortcomings?

To judge by the material from Soviet media outlets, Olga Korbut's success in Munich was as much of a surprise to official commentators in her home country as it was to audiences outside it. From the beginning of 1972, *Sputnik* magazine, the foreign-language Soviet press digest prepared by Novosti Press Agency, had set the scene for the Olympics with a series of articles about Soviet medal hopefuls – including one from *Moskovskii komsomolets* about a 'perky sparrow' of a young female gymnast from the Belorussian Republic, with a special talent for the uneven parallel bars and a slight tendency to capriciousness. The individual in question was Tamara Lazakovich, gold medallist at the fifth USSR National Games in 1971. The article was hardly flattering to Lazakovich, dwelling as it did on her 'inconsolable' sobs when she underperformed at selection competitions for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico, and the scale of the task facing her long-suffering coach as he performed the canonical role of the Socialist Realist mentor:

> The patient Dmitriev ignored her moans and groans. He took her further and further ahead, helping her to become the kind of gymnast she was really destined to be – despite the fact that she allowed herself to be diverted at times.[51]

Despite the title, and the photograph caption acknowledging that 'for twenty little girls at the Vitebsk Sports School, who'd like to follow in her footsteps, Tamara is an international celebrity',[52] the article was really about the central role of coaches in working the *very* raw material at their disposal to create a distinctive and highly successful 'Belorussian' school of gymnastics. The article extensively compared the

[51] Andrei Batashev, 'That Amusing Kid. Representative of a Fine School of Gymnastics', *Sputnik*, August 1972, pp. 4-9 (p. 7).
[52] Batashev (1972), p. 9.

approach of Lazakovich's coach, Vikenti Dmitriev, to that of his colleague, Renal'd Knysh of Grodno – but without any mention whatsoever of Knysh's star pupil, Olga Korbut.

As the March 1973 issue of *Sputnik*, reprinting material from *Sels'kaya molodezh'* and *Nedel'ya* put it, 'Who could have known that the most difficult exercises of all would be performed at the Munich Olympics by none other than Olga Korbut, a Soviet gymnast?'[53] If such modesty on behalf of the USSR comes over a touch disingenuously, the surprise over the level of success achieved by one of the team's more junior members was evidently genuine. The Soviet press had not been accustomed to paying Korbut much attention, but now Sputnik's eight-page article, copiously illustrated with photographs of her on and off the apparatus and with much less of the half-teasing yet pointed criticism that had been the lot of Tamara Lazakovich, made up the shortfall. The text touched lightly on 'the fall […] which made the spectators gasp, and after which Olga sat down on the bench wiping away her tears', explaining that Korbut and her coach still had work to do in the area of 'psychological stability' – but the episode was minimised: 'She had everything under control practically in no time. Her three gold medals, won subsequently in individual events, were a great achievement, and she left the Games a happy girl.'[54] In August 1973, the issue of *Sputnik* reporting on the World Student Games in Moscow bore a colour portrait of a beaming Korbut on the front cover, and her position in material for the outside world was apparently sealed.

Korbut had not been a complete unknown in the USSR prior to the Olympic Games. A few months earlier, as the qualifying competitions were taking place, *Sovetskii sport* had expressed admiration for her 'truly fantastic exercises'[55] and predicted that a 'great

[53] 'Olga Korbut, Whizz Kid', *Sputnik*, March 1973, pp. 126-133 (p. 127).
[54] 'Olga Korbut, Whizz Kid' (1973), pp. 132-133.
[55] V. Golubev, 'I snova – prem'ery', *SS*, 2 July1972, p. 1.

future'[56] lay before her. Broadly, however, the timeline of *Sputnik*'s coverage did reflect the overall development of domestic press interest in Korbut's career. Much like their American counterparts, Soviet sports reporters in Munich initially had their eyes elsewhere. On 31 August, *Pravda*'s analysis of the previous day's Olympic business gave the gymnastics competition very low priority, dealing with it only at the very bottom of the penultimate column. Korbut's failed bars routine could hardly pass without comment, but the *Pravda* commentators certainly did not take it for a human-interest story. Expressing exasperation at 'several crude errors' (*neskol'ko grub[ye] oshib[ki]*) Korbut made on what should have been her best apparatus, the article grudgingly conceded that, 'after that offensive breakdown' (*posle obidnogo sryva*), she had achieved a higher score on the beam than anyone else, but had little more to say about her. Wholehearted praise was reserved for Lyudmila Turishcheva, whose portrait accompanied the article, and of whom *Pravda* wrote, 'together with her coach V. Rastorotsky, she can be truly proud of her contribution to Soviet gymnastics.'[57]

Interestingly, this level of sternness is only really observable in *Pravda*. *Izvestiya*'s correspondents took a less severe stance entirely, reporting with pride on 'our (women) gymnasts' amazing victory', and discussing in some detail the kindly way that other gymnasts from the USSR and East Germany had comforted their friend after the 'tragic moment' when Korbut 'lost her nerve (*perevolnovalas'*) due to lack of competitive experience, and couldn't do the things she normally did with ease, passion (*zador*) and a charming smile'. Such actions really reflected best on the comforters – and indeed on Turishcheva, who 'couldn't not see' the distressing incident as she awaited her turn to perform, but 'really summoned up all her will' (*deistvitel'no sobrala vsyu volyu*), and

[56] Yu. Shtukman, 'Vlivayutsya svezhie sily', *SS*, 2 July1972, p. 3.
[57] E. Grigor'ev, I. Mel'nikov and V. Chertkov, 'Borot'sya do poslednei sekundy, *Pr*, 31 August 1972, p. 6.

managed to achieve a respectable score[58] – but the tone of the article was wholeheartedly sympathetic to Korbut and her plight. Meanwhile, in Korbut's home city of Grodno, the editors of the local daily *Grodnenskaya pravda* even managed to come up with a different approach to the text syndicated via the Soviet news agency TASS,[59] printing precisely the same words as the all-Union *Pravda*, but completely changing the overall emphasis by placing it next to a row of photos of the Soviet women's gymnastics team, with the heading 'Our Pride' and an effusive caption.[60]

Throughout the Munich Olympiad, the general-interest, all-Union daily newspapers – which had a much greater geographical area to cover than the regional papers, and far fewer pages than their major American counterparts – gave relatively little attention to individual performances, preferring instead to show how the athletes' combined efforts had led to glory for the team and, by extension, for Soviet society as a whole. The ultimate glorification of socialism was a recurring theme throughout the Games; so while Western journalists had repeatedly marvelled at moments when, for example, '84-Pound Powerhouse Thrills Munich Fans', *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* typically devoted a mere sentence or so to the achievements of each individual athlete, preferring to draw attention instead to the power of the socialist way of life to produce vast numbers of champions across a wide range of disciplines. Reflecting on the same gymnastics competition that had, according to the *New York Times*, made '[l]ittle Olga Korbut' such a favourite outside the USSR, *Pravda* writers dwelt more fully on the fact that 'all three medals went to gymnasts from socialist countries!'[61] Indeed, in a post-Games leader on

[58] D. Mamleev, S. Tosunyan and B. Fedosov, 'Aplodismenty muzhestvu', *Iz*, 31 August 1972, p. 4.
[59] Although the *Grodnenskaya pravda* version of the text is only attributed to TASS, I believe it to have originated from *Pravda*, where the article bore the names of that newspaper's three regular Olympic correspondents.
[60] 'Vesti s Olimpiady: Olimpiiskaya pobeda Turishchevoi', and 'Nasha gordost'', *GP*, 1 September 1972, p. 4.
[61] E. Grigor'ev, I. Mel'nikov and V. Chertkov, 'Zoloto, serebro, bronza..', *Pr*, 30 August 1972, p. 6.

the national sporting success, *Pravda* referred to Soviet Olympic athletes almost as if to a single body that competed in all events as a monolith:

> Успешно начав олимпийский год в снежном Саппоро, советские спортсмены – представители всех союзных республик – с подъемом и на летних Играх, проявили высокое мастерство, самоотверженность в борьбе, огромную волю к победе.

The opportunity to remind readers of relevant socialist virtues was not wasted; the phrase '*samootverzhennost' v bor'be*' ('self-sacrifice in battle') is especially telling, suggesting both self-abnegating dedication to the collective as the primary concern, and the crucial nature of the competition for the USSR as a whole. Finally, although Olga Korbut, Valerii Borzov, Lyudmila Bragina, Vasilii Alekseev, Faina Mel'nik and Aleksandr Belov did receive individual mentions, the roll call of '*geroi XX Olimpiady*' was brought to a swift conclusion with the assertion that 'it's impossible to name every one of our amazing athletes individually: just counting the gold medallists we had 103, and altogether 183 representatives of the Soviet Union made it onto the podium.'[62]

The remainder of the article – some eight paragraphs – was devoted to consideration of the exemplary conditions that allowed *fizkul'tura* of all descriptions to flourish:

> Яркие победы представителей СССР, посланцев братских стран убедительно свидетельствуют о том, что социализм открывает самые широкие возможности для физического и духовного совершенствования человека.

Significant emphasis continued to be placed on the *massovost'* of Soviet sporting endeavour – in late November 1973, for example, *Pravda* described the population as a 'multi-million [strong] army of Soviet physical-culturists', and the forthcoming III Winter Spartakiad of the People of the USSR as

> еще одно яркое подтверждение того, что физическая культура, которую Коммунистическая партия рассматривает как важное средство воспитания всесторонне развитого советского человека, прочно вошла в нашу жизнь.

[62] 'Zovet primer olimpiitsev', *Pr*, 17 September 1972, p. 1.

> Каждый спортивный коллектив сегодня мечтает успешно выступить на соревнованиях, пополнить отряд значкистов ГТО.[63]

The message was certainly that these exceptionally high levels of proficiency, allowing athletes from socialist countries to dominate at gatherings of the world's top athletes, were achieved only by putting the interests of the collective above all else. The career of the sporting hero, as portrayed in the Soviet official media, remained firmly structured according to the tenets of the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism, in particular those requiring 'conscientious labour for the good of society', and 'collectivism and comradely mutual assistance'.

As far as physical culture policy was concerned, the fit between certain sports and the requirements of citizen-formation remained under review. In early 1973, karate, hatha yoga, and women's football (plus the somewhat less strenuous game of bridge) were denounced by the Sports Committee as 'types of physical exercise and activity having nothing in common with the Soviet system of physical education, threatening to spread ideas about physical culture and sport [that are] alien to Soviet society, [and] with a harmful social focus', and their practice banned within the USSR.[64] Gymnastics, too, was a potential worry, albeit for different reasons. In public, as on the first page of the programme for the all-Union tournament held at the Spartak sports club in Lipetsk in February 1972, the sport's importance as a means of promoting health among the population *and* bringing in large numbers of Olympic medals, was trumpeted as evidence of its perfect compatibility with the Moral Code:

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[63] 'Zovet zima sportivnaya', *Pr*, 25 November 1973, p. 1.

[64] 'Prilozhenie 7: Iz postanovleniya Komiteta po fizicheskoi kul'ture i sportu pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR. 24 yanvarya 1973 g. "O nekotorykh faktakh nepravil'nogo razvitiya otdel'nykh vidov fizicheskikh uprazhnenii i sporta"', reprinted in V. A. Ivonin, *Sputnik fizkul'turnogo rabotnika*, 2nd edn (Moscow: Fizkul'tura i sport, 1977), pp. 346-347. For further discussion of the Soviet ban on women's football, see Anke Hilbrenner, 'Soviet Women in Sports in the Brezhnev Years: The Female Body and Soviet Modernism', in *Euphoria and Exhaustion: Modern Sport in Soviet Culture and Society*, ed. by Nikolaus Katzer, Sandra Budy et al. (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2010), pp. 295-314 (pp. 295-296).

> Духовное богатство, моральная чистота, физическое совершенство – черты советского человека способного строить светлое здание коммунизма.
>
> Важная роль в достижении физического совершенство принадлежит гимнастике – составной части советской системы физического воспитания. Гимнастика многолика. Миллионы советских людей начинают день с утренней гимнастики и выполняют комплексы производственной гимнастики, сотни тысяч занимаются спортивной гимнастикой в секциях школ, физкультурных коллективов и спортивных клубов, совершенствуют свое мастерство в детско-юношеских спортивных школах и школах высшего спортивного мастерства.
>
> Соревнования по спортивной гимнастике – интереснейшее зрелище, демонстрируя изумительной ловкости и смелость, недюжинной силы, подлинно элегантности и грациозности.
>
> Гимнасты- передовой отряд советских спортсменов. Вот уже 20 лет, со времени первого выступления на XV Олимпийских играх в Хельсинки, они, по-праву, являются сильнейшими в мире, несколько поколений советских гимнастов […] побеждали на самых представительных форумах гимнастики: Олимпийских играх, чемпионатах Мира и Европы. 27 гимнасток и 28 гимнастов представляли нашу Родину на этих соревнованиях. 37 из них являются обладатели Золотых Олимпийских медалей.[65]

Less publicly, however, even Yury Titov, Honoured Master of Sport and chair of the Gymnastics department of the USSR Sports Committee, accepted that the inherently individualistic nature of his sport – in which 'success depends on victory over one's friend' – posed a special challenge to Soviet educators. Speaking to the second seminar for komsorgs of the 1972 Olympic teams, Titov underlined the Komsomol organisations' greater competence than coaches in helping gymnasts learn 'to subordinate personal interests to collective ones.'[66] Though keen to suggest measures such as the imposition of strict dress standards, and the encouragement of collective music-making, to boost team spirit,[67] Titov certainly seems to have been inviting authorities from outside the

[65] 'Sportivnaya gimnastika: III Vsesoyuznye sorevnovaniya (konkurs) po otdel'nym vidam mnogobor'ya, g. Lipetsk, 5-6 fev. 1972 g. Dvorets sporta "Spartak".' GARF, f. r-7576, op. 31, d. 1865, ll. 17-20 (l. 17ob).
[66] Yu. E. Titov, 'Svyaz' obshchestvennykh organizatsii', RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 180-189 (l. 183).
[67] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 187-188.

team to step in to help with the development of a spirit worthy of the Moral Code's call for 'collectivism and comradely mutual help'.

While there is generally little hard evidence (such as records of editorial staff members' attendance at meetings of state sports policy bodies) of direct input into media content, it is interesting to note the ways that certain newspapers reflected the positions taken by agencies charged with regulating the conduct of Soviet sport. *Pravda*'s insistence on the primarily collective significance of Soviet Olympic participation was one example; another was the relationship between sporting defeat and personal integrity – the undercurrent in *Pravda*'s description of Korbut's 'crude' and 'offensive' errors on her first day of Olympic competition – which had been the subject of particularly impassioned discussion at the komsorgs' seminars. One speaker, at least, was able to admit the possibility that the officials could not control the outcome of every contest:

> Конечно, спортсмен может проиграть. Спорт есть спорт, и непобедимых здесь не бывает. Но поражение поражению рознь. Трудно предъявить какие-либо претензии спортсмену, который проиграл, что боролся до конца, отдал в этой борьбе все, что мог.

But since the Soviet athlete's primary responsibility was not to him- or herself, but to the team and the whole of society, the bar even for 'honourable defeat' was set very high, and anything less than fullest effort was unacceptable:

> Но ведь бывает случаи, когда спортсмен выглядит свежим после того как выступал, и у товарищей создается впечатление, что он не до конца выполнил ту миссию, которая на него была возложена. Бывает, что он начинает вести себя как самая заурядная личность, лишенная всяких патриотических начал, когда он пассивен в тот момент, когда речь идет о престиже советского спорта, престиже своей страны – это уже граничит с аморальностью. Спортсмен, на которого обращены взоры миллионов его соотечественников, вверивших ему спортивное знамя первой в мире страны социализма, но который на поле спортивной битвы не делает всего, что может и должен сделать для прославления своего народа, такой спортсмен заслуживает самого резкого порицания.
>
> Эти срывы и подобные им явления тем более недопустимы, что происходят на историческом фоне советского спортивного движения, который буквально насыщен ярчайшими примерами гражданственности, мужества,

> самоотверженности. Вспомните хотя бы один единственный пример из нашей спортивной летописи – выступление Хуберта Пярнакиви на матче США-СССР по легкой атлетике в 1958 г. и так драматично запечатленном в фильме 'Спорт, спорт, спорт'. […] Он закончил неимоверно трудный бег, принес победу своей команде, отстоял спортивную честь Родины. Именно в этом и заключается суть спортивного подвига, высшее проявление мужества, сознание своей ответственности.[68]

The same values were emphasised, in and out of Olympic season, but with varying intensity depending on the precise details of the case under discussion. Until the second half of 1973, the dominant feeling seems to have been that Korbut's performances simply lacked 'stability' compared to those of her captain Lyudmila Turishcheva. Accepting that this might be due either to her youth and inexperience, or to her commitment to pioneering new elements, journalists were reasonably forgiving, expressing the expectation that greater maturity would bring with it greater reliability.[69] However, at the European Cup, held in London that October, the difference between the two athletes came into sharper focus as Turishcheva took first place in every event, while Korbut withdrew from some parts of the competition due to an ankle injury. With the younger gymnast appearing to grow less consistent, not more, the continuing psychological and physical setbacks began to be seen as suggestive of an underlying character weakness. The issue of the athlete's duty to put aside personal comfort in favour of success on behalf of the collective, discussed in passionate terms at the komsorgs' seminars, began to surface in newspaper reports of Korbut's performances. Thus, while steering clear of intimate details about personal life, Soviet papers showed that being a real Soviet hero meant first

[68] RGASPI, f. M-1, op. 38, d. 469a, ll. 21-22. For an assessment of the film *Sport, Sport, Sport* which calls into question this speaker's insistence on the runner's patriotic motivation, see Christine Gölz, 'Sport, Sport, Sport, or a Cinematic Experiment with the "Formula of Harmony"', in *Euphoria and Exhaustion: Modern Sport in Soviet Culture and Society*, ed. by Katzer, Budy et al., pp. 339-359.
[69] E. Avsenev, 'Turishcheva, Korbut ili...', *Pr*, 18 November 1973, p. 6. See also the March 1973 issue of *Sputnik*, cited above.

and foremost developing self-discipline and a strong sense of socialist morality, which in turn made other achievements possible.

Frequent reference was made in these articles to Korbut's status as an international star, 'perhaps the most popular sportswoman in the world in recent years'. But, as newspapers in the USSR not unfairly suggested, it was childlike qualities – small stature, acrobatics, facial expressions, outfits – that had contributed to making Korbut the idol of American audiences. For their own part, Soviet readers were encouraged to recognise the deeper qualities that made Lyudmila Turishcheva a model of both sportsmanship and citizenship:

> Сейчас в мире нет гимнастки, равной ей по насыщенности программы сложными элементами, по умению соревноваться и, пожалуй, по спортивному прилежанию. Впрочем, не только спортивному. В высшей степени волевой, серьезный, целенаправленный человек, Турищева не случайно отлично училась в школе и сейчас – в педагогическом институте – тоже отличница.

The same columnist went on to comment that 'the two stars of gymnastics, Korbut and Turishcheva, are in many ways polar opposites – in character as much as style'. Finally, ignoring the fact that Korbut had indeed come away from Munich with a higher medal score than Turishcheva, he established an unambiguous order of precedence: 'It's as if Turishcheva was made to be the leader of the national team. Its captain. Its komsorg. And Korbut? Olga's greatest ambition is to beat Lyudmila.'[70] Similar observations came directly from the national team's head coach, Larisa Latynina, herself one of the most decorated Olympians of all time. In a December 1973 interview for *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, Latynina acknowledged Korbut's incredible popularity, but cited Turishcheva's

[70] S. Tokarev, 'Poedinok ne okonchen', *Pr*, 30 October 1973, p. 6. For other comments on the results of the 1973 European Championships, see G. Vasil'ev and V. Smirnov, 'I vnov' chempionka', *Pr*, 28 November 1973, p. 6; N. Kolesnikova, 'Zolotoe solo Lyudmily Turishchevoi', *Iz*, 29 November 1973, p. 6. It is worth noting here that although age hierarchies tended to be rigidly enforced in Soviet sports teams, and Turishcheva was two-and-a-half years Korbut's senior, this does not appear to have been a significant factor in the elevation of Turishcheva over Korbut. Soviet journalists' comparisons of the two gymnasts focused almost exclusively on their moral qualities and performances in competition.

ability to perform well in all circumstances, never needing to blame injuries or accidents for a poor showing, as proof that she alone had earned the right to be considered the team leader.[71]

Monitoring the USSR's press coverage of its own sporting champions, US commentators affected bewilderment at the way 'Soviet Reduction of Heroes Cuts Down Even Olga Korbut'. Portraying Korbut as alienated from her Soviet handlers was, Ann Kordas has suggested, central to the American media's strategy for making her an acceptable object of American adulation. It is interesting that even as experienced and usually sensitive a Russia correspondent as Hedrick Smith should have joined in, producing such an inaccurate synopsis of Latynina's interview that he might never have read the original at all. Writing in the *New York Times*, Smith suggested that the piece was but the latest example of harsh criticism from a society (and, especially, a political authority) that routinely sought to take its champions down a peg or two:

> So striking has been the string of downfalls for the sports heroes of last year this season, that Westerners here have been wondering aloud whether Soviet authorities prefer that their athletes be periodically reminded that they have feet of clay.[72]

American audiences had little interest in Turishcheva; Smith's approach, concentrating on the perceived slight to Korbut rather than the affirmation of her team captain, both reflected and reinforced the status quo among readers brought up in the West. Those disposed to understand Soviet-style leadership as cold and robotic would no doubt have found their views confirmed in Smith's paraphrase: 'A leader, [Latynina] insisted, should win in any situation'. However, the interview text as published in

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[71] S. Shachin, 'Larisa Latynina: Smotryu gimnastiku', *KP*, 4 December 1973, p. 4. Turishcheva's own public comments on her role were, no doubt, further evidence of her suitability of it. Though acknowledging 'confidence in my own strengths' as crucial to success, her description of leadership was as a burden of responsibility rather than an honour: 'Олимпиада-72 для меня разительно отличалась от мексиканской. Тогда я выступала как рядовая участница команды, а сейчас ощутила в полном смысле бремя лидера' ('Chempiony bespokoinnye serdtsa' (1973)).

[72] Hedrick Smith, 'Soviet Reduction of Heroes Cuts Down Even Olga Korbut', *NYT*, 6 December 1973, p. 65.

Komsomol'skaya pravda hardly justifies that interpretation. Smith's translation of Latynina's comment, 'This is where a leader's strength lies: there can't be any 'if only's', [s]he has to know how to win under any circumstances. And for that [s]he has to be above all a real person (*nuzhno byt' prezhde vsego nastoyashchim chelovekom*) in every respect', for example, misses the heroic connotations of the term '*nastoyashchii chelovek*', familiar to Soviet readers from Boris Polevoi's 1946 account of fighter pilot Alexei Mares'ev's successful struggle to overcome war injuries. More generally, in imputing to the Soviet authorities a malicious pleasure in 'cutting down' popular heroes, Smith's article failed to take account of the fact that, as part of the campaign for communism, it was simply the accepted practice of the Soviet media (and those in positions of authority, such as coaches) to announce positive developments and publicly criticise the negative.

Soviet-American gymnastics commentary closed for 1973 with Smith's assertion that 'This blunt put-down [of Korbut] was in the Soviet spirit of discouraging any cult of individualism from growing around any athlete. [...] The last young hero of Soviet life was not an athlete, but a space man, Yuri Gagarin, the first mortal to orbit the earth, in April, 1961.'[73] Gagarin had, perhaps, been the clearest case of an authentic USSR-wide popular fixation dovetailing with the interests of journalists and the ambitions of Party propagandists (and with the convenient fact of a lifestyle so shrouded in official secrecy that any incongruous elements could easily be hidden from public view). When it came to sport, no speaker at the Komsomol and Sportkomitet policy meetings discussed here expressed any objection to newspaper praise of performers exhibiting a high level of socialist consciousness. Articles commending Turishcheva's physical and psychological dependability, presenting her as a model of humble leadership, were published for

[73] Smith (1973).

readers' interest and edification. In April 1973, *Sovetskii sport* – whose editor Kiselev had, a year earlier, explicitly committed it to the cause of *vospitanie* – went a step further, finding evidence of Turishcheva's socialist consciousness not only in her commitment to sport and to the work of the Komsomol, but even in her physical bearing. Though it sought different qualities, S. Tokarev's '*Razmyshenliya u znakomogo portreta*', one of a series of articles marking the fiftieth anniversary of Turishcheva's sports club Dinamo, was not so very far removed from the physiognomic musings of American journalists delighting in Korbut's physical features:

> Вглядимся в ее лицо. Будь я художник, мне бы нелегко дался портрет. Лицо это вроде бесхитростно в крепком своем – яблочно – абрисе щек и нежной припухлости губ, но словно прорезает простую мелодию черт высокая, строгая и драматичная – до трагизма – нота: она в изломе бровей, под которыми взгляд может быть диковато быстр и уклончив, или крут и прям так, что больно выдержать, или совсем нездешен, весь в себе.[74]

Had Turishcheva become the object of fanatical veneration, yet managed to maintain her competitive reliability and responsible demeanour, there is no evidence at all to suggest that policy- and propaganda-makers would have stepped in to issue 'blunt put-downs' or 'remind' the athlete that she had 'feet of clay'. Among the USSR's most prominent newspapers, the accepted approach was to cut through audience favouritism to reveal the citizen-subject beneath.

The case of Olga Korbut shows regional newspapers sharing the same basic ethos of collectivism and good citizenship, but with an inclination towards civic pride that often allowed for a more generous – sometimes simply delighted – interpretation of local individuals' performances. Here, rather than in the central papers, were '*gromkie epitety*' ('loud epithets') of the kind the Komsomol disparaged, and these showed no signs of abating as the komsorgs' seminars declared they should. Following the Munich

[74] S. Tokarev, 'Razmyshenliya u znakomogo portreta', *SS*, 18 April 1973, p. 2.

Olympiad, *Grodnenskaya pravda* produced a steady stream of celebratory articles, an interview with Korbut and her coach, Renal'd Knysh, and an ode to the gymnast by the decorated war veteran and poet Gavriil Shutenko, which implicitly compared her peacetime '*podvig*' to those of the Great Patriotic War ('*V nashe mirnoe vremya / geroi / Nezametno rastut / sredi nas*').[75] Over the coming months and years, Korbut's triumphs would regularly be invoked, in both *Grodnenskaya pravda* and the Belorussian sports newspaper, *Fizkul'turnik Belorussii* – mostly as evidence of the Belorussian Republic's dedication to sport, but also in tribute to one of its most popular exports.[76] To be sure, items critical of Korbut's performances, or suggesting that other Soviet gymnasts had executed their routines more successfully, did appear from time to time.[77] Predominantly, though, the regional papers told the story of a gifted and attractive performer who, having captivated the world, became a fixture of public life in her home city. Thus, for example, did *Grodnenskaya pravda* report the post-Olympic bestowal of Komsomol awards on the city's leading gymnasts, with an article entitled '*Nasha lastochka*' (literally, 'Our Swallow', or perhaps, 'Our Little Bird'):

> Так ласково назвали нашу олимпийскую чемпионку Олю Корбут на вечере чествования, который состоялся в прошлую пятницу в Доме политпросвещения в Гродно. На встречу с нашими олимпийцами пришли трудящиеся города, партийные и советские работники, комсомольцы, учащиеся. В президиуме – заслуженный тренер СССР Ренальд Иванович

[75] Gavriil Shutenko, 'Nasha Olya: Olimpiiskoi chempionke Ol'ge Korbut', *GP*, 13 September 1972, p. 4. Another poem, without attribution but conveying boisterous greetings from the people of Minsk to all three Belorussian Olympic gymnasts (Antonina Koshel', Tamara Lazakovich, and Korbut), and wishing '*[g]eroinyam Olimpiady […] POBED, POBED, POBED!*' had appeared in *Fizkul'turnik Belorussii* during the competition itself ('Geroinyam Olimpiady', *FB*, 1 September 1972, p. 3).

[76] See, for example, the gushing final sentence of an article about the growth of sporting participation in Belorussia and the 'Grodno tradition' of holding sporting tournaments in honour of local heroes: 'И, наконец, кто не знает лучшую гимнастку мира Ольгу Корбут, которая выросла в нашем городе и принесла ему спортивную славу!' F. Chubovskaya (instruktor komiteta fizicheskoi kul'tury i sporta pri oblispolkome), 'Massovost' i masterstvo', *GP*, 18 September 1973, p. 4; and on a different occasion, in *Fizkul'turnik Belorussii*, 'Многие уже переняли у гимнастки ее знаменитую "петлю" и сосок "дугой". Но так, как их исполняет Ольга, наверное, никто не сможет повторить. Есть в ней этакая лихость, которая каждый раз заставляет сердца болельщиков биться учащенно.' N. Prokopovich, 'Raduya zritelei', *FB*, 24 April 1976, p. 1. See also 'Bogatyi urozhai sovetskikh olimpiitsev: Bravo, Olya!', *FB*, 2 September 1972, pp. 1, 4; and other articles listed in footnotes below.

[77] 'Podvel lyubimyi snaryad', *FB*, 1 September 1972, p. 1; Nina Prokopovich, 'Olimpiitsy, potesnites'!', *FB*, 28 May 1974, p. 1.

> Кныш и его воспитанницы – участницы многих международных соревнований гимнастки Елена Волчетская, Тамара Алексеева, Оля Корбут. Все стоя приветствуют появление их в зале.

As in other articles featuring '*R. I. Knysh i Olya Korbut*', the hierarchical relationship was emphasised by the use of name and patronymic for the former, and diminutive for the latter, and by the inclusion of the coach's paternalistic appraisal of his pupil. Clearly, though, familiarity was intended as a form of flattery.[78] In *Grodnenskaya pravda*, unlike in most items from the all-Union press, an appealing naiveté was allowed to show through, seemingly giving readers a child's-eye view of Olympic competition:

> *Гродненская правда*: Оля, что тебе больше всего запомнилось на олимпийских играх?
>
> Корбут: Никогда не приходилось выступать при таком количестве людей. Понравилось в олимпийском деревне. Питались в одной столовой, встречались в интерклубе. Люди там были из разных стран, но спортсмены – народ общительный, приветливый. Чувствовали мы себя хорошо.[79]

With their interviews, account of the audience at the Grodno House of Political Enlightenment, and later photographs of Korbut addressing crowds at the city Physical Culture Day festivities,[80] Belorussian journalists often portrayed her as a local star whose presence positively encouraged citizens to turn out for government- or Party-sponsored events – something of a reversal of the explicit norm of gratitude to the Party for its unfailing provision. In her own republic, portrayals of Korbut-the-hero were both descriptive and performative, raising her to a status of which Union-level commentators did not quite find her worthy.

Not unpredictably, then, it was the Belorussian regional press that finally carried the fullest and least grudging portrait of Olga Korbut as the Soviet public's *kumir*, having eventually come to see her as one whom readers might study and worthily aspire to

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[78] V. Lukashenko, 'Nasha lastochka', *GP*, 4 October 1972, p. 4.
[79] V. Lukashenko, 'Nasha gost'ya: Olya Korbut', *GP*, 27 September 1972, p. 4.
[80] F. Pugach, 'Prazdnik yunosti, zdorov'ya, sily', *GP*, 5 June 1973, p. 4.

emulate. Still, the down-to-earth conclusion reached by the Belorussian sports newspaper, *Fizkul'turnik Belorussii*, ultimately conformed to the pattern established for and by the national titles. On 24 July 1976 – the same day it published an interview with the Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci, who had outstripped Korbut on the uneven parallel bars with the first 10.0 score ever to be awarded in an Olympic gymnastics event – *Fizkul'turnik Belorussii* ran a sympathetic piece on the beaten former champion. Appropriately appearing during what would turn out to be Korbut's last Olympic performance before her retirement in 1977, the article depicted the gymnast as an extraordinary achiever with an essential humanity, conducting herself properly in the face of the difficulties and disappointments that inevitably came her way. Here was an image of an ideal role model for other young people, an individual possessed of the sort of equilibrium that had long been presented as characteristic of the generic, idealised Soviet athlete:

> Столько о ней написано и рассказано, что кажется – добавить ничего. Ей посвящены книги и фильмы. Одним словом, популярностью она пользуется редкой. Но Ольге Корбут от этого не легче. Она – кумир, а с них, с кумиров, как известно, спрос особый. От них всегда ждут изюминки в выступлениях, чего-то сверхъестественно. Ольга – из разряда тех, кто ожидание оправдывает. Она просто не может иначе – стиснет зубы, брови насупит, и – к цели...
>
> Это не бывает так – сплошные успехи. Ольга ведь обыкновенный человек, со всеми своими сильными и слабыми сторонами. И срывы гимнастические она очень переживает, но не опускает руки. Она действует так, как и должен действовать первопроходец при покорении нового, доселе неизведанного – настойчиво и упрямо.[81]

Most significant was the article's avowal that Korbut the *kumir* was above all an 'ordinary person'. Her triumphs, setbacks and emotions were exceptional in their scale, but not in their fundamental nature. *Kumir* status – undeniable in the relatively small pond of Belorussian public life – was thus domesticated for the readers of *Fizkul'turnik*

[81] I. Shvets-Kuznetsova, 'U nee takoi kharakter', *FB*, 24 July 1976, p. 4.

Belorussii, the star gymnast shown to be in just as much need as any other citizen of support, encouragement and correction on the journey to full consciousness.

Since joining the international Olympic movement in a bid to awe the world with the physical might of late-Stalinist culture, the Soviet Union had often instead felt the weight of capitalism's disapproval. Rather than admiring its achievements, Western journalism habitually criticised the methods by which they were obtained, declaring the Soviet approach to be symptomatic of a morally defective Party-state that sought power at any cost. While claiming to oppose the association of sport with politics, this discourse actually served to reinforce it, encouraging both sides – but particularly the USSR – to invest their international sports programmes with even greater political significance. In an occasion such as the Olympics, the USSR saw both opportunity and threat: the chance to show off the all-round superiority of Soviet citizenship as embodied by the heroic elite athlete, but also the hazard that the narrative of moral superiority would be undermined by the athlete's human weakness when faced with scheming political opponents.

Convinced of the special dangers of an Olympiad on West German soil, Party and Komsomol talked a great deal about a combined programme of politically-based psychological training in addition to athletes' normal regime of sports-psychological preparation. Every athlete would be a living advertisement for socialism, countering devious Western attacks with evidence of the USSR's greater contribution to world security. Sporting victories alone were not enough, but they were crucial, and they were incentivised in such a way as to make sure the athletes knew exactly how things stood. After the breakup of the USSR, some, such as Olga Korbut (who had emigrated to the USA), evinced contempt for the entire system; others, such as Lyudmila Turishcheva (continuing her career in the national gymnastics organisation of the newly independent Ukraine) described it as the cause of immense stress.

While Soviet athletes were being groomed for all-round victory, Western commentators continued to comment. Mostly sceptical of the Soviet approach, they nonetheless took the sporting 'threat' seriously, evidently seeing it, as did the Soviets themselves, as an integral part of the only-just-peaceful cold-war conflict. Some elements of Soviet physical culture – particularly for women – actually seemed to pose an existential danger to cherished elements of a mythical American way of life. These, American journalists demolished with especial fervour. But other examples of Soviet athleticism seemed to offer hope of a less menacing, more enjoyable type of rivalry, in which communists, and other deviants and doubters, might gradually be won over to the American way without diplomatic incident. When the cheerfully rebellious, easily-Americanisable Olga Korbut arrived on the scene, they duly set about justifying her popularity by demonstrating how she conformed to American values. If this was the new generation of Soviet youth, there might be hope for East-West reconciliation on American terms.

Soviet policy- and propaganda- makers were well aware of the nefarious purposes of the US media. Yet when foreigners expressed affection or admiration for Soviet sporting achievements, their judgements were interpreted with an extraordinary simplicity. Apparently only too delighted to tell readers that their international rivals were finally seeing sense, Soviet journalists scanned American commentary for the most flattering snippets to report, ignoring the political contexts or subtexts of Korbut and her teammates' international popularity and presenting a version of American sporting politics that was skewed to show Soviet readers the best possible picture of their own country. But this practice sat uneasily with Soviet journalism's commitment to educating those very readers – and the athletes who represented them – into the proper practice of Soviet citizenship. In the end, it was *Pravda* – in Wolfe's words, the paper with the

'responsibility to be […] the mouthpiece of the party'[82] – which presented Soviet readers with the most mixed messages about Olga Korbut and the nature of her fame and achievements.

[82] Wolfe (2005), p. 40.

Conclusion: Always Room for a Heroic Deed?

> А когда человек любит подвиги, он всегда умеет их сделать и найдет, где это можно. В жизни, знаешь ли ты, всегда есть место подвигам. И те, которые не находят их для себя, – те просто лентяи или трусы, или не понимают жизни, потому что, кабы люди понимали жизнь, каждый захотел бы оставить после себя свою тень в ней. И тогда жизнь не пожирала бы людей бесследно...[1]

In-between the folk tales that bookend Gorky's story 'Starukha Izergil'', first published in *Samarskaya gazeta* in 1895, the eponymous character recounts to the narrator the story of her own life, lover by lover. Most of them turned out to be losers, whom Izergil' is thankful never to have seen after their trysts ended – from the exceedingly handsome youth who bored her by doing nothing but 'singing and making love', to the 'beastly and absurd' little man whom she eventually 'picked up and hurled into the river'. The one notable exception has been 'a very fine man […] with a scarred face', a Pole who fought for the Greeks against the Turks simply because he longed to carry out brave deeds in a just cause, and in doing so, to leave his mark upon the world.

Though described by a 1938 *Pravda* homage to Gorky as 'beautiful, courageous words', and a thoroughly appropriate 'epigraph to Gorky's creative work,'[2] the phrase '*vsegda est' mesto podvigam*' ('always room for a heroic deed', literally 'heroic deeds') scarcely appeared in the major newspapers during the Stalin era. In 1950, however, a piece on the achievements of farmers along the Volga finally exposed its potential as a Socialist Realist motto for the Soviet people.[3] From 1957 onward, the phrase would appear a few times a year in the central press: sometimes in direct celebration, as when lauding the 'thousands of young patriots' proving Gorky's point in their 'conquering of

[1] Maksim Gorky, 'Starukha Izergil'', in *Starukha Izergil'. Na dne. Mat'. V. I. Lenin.,* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1979), pp. 3-21 (p. 11).
[2] M. Serebryansky, 'Gumanizm Gor'kogo', *Iz*, 27 March 1938, p. 4, in *EVUD* (24810442).
[3] V. Zhuravsky and V. Yakhnevich, 'Zarya nad zavol'zhem', *Pr*, 4 November 1950, in *EVUD* (21400469).

the soil of the Virgin Lands',[4] sometimes to describe the incitement to heroism that pervaded Soviet institutions of education and socialisation. In 1957, a speaker at the USSR's central International Women's Day celebration proclaimed a close fit between Soviet education, Soviet working life, and the natural inclinations and aspirations of Soviet youth:

> В своих классных сочинениях юноши и девушки часто вспоминают чудесные слова Алексея Максимовича Горького о том, что в жизни всегда есть место подвигам. Как хорошо, что юношеская мечта о подвиге находит свое претворение в нашей простой советской действительности, в делах и труде, в борьбе и достижениях нашей молодежи! Как радостно знать, что наши воспитанники любят труд, что они считают делом своей чести выполнение тех живых, практических задач, которые ставит перед нами Родина, партия, народ![5]

Reports to *Pravda* from the regions confirm that essay topics, school 'debates' and Komsomol meetings bearing Gorky's aphorism (or other similar sentiments, such as '*Ty na podvig zovesh', komsomol'skii bilet!*') as the title were a feature of organised youth activity throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[6] All in all, the heroic motif runs like a thread, changing but not breaking, through Soviet public discourse: from the Revolution, via the shock industrialisation of the 1930s, the struggle of the war years, and the postwar reconstruction, right through to the upheavals of the 1980s. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the emphasis was on the epic march towards full communism; in the late 1960s and the 1970s, as the achievement of that goal was indefinitely postponed without ever being cancelled, the meaning of heroism evolved again. Soviet propaganda continued to employ the language of the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism in order to elicit the performance of heroic behaviour – but the thrust towards the future was mitigated by

[4] 'Slava molodym pokoritelyam tseliny', *Pr*, 27 February 1957, p. 1, in *EVUD* (21420902).
[5] '8 marta – den' solidarnosti trudyashchikhsya zhenshchin vsego mira: rech' tov. T. I. Martynovoi', *Pr*, 9 March 1957, p. 2, in *EVUD* (21421424).
[6] L. Lesovaya, 'V dukhe patriotizma', *Pr*, 6 August 1974, p. 2, in *EVUD* (21720380). For very similar material from 1967, see I. Savchuk, 'Dorogoi ottsov', *Pr*, 16 September 1967, p. 2, in *EVUD* (21448606).

a long look back to a war victory now enshrined in public discourse as the USSR's finest hour.

For all the continuing talk of 1970s youth as the 'rising generation', then, there was now very little imaginative vision for how they would create and embody the Soviet future. Esaulov's 1972 *Grodnenskaya pravda* article on officer training was typical in stating that 'the Party, the Soviet people see in the young generation the heirs and continuers of heroic revolutionary and military traditions'.[7] Young people were supposed to walk faithfully 'in their fathers' glorious footsteps', humbly – indeed passively, to judge by the tone of materials produced or commended by the central organisers of the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda* – absorbing the details of earlier generations' extraordinary acts. Though constantly instructed that 'there's always room in life for a heroic deed', young Soviet citizens of the period of late socialism found that the range of acceptable possibilities was narrowly circumscribed and based predominantly on past examples.

Youth was no longer in the vanguard, and the web of official discourse offered few deliberate opportunities for youth to articulate an identity of their own. The young people selected and trained to be role models for their compatriots as they 'defended the sporting honour of the USSR' are a case in point. Though all were lauded – when they brought home Olympic medals and the admiration of foreign audiences – as 'heroes' and 'warriors', only those with a strongly developed ability to police themselves received consistently positive treatment in the media. Discussions of Party policy dwelt at length on the danger of letting young athletes taste success or travel abroad without enormous preparation – a concept which in practice entailed both political training sessions prior to

[7] Esaulov (1972).

major appearances, and uncompromising treatment by the central press thereafter. Major newspapers' narratives of sporting performance often invoked Socialist Realist tropes of paternalistic mentors such as sports coaches, while simultaneously enacting a paternalistic role themselves. The USSR's highest-profile athletes were treated as role models in the sense that they modelled the *process of becoming* worthy Soviet citizens, rather than a perfect end result.

Vivid depictions of the process by which the steel was tempered were, of course, characteristic of Socialist Realism. But whereas 1930s reports of the heights attained by shock workers were vivid in their depictions of 'life as it is becoming, life as it ought to be', as an already-visible and ever-increasing reality, the teleology of the 1970s was not backed by the same guarantees. High-Stalinist and Khrushchev-era crusades for social progress had delivered such goods as industrialisation, urbanisation, and mass literacy, but not the promised state of full communism – and with the advent of late-Soviet 'developed socialism', the urgent grasping of the future slowed. Attention shifted to life in its current manifestation. Brezhnev's much-vaunted 'confidence in tomorrow', with its 'stability of cadres', spoke of the continuation of daily life much as it already was. Individuals still needed to be educated into playing their proper part in society, which was still supposed to be a model to the rest of the world. Yet the imperative to see the future realised in the present was much less pressing.

In that sense, Mervyn Matthews' 1978 assertion, in his study of *Privilege in the Soviet Union*, that 'there is no popular celebrity or image-building in the Western sense, the Soviet press being, anyway, unsuited to this', was right.[8] Matthews' failure even to mention the frenzied 'image-building' of seventeen years earlier – when, in Jenks' words,

[8] Mervyn Matthews, *Privilege in the Soviet Union: A Study of Elite Life-Styles under Communism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), p. 21.

'[Yuri] Gagarin – who was, after all, just a passenger – came to be the personal embodiment of both the triumph of the Soviet space program and of the hopes and dreams of Russian culture'[9] – may reflect an evolution in journalistic practice during the decade-and-a-half when Khrushchev was ousted by a 'collective leadership' determined to do away with frenzy. Certainly, Matthews was not the only Western observer to draw such a conclusion. Though highly inaccurate in its representation of Larisa Latynina's comments to *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, Hedrick Smith's 1973 *New York Times* article, 'Soviet Reduction of Heroes Cuts Down Even Olga Korbut', made an important point about the Brezhnev-era retreat from seeing key individuals as portents of the future.

Yet the central press, however dominant its role in Soviet public discourse, was not its only outlet. Further from the centre, the web did grow looser. The regional press did not take quite such a demanding attitude towards local stars, and was more willing to celebrate them – whether as traditional-style civic heroes proving the importance of the local area in national life, charismatic figures in whom readers would understandably take an interest, or something in-between. As far as opportunities for 'celebrity' were concerned, any coverage, in any medium, constituted material that consumers – the essential drivers of 'celebrity culture' – could consume. Despite the complaint about the trivialisation of public culture – exemplified by children's abandonment of war heroes, or simple failure to admire their own parents' war records, in favour of an obsessive interest in movie stars – which *Pravda* printed in 1965, the star-spotting the amateur correspondent decried hardly suggested rebellion. With varying degrees of state enthusiasm and support, the Soviet system produced, promoted, or at least permitted the emergence of vast numbers of celebrity figures in film, music, and sport. No patriotic

[9] Jenks (2012), p. 154.

education campaign, however fixated on militarised concepts of heroism, was ever going to supplant them.

In its coverage of the launch and early years of the *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda*, *Pravda* gave voice to hopes that the initiative would reignite a mass interest in the proudest moments of Soviet history, leading to a renewal of commitment to the authority of the Party. Yet although such hopes were plainly unrealistic in an age of increasing access to competing attractions, the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* was not a humiliating flop. It was neither drowned by cynicism, nor mangled beyond recognition by participants going out on a limb. Groups based at all kinds of establishments – and thus representing such bastions of Soviet public culture as schools, Pioneer Palaces, and trade unions – engaged in different ways with the organisers' calls to carry out activities that had been part of the Soviet repertoire since the earliest days of the USSR, and that continued to be presented as key to strengthening the country against existential threats.

Above all, what correspondence between participants and the central organisers illustrates is the variety of approaches participating groups could take and still believe themselves to be acting in accordance with the ethos of the campaign. The 1st Kiev Student Guards' Brigade submitted copious materials on challenging (if thoroughly enviable) expeditions to 'fraternal socialist' neighbouring countries, describing them in terms according with the norms for 'properly-organised tourism' being propagandised at the time. Eventually notice was given by the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* that a military-patriotic organisation of that type needed to be doing far more in the way of preparing members for patriotic service as officers in the Armed Forces – but not before the Brigade had enjoyed several years' worth of praise and prizes, allowing its members to think that they were already demonstrating a suitable level of 'military valour'. Had they not so believed,

they would not have argued so spiritedly in their own defence. Equally self-confident was the Iskra club from Leninakan: spurred on by the praise of soldiers' families and local media outlets, both treated as constituencies of considerable importance in official documentation about the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*, the leader described the club's activities in terms heavily influenced by the overt romanticism of Party and Komsomol discourse about the high calling of Soviet youth. In their daring and dangerous acts of service to the families of soldiers killed in action, the leader suggested, the 'Iskrovtsy' had themselves earned the right to be considered heroic.

The USSR of the 1970s was not the twenty-first-century West, and contraindications to taking adolescents on genuinely hazardous 'missions' do not seem to have occurred to anyone involved in the planning of expeditions linked to the *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod*. Nor could the Iskra club be criticised for the type of activities it carried out, since these were entirely in keeping with its aims as a local-history society. The noncommittal response from the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* simply lacked any endorsement of the club's enthusiastic self-promotion; though praise may have been conspicuous by its absence, there was nothing there to cause the club to change course dramatically. In the case of the 1st Kiev Guards' Brigade, radical change was indeed being demanded; yet even that did nothing to change the fact that until that moment, the Brigade believed itself to have been doing the right thing, with the blessing of the central authorities, and that if they had not themselves invited the organisers to assess them, they might well have been able to continue uninterrupted. Though the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* clearly had very fixed ideas about what was appropriate, and wanted to impose them, there was enough slack in the system for *Vsesoyuznyi pokhod* participants to bring their own interests to bear, picking the kind of activity that most appealed to them and weaving their own narrative of moral

purpose around it. For the most part, they had no reason to see this self-interest as being in conflict with the 'national' interest espoused by the central organisers.

'Official' culture of the 1970s, made up of many different voices but still with grandiose claims about unity, was sending very mixed messages to the young people of the USSR. They were encouraged to admire and imitate the heroism of earlier generations. The mechanisms by which power was exercised allowed them to make certain choices, and local voices of authority often told them they were doing well. Yet the highest authorities, the very agencies which so insisted that Soviet youth should strive to emulate inherited models of heroism, were also extremely reluctant to acknowledge the achievement of it. Small wonder, perhaps, that the meaning of *pokhod* and *podvig* should gradually have hollowed out. Comparison of Tumarkin's and Usyskin's accounts of the 'search movement' and associated initiatives, both published in the first post-Soviet decade, suggests a reversal in which – despite, or because of, the strictures of the *Tsentral'nyi shtab* – the official *Vsesoyuznyi turistskii pokhod komsomol'tsev i molodezhi po mestam revolyutsionnoi, boevoi i trudovoi slavy sovetskogo naroda*, and especially its centrally-organised *Vsesoyuznyi slet pobeditelei pokhoda*, metamorphosed into social events principally concerned with entertainment and friendship, while the serious search work became the preserve of a minority disgusted by the Komsomol's handling of it. For neither group could the concept of *podvig*, as it had been deployed in official discourse, retain much significance or power to inspire.

In 2012, the website of the post-Soviet *Komsomol'skaya pravda* published an article entitled '*V zhizni vsegda est' mesto podvigu*', with an opening line acknowledging precisely that decline of Soviet heroic sentiment: 'Most of us have got used to understanding this old motto of Soviet times in an exclusively ironic sense.' This time, however, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* had a revival of sorts to report: a 'good news'

initiative entitled *Geroi Rossii*, whose founders, 'sure that that motto is still valid today […] [a]nd that the epoch of great accomplishments and deeds does not belong to the past', had determined to establish an online space where feats of human bravery would not be overshadowed by constant reports of disasters. In 'contemporary Russia', it continued, bad news had become the norm, pride in achievements (especially one's own) typically being equated with the vice of '*samopiar*' (literally 'self-PR', or self-marketing).[10]

There is an entirely plausible link (though *Komsomol'skaya pravda* did not, in this article, make it explicitly) between the public mood during and after the collapse of the USSR, and the tone of late-Soviet public discourse. Citizens of the Brezhnev era might have thought they had witnessed or committed feats worthy of the term heroism, and even had their thoughts confirmed at the local level, but higher up the hierarchy there was resistance to the appropriation of heroic discourse by individuals or groups. Outwardly optimistic propaganda had belied a pervasive anxiety about what the future might hold for the USSR, and been targeted at the young more through fear of their vulnerability than belief in their potential. While policy- and propaganda-makers engaged in plentiful '*samopiar*' on behalf of the Party-state, in citizens it was frowned upon.

The 2012 *Komsomol'skaya pravda* article looked back on the collapse of the USSR and subsequent two decades as an era of *chernukha*, the almost gratuitous exposure of bad news and the darker side of human nature. Now things were changing: 'people ha[d] got tired of *chernukha*', and Russia seemed to have a renewed appetite for initiatives aimed at strengthening social cohesion. However, *Komsomol'skaya pravda* was not convinced by the Soviet-style patriotic education which had recently enjoyed such renewed interest:

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[10] 'V zhizni vsegda est' mesto podvigu', *KP*, 25 October 2012, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/25973.4/2909231/> [accessed 5 January 2017].

> В последнее время, однако, все больше стали вспоминать о необходимости нравственного воспитания молодого поколения. Но на поверку оказывается, что предложить молодому поколению особенно-то и нечего. Отсюда и все разговоры о поисках национальной идеи, патриотическом воспитании и т.п. А между тем, реальные истории реальных людей, настоящих героев, живущих с нами по соседству, могут оказаться самым лучшим примером.

The report on *Geroi Rossii* quoted a number of descriptions of civilian bravery, including a sixteen-year-old who entered her neighbour's burning house to rescue (successfully) three children, while adults stood back waiting for the fire engine. The website was to provide an option for readers to click to 'thank' the '"ordinary" heroes who live around us'; according to the write-up, 'a hundred thousand people' had already done so. *Komsomol'skaya pravda* could have made the point more boldly that the project, with its stories of teenagers and young adults acting with instinctive heroism while their elders stood by and watched, provided a counterpoint to the resurgent narrative of a young generation adrift and in need of moral instruction. And, curiously, while the article recounted several episodes of civilian bravery, all three of the photographs accompanying the online version were of the serviceman whose story was also featured. Only a month before he was due to be discharged from national service, Aldar Tsydenzhapov had prevented an explosion aboard his destroyer, at the cost of his own life. Though the circumstances of his death, as briefly recounted in the article, spoke rather better for Tsydenzhapov himself than for the Russian Navy, *Komsomol'skaya pravda*'s exclusive use of official Navy portraits visually tied the young man's heroism – and even that of the other, unpictured, individuals mentioned in the article – to the identity of the conscripted servant of the state.

In its very paradoxicality, *Komsomol'skaya pravda*'s report on modern-day heroism was typical of public discourse in the post-Soviet space. Historical studies of former Soviet citizens' attitudes to the late-Soviet period (including Tumarkin's 1994 *The Living and the Dead*, and Raleigh's 2012 *Soviet Baby Boomers*) have reported

informants' disdain for activities with a heavy ideological component, or for the appropriation of 'grassroots' activities by official agencies, and the period following the breakup of the USSR saw the discarding of numerous programmes and practices held to represent an abandoned way of life. However, since late 2009 – when then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin signed a decree reinstating the Soviet name DOSAAF (Voluntary Society for Co-operation with the Army, Aviation and the Navy) of the organisation known since 1991 as ROSTA (Russian Defence Sporting-Technical Organisation)[11] – military-patriotic education following a recognisably Soviet pattern has continued to increase in visibility, regardless of any doubts expressed about its efficacy. A new version of the state sports programme GTO – first launched in 1931, but dormant since 1991 – was unveiled in 2014, the Soviet title being retained, according to President Putin, 'as a tribute to traditions of our national history'.[12] Vociferously criticising 'nationalistic' tendencies, based on 'the falsification of historical events and the omission […] of entire sections of past events' in recent Ukrainian patriotic education initiatives,[13] Kremlin-aligned media outlets have staked out the Russian Federation's claim to be the sole inheritor of the proud historical legacy of the USSR – to whit, the defeat of 'fascism' in World War II. In this interpretation, any interest in Ukrainian wartime factions other than the Red Army indicates tacit approval of 'collaboration with German forces' and 'crimes against the peaceful population', and can therefore be taken as evidence of an immoral and still potentially dangerous worldview on the part of Russia's neighbours.

[11] 'Putin vozrodil DOSAAF', *Fontanka*, 7 December 2009, <http://www.fontanka.ru/2009/12/07/013/> [accessed 5 January 2017].

[12] 'Vladimir Putin podpisal ukaz o vozrozhdenii norm GTO', *Putin segodnya*, 24 March 2014, <http://www.putin-today.ru/archives/2289> [accessed 5 January 2017].

[13] Dmitrii Runkevich and Elena Malai, 'Minobrazovaniya Ukrainy nauchit molodezh' lyubit' banderovtsev', *Iz*, 6 February 2015, <http://izvestia.ru/news/582660> [accessed 5 January 2017]. The *Izvestiya* story was swiftly picked up and re-reported by other media outlets loyal to the Russian government: see Anastasiya Efimova, 'Ukraina perepisyvaet uchebniki istorii', *Vesti.ru*, 6 February 2015, <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2334530> [accessed 5 January 2017]; 'SMI: Kontseptsiya patrioticheskogo vospitaniya na Ukraine imeet natsionalisticheskuyu napravlennost'', *RT na russkom*, 6 February 2015, <https://russian.rt.com/article/72666> [accessed 5 January 2017].

Conversely, present-day loyalty to Soviet institutions and models denotes opposition to the barbarism embodied by Nazi Germany (and which, according to official Soviet discourse of the late 1960s and 1970s, remained characteristic of Western 'imperialist' powers in the postwar era).

Contrary to early post-Soviet indications, the federal government's calls for a sustained military-patriotic education campaign along Brezhnev-era lines have been, and continue to be, embraced with enthusiasm by local citizen-led groups, some of which explicitly trace their interest in such social initiatives to their own Komsomol participation in the 1970s and 1980s. Given the immense significance of voluntary involvement in the state-sponsored patriotic discourse of late socialism, a crucial task of future scholarly work will be to follow the fates of Soviet-era club activists through perestroika and institutional collapse, to explore how and why the patriotic performances of the old regime have re-emerged to form a model for Russia under the second Putin presidency.

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