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The Modernization of Party Propaganda in the USSR

Lenin was one of the first political theorists to emphasize the enormous potential impact that manipulation of modern communications channels could have on a recipient population. It may therefore not be surprising that indices of penetration by the communications networks of the world's states suggest that the Soviet pattern is unique. For example, *The World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* places groups of states on a developmental spectrum and finds that the Soviet Union, as well as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, are "industrial revolution" societies, one stage behind the more developed "high mass-consumption" societies, where the United States, Canada, and much of Western Europe have been placed. It is true that according to the indices of Gross National Product and urbanization the Soviet-type states do cluster in the range that includes such states as Italy, Argentina, and Venezuela. However, if we look at percentage adult literacy or percentage voting, the Soviet-type states easily rank with the highest "high mass-consumption" societies.¹

The literature of political development in the West has generally reflected this ambivalent pattern by stressing the Soviet Union's lagging political development with respect to such matters as subsystem autonomy, while crediting its communications and mobilization agencies with outstanding efficiency and standardization. The theoretical model used by one scholar suggests that "the most salient characteristic of totalitarianism is the massive amount of communication which flows from the party elite and their agents to the masses.

1. Bruce M. Russett, Hayward R. Alker, Jr., Karl W. Deutsch, and Harold D. Lasswell, *The World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven, 1964). In this collection of data the Soviet Union seems to rank surprisingly low in radios per thousand and circulation of daily newspapers per thousand. This is probably because these variables fail to take into account the impressive *exposure* of the population to each radio or newspaper. To rank the Soviet Union accurately one would have to do a careful study of audience per medium of communication; the Soviet Union and Communist China have pioneered the techniques of maximum exposure. Further, the *World Handbook* is of limited use in bringing Soviet data into a framework of comparative data, because United Nations sources are almost wholly relied on. For scholars and students who require more complete data, a collection will be published by the Free Press: *Handbook of Soviet Social Science Data*, edited by Ellen Mickiewicz, with contributions by Stanley Cohn, Warren Eason, Mark Field, Gayle Hollander, Roger Kanet, Roy Laird, Ellen Mickiewicz, Henry Morton, Jonathan Pool, and Jeremy Azrael.

All the human and technological apparatus controlled by the leadership is designed to achieve maximum public coverage and effectiveness. The effort is continuous, homogeneous, and pervasive. . . ."² Another analysis finds: "In a totalitarian system these structures [interest-group and party communication structures] are subject to a high degree of control by the elites. They are receptive to demands and information upward through the hierarchy only as permitted by those at the top. They disseminate only that information permitted and ordered by the top elite."³

This study will investigate one area of Soviet political communication activity in the light of development theory. We shall be looking at the structure and function of propaganda in the Soviet Union, particularly with regard to a series of important recent changes which indicate that modernization of the network has attained high priority for the Kosygin-Brezhnev regime and that prior to this modernizing reform the advanced state of efficiency suggested by Western theorists had been far from realization. The criteria to be used in assessing the direction of change are those prominent in the literature of political development. First, if modernization is in fact taking place, we shall expect to see a greater degree of specificity of function for the propagandist. Second, it should be apparent that universalistic norms of conduct are being extended throughout the network. Finally, we should see an increasing concern with achievement considerations.⁴

Propaganda and Agitation: The Soviet Context

In Lenin's famous distinction between propaganda and agitation, agitation is directed to a mass audience and involves messages of limited content but wide applicability and emotional impact. Propaganda, on the other hand, is directed to small numbers of "politically literate" (in Soviet terminology) individuals, and it involves complicated theoretical messages. It has generally been assumed that propaganda activity has been separated from agitation, following the official doctrine, and that a highly differentiated and efficient structure has resulted. Since the Soviet system has been in power for over fifty years, Western observers often assume that the development of this differentiated pattern of political communication has proceeded in linear fashion, so that both agitation and propaganda, in their Soviet definitions, have by this time been thoroughly modernized and possess a high degree of specialization.

However, this is not the case. Propaganda and agitation have not in

2. Richard R. Fagen, *Politics and Communication* (Boston, 1966), p. 33.

3. Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics* (Boston, 1966), p. 171.

4. These criteria are linked to modernization within the domain of governmental rule and authority in *Communications and Political Development*, ed. Lucian W. Pye (Princeton, 1963), p. 17.

practice been separated functionally. Almost all overt political communication activity has been agitation. Not even the press, except in a very limited way, functions as an instrument of the propaganda process; it is rather an additional agency for agitation. One observer of Soviet politics has written: "With the passage of time, and particularly since the consolidation of power in Russia by the bolsheviks after 1917, the concrete, agitational element in Soviet political communication has tended to overshadow the more abstract theoretical or propagandist element."⁵ Not only in content has propaganda yielded to agitation, but in function and structure as well. Propaganda, defined precisely, is essentially a type of communications activity the purpose of which is to socialize members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The abstract theoretical matters which form the content of propaganda messages are appropriate only to that body which shares the Marxist-Leninist outlook in all of its complexity; that body can only be the party. Alex Inkeles, in his pioneering study of Soviet political communication, followed this Soviet functional distinction by treating propaganda under the heading of "the schooling of opinion leaders," and reserved the study of agitation for a later section.⁶ In Soviet terminology the "propagandist" has a clearly defined jurisdiction; he himself is a party member, and he communicates with other members of the party. At least that is what he is supposed to do to fulfill the demands of propaganda activity as defined by Lenin. The replacement of propaganda by agitation has puzzled Western observers, one of whom, in a recent study of the party, writes that "in recent years, the distinction between the two has sometimes been blurred by Soviet writers so that the terms may become interchangeable. . . ."⁷ But the terms have never been interchangeable, even though the functional specificity of the propagandist was never established. Purely normative guidelines have always called attention to the deficiencies of an undifferentiated structure. Thus in 1920 at the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Maksimovsky, in speaking about the failure to socialize party members, stated, "Comrade Kamenev says that our propaganda has a rather abstract character. One has to say frankly that our propaganda does not exist at all. . . . There is no propaganda in the centre and in most cases also not in the provinces."⁸

Some forty-five years later a major reform was undertaken to effect the differentiation and strengthening—or modernization—of the system of propaganda. With the ouster of Khrushchev and the installation of the Kosygin-Brezhnev regime, there are signs that indicate a renewed and vigorous interest

5. Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton, 1964), p. 12.

6. Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), chap. 4.

7. Michael P. Gehlen, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (Bloomington, 1969), p. 75.

8. Quoted in Zev Katz, "Party Political Education in Soviet Russia," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1957, p. 13.

Table 1. *Distribution of Propaganda Personnel*

Year	Propagandists	Location	CPSU Members	Students in Propaganda System	Party Members per Propagandist (ratio)	Students per Propagandist (ratio)
1964/65	1,100,000	USSR	11,022,369	36,000,000	9:1	30:1
1965/66	900,000	USSR	12,357,108	12,000,000	13:1	13:1
1967/68	1,000,000	USSR	13,180,000	14,500,000	13:1	14:1
1968/69	1,100,000	USSR	—	15,000,000	—	13:1
<i>Subnational Figures</i>						
1967/68	6,300	Armenia	200,605	—	31:1	—
1967/68	1,795	Georgia	209,196	—	116:1	—
1965/66	43,907	Uzbekistan	193,600	—	4:1	—
1967/68	75,000	Moscow	730,000	850,000	9:1	11:1
(March 1966)						

Note: "Nonparty activists" are also included in the propaganda system.

Sources: "KPSS v tsifrah," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 19, October 1967, pp. 8–20. "Na povestke dnia—itogi uchebnogo goda," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1968, no. 7, p. 105. "Obshchestvennaia professiia—propagandist," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1968, no. 9, p. 133. M. Khvartskia, "Boets ideologicheskogo fronta," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1968, no. 6, p. 108. M. Gabdulin, "Politicheskomu prosveshcheniiu—povsednevnuiu zabotu," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 14, July 1968, p. 53. *Spravochnik propagandista i agitatora* (Moscow, 1966), p. 107. *Iz opyta ideologicheskoi raboty partiinykh organizatsii* (Moscow, 1965), p. 107. "Navstrechu novomu uchebnomu godu," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1969, no. 8, p. 111. Ellen Mickiewicz, *Soviet Political Schools* (New Haven, 1967), pp. 1–13.

in the efficacy and standardization of a process that had previously been so haphazard and intermittent as to be virtually nonexistent. Now, for the first time, the system of political communication is to have a specialized, separate network and personnel whose main task will be to socialize party members, rather than to instruct paid functionaries in the specific managerial and secretarial skills needed or to engage in general agitational activities that treat party and nonparty alike.

The most prominent manifestation of this new attention is the central reorganization of the ideological apparatus which took place shortly after Khrushchev's ouster. The highest authority in this crucial area had been the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the party's Central Committee. That agency is now the Department of Propaganda, headed, until his ouster in 1970, by V. I. Stepanov.⁹ Below the national level the chief authority for all forms of political communication is vested in the departments of agitation and

9. No precise date can be established for the change, but two students of Soviet politics have offered suggestions. Mark W. Hopkins, in his *Mass Media in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1970), places the change between the spring of 1966 and August of that year (p. 351, n. 69). Aryeh L. Unger suggests a slightly earlier date of May 1966 ("Politinformator or Agitator: A Decision Blocked," *Problems of Communism*, September–October 1970, p. 33).

propaganda of the central committees of the union republic parties. No major Soviet source has announced or analyzed the rationale or consequences of this important policy change. It seems, however, that agitation has undergone a process of decentralization, a logical operationalization of the theoretical distinction sketched above: face-to-face communication about single and simple matters of local significance forms the heart of agitation. The actual operation of agitation had previously centered on the place of work, but with the introduction of the five-day work week, and the shortening of the midday dinner break, free time has diminished. Agitation has therefore changed its base of operations to the city block or the individual apartment house. Presumably at the residential unit it will be more effective and interfere less with production goals.¹⁰

But propaganda as the communication to a small audience by a small number of specialized communicators of messages which are complex abstractions that provide an all-inclusive explanatory matrix will be centralized. For the new reform to have any degree of success the corps of propagandists and their audience must first be stabilized. Under Khrushchev the structure of propaganda, or socialization of party members, underwent a massive and rapid expansion. With the stated intention of including all adults in a continuing program of political education, the Khrushchev regime erased the distinction between party and nonparty audiences, and the number of those enrolled in the political education schools rose from 6,200,000 in the academic year 1957/58 to 36,000,000 for 1964/65. The exclusivity of instruction in doctrine for the party member was deliberately attacked in a campaign to effect the radical egalitarianization of society.¹¹ There could be no corresponding growth of trained propagandists. The training of propagandists was, as we shall see later, always at best an ad hoc affair. Thus, as shown in table 1, by the end of the Khrushchev era there was one propagandist for every thirty-six

10. "Tam gde my zhivem," *Pravda*, July 30, 1968.

11. For a discussion of this expansion of adult political education, see my *Soviet Political Schools* (New Haven, 1967). In a recent article Erik P. Hoffmann argues that Khrushchev's reform of adult political education was for the most part an attempt to create more reliable parallel channels of communication: "Communication Theory and the Study of Soviet Politics," in *Communist Studies and the Social Sciences*, ed. Frederic J. Fleron, Jr. (Chicago, 1969). It is true that new channels with new administrators were installed, but it is unlikely that the purpose was simply to acquire more relevant and detailed information. Khrushchev's reforms in adult political education were part of a wider equalizing program that far exceeded in scope the communications goal that Hoffmann suggests. Khrushchev initiated sweeping reforms in several areas to cut through the hardening boundaries of social stratification.

For reforms affecting the military see Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton, 1967). For reforms embodied in the party program see Robert Feldmesser, "Stratification and Communism," in *Prospects for Soviet Society*, ed. Allen Kassof (New York, 1968). For reforms in education see Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Politics in the USSR* (Boston, 1966), chap. 3.

students in the propaganda system, and one out of every thirteen members of the Communist Party was a propagandist. However, one of the most frequently noted deficiencies in the functioning of the propaganda corps was the failure to provide for continuity. The profession of propagandist had not yet come into being, and certainly could not as long as it was necessary to staff a ballooning and virtually unadministered mass indoctrination campaign. Those who were designated as propagandists would often drop out during the year; the *stazh*, or number of years the propagandist performed his function, was likely to be very low.

It should be recalled, at this point, that under Stalin no specialized propaganda activity existed; that is, no structures existed to provide for the intensive and systematic training of propagandists. The adult political education meetings at which the intellectuals were the principal audience were not primarily concerned with the socialization of all party members. In the current policy to differentiate propaganda activity from all other ideological work, the beginnings can be seen of the professionalization and stabilization of the propaganda corps. There are increasing references to the *stazh* of propagandists; local party organizations give percentages that show *stazh* of five or ten years. The city party organization in Cheliabinsk reported recently that with new initiatives to stabilize propagandists, 70 percent now have a *stazh* of at least five years, and only 7.2 percent are working in the propaganda system for the first year.¹² The ratio of party members to propagandists seems to have settled, although there are differences among the union republics. In terms of the efficacy of propaganda, a very favorable ratio of students per propagandist has been established. From September 1965 to June 1969, enrollment in the propaganda system grew by about 20 percent, while the number of propagandists grew by about 18 percent. For the first time the central leadership has instituted a system of planned and complementary growth of both the teaching and learning facilities of the propaganda structure.

Specificity Criteria

In assessing the trend toward the functional specificity of the propagandist, we shall examine data for the indicators of specialization of training and specialization of work assignment. Information about these factors does indicate a trend toward the professionalization of the propagandist corps. Until the current reforms the functional specificity of the propagandist had not been established. In his study of Soviet elites John Armstrong examined the training and career patterns of "the men of the word"—the leading party

12. N. Rodionov, "Partiinoe rukovodstvo ideologicheskoi raboty," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 14, July 1968, p. 9.

Table 2. *Schooling of Party Functionaries (Cumulative: 1946-66)*

School	Administrative Level	Numbers Graduated
Academy of Social Sciences	USSR	3,000
Higher Party School of the Central Committee of the CPSU	USSR	40,000
Higher Party Schools	Republics, krais, oblasts	25,000
Party Schools	Republics, oblasts	60,000
Soviet-Party Schools	Oblasts, districts	31,000
	TOTAL	159,000

Source: "KPSS v tsifrakh," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 19, October 1967, p. 20.

functionaries in charge of political communication.¹³ Perhaps at this level one can speak of the functional specificity of the political communicator, but these specialists account for only a small number of party members. They are the ones who formulate the concepts and theories which the propagandist will use in socializing party members. Table 2 shows that the total number of party functionaries who were processed by the special schools that train the men of the "apparatus" was only 159,000 for the twenty years between 1946 and 1966. This would be only about 1 percent of the CPSU membership in 1967 and only 2 percent of the number admitted to the party during those twenty years. Of course, some of the paid professionals in the party have substituted what the Soviets call "political experience" for formal training, and they would not be included in this total. But the figure does include the generalists as well as the ideological specialists; thus the indoctrination experts would be only a small fraction of the total number.

Propagandists are much more numerous than paid theory specialists, and they have not had the latter's functional specificity. Formerly the propagandist's sole preparation consisted of a hurried, ad hoc indoctrination session lasting for a day or a week once or twice a year. Although under the present system the propagandist still receives no salary and remains a volunteer, and this function may be only one of his party duties, he is increasingly a trained expert commanding a standardized body of knowledge and performing a specific function. The agency for training propagandists is the Evening University of Marxism-Leninism, located in the cities. When Alex Inkeles described these evening universities in the postwar period they were essentially city lecture halls to which the local intelligentsia were required to go periodically to listen to current definitions of the party line.¹⁴ Since the ouster of Khrushchev, these institutions have become, in part, specialized training centers for propagandists. There are 280 propagandist faculties, or departments, in the

13. John Armstrong, *The Soviet Bureaucratic Elite* (New York, 1959).

14. Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia*, p. 54.

Table 3. *Evening Universities of Marxism-Leninism*

Year	Location	Number of Universities	Enrollment
1948	USSR	188	100,000
1964/65	USSR	—	200,000
1965/66	USSR	302	230,000
1967/68	USSR	326	220,000
<i>Subnational Figures</i>			
1965/66	Moscow	—	20,000
1940–65 (cumulative)	Moscow	—	90,000
1965/66	Kiev	—	2,500
1965/66	Riga	—	2,600
1941–65 (cumulative)	Riga	—	12,000

Note: Not all of those who studied at these universities became propagandists. There are also divisions, or faculties, which prepare the “generalists” of the party organizations. *Sources:* Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), p. 54. *Spravochnik propagandista i agitatora* (Moscow, 1966), p. 102. “Partiinoi uchebe—neoslabilennoe vnimanie,” *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 18, September 1967, pp. 49–52. “Marksist-sko-Leninskaia ucheba kommunistov na novom etape,” *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1967, no. 8, pp. 92–98. Mickiewicz, *Soviet Political Schools*, pp. 51–52.

universities of Marxism-Leninism throughout the country; they train some one hundred thousand propagandists each year.¹⁵ To be admitted to the propagandist faculty the party member must have completed high school and have had some higher education. Within the faculty there are three major divisions: history of the CPSU, philosophy, and political economy. The future propagandist must specialize in a particular division and in addition take courses in theory and methods of propaganda. This represents a radical departure from the past. Before the Kosygin-Brezhnev regime came to power the propagandist could be assigned to teach any problem; he was a generalist who had been given a briefing on the subject at hand. The new system of training is thought to be more appropriate for the rising demands and higher educational level of party members and is intended to establish an actual rather than formal distinction between agitation and propaganda (see table 3). The Moscow Evening University of Marxism-Leninism, the oldest and most highly developed of these institutions, has over three hundred faculty members, drawn from a variety of professions, including (1) chairmen of departments in institutions of higher education, (2) scholars from the institutes of philosophy, history, and economics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, (3) teachers from the Academy of Social Sciences and the Higher Party School of the Central Committee of the CPSU, (4) scholars from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the CPSU, (5) directors of departments of the journals *Voprosy istorii KPSS* and *Voprosy istorii*, and (6) personnel from the city and district party organizations.¹⁶

15. “Navstrechu novomu uchebnomu godu,” *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1969, no. 8, p. 111.

16. *Kuznitsa propagandistskikh kadrov*, ed. V. Speransky (Moscow, 1965), p. 9.

As noted above, under Stalin the Evening University of Marxism-Leninism had addressed the “party, soviet, and economic *aktiv* and the intelligentsia.”¹⁷ The course of studies here and throughout political education relied heavily on the famous *Short Course* history of the CPSU. In 1956 the Khrushchevian reform of the evening universities was heralded in a resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU, which stated in part that it was “necessary to reorganize the work of the evening universities of Marxism-Leninism, coordinating their study programs with the concrete tasks standing before the given republic, territory, or province [and] to increase in the evening universities the number of hours devoted to political economy and the economics of industry, at the expense of shortening the hours of other disciplines. . . .”¹⁸ The discarding or continual downgrading of the strict theoretical, dogmatic rigidity previously demanded by the university, and the substitution of a crudely empirical approach, constituted an innovation of the Khrushchev era. The entire propaganda and agitation network was similarly reformed, so that solving local economic problems and collecting data at the factory and plant level came to supplant the study of Marxism-Leninism, as formulated by Stalin. In this connection the “practical task” was an important part of the assigned study for both party member and nonparty student. The latter increasingly dominated the propaganda network, until at the time of Khrushchev’s ouster nonparty students constituted 78 percent of the enrollment, which had previously been reserved mainly for party members. At all levels of political study, theory and economics merged. At the lowest level—the political school (*politshkola*)—the tasks were simple ones, such as checking the electrical wiring system of the factory or assuring that light bulbs were not left burning or that machines were not left running during a smoking break.¹⁹ At the middle level—the circle—a practical task would involve the discovery of methods to lower the cost of production or raise the productivity of labor.²⁰ At the level of the theoretical seminar—the level of the most highly educated (the university graduates)—the practical task would center on the dissemination of what the Soviets call “rationalized” production methods (those in which unnecessary expenditures of time and effort have been eliminated).²¹ As might be expected, instruction for party members was indistinguishable from that given to the nonparty population, since the former were only a small

17. M. Ia. Tsubulsky, *Universitet marksizma-leninizma* (Kharkov, 1957), p. 4.

18. “Ob itogakh uchebnogo goda v sisteme partiinogo prosveshcheniia i zadachakh partiinykh organizatsii v novom uchebnom godu,” *Partiinaia zhizn'*, no. 16, August 1956, p. 13.

19. V. Volodin, *Politshkola i organizatsiia ee raboty* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 43–44.

20. N. Kalugin, “Pri kakikh usloviakh zaniatiia kruzha dostigaiut tseli,” in *Kruzhek tekushchei politiki* (Moscow, 1957), p. 50.

21. E. Tikhonov, *Teoreticheski seminar i organizatsiia ego raboty* (Moscow, 1961), p. 26.

minority in a widespread system of schools projected for the entire adult population. The more highly educated in the system were also expected to give lectures for the Znanie (Knowledge) Society, the mass lecture bureau which had close ties with the adult instruction system.

It would be difficult to call Khrushchev's system of political instruction "propaganda"; rather the content would seem to fit more closely the definition of agitation. Additional agitation at the place of work was, of course, expected of all party members, and it too was closely related to the economics of production. To suit this new function the entire style of political instruction underwent bold changes under Khrushchev. Whereas the formal lecture and recitation characterized the conduct of sessions under Stalin, sessions were now to be based on the seminar procedure. The "dry scholasticism" of the Stalin era was to be abolished in favor of small informal group meetings.

Khrushchev's successors have shown that they believe that in economics political theory cannot be submerged without tending to eliminate the role of theory. Shortly after Khrushchev's fall *Kommunist*, in announcing the modernization of the propaganda system, observed:

The features of the new structure and subjects of instruction . . . consist of a *clearer division of tasks standing before party instruction and mass political propaganda*. At the same time a substantial shortcoming is removed in the organization of political enlightenment [instruction] of the last years, when the tendency was observed to convert this system almost into an all-embracing means of the education of Communists and nonparty [people]. At this time under the guise of party instruction they studied not so much Marxist-Leninist theory as production-technical questions.²²

Under the new system, nonparty adults are to have a wide variety of mass political education institutions, such as people's universities, popular lectures, schools of Communist labor, economic schools, evenings of questions and answers sponsored by the Znanie Society, and the numerous lectures, speeches, and talks that accompany public events. In addition, the trade unions, soviets, and Komsomol have responsibilities for mass agitation. The propaganda system for party members continues to have the *politshkola* at its lowest level; here the party member with elementary school education or less learns the basics of "political literacy." Here he is taught to read and analyze newspapers, to make outlines and summaries, and to speak publicly, so that he may better perform his function as agitator. A less elementary approach is used for party members with secondary school education. For those with higher education the theoretical seminar is appropriate, unless specialization to become a propa-

22. "Aktivno formirovat' marksistsko-leninskoe mirovozzrenie kommunistov," *Kommunist*, no. 13, September 1965, pp. 8-9 (italics in original).

gandist calls for a program of study at the University of Marxism-Leninism. The new curriculum of the university stresses theoretical problems and the retraining or reindoctrination of those who were educated under the Khrushchev regime. At the university, training is more comprehensive and broader than in the theoretical seminar. The topic of study in the seminar is related to the profession of the students, who are enrolled on the basis of occupational homogeneity. Thus while the University of Marxism-Leninism gives a broad course in philosophy, the theoretical seminar explores a topic that relates a philosophical concept to a specific problem in biology or physics, or whatever the professional interest of the student.²³ The following are some representative theoretical seminars found in institutions of considerable prestige: Institute of Biochemistry of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (seminar in biochemistry and Marxian concepts of the movement of matter), Laboratory of Helminthology (seminar in the history of biology and the history of the struggle of materialism with idealism), Institute of Instructional Methods of the Academy of Pedagogical Science (seminar in the development of cognition and methods of instruction), Institute of Serums and Vaccines (seminar in Marxism and Darwinism), All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (seminar in the dialectics of nature), Lebedev Physics Institute (seminar in the philosophical foundations of physics), Institute of Automatic Mechanisms and Telemechanics (seminar in the philosophical implications of cybernetics), and Foreign Ministry (seminar in the changing social structure of the United States and the rise of the white-collar worker).²⁴ By contrast, as noted above, the training of the propagandist is far broader and includes study of the theory and techniques of propaganda.

Propaganda and Universalistic Norms

Universalistic norms imply reliance on rational, interpersonally verifiable, and nonparochial criteria. In the Soviet Union the political doctrine of Marxism-Leninism is officially credited as being the source of all universalistic norms. It is clear, however, that elements of irrationalism, ritualism, and parochialism pervade the official belief system. For example, in recent years the irrationalism and inefficiencies plaguing the Soviet economy have vividly called into question, both in the USSR and abroad, the criteria upon which economic policies have been formulated. The ritualistic adherence to the labor theory of value has now been replaced—though not in rhetoric—by broader, more complex factors of economic theory, which include rent, interest, profit, and elements of demand and supply. The economic reforms presented by Kosygin,

23. "Teoreticheskii seminar," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1966, no. 7, p. 104.

24. Mickiewicz, *Soviet Political Schools*, pp. 127–31.

although retaining many of the irrationalities of the official political doctrine, also include areas where rational and universal principles apply. In a sense this is a movement away from “religious” attitudes (or unquestioning acceptance of nonverifiable matters) toward “secular” ones (or reliance on rational and verifiable criteria), and such a movement is essential to modernization. Economic performance is itself one of the chief indicators of the progress and development of Soviet society as a whole, according to the official political doctrine. But with the modernization of the economy the universalistic norms might supplant the remnants of the irrational and possibly challenge the legitimacy of the leadership. The tensions and constraints produced by the coexistence of differently derived norms of conduct have often resulted in a zigzag movement along the path of modernization.

Within the sphere of propaganda, a trend toward the use of universalistic norms can be discerned. The leadership recognizes that rational and verifiable criteria must be applied to an area that has depended heavily on ritualistic and irrational modes of evaluation. Obviously this movement toward the “secular” approach is closely related to campaigns for improving the efficacy of propaganda—but efficacy based on rational and verifiable principles rather than on emotion, exhortation, or faith. Indicators of this trend can be seen in the official directive for the strengthening of the social sciences, in the new emphasis on survey research, and in the rapid development of courses and faculties of social psychology for party propagandists.

In the important resolution “On Measures for the Further Development of the Social Sciences and the Elevation of Their Role in Communist Construction,”²⁵ the Central Committee of the CPSU recommended sharp increases in the personnel and facilities for research and teaching in the social sciences. Included in this trend is a more vigorous and systematic use of survey research beyond the crude forms of polling sometimes published in the past, where samples were often self-selected and questions were frequently ambiguous and uninformative. Officially, the rationale for this type of research activity is given as follows:

It [research] provides the opportunity for party organs to have more reliable “feedback”—information on social processes; [it] reveals discrepancies and contradictions among individual branches and aspects of society; [it] permits objective evaluation of the results of decisions taken. At the same time it becomes a connecting link which aids in overcoming the elements of emotionality and subjectivism in the solution of concrete problems.²⁶

25. *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 17, September 1967, pp. 3–12.

26. R. I. Kosolapov and P. I. Simush, “Konkretno-sotsiologicheskoe issledovanie i sostoiianiiia rukovodstva dvizheniem za kommunisticheskii trud,” in A. K. Kurylev, V.

Table 4. *Propaganda and Rationalization of Production*

Workers	Students in Propaganda Network	Others	Total
All Workers	7	18	25
Of which: Rationalizers	5	3	8
Recorded suggestions for rationalization	11	4	15

Source: P. Maslov, "Statistika i sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia," in *Iz opyta konkretnykh sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniï* (Moscow, 1969), p. 121.

The new economic reforms, with their emphasis on the quality of production, and therefore on the productivity of the labor force, are said to require new and more effective forms of propaganda work. A recent study published under the aegis of Moscow University linked party propaganda to advances in productivity and found that workers enrolled in party education tended to contribute significantly to rationalization, or efficiency, of production. The study was conducted among a small group of workers in the steam hammer shop of a Moscow factory, and the results are given in table 4.

R. I. Kosolapov and P. I. Simush, both of whom are attached to the Central Committee's Department of Propaganda, note that the problem of industrial discipline is one of the most serious obstacles to the new reform. They found that regions of the Soviet Union differed sharply in instances of violation of discipline, and their survey revealed that the chief cause was absenteeism and the second most frequent cause was drunkenness, which led to careless work, breakage, ignoring safety rules, and petty theft. They also found that research did not confirm the hypothesis that the level of labor discipline improved with education. Rather, discipline improved with the number of years on the job; thus the transience of the labor force proved to be the most important immediate problem. Experience with survey research helped to correct another misconception that had governed propaganda work. Kosolapov and Simush describe a poll conducted in the city of Gorky and report that the findings did not support the common belief that violators of labor discipline tended to be the young workers. The whole basis of Komsomol indoctrination was declared incorrect, for the survey revealed that workers over thirty constituted 58.4 percent of the violators of labor discipline, and workers over twenty-five constituted 82.8 percent. Clearly, this became a party and trade union matter.²⁷

The broader problem of the socialization of youth for production in the USSR has come under the purview of the central propaganda personnel, and here, too, survey research has been helpful in increasing the efficacy of propaganda and agitation. Kosolapov and Simush note that "the rapid rise of the

G. Smolkov, and G. M. Itraks, eds., *Iz opyta konkretnykh sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniï* (Moscow, 1969), p. 121.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-38.

general educational level of workers does not always coincide with corresponding changes in the conditions of work," and that it has become imperative to enhance "the prestige of industrial and agricultural work among youth, [to change] their professional orientation."²⁸ But the tension between secular norms and ideologically orthodox norms is clearly evident in their assertion that purely material stimuli, or incentives, cannot replace "social consciousness," and unless there is careful balance and control the material incentives could lead to harmful individualism and antagonistic competition. A study which examined the problem of reconciling economic and ideological criteria was conducted by the Leningrad oblast party committee. One question asked was "How [is] a young engineer . . . prepared to be not only a leader of production but also the ideological educator of people. . .?" It was found that about 60 percent of those questioned did not know how to conduct the latter type of activity.²⁹

Because the current interest in surveys seems to be closely related to applying the results to propaganda effectiveness, it is the party organization that is usually the center of activity. For example, under the auspices of the Leningrad party organization some interesting topics were investigated: the effectiveness of party instruction, the use of free time, and the kinds of editorial mail received by district and city newspapers.³⁰ In Cheliabinsk the oblast party committee founded an institute for concrete sociological research. A council representing the party, the trade unions, the soviets, the youth organization, and scholars directs the work of the institute. According to the first secretary of the oblast party committee, the local universities granted twenty doctoral degrees based on material gathered by the institute. In 1965 one study undertaken by the institute examined the effectiveness of propaganda. On the basis of the results of this study the party ordered the propagandists to be retrained. Two years later a follow-up survey found that half as many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with propaganda. The first secretary concluded that "changing the attitude toward the system of political enlightenment [education] was achieved not by disciplinary measures but by improvement of [our] work."³¹

Further evidence of the extension of universalistic norms of conduct can be seen in the introduction of social psychology as a discipline in the training of party personnel in the Leningrad University of Marxism-Leninism. The course has three parts: history of social psychology, theory of social psychology, and problems of applied social psychology; the total lecture and seminar

28. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

30. "Ideinoe vospitanie—v tsentr vnimaniia," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 13, July 1968, p. 54.

31. Rodionov, "Partiinoe rukovodstvo ideologicheskoi raboty," p. 14.

time is sixty-six hours. A laboratory of social psychology is the center for research activity, which in one case explored "the structure of communication and the orientation of the decision-making personality." Subjects for this research included leading personnel in the district soviets, managers of several industrial enterprises, and heads of scientific-research institutes.³² Similar departments of social psychology have been reported in the Moscow University of Marxism-Leninism and in others throughout Belorussia, where students study such subjects as "the social structure of society" and "psychological peculiarities of collectives."³³ Regardless of how limited the application of these results may be, there can be no question that an important criterion of modernization is being used.

Achievement Criteria

Elements of achievement criteria are increasingly being used to guide the recruitment and advancement of propagandists. This trend can most clearly be seen in new procedures for the planning, coordination, supervision, examination, and assessment of propaganda personnel, as well as in the system of rewards for meritorious performance of duties. The new reforms involve significant improvements in the planning and coordination of the work of the local party organization, which has now been advised to publish a plan of all activities for at least three months and sometimes up to two years in advance. For each item planned by the organization the length of time to be devoted to it and the responsible personnel must be indicated. One such plan of a factory party organization, listing activities for the year December 1967 to November 1968, was published in *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, the journal of the Central Committee of the CPSU.³⁴ This factory group is a large primary party organization with 350 members representing fourteen smaller shop organizations. Of the seven major sections of the plan, one is devoted to the socialization of party members. This section is shown in table 5. There are several points of interest here. This is the first time that an attempt has been made to formalize supervision over the political socialization of party members. Second, although Sidorov, as secretary in charge of propaganda and agitation, must spread himself thin over all the activities of the party organization, and although Komov combines secondary responsibility for mass agitation with his duties in the area of propaganda, Golubkova is able to specialize solely in

32. G. Petrov and A. Kirilin, "Kurs sotsial'noi psikhologii v universitete marksizma-leninizma," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1968, no. 7, p. 106.

33. F. Krotov, "Universitety ideinoi zakalki kommunistov," *Politicheskoe samoobrazovanie*, 1969, no. 7, p. 49.

34. "Perspektivnyi plan partiinoi raboty zavoda 'Leninskaiia iskra,'" *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, no. 8, April 1968, p. 49.

Table 5. *A Plan for the Socialization of Party Members*

Activities	Time for Performance	Responsible Personnel
Discuss at meeting of party committee:		
(1) Report of the shop party bureau on the direction of the education of Communists	February 1968	Member of party committee: Z. N. Golubkova
(2) Results of study in the system of party enlightenment and tasks for preparations for the new academic year	June 1968	Deputy secretary of party committee: K. N. Komov
Hear reports from Communists on their work in raising their ideological-political level at sessions of the party committee, party bureau, and at party meetings	Continuously during the year	Secretary of party committee: A. M. Sidorov and Secretary of party shop organizations
Carry out the instruction-methodology study of propagandists and [arrange] meetings for the exchange of experience	Continuously	Deputy secretary of party committee: K. N. Komov and Member of party committee: Z. N. Golubkova

propaganda work. It is, of course, true that none of these three would be a paid party functionary; thus the duties they perform for the party must compete with their regular jobs and responsibilities. But this does represent a move toward differentiating the sphere of propaganda within the more general and diffuse area of political communication.

The plan will also now provide for the rational allocation of personnel for propaganda activity. In Moscow, Leningrad, and Saratov, for example, the plans include the preparation of refresher courses for propagandists. In some cases such plans govern not only the current year but also a number of years in advance and specify how many propagandists with what academic specialties are likely to be required for a given year.³⁵

Achievement considerations do not yet fully serve as the criterion for judging the performance of the propagandist, but the local party organizations are increasingly being instructed to apply this criterion over all others. There are still complaints about disinterested, apathetic propagandists whose performance of teaching duties reflects their reluctant acquiescence to coercion

35. *Spravochnik sekretaria pervichnoi partiinoi organizatsii* (Moscow, 1965), pp. 91-92.

by the party organizations; recruitment of propagandists apparently still bears the traces of the punitive or therapeutic motive by which Khrushchev sought to erase class distinctions and the party-nonparty distinctions. But recruitment of the propagandist is now expected to follow this channel. Among the students of the propaganda system, the one who demonstrates an ability to assimilate the theoretical material and an aptitude for public speaking is given increased assignments and is sent on lecture tours. When evidence of progress is seen, the local party organization recommends study in the Evening University of Marxism-Leninism, where the student receives the official status of propagandist, provided the party committee or bureau confirms the title at its general meeting, after interviewing and testing the candidate.³⁶

Currently, too, achievement will increasingly be rewarded, and the propagandist will receive benefits, both psychic and material. He will, however, be subject to the same pressures that Inkeles described in the life of the agitator. He is subject both to the downward pressure from the party organization that visits his classes and judges his performance and to the upward pressure from party members who are required to attend his classes, even when they are already overburdened with other party duties and with the pressure of their occupational and family responsibilities. The propagandist, like the agitator, must advocate the fulfillment of party policies when this might mean additional effort and sacrifice, and he must in a sense "represent" his students to the party hierarchy and with its help perform the services and distribute the privileges which might enhance his authority and influence with his students. Although rewards for achievement are still meager when compared with those received by paid party functionaries, nevertheless they are beginning to play a significant role and may be expanded as the system is modernized. Party organizations have been urged to consider the whole panoply of honorific awards, which have been highly proliferated in the Soviet political system, as applicable to the propagandist. The range of these rewards in which the propagandist will now share is given below:

It is necessary to become concerned about the encouragement of the best propagandists. In several places party committees reward them by putting them on the Board and Book of Honor; they present them with books with souvenir dedications; they organize excursions for them to noteworthy places, historic places, to hero-cities. Means of encouragement [which are] generally accessible are warm reviews of the propagandist's work at meetings, putting his picture in the newspaper, talking about him on the local radio. In a word, there are many forms of encouragement, and it is necessary to use them to value merit, to stimulate the difficult, noble work of the propagandists, [and] to show them every support.³⁷

36. *Metodika partiinogo obrazovaniia* (Moscow, 1968), pp. 261-67.

37. *Spravochnik*, pp. 93-94.

Political Development and Propaganda Reform

Several conclusions emerge from this discussion of the newly instituted system for the socialization of party members, the most obvious of which is that the smooth efficiency and standardization of propaganda activity assumed by Western observers has not been established. Although it is a stated goal of the party at its highest level, a differentiated and modern propaganda system has not yet been realized and was hardly attempted before the current reform of the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime. Why do we witness this undertaking now? Of course, when there is a change of leadership in any political system, the new authorities are apt to change program and personnel with which to distinguish their inauguration and to carry out their policies; moreover, a general tightening of the ideological framework can be seen in the arrests and trials of dissidents in the Soviet Union. But neither of these circumstances indicates why propaganda has become the focus for new activities or why previous regimes did not proclaim similar reforms.

A far more suggestive line of inquiry relates the propaganda system to the modernization of the entire polity. Several recent studies have pointed to an increase in the representation of what Barrington Moore has called "technical-rational" criteria at the highest decision-making levels.³⁸ Most of these studies have suggested that the modernization of a polity is a process that creates differentiation or pluralization without which further development would be severely hampered or arrested.³⁹ A critical test for the viability of the party will inevitably involve the socialization of technocrats with new expectations and perceptions. Some Western scholars see this as simply a matter of control by generalist-*apparatchiki* of the new modernizing forces; most, however, would view persuasion or socialization as a far more economical and effective process. Related to this pressure for pluralization of decision-making is the rising level of education among party members and among the population at large. Soviet sources warn that the propaganda system must answer to the "rising demands" of party members, and that agitation, with its simplifying exhortations to mass audiences, cannot suffice—nor can the Stalinist pattern of propaganda, which undervalued the rank-and-file of the party and addressed the intellectuals almost exclusively. Table 6 shows the steady upward movement of the level of education of party members.

The rising level of education among party members becomes an even more critical problem when seen in relation to the *stazh*, or length of membership. As of 1965 almost 25 percent of the party were either candidate

38. Barrington Moore, Jr., *Terror and Progress USSR* (New York, 1954), chap. 7.

39. For studies of the problem see George Fischer, *The Soviet System and Modern Society* (New York, 1968), and Frederic Fleron, Jr., "Representation of Career Types in Soviet Political Leadership," in R. Barry Farrell, ed., *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Chicago, 1970), pp. 108–39.

Table 6. Educational Level of CPSU Members

Year	Number of Members and Candidates	Complete		Incomplete		Secondary		Primary	
		Higher	%	Higher	%		%		%
1927	1,212,505	9,614	0.8	—	—	104,714	8.6	—	—
1937	1,981,697	108,256	5.5	48,563	2.5	227,612	11.5	—	—
1947	6,051,901	453,288	7.5	136,149	2.3	1,324,896	21.9	—	—
Jan. 1956	7,173,521	801,384	11.2	—	—	1,850,370 ^a	25.8	2,127,862	29.6
1957	7,494,573	869,582	11.6	267,158	3.6	1,696,114	22.6	—	—
July 1961	9,626,740	1,283,548	13.3	—	—	2,852,158 ^b	29.6	2,795,652	28.6
Jan. 1962	9,891,068	1,349,535	13.7	282,061	2.9	2,693,457	27.2	2,754,307 ^c	27.8
Jan. 1965	11,758,169	1,763,262	15.0	301,255	2.6	3,542,005	30.1	2,874,623 ^d	24.4
1967	12,684,133	2,097,055	16.5	325,985	2.6	3,993,119	31.5	—	—

Sources: The figures for 1927, 1937, 1947, 1957, and 1967 are from *Partiinaia zhizn'*, no. 19, October 1967, p. 14. The ones for 1962 and 1965 are from *Partiinaia zhizn'*, no. 10, May 1965, p. 11; for 1956 and 1961, *Partiinaia zhizn'*, no. 1, January 1962, p. 48.

^a For 1956 another category was added—"specialized." The figures were 1,199,792 members with this type of education, which was 16.8 percent of the party.

^b In 1961 those who had a specialized education numbered 1,792,689, which was 18.6 percent of the membership.

^c For 1962 a category of "incomplete secondary" was added in which members numbered 2,811,708, which was 28.4 percent of the party.

^d These members with incomplete secondary education in 1965 numbered 3,277,024, which was 27.9 percent of the party.

Note: I should like to thank Elizabeth Andrus for her help in compiling this table.

members or members of three years' standing or less.⁴⁰ Thus, in a rapidly changing environment in which there is increasing contact with the West, there has developed a large undigested body of members in the party who have a pragmatic or technical outlook and a higher level of education than their superiors. Under Stalin a drastic means of providing for mobility in the party was the purge; channels were opened for rapid promotion and assumption of responsibility. These channels may now be clogged with aging leaders.⁴¹ One Western observer even writes of the "immobilism" of the Soviet regime.⁴²

It is undeniable that almost immediately after the Revolution the Soviet leadership placed high on its list of policy priorities the socialization of the

40. Mickiewicz, *Soviet Political Schools*, p. 15.

41. For examinations of this problem, see the works by Fischer, Gehlen, and Fleron previously mentioned, and Borys Lewytskyj, "Generations in Conflict," *Problems of Communism*, January-February 1967, pp. 36-40.

42. Robert Conquest, "Immobilism and Decay," *Problems of Communism*, September-October 1966, pp. 35-37.

entire population through the communications network. The Soviet position on the communications variables noted earlier supports this contention, as do the observations of political scientists and journalists. This writer has seen an "agitation point" in the tiny village of Kazbegi, high in the Georgian Caucasus. But this fact of high priority of policy does not necessarily imply an efficient and modern use of resources, and it would be a mistake to assume that fifty years of Soviet power have automatically produced the achievement of a high standing on an axis combining the three criteria of development suggested earlier: specificity of function, universalistic norms of conduct, and achievement considerations. A close study of one component of the Soviet political communication network suggests that in the area of propaganda, at least, modernization has proceeded very slowly, despite an articulated policy position emphasizing its importance. Speculation about the current reforms inevitably stresses the increasing importance of the socialization of party members. There can be no question that the party is hardly a static, seamless monolith. It is rather the case that the stresses and strains of a developing polity are reflected in the party as well, and that the application of the criteria of modernization is no less crucial for the functioning of that most significant Soviet elite. However, the tension between the logic of secularization and the constraints produced by ideological orthodoxy may create crises for the ruling regime. The rumored installation of Chervonenko, former ambassador to China and Czechoslovakia, and a traditional *apparatchik*, as head of the Department of Propaganda may perhaps signal a defensive reaction to the momentum of modernization.