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Review

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Source: *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (July 2015), pp. 590-592

Published by: the [Modern Humanities Research Association](#) and [University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.93.3.0590>

Accessed: 22-12-2015 00:17 UTC

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findings in particular stand out: 1) Slovak (and Czech) nationalism did not emerge immediately after the revolution but grew only out of local patriotism and then regionalism. Using the heretofore unexplored case of Civic Forum branches in Slovakia, Krapfl shows how Bratislava ultimately 'conquered' Slovakia by stoking nationalism and how OF and VPN might have forged a different relationship between the two entities, and 2) local actors throughout the country played a central role in the revolution by conducting no confidence votes and recall elections that allowed them to oust workplace directors, democratize unions, reconstruct local administration and change political representatives. Without these actions, which often had to overcome significant resistance from entrenched powerholders, much of the Communist apparatus or at least its personnel would have remained in place.

These new findings, as well as several others, are important and persuasive. Where the book falls short is in showing the roots of these phenomena and their consequences. Are the interpretations and actions of the public in Czechoslovakia specific to this country (if so, why?) or are they applicable to all revolutions? Both claims find some support in the text. What impact did this sort of public involvement have on future developments in the Czech and Slovak Republics? Krapfl claims that the symbolic system created by the revolution remains and generates legitimacy today but offers little evidence for this proposition. Social scientifically inclined scholars may thus ask their traditional questions of 'Why?' and 'So what?' about this impressive work of historical reconstruction.

Nevertheless, the book does take a considerable step forward in the study of the fall of Communism. It is persuasive and ground-breaking in showing the involvement of the public in the Gentle or Velvet Revolution and the importance of this involvement for breaking the grip of the Communists on power and setting the country on a path to dissolution. It may also provide inspiration to contemporary actors in the Czech and Slovak Republics as well as elsewhere that ordinary people can and do have an influence on even the grandest political changes.

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Gorham, Michael S. *After Newspeak: Language Culture and Politics in Russia from Gorbachev to Putin*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2014. xvii + 234 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$24.95 (paperback).

FOR much of the twentieth century, the Russian language was a trusty resource of Soviet patriotism. From the early 1930s, Marxist arguments were discarded

and language policy became a matter of setting and policing norms. Notions of correctness were drawn partly from a selective appropriation of the national literary heritage and partly from Soviet construals of 'high' style. Bolstered by telling interventions from Gor'kii and Stalin, Soviet people became convinced that talking proper was a crucial component of culturedness. In the post-Stalin era, as access to education expanded and the norms of the intelligentsia spread to a mass public, the publishing industry saw a boom in advice literature on *kul'tura rechi*, while the broadcast media also played their part in dispensing linguistic counsel. The promotion of the 'great, mighty' (*velikii, moguchii*) language of Turgenev and Tolstoi was not obviously compatible with the leaden rhetoric of the Brezhnev generation of the political elite. But in both of these discursive realms the sense of a timeless norm prevailed.

As Michael S. Gorham demonstrates astutely in his new book, Russia's norm-setters had a much tougher time from 1986 onwards. The first culprit was the slippery term *glasnost'*. For the whole of the modern era, from Faddei Bulgarin in 1826 to the Soviet Constitution of 1977, this concept had been carefully circumscribed by the establishment: *glasnost'* was about giving the people enough information to agree in a more enthusiastic way with the decisions of their rulers. Gorbachev himself operated in this tradition until 1986, when he gave legitimacy to a more contentious interpretation of the word: *glasnost'* was now to be understood as debate and discussion. When he later tried to step back from the implications of his own rhetoric, it was already too late. At the 19th Party Conference in 1988 the *apparatus* could launch a determined rearguard action by contrasting their own deeds with the democratic babble of their opponents, but at the fully televised Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 they were fighting a losing rhetorical battle.

In the early 1990s, the floodgates opened: people seemed to be talking any way they liked with complete impunity. It is easy, and in many ways justified, to see this in terms of liberation from Soviet-era cliché and political correctness. But Gorham also conveys the shock and disorientation brought by linguistic *bespredel* (one of the characteristic words of the time). At a moment when traditional Soviet careers were running into the sand and prices were galloping out of control, people could not even count on their everyday cultural currency of language. One did not have to be a Russian Mary Whitehouse to be troubled that tabloidization had displaced Soviet high-mindedness, or that it was now acceptable to be ungrammatical on air or foul-mouthed almost anywhere. Loan words like *imidzh*, *vaucher* and *killer* seemed to demonstrate a connection between ugly foreign provenance and immoral semantic content. Yet a sizeable section of the population responded to the new opportunities by reading how-to literature on rhetoric (a boom genre of the post-Soviet era) or by aestheticizing, and making patriotic, the good old-fashioned Russian curse. The demagogue Vladimir Zhirinovskii talked of the need to 'rehabilitate *mat*' (p. 84).

The custodians of the norm fought back as best they could. Time was on their side: at the turn of the millennium post-Soviet perturbations, including those of a linguistic variety, began to abate. Yet the rhetorical presidency of Vladimir Putin was dialectical synthesis, not return to the Soviet norm. For the most part, Putin's speech exuded the technocratic competence of a model Soviet functionary. But it was also laced with ostensibly baffling vulgarities — most infamously, his threat to hunt down Chechen terrorists in the toilet (*mochit' v sortire*). Putin sensed the pent-up aggression of the population and repeatedly gave it expression. He also made full use of the tried-and-tested 'good tsar' scenario, but adapted it for the televisual age in the marathon annual Q&A sessions known as 'Direct Line with the President'.

Although the cultural traumas of the 1990s were receding into the past, Putin did not have everything his own way. Early in the new millennium the Russian Internet came to maturity, which implied new opportunities for civic mobilization independent of the state. Parts of the ruling elite (notably Dmitrii Medvedev) tried to exploit the medium for their own ends, but the new speed and range of horizontal communication in Russian society made Putin's patriarchal performances seem anachronistic in 2011.

Throughout the book, and especially in his account of the near-present, Gorham shows just how revealing language can be as an object of inquiry. On the one hand, it is acutely and directly political: especially at turbulent times such as the period 1986–2000, it reflects the struggles for authority and legitimacy that are taking place in society and the state. On the other hand, it is rather more than the rhetorical tool of the powers-that-be. In tandem with new technologies such as the Internet, it has an organic strength of its own. It develops in unpredictable ways and with the participation of a great many actors: not just Kremlin *polittekhnologi* but also professional linguists, bloggers and broadcasters. *After Newspeak* is all the more welcome for treating the entire thirty-year period since Gorbachev's arrival in power: there are still very few studies that cross the divides of 1991 and 2000 with such illuminating results. In general, Gorham's account is stronger on the normative discussions surrounding language than on actual rhetorical practice. This gives the book a strong backbone and keeps it economical. But this fine study whets the appetite for further investigation of Russian rhetoric in the audiovisual age (and beyond).

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