

პიტერ რედევეი

**საბჭოთა პოლიტიკა განსხვავებული
აზრის მიმართ და მისი მოდელები:
1953–1986 წწ.**

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PETER REDDAWAY

**PATTERNS IN SOVIET POLICIES
TOWARDS DISSENT:
1953–1986**

Center for Cold War Studies
Ilia State University



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2012

Patterns in Soviet Policies Towards Dissent: 1953-1986
Peter Reddaway

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სარჩევი

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Foreword

One of the people whose name is inextricably linked to the campaigns in the West on behalf of Soviet dissidents is that of Peter Reddaway. While lecturing at the London School of Economics and Political Science in London, United Kingdom, from the mid-1960s until the mid-1980s, Peter Reddaway became a central figure in both documenting human rights abuses in the USSR, organizing campaigns on behalf of political prisoners in the West and coordinating the work of Westerners who travelled to the USSR to deliver humanitarian aid and collect information on arrests, trials, and what was happening in prisons, camps, exile and psychiatric hospitals.

For that reason it was no coincidence that in 1977, when I entered the field of human rights in the Soviet Union, I was almost immediately put in touch with Peter Reddaway. From the very start I shared with him his special interest in the use of psychiatry to incarcerate dissidents in psychiatric hospitals, and in 1980 we were both among the founders of the International Association on the Political Use of Psychiatry (now the Global Initiative on Psychiatry).¹ Over the years, Peter Reddaway continued to function as my mentor, advising me not only in my human rights work, but later also when developing an academic career. It is therefore a great pleasure to publish his monograph as the first publication of the Center for Cold War Studies at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Twenty years have passed since the Soviet Union ceased to exist, and many participants in the dissident movement

1. For more information see Van Voren 2009, and the website of Global Initiative on Psychiatry www.gip-global.org

have since passed away. Others have disappeared out of the limelight, and members of post-Soviet generations often do not even know the names of the most prominent dissidents. During these twenty years, the former Soviet republics went through a very turbulent period. Some came out as full-fledged democracies, sometimes with full membership in both the European Union and NATO, others slid into various forms of dictatorial or autocratic rule. Some opened part of their Party and KGB archives, in as much as they were available and had not been hauled to Moscow after the collapse of the USSR in order to prevent disclosure, others kept their archives carefully closed.

In Russia a temporary liberal period in the early 1990s allowed some researchers to access Party and KGB archives, and some of the documents were photocopied and made available. Some files were sold in exchange for hard currency, others (like Bukovsky's *Soviet Archive*)² were scanned and copied without official permission and became available through the internet. They provide a unique insight in the process of policy making behind the scenes, in the corridors of the Kremlin and the KGB headquarters at Dzerzhinsky Square. Yet even though they provide some windows into the *inner-sanctum* of Soviet repressive policy making, the picture that emerges is still rather haphazard and with many gaps and question marks.

In this monograph, Peter Reddaway analyzes many of the documents that are currently available, and comes to a number of conclusions that help us to understand how the Soviet authorities responded to the dissident movement, how effective the tactics of the dissident movement were and what influence Western support to the dissident movement had on the decision making process in the highest echelons of Soviet power.

The latter issue is of course of particular interest to people like Peter Reddaway and myself: what effect did our campaigns have, if any, and were we able to really influence Soviet policy

2. See footnote no.6

towards the “internal enemy”. However, due to the lack of accessibility to the relevant documents, still relatively little is known and much more research is required. In researching the effect of Western campaigns against the political abuse of psychiatry in the USSR, I came to the conclusion that at least as influential as Western campaigns was the involvement of the Soviet Foreign Ministry under Eduard Shevardnadze, who together with a number of his senior diplomats understood that unless these abuses came to an end a complete normalization of the relations with the United States would not be possible.³ However, at the same time it is clear that without the campaigns in the West, the political abuse of psychiatry would never have reached the top of the political agenda and the Soviet Foreign Ministry would never have been so insistent.

Considering the political situation in many of the former Soviet republics, and in particular in Russia, it is clear that it will take a long time before more documents are disclosed or archives will be made accessible. Some additional documents might however be found in the archives of Eastern European intelligence services, which maintained close working relationships with the KGB,⁴ and research in that direction might help fill some of the gaps. For the time being, however, we will have to do with what is available.

In spite of these limitations, Peter Reddaway has been able to provide a thorough and convincing picture of how the Soviet authorities responded to both the “internal enemy” and to their Western supporters.

Robert van Voren,
Director,
Center for Cold War Studies
Ilia State University

3. See Van Voren, 2010

4. During my research for *Cold War in Psychiatry*, I found a considerable number of documents in the archives of the East-German Stasi, which held annual high-level meetings with the KGB to discuss activities against the “internal enemy”.

Introduction

This essay provides a brief survey of the policies of the communist party towards those forms of public dissent that the leaders viewed as having a political character or tinge. It uses some of the rich archival materials that have been published since the early 1990s and document the leadership's unrelenting preoccupation with monitoring and combating dissident groups.

The period under review – 1953 to 1986 – was a time when the main categories of dissent concerned civil rights, emigration, politics, nationalism, religion, culture, and social issues. In many cases these categories overlapped. We should note that the boundaries between public dissent deemed politically tinged and thus intolerable, and dissent deemed not political and thus tolerable, for example church-going, varied over time in accordance with various factors, e.g., the sharpening or easing of the severity of the Soviet censorship.⁵

While, in general, policy on dissent remained relatively consistent over the 32 years under review, some broad and important changes did occur at intervals. These tended to be cyclical in nature, as official controls were tightened, then eased, then tightened again. From 1966 on, foreign opinion became a factor to be taken constantly into account, although, depending on the all-round conjuncture of events, it was a weightier input into policy-making at some times than at others. The period to be analyzed ended when, in 1986, Gorbachev prepared to

5. Note that the severity could also vary either regionally, or because different censoring bodies failed to coordinate their policies. See Bock, 2008.

launch a restructuring and opening up of what turned out to be the entire polity. This process, expressly designed to strengthen communist rule, was, at first, centrally directed and rather tightly controlled. However, between 1988 and the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, it was sporadically opposed and became increasingly uncontrolled and chaotic.

It was Stalin's death in 1953 that led to the Kremlin's gradual adoption of broad policy parameters on dissent that remained in effect until 1986. These were: no more mass terror; only occasional use against dissidents of murder, the death penalty, or crude physical torture, a certain degree of respect for law (e.g., the right to have a defense lawyer, except in cases of civil psychiatric commitment), strict concentration of decision-making in the hands of the party's Politbureau (not in Stalin or the secret police),⁶ and relatively few arrests compared

6. This important principle is especially well documented in two books that are used extensively in this chapter. The first is a wide-ranging and painstakingly edited collection of archival documents on dissent policy that were issued in the years 1970-85 by the party's Politbureau and Secretariat and the KGB: A.A. Makarov, N.V. Kostenko, and G.V. Kuzovkin, eds., *Vlast' i dissidenty: Iz dokumentov KGB i TsK KPSS*, Moskovskaya khel'sinskaya gruppa, Moscow, 2006, 280 pp. The second book is by Vladimir Bukovsky, *Moskovskiy protsess*, "Russkaya mysl' – Izdatel'stvo "MIK", Paris-Moscow, 1996, 525 pp., ISBN 5-87902-071-1. It has appeared in a few languages, but not, although several times announced by publishers, in English.

It is based to a large extent on the 3,000 pages of archival documents – mostly dating from the 1960s onwards and wider in their date and theme range than those in the Makarov book – that he was able to scan in the "Central Committee Archive" in 1992. This work was made possible by his role as a volunteer expert and researcher for the Russian government in the 1992 "trial of the CPSU". The book combines extensive extracts from numerous documents with some analysis of them and with elements of his memoirs. A large section of the documents – perhaps a fifth of the archive – concerns Soviet policies towards dissidents. On the

to the Stalin era, though enough to prevent dissent from getting out of hand (e.g., about 6,000 between 1958-1986 under articles 58-10, 70 and 190-1⁷).

intensity and frequency of the Politbureau's collective attention to these policies, see for example pp. 89-91. While the book does not provide archival references for the documents and also omits the headings and exact dates of many of them, additional details about them can be found at the web site set up by Alexander Kaplan, Yuliya Zaks, and others. Called "V. Bukovsky – Sovetskiy Arkhiv", it is well organized both topically and chronologically, and is at: <http://psi.ece.jhu.edu/~kaplan/RUSS/BUK/GBARC/buk-rus.html>. However, archival references are not given. The documents are only in Russian, but their titles and dates are also given in English.

Other topics covered on the website and in the book include Soviet ideology, disinformation, relations with the U.S., invasion of foreign countries (Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan), suppression of Solidarity in Poland, funding of foreign firms, media, and communist parties, aid and training for foreign guerrillas and terrorists, the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, and the collapse of communism in the USSR.

7. Note, regarding the 6,000 figure, that (a) a disproportionately large share of these cases happened at the beginning of the period, and (b) the figure does not include individuals sentenced under related articles like nos. 64 (treason) and 83 (illegal crossing of the border), nor individuals sentenced under articles for everyday (bytovye) crimes as a way of masking the dissent that was the "real" reason.

I. Landmarks in the course of dissent policy, 1953-86

The frankest broad description of dissent policy presented by a Soviet leader in early in the period comes from Khrushchev⁸. In his uncensored, magnitizdat memoirs⁹ he says of the years 1953-64: "On the one hand we really did allow an easing and relaxed our controls, and the people started to express themselves more freely both in conversation and in the press But there were two views on this: it reflected our inner feelings and we wanted it; on the other hand, there were people who did not want this thaw. They even uttered rebukes and said: look, if Stalin were alive, he wouldn't have allowed this We were consciously rather afraid of this thaw, for fear that the relaxation of controls might produce a flood which would inundate everything

"For this reason we, as it were, restrained the thaw Things that were undesirable to the leadership would have overflowed the restraining barriers, and such a tide would have started to run that it would have swept away the obstacles in its path. The fear was that the leadership would not be able to lead and direct into Soviet channels the creative forces that would be let loose, nor to ensure that the output of these creative forces would serve to strengthen socialism. This concern was good, a good instinct, but perhaps a bit cowardly".¹⁰

8. Gorbachev had much to say publicly on the subject, but not before January 1987.

9. They were dictated onto a dictaphone.

10. N. Khrushchev, *Vospominaniya*, Chalidze Publications, New York, 1979, pp. 274-76.

The fact that Khrushchev is less explicit here than he is in most of his memoirs, using euphemistic if graphic imagery about floods and barriers, only serves to underline the sensitivity of dissent as a topic. On the other hand, his explicit and devastating attacks of 1956 and 1961 on Stalin and some of his mass terror policies were landmarks that heralded the limited respect for unorthodox opinions and human rights that Khrushchev's regime gradually encoded in various fields, for example in its wholesale revisions of the civil and criminal law codes. Later, in the early 1980s, he was reviled by party leaders at Politbureau meetings for introducing these reforms.¹¹

In public, during his time in office, Khrushchev occasionally made exaggerated claims, as in his statement of 1959: "Political prosecutions have ceased"¹². In fact, while prosecutions had been radically reduced compared to the Stalin period, they had not fallen below a few hundred per year. In 1961, moreover, the leadership launched a little publicized two-year offensive against religious, nationalist, and Crimean Tatar dissidents. The aim was to try to destroy the nascent independent groups organized by leaders of these groups. In most cases the attempt proved to be either ineffective or, more often, counter-productive.¹³

Khrushchev's overthrow in October 1964 produced a temporary halt to arrests in all categories, lasting eight months, and also a wave of early releases of Baptists. This was one of the ways in which the new leaders sought to distinguish their rule from Khrushchev's. However, in 1967 they began a six-year offensive against, in particular, the emerging human rights movement. This gathered pace, especially after they launched an aggressive political and military reaction to the Prague Spring of 1968. The offensive included, most notably, a focus in

11. See, e.g., the transcript of one such meeting in 1984 in Bukovsky 1996, pp. 87-88. Especially virulent were Dmitri Ustinov and Nikolai Tikhonov.

12. *Pravda*, January 27, 1959.

13. For a detailed analysis of dissent policy in the Khrushchev period, see Reddaway 1980.