TITLE: THE CHALLENGE TO SOVIET DEMOCRACY FROM THE POLITICAL RIGHT

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The paper describes the political parties/movements now active in the USSR, their postures and relations, and ascribes the challenge from the right more to the weaknesses of the democratic center-left than to the appeal of the right.
The Soviet Political Right in a Multi-Party System

With the formal elimination of Communist Party monopoly by the removal of Article 6 from the Soviet Constitution in March of 1990, over a hundred political parties, popular fronts, and other quasi-parties had already formed in the Soviet Union by August of 1990. Some at best constitute legislative coalitions or ideological factions of like-minded Supreme Soviet deputies formed spontaneously out of the policy conflicts during the first session of the Congress of People's Deputies in the summer of 1989. By 1990, the legislative coalitions-parties had organized voters' clubs to mobilize electoral support of their candidates for the republic and local elections in the winter and early spring of 1989-90. They competed with a number of ethnic popular fronts, especially in the Baltic republics and Ukraine, formed independently by so-called "informal" interest groups and several formerly prominent Soviet dissidents at the grass-roots level of their republics since 1987. Unlike the legislative coalitions-parties, the ethnic popular fronts supported candidates primarily committed to secession from the Soviet Union and independent statehood for their republics.

In many aspects, the multi-party system evolving in the new Soviet democracy is a throwback to those political parties and ideological conflicts between Westernizers and Slavophiles prevalent during the tsarist Duma period of 1906-1917. In other ways, the new democratic socialist parties and movements resurrect after five decades political factions identified as the "Left-Right Deviationists" and "Democratic Centralists-Workers' Opposition" in
the Communist Party of 1921-28. In all forms, the parties represent different ideological reactions to the Soviet experience since 1917 now almost universally repudiated in the liberal Soviet media, various degrees of support for or opposition to Gorbachev's democratic reforms of Soviet society since 1987, and Soviet counterparts to the new political movements and party alignments in Western Europe or Eastern Europe since the 1989 Revolution.

On the Soviet democratic left are various social democratic parties whose political philosophies seem inspired by those same parties in Western and Eastern Europe. Counterparts to European Green parties have organized in many Soviet cities and republics to oppose environmental pollution, nuclear energy, and military spending. Soviet history re-emerges in the democratic left with new versions of the Party factions and platforms that railed unsuccessfully against the betrayal of socialist democratic ideals by the Communist Party in the 1920s. The Democratic Platform originated in early 1990 as a liberal faction within the Communist Party, pushing democratic reforms for delegate selection to the 28th Congress and the devolution of real political power in the Party to the rank-and-file membership at the local level.

At the 28th Communist Party Congress in July of 1990, prominent leaders of the Democratic Platform, such as Anatolii Sobchak, Gavriil Popov, and Boris Yeltsin, resigned from the Party. Yet the Democratic Platform's criticism of authoritarianism within the Party and defense of grass-roots Party democracy revive conflicts last openly stirred by the Democratic Centralists six decades prior at the 10th Party Congress in 1921. The Marxist Platform and Boris
Kargalitskii's Socialist Party in the early 1990s recall the Workers' Opposition at the same 10th Party Congress. The Marxist Platform and Socialist Party advocate a decentralized rather than capitalist economy and worker self-management rather than private enterprise. From their perspective, state-owned industrial enterprises should be transferred over to the management and ownership of the enterprise workers rather than to a new class of Soviet capitalists; wholesale and retail markets should be controlled and owned by citizen-based consumer cooperatives in competition with a private sector.

In the Soviet center are political parties in name and political philosophy identical to those of the European Christian Democrats and Liberal Democrats. Yet the political center retains a distinctively Soviet shading. Like a ghost out of the Duma past, the Soviet center includes at least two newly formed parties claiming the nomenclature and identical goals of the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) from 1906-17. By the end of 1990, the Democratic Platform also had split into two contending groups - one remaining within the Communist Party in coalition with reformist Communists and the Marxist Platform, and the other forming an independent Republican Party to compete with social democrats and Greens on the Soviet left.

On the Soviet political right in the early 1990s are movements and parties that recall the Russian nationalism and Slavophilism, racist populism, militarism, and anti-Semitism of parties and movements on the right in the late tsarist-era of 1906-17. Not unlike the situation of 1906-17, the new Soviet right unites strange
political bedfellows — influential members of the old regime and their underlings with powerless citizens most victimized by the same old regime. Among elites in the Party-state bureaucracy, military, and intelligentsia, the new Soviet right includes hard-line defenders of the Communist autocracy and of a new strong unified state. Among the victimized Soviet working class, it has attracted those who equate democracy with an anti-worker authoritarian conspiracy of Jewish political liberals and Soviet organized crime. The common defining features of the Soviet right in the 1990s revive those which bonded the old Russian right in 1906-17: an ideology of racist nationalism; a visceral fear of democracy and economic liberalization; a conspiratorial mindset; and a politics of hate.

The movements and parties of the Soviet right actually overlap to a great extent. The most recognized national figures on the Soviet right among Party officials, academics, and heads of writers' unions tend to reappear in the leadership roles, rallies, conferences, letters-to-the-editor, and organizing sessions of otherwise different groups or parties. Broadly defined, the Soviet political right also can be clearly identified with certain Soviet newspapers and journals.

At the same time, important differences of background, personality, and tactics do appear to exist within each of the movements and parties of the Soviet right. In a general way, the Soviet political right can be differentiated by its "moderate" and "radical" wings. The "moderates" are those who oppose violent political tactics; disassociate themselves from the more rabid anti-Semites; gain their principal following from writers and
scientists; and denounce the Party establishment while openly identifying with the political views of anti-Gorbachev conservative Party leaders. In their primary concern with the negative consequences of Communism for Russia and with Russian problems, the "moderates" share views not totally dissimilar from those of the more popular and publically acceptable Russian nationalists like Solzhenitsyn.

"Radicals" in the Soviet right are those who are willing to use violent tactics in their demonstrations and protests; primarily target Jews and an alleged Jewish conspiracy; enlist their most enthusiastic followers from the urban working class; and despise all Communist officials while admiring the strong integrating role of the Communist Party for the nation. In their racist populism, the "radicals" share a vision of the world not totally unlike that of certain nationalist parties in Eastern Europe, the National Front parties in Western Europe, and the Ku Klux Klan in the United States.

Differences between "moderates" and "radicals" aside, the most identifiable movements and parties of the new Soviet right in the early 1990s include seven different Moscow organizations alone claiming the name Pamyat' (Memory), as well as Nina Andreyeva's Yedinstvo (Unity for Leninism and Communist Ideals Society), Venyamin Yarin's Ob'yedinnennyi front trudyashchikhsya or OFT (United Workers' Front), Soyuz (Union), sympathetic advocates within the Communist Party leadership of several republics and the national trade-union officialdom, and numerous literary-cultural organizations. Various shadings of "moderates" and "radicals" can
be found within each of these movements and parties.

Closely linked in philosophy to party-movements calling
themselves the Union for Spiritual Revival of the Fatherland and the
Russian National Patriotic Center, Pamyat' blames all the ills of
Soviet society over the past seven decades on a worldwide
Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. Notorious for their militaristic
uniforms, aggressive anti-Semitism, and Russian racist nationalism
seemingly inspired by the ideology of Adolph Hitler, Pamyat' has
recruited several hundred both academics and workers and has been
especially prominent in the noisy rallies staged by its followers in
Leningrad and Moscow.

At the same time that Pamyat' has attempted to identify itself
with the anti-Communism and anti-establishment populism of the
Soviet electorate, its violent tactics have repulsed most of its
potential supporters. Continuous questions in the Soviet media
about the hidden sources of support and finances for Pamyat' have
also shaken its anti-establishment public credibility. One
high-ranking former KGB official has openly charged on Soviet
national television that the KGB organized and funds Pamyat' to
undermine democratic changes; and links have been suggested in the
Soviet media between Pamyat' and sympathetic local Party officials,
who have allowed their buildings to be used by Pamyat' organizers.

In October of 1990, one prominent leader of Pamyat' was convicted
and sentenced to two years in a labor-camp for breaking into a
meeting of Moscow writers in January of 1990 and verbally assaulting
them with anti-Semitic insults; and during the trial circumstantial
evidence of ledgers and photographs was introduced implicating local
Moscow Communist officials with the defendant's organization. 7

_Yedinstvo_ suffers from an equally negative public image as a political party dedicated to reinstilling "Bolshevik principles" and organized by the notorious Nina Andreyeva. 8 _Yedinstvo_ reveres Stalin as the last true defender of the Soviet working class and vilifies everyone from Khrushchev to Gorbachev among Party leaders for having reintroduced "exploitative capitalism" into the Soviet Union in league with a corrupt Jewish-dominated Party establishment. Andreyeva is the Leningrad teacher and author of the lengthy anti-Semitic and Stalinist denunciation of Gorbachev's liberal democratic reforms published in _Sovetskaya Rossiya_ in March of 1988. At the time, it was widely rumored in the Soviet Union that highly ranked Party officials like Yegor Ligachev who opposed the reforms and wanted to retain the Communist autocracy had conspired to use Andreyeva and the letter to mobilize public sentiment in their favor. Despite her persistent denials in interviews since 1988, Andreyeva has been unable to alter a general public image of herself as an agent of Party apparatchiki and has openly admitted that the name association of _Yedinstvo_ with herself has remained a distinct liability in party recruitment. 9

Distinct in certain philosophical points of departure, _Pamyat'_, _Yedinstvo_, and their most conspicuous leaders are typically ranked as the least admired public organizations and politicians in Soviet public-opinion polls and are usually lumped together by both Soviet and Western critics. Soviet and Western observers conventionally term the leaders and activists of _Pamyat_ ' "National Fascists" and those of _Yedinstvo_ "National Bolsheviks." Indeed, the views of both
party-movements seem almost indistinguishable in the articles and editorials that appear monthly in the Komsomol journal, Molodaya gvardiya. Typical articles in the journal extol the virtues of Stalin as a working-class hero and the spiritual superiority of Russian nationalism, while condemning corrupt-Jewish influences in the Communist Party and liberal media.  

OFT was organized in the fall of 1989 as a self-defined conservative working-class organization to counter the majority liberal working-class movement and Confederation of Labor, which evolved from the national coal-miners' strike in the summer of 1989. OFT has been most closely identified with one of its founders, Venyamin Yarin, a deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet and steel-worker from Sverdlovsk, who was appointed to the Presidential Council by Gorbachev in the spring of 1990. Yarin and other workers allegedly formed OFT to protect working-class interests in the new democratically formed legislatures, which Yarin and conservative trade-union officials claim are unnaturally biased in favor of intellectuals and liberal economic views.

OFT adamantly opposes a free market economy in the Soviet Union and equates Western investment with "foreign enslavement" of the Soviet working class. OFT defends the unity of the Soviet state, the Soviet armed forces, the KGB, and the Communist Party from an alleged anti-worker conspiracy on the part of the democratic left secretly bankrolled by the Soviet mafia. In the 1990 Russian republic-local elections, OFT allied with a number of right-wing Russian nationalist groups in forming the United Council of Russia and Rossiya to coordinate their electoral campaigns and mobilize
sympathetic voters in precincts.

Soyuz originated as a response in early 1990 to the threat of secession by the Baltic republics and to a perceived growing attack on the Soviet armed forces and on Russian ethnic minorities in the Baltic and other Soviet republics. Soyuz brings together high-ranking Soviet officers elected to deputy positions in the Union and republic soviets with those commanding certain military districts and those leading conservative veterans' organizations, such as the All-Union Council of War, Labor, and Armed Forces Veterans chaired by the former Soviet chief of staff, N.V. Ogarkov. Soyuz extols militaristic values, advocates making Russian the official state language of the country, and adamantly opposes independent statehood for the Baltic and other republics.

Soyuz blames Gorbachev and the democratic left for the disintegration of political authority in Soviet society and the alleged loss of national security for the country with the toppling of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989. Soyuz's critical views of alleged failures in Soviet foreign policy closely echo those expressed by top conservative Party officials like Yegor Ligachev. Following his retirement from the Politburo in July of 1990, Ligachev hinted that he intended to remain active in national politics by joining the Soyuz deputies in the Supreme Soviet. Highly flattering interviews with Soyuz leaders and positive evaluations of their attempt to reinstate military patriotism have predictably appeared in Krasnaya zvezda, the daily newspaper of the Soviet armed forces, and in Sovetskaya Rossiya, the daily newspaper of the Russian Republic Communist Party strongly biased toward the
political right.

By the end of 1990, Soyuz deputies in the Supreme Soviet led the opposition attacking Soviet foreign policy under Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and President Gorbachev for cooperating so closely with the United States against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Their criticism only coincides with Soyuz's repeatedly stated opposition to Shevardnadze and Gorbachev for having abandoned so-called "international principles" of solidarity with pro-Soviet regimes in Soviet foreign policy. Nationally, Soyuz has begun to form links with the conservative Russian Intermovements in the Baltic region, which oppose the secession of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from the Soviet Union.

By December of 1990, prominent legislative leaders in Soyuz were threatening to introduce a vote of no confidence against Gorbachev in the Congress of People's Deputies and force him out as Soviet President, unless he declared a national state of emergency, formed a National Committee of Salvation, temporarily dissolved all republic governments and political parties, and reinstituted authoritarian political controls over the entire country. Soyuz's criticism of Shevardnadze personally and challenge to Gorbachev likely led to Shevardnadze's dramatic speech before the Soviet parliament in December of 1990, resigning as foreign minister and warning against the threat of a "coming dictatorship" instigated by unnamed men in military uniforms.

The Russian nationalists on the right benefit from both an institutional base of support and a certain degree of respectability for their policy views in the Russian Republic. Anti-democratic and conservative Party officials prevail in the leadership of the
All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and in the Russian Communist Party. Under the leadership of Ivan Polozkov, the Russian Republic Communist Party was organized in June of 1990 as a clear attempt of the conservative Party officials in Russian locales to organize themselves against Gorbachev in the central government and against the democratic left of Yeltsin and the Democratic Russia bloc now in control of the parliament and ruling government of the Russian Republic. At the same time, activists in OFT and Yedinstvo more than rank-and-file Party members were among the earliest and most enthusiastic supporters of a separate Russian Communist Party.

The Russian Communist Party leaders and union officials defend their positions and berate democracy and economic liberalization out of a concern over the loss of working-class political power and threat to jobs for millions of average workers in the Soviet Union. For the Russian party leaders and union officials, democracy is equated with the removal of many working-class deputies from legislative soviets; economic liberalization, with the enrichment of so-called "speculators" in the cooperatives and the threatened unemployment of millions of Soviet workers. This same core of conservative officials controls the editorial board of the Russian Republic Communist Party's daily newspaper, Sovetskaya Rossiya, which predictably echoes their views in slanting negative stories on democratic changes and market reforms in Soviet society.

The conservatives who control the leadership of the Russian Writers' Union and the editorial boards of literary journals, such as Literaturnaya Rossiya, Nash sovremennik, and Moskva, provide the
Soviet right and Russian nationalistic views with a certain degree of intellectual respectability and visibility. The writers and journals maintain a constant ideological litany bordering on an outright persecution mania. They blame the liberal democratic changes in Soviet society since 1987 and the immoral Western influence of the political left and Jews in the Soviet media and arts for the environmental pollution of Russia, falling birthrates of ethnic Russians (an alleged Russian "ethnocide"), pornography, increasing violent crime, contempt for patriotism among Soviet youth, the imminent collapse of the country into civil war, and a growing tide of hatred against Russians and Russian cultural values (an alleged "Russophobia").

**Turning Points**

All political leaders and parties in the Soviet Union since 1987 concede that the country is both in a serious crisis and at a critical "turning point" in its evolution. They disagree over the reasons for the crisis and over the very meaning of the term "turning point." The "turning point" for leaders and parties connotes a time at which the wrong course of actions was taken that led to the present impasse and political crisis threatening the very survival of the nation. The solution is to return Soviet politics spiritually to that past "turning point", but now to avoid repeating those wrong actions and decisions.

For Gorbachev and other centrist Party reformers, their oft-repeated goal has been to revive or renew socialism. The turning point to which they intend to return the Soviet Union spiritually is March of 1921 and the adoption of the NEP by the 10th
Party Congress. In essence, Gorbachev reasons that Stalin's ending of the NEP in 1928 represented the lost opportunity to realize the "democratic socialistic" potentials intended by Lenin. In the 1990s, Gorbachev contends that returning to the spirit of the NEP, with a Western-type democracy and a mixed market economy, can both realize the opportunity lost in 1928 and create the kind of humane society in which the many ethnic nationalities of their own volition will want to remain in the Soviet state as sovereign republics of a federation.

For others, such as the non-Communist left parties and former Communist Party members and supporters of Gorbachev like Anatolii Sobchak and Gavriil Popov, February of 1917 is the turning point to which the Soviet Union must be returned. For them it was the Bolshevik Revolution itself that doomed any potential for political democracy. The tragic course of Soviet history since 1917, leading to the current crisis, inevitably stemmed from the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the imposition of the Communist autocracy. In their vision, the Soviet Union spiritually is in a state similar to February-October of 1917. To prevent a reoccurrence of a new Bolshevik Revolution, it is important to avoid the political mistakes of the Provisional Government and to counter the threats to the current fledgling Soviet democracy. In the 1990s, those threats are the Soviet political right, the modern version of the Bolsheviks in 1917, and a growing wave of working-class populism against all politicians fed by the economic collapse not unlike those conditions in 1917 Russia.

Nothing more clearly distinguishes the Soviet political right
from center-left parties in the early 1990s than its quite different connotations of the turning point at which the present crisis originated and to which Soviet politics should return spiritually.

The political philosophy of those associated with Pamyat' rejects the entire history of the Soviet Union extending back to 1917. Anti-Communist, they blame Jewish nihilists, who infiltrated positions of authority in the Party and are now propagating false Western models, for the current political and economic crises of the country. Retaining an idealistic image of the tsarist past, Pamyat' almost seems to want the Soviet Union to return to the era of 1881-82, at a time that Alexander III encouraged pogroms against Jews to eliminate their allegedly alien influence in Russian culture and society. Not totally opposed to the secession of non-Slavic ethnic groups, members of Pamyat' want to regain an ideal Russian nation in their minds defiled by all the political changes instituted during the 20th century in the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's renewed socialism has very little in common with the kind of revitalized socialism envisaged by Nina Andreyeva and Yedinstvo. The ideal turning point to which Andreyeva would return the Soviet Union spiritually is the era of the first two five-year plans in 1928-37 highlighted by the Great Terror of 1937-38. For her, the first two five-year plans epitomized true socialism under Stalin by mobilizing the nation and by empowering the proletariat against its economic problems and exploiting classes; the Great Terror of 1937-38 was an unfortunate but objectively necessary action by Stalin to eliminate corrupt anti-proletarian influences and internal enemies.
At a minimum, Andreyeva and Yedinstvo would return the Soviet Union to February of 1956. In their view, Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the 20th Party Congress in February of 1956 represented the Communist "original sin". By condemning Stalin and calling into question Stalinist institutions and values, Khrushchev ushered the return of exploitative capitalism into the Soviet Union over the past three decades. Andreyeva and Yedinstvo consider the current Party reformists associated with Gorbachev to be "right-wing revisionist-opportunists" if not outright "counterrevolutionaries". By Gorbachev's reforms, they have committed the ultimate apostasy for Andreyeva and Yedinstvo of repudiating the Bolshevik Revolution and reverting the nation to its state of political-economic crisis and imminent civil war after the February revolution but prior to October of 1917. With her political rallying-cry of "socialism or death!", Andreyeva at a maximum wants another Bolshevik Revolution.

For the conservative working-class populists in OFT, their ideal turning point to which they would return the Soviet Union is October of 1917. For them, the Bolshevik Revolution, with its promises of equality and justice for the working class, was an obtainable goal somehow perverted and undermined by evil and corrupt Communist bureaucrats over the past six decades. The working-class control of factories during War Communism in 1918-20 seems to represent their ideal model and reference-point in Soviet history.

For the conservative Party and trade-union elites, their ideal is to return the Soviet Union to April of 1985. At that time, Gorbachev's goals were limited to eliminating widespread elite corruption and instituting moderate economic reforms that at the
same time would have preserved the dominant control of the economy and society under the Communist Party.

For the conservative military officers in Soyuz, the important turning point to which the country must be returned is May of 1945, at which time the current Soviet Union emerged out of territories incorporated at the end of World War II. At a minimum, they share the view of conservative Party and trade-union elites on returning Soviet politics to April of 1985. They fear that the national security of a unified Soviet state would be irreparably endangered with the fullscale conversion of military to civilian production and the elimination of all central controls of the national economy.

For Russian nationalists affiliated with the Russian Writers' Union or various literary journals, everything has been wrong since the forced abdication of the tsar in February of 1917. In certain ways, Russian nationalists want to return the Soviet Union to an idealized image of 1612, when the Russian nation allegedly came together with the Russian Orthodox Church to form the Romanov dynasty. They view the Russian empire as a civilizing force of salvation and assimilation for the many non-Slavic ethnic groups incorporated into the empire after 1612. Russian nationalists repudiate the model and Western democratic reforms of Alexander II as well as the entire 20th century of Soviet history since the Bolshevik Revolution. For them, Alexander II and Soviet Communism since 1917 all betrayed the Russian moral-religious grandeur epitomized by Romanov absolutism from 1612 until the 1860s.

The Impact of Multi-Party Systems

That the Soviet Union has quickly evolved into a multi-party
rather than two-party system is important in itself in projecting any real threat to Soviet democracy from the anti-democratic right. The nature of the party system in any democracy directly affects the prospects for political stability and the responsiveness of governments to social problems and interest groups. Under certain societal-cultural conditions, a multi-party system promotes moderation and consensus in a society by balancing effective political authority with the widest degree of political participation and democratic pluralism. Under other realities, a multi-party system destabilizes a democracy by polarizing society and by immobilizing its government.

If Western Europe represents the model of a multi-party system in advancing both political stability and governmental responsiveness, however, it is a model totally inapplicable to the quite different political realities and cultural pluralism of the Soviet Union and many other Eastern European countries. The Western European model only works under certain societal and cultural conditions. There must already exist 1) a relatively narrow range of differences in a society over basic political values and principles, 2) long-term economic growth over decades coincidental with the multi-party system, 3) a strong overriding sense of nationalism, 4) the relative absence of sectarian ethnic-religious pluralism and communal conflicts in the country, and 5) party divisions that cut across rather than overlap any sectarian
conflicts in the country. By itself, a multi-party system in a society with intense sectarian conflicts can either tear a country apart into a Lebanon-like civil war or sublimate tensions. All depends on the party alignment relative to the sectarian divisions, the nature of interaction among parties, and the conduct of campaigns by the parties in appealing to support along sectarian lines.

For the republic and local elections in 1989-90, the Soviet voter had a wide range of choice from the social democratic left to the ultranationalist right. Given that choice, the Soviet voter supported center-left political parties and candidates for the most part. In the Russian Republic, the Democratic Russia coalition won a plurality of seats in the Russian Congress and majorities in the key Leningrad and Moscow legislative soviets. The patriotic bloc of right-wing Russian nationalists were resoundingly defeated in elections to the Russian republic parliament, winning only two seats to the Russian Congress and failing to win even one seat from Leningrad and Moscow. With Boris Yeltsin's election to chair the Russian Republic Supreme Soviet and those of Gavriil Popov and Anatolii Sobchak to chair the Moscow and Leningrad city soviets, the non-Communist democratic left has nationally visible and extremely popular leaders. By their public actions and conduct with their legislatures, all three symbolize the new breed of democratically committed politicians emerging in republics and locales throughout
the Soviet Union.

Any conclusion that democracy has triumphed irreversibly with the rejection of the anti-democratic right, however, would be extremely premature. The problem is not for want of strong leaders, such as Yeltsin, Popov, and Sobchak. The problem is the weakness of all political parties. Compounded by a multi-party system that almost precludes large electoral pluralities for the candidates of any one political party, the Soviet democracy seems doomed to suffer Israeli's fate of factious coalition government dominated by political extremists.23

The numerous political parties and ethnic popular fronts threaten to polarize Soviet society even further by combining the very worst attributes imaginable for stability in a fledgling democracy like the Soviet Union since 1987. The political parties and ethnic popular fronts have been noteworthy more for their ideological extremism, appeals to the basest fears and irrational prejudices of the Soviet electorate, a prevalent identification with their newly popular national leaders, and their common denunciations of conspiracies and the "totalitarian" Communist Party establishment.

The center-left political parties and popular fronts have been especially conspicuous for their failures.24 Because party organization and party decision-making connote the despised "democratic centralism" of the Communist Party, party leaders are reluctant to organize at the grass-roots level or hesitate to take clearly defined positions on the issues for the Soviet electorate prior to a lengthy process of internal discussion and consensual
decision-making among groups within the parties. As a consequence, the new center-left parties resemble debating clubs more than responsible competitors for political power. To the same extent, they have been either unable or unwilling to recruit members and to mobilize a wide base of national support for themselves among the many diverse social-ethnic groups in the Soviet electorate. Just as reluctant to forge coalitions with like-minded parties in the parliaments, they have been evasive and even irresponsible in not educating the Soviet public on the hard choices to resolve the economic crisis and the real tradeoffs and uncertainties to implement market reforms successfully in the 1990s.

The Soviet past in 1917 threatens to be the prologue of the Soviet future in the 1990s. In 1917, the end of tsarism brought with it a breakdown of central political authority and an intense struggle for political power between the Provisional Government and numerous legislative soviets, political parties, and secessionist ethnic regions. The divisiveness, vacillation, and ineffectiveness of the Provisional Government only contributed to already widespread societal polarization, economic breakdown, and public cynicism toward any political authority. The anti-democratic radical Lenin and the Bolsheviks took advantage of that sense of malaise to seize power and institute authoritarian rule and a reunified state by 1921 under the pretext of saving the revolution and the people from counterrevolution.

In the 1990s, the dissolution of Communist authoritarianism has produced as much a political vacuum as a stable political democracy. Majority sentiment supports Gorbachev's revolution to create a
political democracy, to devolve real autonomy to ethnic republics in a federation, and to institute wide-ranging market reforms. Groups and political parties in the democratic center and left squabble only over timetables and specifics to arrive at these same goals. Yet they seem unable to overcome their suspicions of each other's ulterior motives, their minuscule policy differences, and the personal ambitions of their leadership. Less pronounced has been a demonstrated commitment to democratic norms and a willingness to compromise in forming a majority coalition government and in resolving the economic crisis and social-ethnic conflicts tearing the country apart.

Parties on the left suspect each other of collusion or collaboration with self-declared reformist Communist officials. The left parties contend that, while allegedly espousing support for democratic and economic liberalization, these officials actually intend to retain the Party's monopolistic domination of Soviet society and to use privatization of the economy only to enrich themselves at the expense of the public.

Several reasons are cited for their suspicions of a clandestine Party conspiracy. Newly elected non-Communist city governments have been forced into a power struggle with local Party committees in trying to reclaim government buildings and printing presses that for decades were automatically leased for the Party's sole use. Many former Party-state functionaries have left their positions in the government only to take over ownership and management positions in the cooperatives and new denationalized private sectors of the local economy. Accusations have been made that some of them
channeled large amounts of money into these same cooperatives and joint ventures prior to leaving their government offices.

Furthermore, left democratic parties warn that, even with the disintegration of the Communist Party's authority nationally, the next decade will see the retention of a majority of current or former Party members in the state bureaucracies. They fear that the same current or former Party members will coalesce to reassert a Party influence in the executive branch to frustrate the intents of the increasing majority of non-Communist deputies in local legislative soviets. In certain regions, a power struggle has already broken out between the non-Communist elected chairpersons of the soviets and the regional Party committees over the assignment of top executive administrators to the regional government - a patronage right still claimed by the Party officials to fall under their powers of nomenklatura as the formerly sole and ruling political party in the country.

Anyone who has been a Party member and particularly anyone who had held an administrative position in the Soviet government before 1989 are potentially suspected of being agents of this amorphous and allegedly still omnipotent Communist Party establishment, manipulating events behind the scenes. Political morality has come to be associated with uncompromising hatred of the Communist Party and with suspicion of anyone previously affiliated with the Party establishment. The Soviet electorate perceives the political sincerity, honesty, and genuine commitment to democratic values of candidates for political office based overwhelmingly on the degree to which they were insulted, hounded, and persecuted in the past by
the Party establishment.

Widespread popular support is almost assured for anyone forced from high political office astute enough to capitalize on their anti-establishment public image, like the former Moscow party leader Boris Yeltsin or the former head of KGB counter-intelligence Oleg Kalugin. The very willingness of political authorities to compromise on common goals with reformist Party officials and to utilize the administrative experience of government officials almost predictably leads to widespread public charges against them of political corruption and collusion with the Party establishment. Extremism and intolerance have been made into a virtue by the Soviet left; pragmatism and compromise, a vice equivalent with outright collaboration.

Parties on the left accuse not only each other of secret collaboration with the Communist Party. They denounce as front groups of the Communist Party establishment the new centrist parties like the Liberal Democratic Party. Tied to the reformist wing of the Communist Party leadership, the centrist parties refute the allegation that they are less committed to democratic reform than the left parties. They contend that the left parties, by their unwillingness to compromise on seizing all Party property, outlawing the Communist Party, and dismembering the Soviet state, are playing into the hands of those hard-line conservatives in the Party, military, and KGB secretly plotting to oust Gorbachev and reverse Soviet policies back to 1985.

The same anti-democratic intolerance, paranoia, and extremism drive an increasing number of internecine conflicts among factions
within the ethnic popular fronts and political parties—positioning themselves to assume political power in several republics and all equally pledged to gaining independent statehood for their ethnic groups from the Union. In the Baltic republics, factions within the now ruling popular fronts have formed between radicals and pragmatists. The radicals demand immediate secession of the republics from the Union and independent statehood as non-negotiable rights, and they come very close to accusing the pragmatists of collusion with the Union officials in Moscow by their willingness to negotiate the terms of secession through diplomacy and compromises.

In the elections to the Georgian republic legislature in 1990, open violence and attacks on each other's supporters broke out in the electoral campaign between the two dominant factions of the anti-communist popular front comprised of seven political parties. Each faction led by charismatic nationalists accused the other of being less than totally committed to gaining immediate independence for Georgia and implicitly collaborating with the Communist Party. The contending factions in the popular front together won a majority of the seats and control of the republic government; but their electoral victory gave an open-ended mandate to Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the newly elected president of the republic and one of the two charismatic nationalists. A common fear was that he would use his mandate and authority to institute reprisals against his rivals in the other faction and plunge Georgia into an open civil war among the nationalists.

Ominously, the one thing that the Georgian factions could agree upon in the electoral campaign was to endorse discrimination against
ethnic minorities who do not support their goals of immediate Georgian independence. They supported a decree of the electoral commission in essence banning from the ballot any candidates of political parties representing the non-Georgian Abkhazian and Ossetians in the republic. The Abkhazian and Ossetians fear discrimination and violence against themselves by ethnic Georgians. To defend themselves from Georgians, they intend to secede from Georgia and form sovereign republic governments remaining within the Soviet Union. For the contending factions in the Georgian popular front, fears of discrimination and violence by the Abkhazian and Ossetians are dismissed as ploys of the Communist establishment in Moscow to undermine Georgian independence. The political parties representing the two minorities are assumed to be creations secretly organized and funded by the Party and the KGB in Moscow.

If common sense, realism, pragmatism, and tolerance are essential to a democracy, they have been ill served by the extremism and jockeying for power among the contending center-left parties and ethnic popular fronts. Their extremism has only exacerbated the normal paranoia in Soviet political culture to view policy conflicts as "deviations" rather than as sincerely held differences of opinion over common principles, to label opponents "enemies" rather than as potential "allies" for similar goals, and to distrust all political authorities and political institutions.

Clear evidence of a political vacuum can be seen in the wave of protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, rallies, and marches so common throughout the Soviet Union since 1987, but unabated even with the democratic elections and emergence of the center-left
parties in 1990. However much the protests and demonstrations express a common rejection of Communist authoritarianism, they as much reflect the failure of the new center-left political parties. The parties have not generated enough public confidence in their leaders and enough public identification with themselves as effective institutions to represent societal interests in the legislatures.

In stable democracies, political parties mediate between society and the government, because they are trusted and valued as institutions by the public. If political parties in a democracy fairly represent the cross-section of all groups in a society, they can integrate public demands and limit the necessity of individuals resorting to protests and demonstrations. Conflict in a democracy is normally resolved by political parties through their elected officials in legislatures, not by clashes among groups in the streets.

The political immaturity of the Soviet democratic center and left coincides with a general political trend. Having dismantled the most oppressive authoritarian system of the 20th century, Soviet society has lurched to the opposite extreme and seems to be suffering from an excess of democratic pluralism. The new Soviet politicians in popular fronts and political parties on the center-left seem totally caught up in their roles as charismatic leaders of mass movements. Their projected political image is more one of movements arousing the Soviet public against an amorphous Communist dictatorship than one of governing political parties — forming majority coalitions to pass laws in the parliaments and
assuming a future public accountability in elections for the actions of their officials and legislators. They seem more concerned in asserting the independent sovereignty and statehood of their ethnic groups or regions from Russian domination than in capitalizing on their popularity to promote cultural tolerance for the civil rights and equal opportunity of all social groups and ethnic minorities.

In many ways, the leaders of the popular fronts and parties on the center-left resemble powerless Soviet dissidents in the 1960s and 1970s, flailing against the Communist establishment. They do not act like politicians of an emerging parliamentary democracy in which real political power over leadership selection and public policy-making has already shifted from Communist officials. It is an emerging parliamentary democracy in which the same politicians are rapidly becoming the new political elites and establishment.

There is little sense that the leaders of the popular fronts and parties on the center-left understand Western democracy in practice rather than in theory. In practice, policy-making in Western democracies evolves through compromises and bargaining. Politics is the highly imperfect art of the possible. Elections in Western democracies often turn on the volatile, irrational response of the electorate to events and to the personalities of the candidates. Winning parties rarely enter office with clearly defined majority mandates. In Western democracies, policy-making and politics are not miracle solutions to problems by politicians as men on horseback, anointed by some unambiguous general will in elections to carry out clear priorities and rational public mandates.

The movement nature of popular fronts and political parties on
the center-left has only intensified political conflict along ethnic lines in the Soviet Union by the early 1990s and transformed Soviet society into one of the most politicized if not polarized societies in the world. National political authority is being challenged openly by all republic governments – each of which has claimed to varying degrees its independent sovereignty from the Union and the supremacy of laws passed by its own republic parliament over those of the Union government in Moscow. Within several republics, the national democratic revolution has turned into an orgy of ethnic self-determination and declarations of sovereignty. Provinces and territories have declared independent statehood from their own republic governments and asserted their right to make laws, control their own economies, and own all local economic resources as sovereign governments. In turn, cities, boroughs, and even local neighborhoods have declared their own sovereignty from any higher authority or jurisdiction.

The historical legacy of Stalin's empire, rivalry over scarce resources in an economy near collapse, and the release of ethnic self-expression suppressed for decades of tsarist and Soviet rule all generally account for this explosion of ethnic tensions and conflict in the 1990s. Yet the popular fronts and political parties in the center-left bear a not inconsiderable amount of the responsibility for the resurgence of ethnic nationalism and, particularly, for the open conflict between groups. Popular fronts and center-left parties have vied with each other to prove their commitment to regaining self-rule and dominant political authority for the titular ethnic majority in their republics. A litmus test
of their commitment to real ethnic self-determination has become the degree to which each supports laws making the titular ethnic language the official state language of a republic or limiting the right to vote and hold political offices to titular ethnic natives.

Few of the center-left fronts and parties on the republic level have made a concerted effort to expand their electoral base of support beyond their own dominant titular ethnic group. None either institutionally or programatically has attempted to create a truly Union-wide political party, actively seeking members among the many diverse ethnic nationalities residing within each of the republics. The 1990 elections witnessed a seemingly conscious effort by the popular fronts and center-left parties to exploit voter identification with the ethnic background of candidates chosen by them to run for deputy seats to the local-republic legislatures. Their winning candidates overwhelmingly (85-95% in each republic) were members of the dominant titular ethnic majority in each of the republics. 29

Thus, the emerging multi-party system has been both a cause and a symptom of the intensified and bitter conflicts between the dominant titular ethnic groups and ethnic minorities in several of the republics. The assertion of independent statehood and sovereignty by several provinces and territories results from a worry that republic statehood will be achieved at their expense. A not unfounded fear is that the republic popular fronts and center-left parties remain so committed to self-determination for the titular ethnic majority as to legalize discrimination against the non-titular ethnic minorities living in these provinces and
territories, such as the Abkhazi and Ossetians in Georgia or the Gagauz in Moldavia.

The immaturity of the democratic center-left is easy to rationalize. Political parties have only existed and been allowed to register and compete for political offices since 1990. The Communist autocracy over seven decades also obliterated any democratic values and norms that could have evolved as precedents from the short-lived experiment with political parties in the tsarist Duma before 1917. Understandable as the immaturity of the Soviet democratic center-left may be, however, their actions in 1990 have polarized Soviet society even more, undermined public confidence and trust in the newly empowered and democratically elected legislatures, and immobilized Soviet legislatures from taking any effective action. Fearing a replay of the events of 1917, Western and Soviet observers deplore the political immaturity of the Soviet center-left in the 1990s for providing an opening for the Soviet political right, totally opposed to any democratic changes and able to mobilize support for itself among a Soviet public. 30

This is a Soviet public that, despite general support for the reforms advocated by the center-left, has become disillusioned by the squabbling and inaction of the new democratically elected legislatures. This is a Soviet public justifiably frightened about massive unemployment and a general economic breakdown in the transition to private enterprise and a market economy. This is also a Soviet public affected by the political extremism and scapegoating characteristic of the rivalry among center-left fronts and parties.

Soviet and Western observers worry that the rivalry within the
Soviet center-left obscures the real danger to democracy and the real struggle for power whose outcome will set the course for the country in the immediate future. On the one side stand the majority of popular fronts, political parties, reformist Communist leaders identified with Gorbachev, and a majority of the Soviet public committed to political-economic liberalization. On the other side stands a diffuse but an inherently more cohesive political alliance of the right. The Soviet political right is drawn together by a common bond of fear at losing their positions of dominance in Soviet society with the transition to a democracy and market economy and by a common visceral revulsion at the repudiation of almost all Communist values and ideology since 1987. This fear and revulsion rather than any real programmatic alternative to the democratic center-left unify the Soviet political right.

Conclusion

Despite the low public support for candidates of the political right in the 1990 elections, and despite the low public ranking in national polls for its most identifiable movement-parties and leaders, the Soviet anti-democratic right cannot be dismissed as irrelevant fringe groups in Soviet politics—particularly if the democratic center-left dissipate their energies in internecine conflicts and fail to form governing coalitions to institute effective economic reforms on the national, republic, and local levels. Without strong party identification, the large and volatile "floating vote" in the Soviet electorate so far has gone predominantly to candidates of left democratic-populist parties.

The left democratic-populists have been successful in tapping
the universal public hatred of the Communist Party and resentment at
the disclosed corruption and elite privileges of Communist officials.
If the elected officials of the left populists fail to improve
conditions, however, the same "floating vote" of hatred and
resentment against those in power easily could be turned against
them by conservative populist-nationalists like Yarin in OFT. An
alarming omen was that, within weeks of assuming the leadership of
the Moscow and Leningrad city governments, Popov and Sobchak
confronted wild-cat strikes by their municipal workers.

Very few would question the assertion that Soviet democracy and
democratic pluralism cannot survive without publically influential
and accountable political parties. Critics would only contend that
the end of 1990 is an extremely short and unfair time-period in
which to judge the nature and impact of Soviet political parties in
the fledgling Soviet democracy. They would argue that the future
Union, republic, and local elections in 1992-94 will be the real
test for the Soviet multi-party system. By the 1992-94 elections,
Soviet political parties will have sufficient time and experience to
organize effectively and to generate a strong voter party
identification with their candidates and legislative platforms. The
1992-94 elections should allow Soviet political parties to
articulate clear political choices through their extensive
campaigning and media coverage for the Soviet electorate. The
1992-94 elections will test whether Soviet political parties have
matured enough to translate electoral outcomes into responsible but
stable ruling majority governments.

The problem is that time is unlikely to be an ally of the Soviet
political parties. If they should not be prejudged before the 1992-94 elections, they confront an additionally unique factor in the Soviet context. In contrast to the complete dissolution of the Communist systems of Eastern Europe, the Soviet political system is still only in transition from Communism to a democracy. Influential leaders in the Party, the military, and KGB retain sufficient organizational capability and financial resources to lend their support either covertly or overtly to the political parties emerging in Soviet society. Only the extremist parties of the Soviet right share their prejudices against democracy and economic liberalization and favor retention of a strong unified state.

Given projections by Soviet economists that as many as sixteen million jobs may be eliminated in this decade with the privatization of the Soviet economy, it requires very little imagination to see these same unemployed Soviet workers rallying to the simplistic conspiratorial explanations of their plight offered by the parties on the right. In this scenario, there is no guarantee that the center-left political parties could win a majority of votes in the future 1992-94 elections.

A solid core of amorphous public attitudes favoring the Soviet right already exists as evidenced from a national mail survey of the Soviet population completed after the March of 1990 elections along with direct surveys of respondents in the province of Gorky and the Kalmyk autonomous republic. Almost the same one-third of all respondents in the national and local surveys identify themselves with the positions advocated by the Soviet political right, blame the new Soviet informal interest groups for aggravating the economic
crisis and attempting to use the situation only to grab power, advocate the use of force by the Soviet armed forces to defend the Constitution, and resort to the same demagogic slogans and simplistic explanations of the country's problems most closely associated with the extremists on the Soviet political right.\textsuperscript{31} With financial and political support from disgruntled establishment figures in the Party, military, and KGB, the political right cannot and should not be discounted as an influential force in a Soviet democracy.

An even more extreme scenario would foresee the failure of Soviet center-left parties precipitating another Bolshevik Revolution - this time led by the Soviet political right. Like Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the fall of 1917, the Soviet right represents the anti-democratic and non-party alternative. It promises political salvation through an appeal to public fears and the promise of security through reimposition of an authoritarian rule outlawing all political parties. The real choice in the Soviet 1990s is between political institutions: center-left political parties to integrate Soviet society with representative government in a Soviet democracy, or the KGB and the Soviet military to suppress Soviet society in a reconstituted police-state dictatorship.
FOOTNOTES


9 “If We Come to Power — The Rightist Forces That are Torpedoing Restructuring are Consolidating,” Argumenty i fakty, June 2-8, 1990,
pp. 4-5 [trans. in FBIS, June 14, 1990, pp. 66-68].


Gorbachev continued to use the 1921 analogy as recently as his opening address to an October of 1990 Central Committee plenum in drawing parallels to the crises and turning point confronting the Communist Party and the Soviet Union in the 1990s: Pravda, October 9, 1990, pp. 1-2.


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groups, see, for example, Myron J. Aronoff, "The Failure of Israel's
Labor Party and the Emergence of Gush Emunim," in Lawson and Merkl,
*op.cit.*, pp. 309-337; Ian Lustick, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish
Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York: Council on Foreign
Relations, 1988); Avishai Margalit, "Israel: The Rise of the
(November 9, 1989), pp. 38-44; and Yoav Peled, "Retreat from
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Valerii Tishkov, Director of the Institute of Ethnography, USSR Academy of Sciences, Stanford, California, December 7, 1990.


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