

The  
Carl Beck  
Papers

in Russian &  
East European Studies

Number 1104

Richard J. Brody

Ideology and Political  
Mobilization

The Soviet Home Front During World War II

REES

THE CENTER FOR RUSSIAN  
& EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

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No. 1104, October 1994

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ISSN 08899-275X

*The Carl Beck Papers*

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## Introduction

World War II was a defining experience for the identity of the Stalin-era Soviet Communist Party. The war accentuated fundamental problems in the identity of the civilian party as an instrument of political mobilization. The war also highlighted a deeper disjuncture between popular political mentalities within Soviet society and the official ideology of the Stalin-era party. This essay will examine efforts by party political organs to propagate the official ideological line among party members during World War II and the problems party leaders encountered in training political workers to transmit the party's propaganda message to the public.<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to the official image of discipline and unity in wartime work, leaders of the wartime Soviet Communist Party encountered profound difficulties in the effective mobilization and political socialization of party members to perform political work. For party leaders, the central problem that emerged during the war was a conflict between the ideal and the real in agitprop work: between what political personnel were supposed to do—the agenda set for them from above—and what political cadres actually did—how orders and expectations transmitted from above were transmuted through contact with agitprop cadres below. This political cultural gap between party propaganda leaders and ordinary agitators represented a larger rift between popular beliefs and official ideology.

But for scholars, wartime problems in agitprop highlight something much deeper about the nature and purpose of the party's political propaganda activities. We are accustomed to thinking of ideology and propaganda as attempts to inculcate a set of political cultural values or as a belief system based upon an explanatory framework.<sup>2</sup> For some significant portion of the party membership, Marxism-Leninism (the party's official ideology) no doubt constituted a system of sincere political belief and a prism through which they interpreted their world. To the extent that party political activists were able to propagate this belief system and convince citizens of its validity and power, they were able to extend their influence and world view among the *narod*.

However, the wartime experience of agitprop work taught a different lesson and suggests a rethinking of the way historians view agitprop work, as well as the way we conceptualize the instrumental or mobilizational purposes of the official party ideology. Instead of being merely a tool of persuasion or a framework by which others could be taught to interpret reality, the official ideology and the political organs dedicated to its propagation played additional and much different roles.

## **Pre-war Disarray**

According to Peter Kenez, "The Bolsheviks built an extraordinary propaganda apparatus and spent a great deal of time, energy, and scarce resources to indoctrinate the Soviet people."<sup>3</sup> In the early years of Soviet power, the party developed an elaborate system of political propaganda that included not only the periodical press and book publishing, but also oral agitation networks based in party cells, clubs, and village and city reading rooms; political education schools within the party and Komsomol; literacy and education campaigns that were closely coordinated with agitprop work; and intensive use of film and graphic agitation media for propaganda purposes. In addition, the army also served an important role in efforts to indoctrinate young people and to spread the party's political message.<sup>4</sup> By the late 1930s, the agitprop network was broad and highly institutionalized, officially encompassing almost all areas of party and state activity.<sup>5</sup>

Party personnel were involved in four major areas of political work. The first was recruitment to the party. The second area was production work in the factory and on the kolkhoz. This activity, conducted most intensively by lower-level agitators, included efforts to promote "socialist competition" and plan fulfillment, campaigns to encourage more economical use of resources, lectures on the role of particular factories or workshops in wartime production and other reports on

explicitly production-related themes. Production agitation was also supposed to involve work on improving living and working conditions.

The third and fourth areas of political work—mass agitation and ideological training—were closely related, yet distinct in their focus. As the name implies, mass agitation (or mass political work, as it was also known) consisted of political work among the general population and included all presentations and speeches on current events by factory and kolkhoz agitators, report-givers, lecturers, propagandists and other party officials. It was a combination of news and political interpretation. In this format, agitprop cadres presented the party's version of war, and domestic and international news to mass audiences: the current state of the war, the party line in international affairs, Nazi activities in occupied territories, Nazi ideology about the Soviet peoples, allied activities in the Pacific, etc.

Closely related to mass agitation work, yet distinct because it focused mostly on the education of party cadres themselves, was ideological training. Some of this work was conducted by institutes of higher ideological education located in Moscow and Leningrad. But much more of it was performed in evening "universities" of Marxism-Leninism, short- or medium-term seminars, local study circles (*kruzhki*) and correspondence courses. On a regular and continuing basis, ideological work was reinforced and supplemented by specially trained propagandists who lectured on various aspects of theory: dialectical materialism, the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, party history and other themes relating to the party's official ideology.

Political agitation was based in and conducted from the propaganda departments of party committees at the *oblast'* (provincial), city and *raion* (district) levels. In addition, agitators, propagandists, report-givers and other personnel also staffed separate institutions, such as the *partkabinet* ("party study room"), which were specifically dedicated to political work. Although institutions like the *partkabinet* specifically concentrated on ideological training, they also trained agitators for mass political work.

This network of political agitation institutions was impressive and highly elaborated. However, despite the breadth and energy of agitprop activities in the 1920s and 1930s, and the emphasis it received at the highest levels of the party, political work was plagued by serious problems on the eve of war.<sup>6</sup> In January 1941, G.F.Aleksandrov, head of the Central Committee's Directorate of Propaganda and Agitation (UPA), convened a meeting of top officials of the political apparatus and representatives of party committees from around the country. Aleksandrov opened the meeting with immediate and harsh criticism of party political operations. In his opening broadside, he complained that party agitation work was amateurish:

As you know, our propaganda has changed in a fundamental way over the past two years. Agitation itself is more neglected and is the most primitive area of party work. So we need to talk about how we can escape this neglect and primitiveness in agitation work.<sup>7</sup>

Participants at the four-day gathering echoed and elaborated upon these criticisms. They sketched a critical portrait of party political work, discussing deficiencies in the organization of agitprop bureaus, the recruitment and training of political cadres and the quality of the message that agitators were conveying to Soviet citizens.<sup>8</sup>

Apathy and bureaucratic indifference to agitprop work was a prominent theme of complaint. A.D. Serov, secretary of the party committee at the Moscow factory *Serp i molot* (Sickle and Hammer) said that, although party rules dictated that all party members perform general agitation every day, in reality only those specifically assigned to do agitprop actually performed it. Others, perhaps more "qualified" to do the work, sat idly by, saying "It's not my business." Serov also complained that the policy of assigning political work to *agitkollectivy* (agitation collectives) gave party secretaries an excuse to delegate agitation work to subordinates and thereby ignore it.<sup>9</sup> The other political officers present agreed that party and soviet leaders generally tried to avoid agitational work.

Moreover, even those assigned to agitprop frequently ignored it. N.F. Rybov, an engineer at Moscow's *Krasnyi proletariat* (Red Proletariat) factory noted that half of the agitators in the machine-building shop ignored their political assignments, as did over half of their superiors.<sup>10</sup> Still others spoke of party organizations that only conducted agitation around formal state holidays.

The problem lay not strictly with those below. It was also traceable to the gulf between the expectations of those directing the "high" culture of official ideology from above and the understandings of those actually charged with performing agitation below. Several officials at the January 1941 meeting complained that lecture themes and political agitation guides provided by the UPA and other organizations in Moscow were too abstract or irrelevant to the realities of daily agitation. Instead of talking about abstract questions of class or government policy, these leaders wanted themes more relevant to the problems of production.

Furthermore, the officials argued that many agitators simply could not understand the language of centrally supplied agitational materials. I.G. Lysenko of the Ukrainian party central committee noted that essays in the journal *Sputnik agitatora* (a journal under the jurisdiction of Aleksandrov's UPA) were written in a language and on a level comprehensible only to the most highly trained agitators. Oddly enough, Aleksandrov agreed: "The editorial board of *Sputnik agitatora* thinks that agitators are people's commissars, but we want to make them agitators." Lysenko remarked that "Some journals should be shelved in the archive immediately after publication. We need to think seriously about improving agitation."<sup>11</sup>

Participants at the January 1941 meeting also complained that too much agitation was of a superficial or strictly informational character and that too many agitators performed their duties simply by reading newspapers aloud, instead of explaining the news or answering public questions.

The concerns of Aleksandrov and his colleagues were well founded because their critiques of prewar political operations foreshadowed the problems that would beset the political organs during the war. When hostilities began, not only had problems in agitprop not been solved, but they were exacerbated by the conditions

of wartime life. If the party's mission as an instrument of persuasion, using agitprop organs to inculcate a specific value system, had been problematic before the war, the war would reveal this contradiction even more starkly and would emphasize the more important role that official ideology played within party life as a language of power. But the first aspect of agitprop that the war highlighted was its importance not as a tool of persuasion or a political language, but as a tool of simple communication.

## Wartime Disintegration

The war brought substantial structural change to civilian agitprop operations. At the beginning of hostilities, almost all civilian institutions of agitation and ideological training were converted into *agitpunkty*, or agitation points. The *agitpunkt* was supposed to coordinate all training of political cadres and agitation activities. *Agitpunkty* were also supposed to be set up at all draft mobilization points and at railroad stations (where they were also known as "evacuation points") to serve draftees and evacuees in transit as well as in hospitals to serve wounded soldiers. Within the propaganda departments, new sections on propaganda, literature, film, radio and art were opened. In villages and in areas without *agitpunkty*, political cadres were supposed to staff or visit the *izba-chital'naya* (reading hut), the *krasnyi ugolok* (red corner) and the local library.<sup>12</sup>

These institutions were supposed to coordinate the work of agitators by providing instruction and consultation in political agitation; by conveying new propaganda themes and lecture materials; by assembling travelling lecture groups; by assigning agitators and propagandists to conduct work throughout the oblast; and by reviewing the work of party agitators. The institutions themselves were also supposed to function as centers of political agitation and as sources of information on the course of the war through *besedy* (political discussions), *chitki* (newspaper



readings), lectures and the use of other mass gatherings, all of which had been part of the party's agitation repertoire since the 1920s.

However, in wartime mass agitation work, the first and most basic official task of party cadres proved not to be disseminating propaganda *per se*, but providing a basic communications link with the urban and rural populations. As official representatives of Soviet power, agitators were charged not only with propagandizing the party's political line and trying to iron out production-related problems. They were also supposed to provide general news surveys about the war and local events, and to answer general questions from their audiences.

Agitprop personnel assumed such a broad informational role, in part, due to the organizational weakness of the Soviet state and the difficulties of wartime communications. Communications throughout the rear were extremely difficult, especially during the first two years of the war. Although party political organs had always been thinly spread throughout the country and networks of communication were often tenuous (particularly in rural areas), the war exacerbated these problems immensely. Academician V.I. Vernadskii, riding the evacuation train from Moscow, noted in his diary on 18 July 1941: "The complete lack of information about the war since [we left] Moscow is staggering. Even in the cities people don't know [anything]. Our latest information from newspapers comes from 16 July."<sup>13</sup> Women working in the fitting shop of the Stalin automobile factory in Moscow reported in early August 1941:

Political reports stopped at our factory when fascist air attacks on Moscow began. We have no radio. We work until 8:00 p.m. and once we get home go immediately to the bomb shelter. We are living practically on rumors alone.<sup>14</sup>

These difficulties were partly attributable to party and state actions themselves. On 25 June 1941—the fourth day of war—the Sovnarkom ordered the confiscation of all private radio receivers. The avowed purpose of banning privately

held radios was to control the dissemination of information, to prevent Soviet citizens from listening to non-Soviet radio broadcasts, and to ensure that all listening occurred in a controlled setting. Party officials were especially concerned that Soviet citizens not listen to German propaganda broadcasts. Protocols of party meetings throughout rear areas in the first months of the war are peppered with orders to improve the speed and efficiency of the collection of private radios, as well as instructions on penalties for violations of the order.

Reports from below validated the fears of party officials that unfiltered German propaganda was reaching Soviet citizens. In August 1941, the Kuibyshev *obkom* (*oblast* party committee) noted that many party and soviet personnel had failed to turn in their radio receivers, which promoted "the spreading of all kinds of anti-Soviet rumors." Similar orders as well as reports of listening to "counter-revolutionary" or enemy broadcasts on private or state radios were found in the records of Leningrad, Novosibirsk and Omsk *oblast*'s, among others.<sup>15</sup>

But the points of "collective listening" that were supposed to replace individually owned radios often did not work due to lack of personnel, lack of or faulty equipment, and electricity shortages. Radio communications were also rendered more difficult at the beginning of the war by a switch from long-wave to short-wave transmission. Since most civilian radio receivers were not equipped for short-wave reception, they could not receive central radio broadcasts.<sup>16</sup> In many rural areas the situation was worse, because authorities had been overzealous in implementing the Sovnarkom order on radio confiscations. In addition to removing radios from private hands, they also removed radio receivers from kolkhoz clubs, reading rooms and other areas that were supposed to serve as points of collective listening. D. Polikarpov, director of the Sovnarkom radio committee, reported gross violations of the Sovnarkom order by officials of *oblast*' communications departments and radio committees who, with the blessing of local party officials, were trying to "over-insure" compliance with the order. In Penza *oblast*', all radio receivers dedicated to public use were confiscated. Mass confiscations also occurred in Vologda, Iaroslavl' and other *oblast*'s.<sup>17</sup>

As a consequence, many areas of the country were reduced to receiving radio transmissions over increasingly crowded and unreliable telephone and telegraph lines.<sup>18</sup> Already in October 1941, the Sverdlovsk *obkom* was reporting that the disintegration of local radio networks was "depriving the population of the opportunity to listen to political news."<sup>19</sup>

Urban radio networks often did not operate much better. One year into the war, Polikarpov reported that radio broadcasting in many large enterprises and in *raion* (district) centers was in an exceptionally poor state. At the Molotov automotive factory in Gor'kii, a local radio network with over 13,000 receiving sets was in complete disuse, as were many similar networks in other enterprises. Limits on factory and *raion* radio broadcasting networks of ten minutes per day also prevented the use of the radio for broadcasting local news or local political agitation.<sup>20</sup>

The technical and personnel problems that plagued radio transmission hit film distribution even harder. Shortages of technical personnel, equipment and theater space curtailed efforts to show newsreels and films to urban audiences. The difficulties of wartime mails also impaired film distribution. Even when films and space were available, increased work hours and the need to spend greater amounts of time searching for food and other necessities limited people's opportunities to attend the cinema. In the countryside, personnel and equipment difficulties were worse. The requisitioning of great numbers of civilian vehicles for military use and severe gasoline shortages greatly restricted the activities of mobile cinemas (*kino-peredvizhki*). Reports flowed in regularly to the center about kolkhozes that had not seen a film for the entire period of the war.<sup>21</sup>

Problems in film projection continued throughout the war and were so bad that the Central Committee reprimanded Ul'ianovsk *oblast'* in September 1944. A large part of the *oblast'*s residents, especially the rural population, had no opportunity whatsoever to see films. In fourteen *raions* of the *oblast'*, mobile cinemas were not working at all. In the remaining *raions*, they worked irregularly and were serving only an "insignificant" portion of the population.<sup>22</sup> Matters were

not much better in cities and towns of the *oblast'*—including the *oblast'* center of Ul'ianovsk—where theaters were in disorder and many (if not all) projectors were not in working order.

The disintegration of radio and film networks was especially important in view of a reduction in the quantity and frequency of publication of the periodical press. Due to the wartime paper shortage and increased number of military newspapers, the number of civilian newspapers fell precipitously in the first months of war, as did the size of print runs and the frequency of publication. To fill the gap, party committees were instructed to make better use of the remaining newspapers through the expanded use of newspaper display windows (*vitriiny*), public readings (*chitki*) and the collection of used newspapers in cities to send to the countryside.<sup>23</sup>

Even those newspapers and journals that were published often did not reach their intended destinations. And the large number of subscriptions for administrative agencies prevented individuals from subscribing to much of the central, republican and *oblast'* press. The distribution problem was aggravated by lack of public display space. In Saratov and Vologda, for example, there were very few newspaper display windows, despite *obkom* orders to install more. The newspaper shortage hit rural areas hardest and continued throughout the war. Many rural *raions* received an infinitesimal number of newspapers.<sup>24</sup> According to an August 1943 *Propagandist* editorial:

The overwhelming number of central newspapers, as a rule, sit in *raion* centers and do not get to the rural reader. For example, in Kharobskii *raion* of Vologda *oblast'*, only one copy of *Pravda*, of 41 copies received in the *raion*, makes it to the village. All remaining copies remain in the *raion* center. Of 75 copies of *Sotsialisticheskoe zemledelie* received in the *raion*, only 44 are sent to the kolkhozes. In the reading rooms and rural libraries of Kharovskii *raion* there are no copies of *Pravda* or *Izvestiia*. Even the *oblast'* newspaper *Krasnyi sever* is not received by all kolkhozes.

Of 355 copies of the *oblast'* newspaper designated for the *raion*, 216 sit in the *raion* center.<sup>25</sup>

In an October 1943 report, a party inspector in Kazakhstan complained that less than 10% of the newspapers received by the *oblast'* actually reached the countryside. The rest of the newspapers were received by state organizations. Some government functionaries were subscribing to several copies of a single newspaper "in order to use it for wrapping or other daily needs."<sup>26</sup>

Those newspapers and journals that did reach the city or the village were often hopelessly late. This aggravated an already bad situation, since much news (especially about military defeats) was officially reported very late to begin with. In Tula *oblast'* in September 1942, central newspapers often reached *raions* 7 to 10 days late. Even *raion* newspapers took two or three days to get to distant *selsoviets*.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, with print, film and radio media so tenuous a means of communication, political agitators became more important, in the eyes of party leaders, for conveying elementary news about the course of the war and for transmitting the party's message, two activities which were of course closely intertwined.

However, and much to the consternation of those who directed party political work, the agitprop network also proved to be a poor communications link. Agitprop personnel were effective neither at getting the party's message out, nor often simply at providing news. In fact, political agitation work, problematic on the eve of the war, broke down almost as soon as the war began. The problem was in part a matter of organization and priorities. The mass exodus of political cadres to the front often left too few people (or no one at all) to conduct political agitation, to give political lectures, to distribute propaganda posters or otherwise to carry on the work of political mobilization.

The most frequent complaint about political work from party officials at all levels in each of the four *oblast's* under study was that party cadres had abandoned

agitprop work—in factories, in apartment blocks, in dormitories and in rural areas—as soon as the war began. For instance, when the Sverdlovsk *obkom* met in mid-November 1941 to discuss failures to fully convert industrial, agricultural, party organizational and mass agitation work to a military footing, *obkom* officials blamed local leaders: "Many leading personnel in enterprises, cities, and raions have kept themselves aloof (*samoustranilis*´) from daily and personal participation in mass-political work, leaving it in neglect."<sup>28</sup> As with problems in party recruitment, the disintegration of agitprop work seemed worse in the countryside.<sup>29</sup> Published complaints and intra-party discussion about the abandonment of agitprop work in both urban and rural party committees continued as the war went on.

In many cases, agitprop was abandoned as part of an organizational triage that put it below production work in the list of wartime priorities. When asked to explain the neglect and abandonment of political work, party workers often cited lack of time and personnel. Working long shifts in industrial and agricultural production for the front, cadres had much less time to conduct political agitation. As Shcherbakov recounted in May 1942, many political workers considered plan fulfilment their single and overarching task, separate from and superior to political work. According to Shcherbakov, party members and ordinary workers sometimes even complained openly:

Why are you talking to me about meetings, about recruitment to the party, about political discussions (*besedy*) and the like when people are struggling to fulfill the plan? We'll fulfill the plan—then we'll do party work.<sup>30</sup>

Instead of being used according to their prescribed purpose, agitators and propagandists were often sent from cities and *raion* centers as plenipotentiaries (*upolnomochennye*) to assist in and supervise agricultural work, a particularly frequent area of criticism at the all-union and *oblast*' levels. At an October 1942 meeting, the head of Kuibyshev *obkom*'s organizational department complained that the majority of *raikoms* had transformed the heads of party organizational

departments (*zavorgy*) into permanent plenipotentiaries who travelled from one special project to another, spending no time at their official jobs. In one *raion*, the *zavorg* and party *instruktor* had "sat out" the entire summer as plenipotentiaries. 2Another *instruktor* worked three to four months as the chauffeur for the first secretary of the *raikom*.<sup>31</sup>

In cities, notably in Kuibyshev, agitators were used as street cleaners, as ordinary industrial workers, to verify allocation of retail products and to regulate distribution of ration cards. Despite an *obkom* decision condemning this practice and ordering *raikoms* and *gorkoms* to use agitprop cadres for their prescribed purpose of conducting mass political work, problems continued. During the summer of 1942, the Kuibyshev *oblast'* towns of Ul'ianovsk (Lenin's birthplace) and Syzran' had no working agitprop cadres—all had been assigned to the kolkhozes, many for several months at a time.<sup>32</sup>

Many plenipotentiaries lived a type of indentured servitude— forbidden to leave the kolkhoz, held under virtual house arrest by kolkhoz presidents. They were, in effect, beholden to two masters: to the kolkhoz president desperate for agricultural workers; and to party committees suspicious of kolkhoz presidents.

In the countryside the main problem in the use of agitprop cadres is that our cadres are converted for the entire spring-summer and fall agricultural period into ordinary plenipotentiaries of party *raikoms*, assigned for the entire summer period and long months to one kolkhoz without the right to travel to the *raion* center. People perform not propaganda work, but instead work least of all on agitation, and more on problems like seed inventories, the use of horses, verifying the work of kolkhoz and *selsovet* [rural soviet] presidents. They do everything, but least of all agitprop work.<sup>33</sup>

Many agitprop institutions were closed and *agitpunkty*, reading huts, red corners and other institutions of political agitation underwent a progressive physical

and organizational deterioration.<sup>34</sup> Many lacked fuel for heating and light for reading.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the war, especially in the countryside, institutions of political work were few and far between.

With housing and office space at a premium, many rural political agitation committees lacked places to meet or lost their facilities to other uses—as offices for other organizations, such as *zemotdels* (rural departments), or as grain storage houses. It was often difficult to reopen libraries when space became available because, during the period of closure, whole collections of books were stolen or destroyed by inadequate storage procedures.<sup>36</sup> Komsomol offices in Kuibyshev *oblast'* suffered particularly from the shortage of office space and furniture. In one *raion*, the Komsomol committee had no chairs—their officers could sit down only when an employee of the party organizational department left the office.<sup>37</sup>

## **Distortion and Disdain**

Wartime priorities and disorganization took a heavy toll on agitprop work. But even when agitprop operated, a larger cultural gap between the expectations of the guardians of official ideology above and the mentalité of agitprop cadres below prevented most agitators from performing their work on the party leadership's own terms. Party reports are filled with criticisms of agitators for "distorting" the official, intended message or for conducting agitation on a "low" political or theoretical level. "Distortion" of the party line took many forms, from the trivial to the (politically) very serious.<sup>38</sup>

One of the most frequent distortions was when agitators abandoned the highly formulaic official line and attempted to put war news in terms more understandable to themselves and their public. A particularly widespread example of this phenomenon was when agitators and propagandists predicted Soviet successes or explained German military defeats in terms of objective factors of



climate and terrain, instead of the officially preferred framework of the superiority of the Soviet system, Stalin's military leadership and other factors intrinsic to the Soviet socio-political order.

In September 1941, the Novosibirsk *oblast'* newspaper, *Sovetskii sibir'* received an official reprimand for publishing an article entitled "Winter—Our Ally" and a poem, both of which alleged that winter frosts would play a decisive role in defeating the enemy.<sup>39</sup> This particular theme in the interpretation of war news enjoyed consistent popularity during the war, among both rural and urban residents. In late 1944, in speeches to the Moscow *gorkom* and the Moscow *aktiv*, Shcherbakov condemned historians and propagandists who asserted that the huge breadth of the Soviet Union had proved decisive in defeating the Germans by giving Soviet troops room to retreat and gather strength. Shcherbakov vociferously rejected such arguments, because they attributed the strength of the Soviet state to its size, not to Soviet power itself. Agitators were supposed to say that the Soviet Union would win the war not because of objective reasons of land size, but because Soviet power, which had defeated the tsar and was based on industrialization and collectivization, had allowed the country to build and supply a strong army while uniting the various peoples of the old Russian empire.<sup>40</sup>

Yet much to the chagrin of officials like Shcherbakov, the "War and Peace" analogy lived a life of its own. This was partly the fault of high party propaganda officials—including Shcherbakov and Alexandrov—who lapsed into such explanations themselves at moments of crisis or excitement.<sup>41</sup> But the idea that winter would play a decisive role in Soviet military fortunes was also a good representation of the popular discourse on the war. Explaining the conflict in these terms was easier and more natural for agitators than explaining that the Soviet Union would triumph because its socio-economic system was superior to Nazi Germany's (official discourse).

Some agitators "speculated" about war news and events through the use of popular parables or metaphors, to make the news more understandable both in terminology and imagery. At an October 1944 Moscow *obkom* meeting, officials

lamented a lapse in control over the ideological content of lectures on the international situation and on current events. Lecturers were said to be adding material of their own choosing instead of basing their arguments on official analysis of the political situation, materials from the party press or selections from the works of Stalin. Moscow officials claimed that some lecturers were even basing their talks on "biblical quotations learned from their grandmother."<sup>42</sup>

Still other agitators, completely throwing aside the party line on the war, participated in peasant superstition as a way of divining who would win the conflict. In July 1942, comrade Liashenko, the Kuibyshev *obkom* propaganda secretary, gave accounts of villages where peasants played "spin the bottle" or read "tea leaves" to predict who would win the war. He also related stories of party organizers who either watched or participated as peasants read cards to determine the fate of relatives at the front.<sup>43</sup>

The character of agitprop sometimes approached popular theater.<sup>44</sup> Given the dearth of war news and the fact that political workers were quite frequently no better informed than their audiences, speculation about future Soviet military fortunes was endemic in public speeches by agitators and in private conversations. Agitators departed from the party line (or embellished war news) in an effort to make their agitation more interesting, to offer hope and encouragement during times of military setbacks, and to respond to and engage audiences on the topics that interested them most. Party leaders condemned this as "sensationalism" and improper distortion of the party line. In June 1942, Iaroslavskii wrote that some lecturers wished to announce "something that no one knows" and made unsubstantiated reports to their audiences. According to Iaroslavskii, when such "facts" were later disproven by events, lecturers lost authority before the public.<sup>45</sup>

But in the first two years of the war, when military disasters came one upon the other, agitators frequently offered speculative observations on the imminent disintegration of the German army. Some of these assertions mirrored similar statements by party leaders. Others were completely *ad lib*. For example, after the military tide turned in 1943 and until the end of the war, agitators and lecturers

were continually admonished to stop telling people that victory was just around the corner. They were instructed to talk instead about the continued strength of the German army and the long period of intense fighting that lay ahead before the Nazis could be defeated. Once again, popular perceptions of the war and the discourse "below" prevented the effective dissemination of the official message.

At other times, agitators did try to speak in the party's own idiom. But the result was often, from the official point of view, just as counterproductive as agitators' embellishment of war news. Many "distortions of the party line" were in fact the errors of young, inexperienced and poorly educated agitators trying to make sense of the confusing and often alien language of official political discourse. For example, in October 1944, party secretary Goroshkin of Moscow's Proletarian *raion* complained that political workers were making serious mistakes, citing as an example a propagandist at the Dinamo factory who had called the Finnish government "democratic."<sup>46</sup>

Attempts to speak in the official idiom also produced unconscious burlesques of party speech—offensive to party authorities not just in their ridiculousness, but also in the ways they parodied the official discourse. For instance, party officials complained that some lecturers tried to paint the picture "more beautifully" and used "pretentious" or "impenetrable" language. Leningrad propaganda secretary Makhanov spoke of one lecturer who went overboard in saying: "The fascist is a dirty universal abscess, like a cancerous tumor that has tried and is trying to sink its purulent roots into the healthy body of the Soviet people." What was needed was "simple phrasing" and the avoidance of foreign words like "publication" (*publikatsiia*), "disloyalty" (*neloial'nost'*) and "reorientaion" (*pereorientirovka*). Makhanov's motivation was not simply linguistic xenophobia, but a desire to make sure that agitators were understood.<sup>47</sup>

Even those agitprop workers who tried to reproduce the official discourse did so in ways that revealed just how alien it was. In February 1944, Moscow *gorkom* members discussed the case of comrade P\_\_\_\_, who led a study circle at the factory *Tsvetnye metally*. At a November 1943 lesson entitled "The Bolshevik

Party in the Struggle for Dictatorship of the Proletariat," he was reported to have simply read incomprehensibly, for 35 minutes, from chapters five to seven of the *Short Course*. Talking of the February 1917 revolution which overthrew the tsar, he said:

Women went out on Petrograd streets, where they were met by agitators who explained the predatory character of the war. The revolution occurred in this way. The Bolsheviks went around the fronts and the bourgeoisie took power into its own hands.

Though roughly correct in its ideological essentials, this explanation of the events of February lacked the essence of what party ideologists wanted a teacher to say about the leading role of the party and Stalin. Moreover, his reference to "agitators" in the context of the streets of 1917 Petrograd showed how contemporary political forms had affected his modes of expression and perception in unintended ways.

Although reports of speculation and distortion of the party line occurred regularly in the records of the wartime party, far more frequent was the complaint that many agitators fulfilled their duties in a rote, dry, monotonous fashion, showing little enthusiasm for the work at hand. The dryness and monotony of standard party lectures and lecture technique was of course a problem before the war. But party officials conveyed a special urgency during the war to make party agitation more interesting and attractive, in substance and in presentation. Emelian Iaroslavskii admitted as much at the October 1942 inter-*oblast'* meeting of propaganda officials in Kuibyshev, where he remarked: "[t]he time has passed when we read dry reports, when the lecturer read a prepared text or read, unwaveringly, so to speak, according to his outline. We need to restructure our propaganda lectures and our agitation."<sup>48</sup>

But complaints proliferated in party journals and in party meetings that oral agitation and articles in the central and local press were composed in the same unimaginative, dry and monotonous fashion. In June 1943, UPA propaganda group leader, A. Petrosian, reported that agitprop in Sverdlovsk *oblast'* was being

conducted and directed by *partkabinety* "from above, by plan." According to Petrosian, subject-matter and outlines were "hackingly" copied from journals sent to enterprises, without any attention to the particular problems or concerns of the enterprise or group of workers in question.<sup>49</sup>

Many agitators fulfilled their duties simply by reading, without commentary, from Sovinformbiuro bulletins, local and central newspapers or pre-prepared agitprop pamphlets. The latter materials were meant to guide agitators and other propaganda workers, but usually were read without alteration or addition. In 1942, officials from Moscow's Proletarian *raion* reported that the majority of political agitators undertook no preparation for their work. At a meat-processing plant, an agitator named Avdeeva was unable to recall what she had read only five minutes after completing an oral newspaper reading. Agitator Titova, an assistant workshop head at the same plant, could not name the major countries in the Allied coalition. That same month, the Kuibyshev *oblast'* agitprop secretary asked how long the organization could tolerate agitators who refused to speak in public except to read Sovinformbiuro bulletins in a monotone, devoid of any emotion.<sup>50</sup> In the fall of 1943, Petrosian described how an agitator named Cheredov had given a two-hour lecture on the political situation in all the countries of the Axis bloc, as well as the neutrals, repeating word-for-word the expressions he had heard at an instructional meeting. Words such as "bluff" or references to "polemics in the Hitlerite bloc" went above the heads of his audience.<sup>51</sup>

Some party committees did not provide any assistance or preparatory materials at all for lecturers and agitators, but simply gave them a subject to speak on and an audience to speak to. This produced a complaint from Kuibyshev's propaganda secretary Boldovskii in December 1944 that lectures were proceeding "aimlessly." At the city's Voroshilov factory, the party committee had not provided any outline materials for its lecturers. The result, in Boldovskii's words, was a lecture on "democracy" in which it was not clear *which* democracy (presumably political or social) the lecturer was talking about. A second lecture entitled "The Papacy" was said to be similarly obtuse.<sup>52</sup>

Propaganda leaders also repeatedly admonished local propaganda officials to present not simply political surveys (*obzory*) or reviews of current events, but instead to analyze them. Yet widespread reports of such "head-in-the-book" agitators persisted throughout the Soviet rear (and also at the front). That agitprop personnel were refusing to engage in original analysis is hardly surprising. Even if they had the inclination and the time to sit down and compose their own material, the risk of making a political mistake was too great. Agitators were regularly censured or expelled from the party for making political mistakes in public lectures.

Apathy among agitprop workers proliferated throughout the war. In January 1945, officials in Chapaevsk, a regional center of Kuibyshev *oblast'*, noted the lack of enthusiasm for public speaking in particular and for agitprop in general:

We've seen how assignments are fulfilled. Analysis has revealed that many Communists fulfill assignments in a standard fashion, as if they lack any love or care for the matter assigned to them—they agitate and that's all.

And although many young Communists participated actively in party work, many older members took no part at all.<sup>53</sup>

For audiences, the results of mindless repetition of party cant were confusing or incomprehensible. In a typical report, the propaganda and agitation department of Moscow's Proletarian *raion* noted in 1944 that party personnel at an electric plant had requested that the Moscow *obkom* not send them any more lecturers. Recent lectures had been so boring and devoid of content that they had "created a negative opinion about lecturers among party workers." At an automotive factory located in the same *raion*, a lecturer had given a talk entitled "20 Years Without Lenin on the Leninist Path" to which the response had been similarly negative. Party members complained that the lecturer simply read verbatim (and with difficulty) from a sample talk in the *Agitator's Notebook (Bloknot agitatora)*. The agitprop department complained that this was the third incompetent lecturer sent to the plant and predicted that people would stop attending lectures altogether if this continued.<sup>54</sup>

Dull lectures almost certainly affected public attendance at propaganda events.<sup>55</sup> An American embassy official who attended a lecture in Kuibyshev in May 1942, entitled "The Current Moment in the War for the Fatherland" reported to Washington:

The crowd was capacity and evidently anticipated receiving information. When it became obvious that the lecture was nothing more than an extensive summary of the reasons given by the Soviet press as to why the USSR is winning the war and why Germany is losing it, the crowd was disappointed and many of the audience left before the end of the lecture.<sup>56</sup>

If audiences often had a negative opinion of political workers, agitprop provoked just as disdainful a reaction within the party, among low- and mid-level circles. Agitators were bored and confused by the sterility of Soviet political propaganda and its distance from and seeming irrelevance to daily life. They and local party leaders often demonstrated outright disdain for agitprop and organizational work itself.

A good example of this can be seen in the attitudes of party officials toward public speaking. One of the most regular and vociferous complaints from central party and *obkom* authorities throughout the war was that party, state and enterprise leaders did not make political speeches before mass audiences. Although lower-level agitators, lecturers and other propaganda staff were presenting political reports (*doklady*), first secretaries of *gorkoms* and *raikoms*, secretaries of city and *raion* soviets and directors of state enterprises were regularly castigated for failing to deliver many of these reports themselves and for instead assigning them to "secondary" officials. When challenged, these officials often defended their lack of action by citing a lack of time or by dismissing agitprop work as unimportant, saying that such public speaking was a duty of the propaganda department. *Propagandist* reported the case of one Goriachev, the head of a *raikom* agitation department. Each time he assigned a lecture to an executive-level party or state employee, that person

would complain to the *raikom* first secretary. The first secretary would then come to Goriachev and ask: "Why are you assigning him a speech? Do you think he has nothing [better] to do?"<sup>57</sup>

The same disdain or distaste for this work was reflected in reports about organizational and recruitment work. In December 1942, the head of Kuibyshev *obkom*'s organizational department reported:

Many *raikoms* continue to have a scornful attitude toward questions of party organizational work...27 *raikoms*...have not only done nothing to improve party organizational work, but do not even consider it necessary to outline and discuss measures to fulfill *obkom* decisions...Many *raikoms* have lost their taste for questions of party work, contenting themselves with the weakness and neglect of party organizational work.<sup>58</sup>

It might be said that disdain for agitprop work was not surprising. There was a widespread feeling that party members and state employees—especially executive-level cadres—simply had other, more important things to do.<sup>59</sup> And there was, after all, a war on. As in any war, people felt that the real action and glory of the war was at the front. Some political workers were ashamed at having to perform what they considered superfluous work. This sentiment was expressed strongly in a letter from political officer Ia. Zharkov to *Pravda* editor P.N. Pospelov in August 1944. Zharkov wrote that he wanted desperately to serve at the front and had been trying unsuccessfully to get a transfer for the past four years:

I know that all party members can't be at the front. But the best sons of the party are [at the front]... What will I say to my future son when he asks how many Germans I killed? How can I explain to him, before his world-view has formed, that the party gave me the task of cadre training?...I'm proud that my father was a Red Partisan and Red Guard during the Civil War, but my future sons and daughters won't be able to be proud that I participated in battles, was a participant in the Great Patriotic War, since



I was not at the front...I understand party discipline and my duty as a Communist. But I have one thought in my head—to fight.<sup>60</sup>

But on another level, disdain for political and ideological work ran much deeper and was more than a simple matter of wartime priorities or the shame of serving in the rear. For other political workers and party officials, the matter was more deeply problematic; it was a question not just of working at what they thought most important, but of compromising their authority. They were reluctant to speak before mass audiences because they feared that doing so would damage their popular authority. Sometimes it was a matter of rank and prestige. Many party cadres saw political agitation as inferior work, the province of those who had failed at other activities. At the January 1941 meeting at the UPA, when asked how he chose political personnel, P.F. Iudin of the state publishing house (OGIZ) responded: "If a person is literate, then he's made a propagandist. If he's not fit to be propagandist, then he's made an agitator."<sup>61</sup> The situation only became worse when the war started. In September 1941, Moscow *obkom* officials were reporting that in the town of Orekhovo-Zuevo (90 kilometers east of Moscow), 32 of 38 enterprise managers were refusing to perform mass agitation work, claiming that their "authority as production leaders would suffer."<sup>62</sup> Similar attitudes prevailed in the army.<sup>63</sup>

At other times and increasingly as the war went on, many ordinary agitators and leadership personnel actually grew afraid or embarrassed to perform political agitation. In October 1942, first secretary Iakovlev of the Kuibyshev *gorkom* said: "Our agitators are ashamed of speaking before workers, that is, they think that people will hound them because of deficiencies in daily life."<sup>64</sup> In July 1943, first secretary Zhavoronkov of the Kuibyshev *obkom* stated that party leaders were afraid of speaking before mass audiences.<sup>65</sup>

## Ideological Ennui

Given party organizational problems, the ways in which the propaganda message was refracted through the lens of popular mentalité and the contempt in which the work was held by large numbers of party members, agitprop could not have been effective as a tool of persuasion or as a method of inculcating official political values; it was highly problematic even as a means of communication. Even within the party, attempts to inculcate the official values of Marxism-Leninism and socialize new cadres into the official norms of party ideological life also showed little success.

In many ways, the disintegration of intra-party ideological training activities during wartime was even more complete than that of public agitation activities. This was partly the result of the closing, in the summer of 1941, of almost all party ideological institutes and training courses. In the words of one party official, "from the very first days of the war, party courses, party schools, ideological seminars were liquidated—the entire system of ideological training was rolled up."<sup>66</sup> But the breakdown in ideological work was also the result of the reluctance of party cadres to continue their studies. Just as higher party organs were unable to improve mass political agitation substantially, they proved equally ineffective in promoting ideological study among agitprop cadres themselves.

In the eyes of party political leaders, promoting ideological study preserved the functional identity of the party as a political institution or (or at least the illusion of it). In September 1941, A.S. Shcherbakov warned that as a consequence of the abandonment of political work, the Moscow party might simply disintegrate:

Isn't it clear, comrades, that this curtailment of intra-party work is leading toward a situation of great danger to the party organization, toward the uncoupling of party members, toward the end of the party organization as a unified collective, toward the disintegration of the organization and each

Communist thinking for himself, suffering through failures and drawing conclusions which "God implants in his soul" or which someone suggests. It's a very dangerous situation when the party collective stops being a party collective, when there are 100,000 or 120,000 Communists, but no party collective.<sup>67</sup>

For Shcherbakov, political work was needed to provide an identity to meld the party into a well-organized and cohesive unit (or collective). Without this intellectual and organizational glue, he feared that cadres would lose themselves and lose sight of the party as a collective mass political instrument.

In place of organized study, all Communists—both ordinary members, as well as agitprop personnel and executive-level cadres—were supposed to continue their ideological education by reading the *History of the Communist Party (Short Course)*. The *Short Course* was the party's basic text—an all-purpose manual of party history and ideology—and was required reading of all candidates for party membership, who were supposed to demonstrate their knowledge of it to become full party members. Printed in millions of copies and several different languages, it was readily accessible to practically all citizens. Nevertheless, despite the book's ubiquity and the exhortations of party officials to study it, most party members appear to have simply ignored the book. In the words of a Central Committee inspector at a Kuibyshev *obkom* meeting, most copies of the *Short Course* were "covered with dust."<sup>68</sup> Party members were also supposed to participate in ideological study circles and attend public lectures on various aspects of Marxism-Leninism. But despite the continuous and vociferous efforts of the leaders of party political organs, few Communists fulfilled this official party duty.

Party members stopped reading not only party history, but also the general party press. At party meetings, officials often cited examples of Communists who had not read a book in years, who paid no attention to party ideological journals, such as *Bol'shevik*, *Znamia*, *Propagandist*, or *Bloknot agitatora* and who only read (irregularly) a general newspaper such as *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Trud* or *Krasnaia*

*zvezda*.<sup>69</sup> Many of the the party's executive-level personnel, such as *gorkom* and *raikom* secretaries and the heads of various departments, were not engaging in ideological study. A comrade Ivanov, director of the Moscow post office, was publically excoriated in October 1944 for having completely abandoned ideological study during the war. Except for newspapers, he had read nothing since the war began. Despite having been a party member since 1919, he could not answer elementary questions of party history.<sup>70</sup> Speaking at a *gorkom* plenum about the drunken indiscretions of local party leaders, the secretary of Chapaevsk's department of propaganda and agitation blamed their "lapses" on a lack of ideological study:

The heart of the matter is that many economic and party leaders have stopped studying [ideology] during wartime...A significant number of very highly placed economic personnel—such as assistant factory directors and shop heads—have completely stopped studying, until recently limiting themselves to reading the newspaper. There was [even] a case in which an executive-level cadre was unable to say anything sensible about what was in the newspaper.<sup>71</sup>

The lectures that were supposed to replace the work of closed ideological institutes and supplement independent study often did not materialize. Instead, agitprop officials reported that the preponderance of public lectures by trained ideological cadres was on current events, war news or aspects of local production, not ideological or party historical themes.<sup>72</sup>

When ideological study circles were re-opened in the second half of the war, attendance was a continual problem. In 1944, 200 people were accepted into a newly created ideological training institute (a "university of Marxism-Leninism") in Kuibyshev. Of these, 150-160 actually began their studies, of which only 30 made it to exams at the end of the term. When asked why they had dropped out, some students (party members and officials of various ranks) answered that attendance was

inconvenient. Others were said to be on "endless" business trips. Local party organizations had to be ordered to release cadres to attend lessons once a week.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, not only among the general public, but also within the party itself, efforts to indoctrinate people into the party's official ideology failed miserably.<sup>74</sup> K.S. Karol, a Pole who spent the war years living and working in the Soviet Union, recounted the difference between the role socialist ideology played in Soviet and Polish political culture and how this related to his reasons for leaving the Soviet Union after the war:

It might seem paradoxical to leave the "socialist Fatherland" the better to struggle for socialism, but...Soviet political culture was based upon the Stalinist interpretation of the history of the workers' movement. I had discovered for myself how it was applied without the slightest effort being made to arouse people's interest, let alone their participation, in political life. This country, with its widespread reputation for skillful "indoctrination," simply kept on repeating the tired themes of a single book, the *History of the CPSU (Bolsheviks)*. It didn't care one iota about spreading socialist ideas. Under the colonels' regime in Lodz, I had known more friends who read Marx and the classics of socialist literature than I ever did in Rostov, where my earliest protector, the mathematician Motya, advised me to concern myself only with the natural sciences. Besides, hadn't I been made a member of the Komsomol without having been asked even a single question about my opinions or my readings?<sup>75</sup>

## **Agitprop, Discourse and Party Power**

Despite the general contempt for agitprop work among both the general population and the party, attendance at agitprop sessions was a very serious matter. In some cases people were compelled to listen to agitprop lectures. Compulsion could take on mild forms. For instance, since much agitation was conducted in

factory cafeterias at lunch breaks, workers had no choice but to listen, though their degree of attention is open to question. Indeed, party inspectors frequently complained that too much agitation was crammed into the lunch break, rendering it ineffective because workers had no time to stand in line, eat and then listen to the political report.<sup>76</sup> In other cases, workers were physically forced to listen to agitators. At the Moscow *obkom* meeting of September 1941, P. Pozdeev, assistant head of the propaganda department, recounted the case of a factory agitator who was doing an unintelligible oral newspaper reading. Workers tried to leave the room, but were prevented from doing so by people posted at the doors.<sup>77</sup>

This episode tells us much about the role that agitprop played within party and Soviet life. If visibly unwilling people were being *forced* to listen to an unintelligible agitprop lecture, then the purpose of requiring their attendance at the talk had little to do with the content of the lecture material or with efforts to inculcate political values contained within it. Instead, their attendance at the lecture had more of a symbolic than literal significance and had to do more with issues of control and power than understanding and belief.

When wartime party political officials talked about the importance of ideology and agitprop work, their concerns revealed much less concern about political indoctrination (promoting the official ideology as a value system) than about social control. For these party officials, control of the discourse—on the party's terms and in the official idiom—loomed high as the primary issue of concern.

Participation in the official ideological study program was important not so much to teach the rudiments of Marxism-Leninism (though this was not unimportant). Instead, active study of the party's ideology indicated participation in and acknowledgement of the party's system of power. In the winter of 1944, secretary Iakovlev of the Novosibirsk *gorkom* lamented the fact that local leadership cadres said they had no time to study ideology. For him, this meant that "a portion of the party and soviet leadership is simply leaving the system."<sup>78</sup> Iakovlev's statement sheds crucial insight into the purpose of ideological study. In his world view, the party's system of political language and ideological study constituted a type of

significatory space within which people indicated participation in party power. Thus, when cadres abandoned ideological study, party officials expressed a sense of loss of control over that individual.

Party leaders harangued members not to focus completely on production tasks and abandon political or organizational work because this participation in the party's system of political ritual, study and speech was critical to their own sense of social control. Controlling the discourse was not simply a matter of preventing seriously anti-Soviet speech, of which there was comparatively little (and the organs of repression were quite effective in limiting such overt expressions of disagreement). Instead, for a party which based its right to govern on its scientific and Messianic ideology, power was more properly represented and measured in the ability to make people speak in the party's own political idiom. Forcing people to articulate themselves in the terms of the party's formulaic political language was a way of representing and articulating relationships of power within Soviet society.

The party's totalizing ideology and its language represented a set of symbols or reference points, the adoption of which signified membership in the party as a social group and participation in its network of power. Party leaders' obsession with eliminating *otsebiatina* (*ad lib* propaganda) highlights the role that language played in the representation of power. On one level, the battle about *otsebiatina* was prosaic—an effort to curb the false, speculative and bizarre statements that poorly informed agitators might make.

But on another level, speaking *ot sebia* (literally "from oneself") was the supreme violation of an ideology with a totalizing and Messianic vision. The degree to which one spoke not *ot sebia*, but according to the linguistic conventions of party discourse, indicated participation in and acknowledgement of party authority and power. It was not necessarily a question of belief, but a instead one of acknowledging and participating in the party's discourse (its language of power). Changing self-perceptions was not the goal; the purpose was instead to force people to acknowledge party hegemony symbolically through their everyday speech.

The party was most successful at defining the public discourse: speeches, the press, etc. The linguistic idiom was strong within the party as well. The language of *obkom* meetings, though sometimes sharper in tone, usually differed little from the linguistic conventions and style of the public discourse. Within and outside the party, the political language was very much a symbolics of power—a way of recognizing and participating in party hegemony, as well as cementing the party's group solidarity and collective identity.<sup>79</sup>

Although the primary function had more to do with the representation of power than with defining social identities and political belief, the idiom did play this role to some degree as well. Lynn Hunt has noted the ways in which the linguistic idiom could play both roles (of signifying power and of defining identity or belief) in a revolutionary conjuncture:

Linguistic practice, rather than simply reflecting social reality, could actively be an instrument of (or constitute) power. When national guardsmen asked, "Are you of the Nation?" they were not trying merely to identify their friends in troubled times; they were actually helping to create a sense of national community—and, at the same time, they were establishing new ways to oppose that sense of community. Words did not just reflect social and political reality; they were instruments for transforming reality.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

The wartime experience thus demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the official ideology as a belief system among party members themselves—and by extension, among Soviet citizens more generally. At the same time, the war highlighted the much different role that agitprop played in reality. On one hand, that role was a practical one. Due to the organizational weaknesses of the party and the exigencies



of wartime, agitators became important not so much as the party's arm for reaching out to and indoctrinating Soviet citizens (spreading the received truth), but instead as bearers of simple news reports (a more literal truth) and as links in an elementary chain of communication.

On the other hand, within and outside the party, agitprop played a role that was symbolic and significatory. The aggressive propagation of the official ideology and political language of the Stalin-era party was not simply a failed attempt by political officers to instill a highly codified system of political belief and social values. The discourse of official ideology was also part of a larger symbolics of power, which included not just Stalinist political speech, but also the books and cultural symbols that constituted the canon and imagery of the official ideology. Forcing party members to speak in the party's linguistic idiom, read its books and celebrate its holidays was not just an effort of political persuasion; it was also part of a larger system of signification and representation of power.

However, that the language was in reality so poorly observed in the Soviet case, both among new recruits to the party and outside the party among the civilian population, indicates the tenuous nature of the party's power among the population on its own ideological terms, as a belief system, as an instrument of rule or as a way of signifying relationships of power. Significant numbers of people surely accepted the official ideology as a belief system. But many others did not and instead used the limited freedoms that war brought to express their feelings more openly about what mattered to them most. This should prompt us to look for other sources to explain mass social support, or at least mass acknowledgement of party hegemony.

In his analysis of propaganda during the 1920s, Peter Kenez states that:

Soviet propaganda taught people a political language and a pattern of behavior. First the people came to speak a strange idiom and adopt the behavior patterns expected of them, and only then did the inherent ideological message seep in. That is, people came to behave properly, from

the point of view of the regime, not because they believed its slogans but because by repeating the slogans they gradually acquired a "proper consciousness."<sup>81</sup>

Kenez was correct that agitprop taught people a language. But the present research contradicts his conclusions about belief. One generation after the revolution—after more than two decades of intensive propagandizing of the official ideology—very little had actually "seeped in."

## Notes

1. For analysis of recruitment practices during the war, as well as popular responses to agitprop work, see my larger study, "All for the Front? Party Authority, Popular Values and the Soviet Civilian Experience of World War II." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1994.

2. This paper is not about ideology *per se*. Rather, it addresses the party's attempts to inculcate its official world view among Soviet citizens. The theoretical debate about the meaning, basis and function of ideology has been a rich one and has produced a very large scholarly literature and a multiplicity of definitions and uses for the term, making it difficult to employ or work toward a single concept of "ideology." The term's meaning depends on the social, cultural, political or intellectual context in which it is being used. I use the term here to signify an explicit and codified theory of political, social and economic development which purports to explain contemporary reality and prescribes a future, better alternative.

Michele Barrett and Terry Eagleton have provided two recent and provocative surveys of theories of ideology. These authors analyze the development of approaches to ideology from Marx through the recent, more cultural theories of scholars such as Laclau and Mouffe and the discourse-centered work of Michel Foucault. Barrett advocates a Foucauldian perspective while Eagleton maintains a Marxist approach. Michele Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*. New York: Verso, 1991.

3. Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*. New York: Cambridge, 1985, p.251.

4. See: Mark Von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell, 1990.

5. Although his study did not address the 1930s, Kenez states that propaganda activities were greatly expanded in size and much narrowed in focus during the 1930s. Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, pp.256-260.

6. Although the party's efforts at political agitation and socialization during the 1920s have received a significant amount of scholarly attention, there has been no systematic work on the operation of party political organs during the 1930s. (Changes in the official ideology have, on the other hand, received a great deal of study.) Although the growing literature on Soviet labor and the social history of the 1930s touches frequently on questions of ideology in the

context of state-engineered social transformation, there has been no study of the operation of the political organs during that decade. Although it does not look at agitprop specifically, the nearest (and best) work for describing the activity of party political workers during the 1930s is Merle Fainsod's *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (New York: Vintage, 1963).

7. Rossiiskii tsentr Khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii, f.17, op.125, d.14, l.15. (Hereafter referred to as RTsKhIDNI. RTsKhINDI is the new name of the former Central Party Archive.)

8. The meeting was notable not only for the level and frankness of criticism, but also for the fact that Aleksandrov was determined that speakers avoid speaking in the party's formulaic idiom and instead talk simply and concisely about the problems they faced. At several points in this meeting he interrupted speakers to challenge overly optimistic assessments and to force them to speak critically about shortcomings in party work.

9. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.125, d.14, l.7.

10. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.125, d.16, l.57. Comrade Kuznetsov, secretary of the Tula *obkom* inspected eight *raions* and found that 80% of *raikom* personnel (secretaries, department heads, instructors, ispolkom presidents) had not given a political talk on any theme for three to four months. *Ibid.*, l.95.

11. Lysenko characterized newspapers in the same manner and asked for more articles written in a form accessible to ordinary party members, possibly under the heading "In aid of agitators." *Ibid.*, f.17, op.125, d.14, ll.28-29.

12. Some of these institutions were staffed by party cadres and others by state employees, most frequently from the *politprosvet* (political enlightenment) staff of the Ministry of Education. Although other ministries and departments often had political departments and political staffs, they were all subordinated to and took directives from party organizations. I do not treat these non-party agitators separately, but instead as part of the overall agitprop apparatus ultimately responsible to and directed by the party.

13. *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16 March 1988, p.13.

14. RTsKhIDNI f.17 op.88 d.69 p.12.

15. Ibid., f.17, op.22, d.1558, l.6; d.1559, l.201; d.1913, ll.47-48; d.1921, l.38; d.1949, l.41; Tsentral'nyi arkhiv VLKSM (*Vsesoiuznyi Leninskii Kommunisticheskii Soiuz Molodezhi*), f.1, op.6, d.5, ll.51-54. (Hereafter referred to as *TsAVLKSM*, the Central Archive of the Communist Youth League, the Komsomol.)

16. Other problems included lack of equipment to receive and relay short-wave broadcasts; faulty equipment; lack of electricity; and lack of repair personnel. D. Polikarpov, director of the Sovnarkom radio committee, reported that large portions (he cited figures of 50-95%) of *oblast'* radio networks were simply not functioning. RTsKhIDNI f.17, op.125, d.73, ll.98-103. Since remote stations operated off of their own electric generators, fuel was a constant problem in radio broadcasting. Due to lack of fuel, in September 1942, the broadcast days of 1,600 of the 2,747 radio stations belonging to the Ministry of Communications (*Narkomsviazi*) were cut by over one half, from nine hours to three to four hours per day. In practice, this surely meant somewhat less than three hours. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.125, d.125, ll.26-27.

17. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.73, ll.98-103.

18. In late 1941, Ia. Khavinson, Executive Secretary of TASS, wrote to Shcherbakov complaining of problems in distributing TASS reports to the local press. Khavinson noted that government news materials were often reported in *oblast'* papers two to three days late and in *raion* papers one week late. Telegraph lines were so overloaded that timely transmission of news articles was impossible. TASS had even lost communications with several major towns in the rear, such as Saratov, Tashkent, Alma-Ata, Frunze, Tbilisi, Baku and Erevan. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.60, l.88.

19. Ibid., f.17, op.22, d.2319, l.239. In the May 1943 issue of *Propagandist*, K. Kuznetsov described the poor use of radio in rural *raions* of Kirov *oblast'*. Speakers were located only in rural soviets, (*selsovets*), many reading rooms lacked radios and broadcasts were limited to short periods in the morning and evening. Usually only *selsovet* personnel and kolkhoz leaders were able to listen to broadcasts. No provisions were made for more widespread radio listening. In far-off kolkhozes, there was no radio even in kolkhoz administrative offices. In a few kolkhozes, Sovinformbiuro bulletins were transmitted by radio or telephone and dictated to students, who transcribed them and brought them home to read to families and neighbors or posted them in local kolkhoz. *Propagandist*, no.9, May 1943, pp.45-46.

20. Although orders were issued expanding this time to 30–60 minutes per day, this order was not effectively implemented. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.125, d.125, ll.4-5. The apathy of party agitprop departments toward radio broadcasting was the subject of a telegram Aleksandrov sent to *obkom*, *kraikom* and republican party secretaries and to heads of agitprop departments of *gorkoms* and *rainspolkoms* in May 1943. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.215, ll.13-18.

21. I. Bol'shakov, president of the Sovnarkom cinema committee, reported the requisitioning of urban cinemas, *kino-peredvizhki* and generators for military needs, as well as a halt in the production of projectors and spare parts and a severe reduction in raw film production. Reduced urban seating capacity could not handle the increased demand by residents and evacuees, who waited in long lines to see news of the war. In May 1943, Bol'shakov calculated that in Moscow, the city best supplied with theaters and equipment, the cinema network had a total capacity to show only two films per month to only 70% of the residents. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.124, ll.1-3, 24-25; d.214, l.36. Bol'shakov's efforts to organize film showings in factories during workers' breaks or free time were rejected by the UPA, which would not risk interruptions or distractions from factory

22. The Inzenskii *raion* had a mobile cinema equipped for silent films, but in *kolkhozes* attached to 21 of the *raion's selsovets*, not one film had been shown in the first seven months of 1944. In the remaining 10 *selsovets*, there had been only 12 film showings. *Propagandist*, no.17, September 1944, pp.6-10.production. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.124, ll.60-61.

23. The number of central newspapers decreased from 39 to 18. By 1942, the total number of newspapers in the Soviet Union (including those in occupied areas) decreased from 8806 with a print run of 38 million copies to 4,561 with a print run of 18 million. By 1944, there were 6,072 papers with a print of run of 20 million—in 1945, 6,455 with a run of 23 million. *Istoriia Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz. v.5, pt.1.*, Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskaiia literatura, p.413.; G.D. Komkov, *Na ideologicheskom fronte velikoi otechestvennoi... 1941-1945*, Moscow: Nauka, 1983, p.79.

24. Of the 64 copies of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* allotted to the Bogatye sabye *raion* of Tataria, 30 went to the *raion* center and 27 to the seven post offices closest to the *raion* center. Not a single copy of either paper was distributed to the remaining 11 post offices, which served 47 *kolkhozes*. Similar distribution figures were cited for other *raions* and *oblast's*, along with large variations in distribution. In Tataria, some villages received one newspaper for every two to three persons; in others, one copy served 45 people. *Propagandist*, no.13-14, September 1942, p.53.

25. Ibid., no.15-16, August 1943, p.6. An earlier editorial had noted that many kolkhozes lacked newspaper windows. In these kolkhozes, as a rule, newspapers "sat" in administrative offices and did not reach kolkhozniks. Ibid., no.11-12, June 1943, p.11. An almost identical report about newspaper distribution in Arkhangel'sk *oblast'* was sent to the Central Committee in October 1943. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.122, d.30, ll.1-18.

26. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.242, l.52.

27. Iaroslavskii noted the problem (*Propagandist*, no.7-8, June 1942, p.52) as did M. Iovchuk and Z. Gagarina (Ibid., no.17, November 1942, p.31.). Similar problems plagued book publishing and distribution. Large numbers of books piled up in warehouses or glutted city book stores because transport was so slow. Some publishers were also slow to change their books to military subject matter. The Gor'kii *oblast'* publishing house was reprimanded for publishing *Beasts, Birds and Reptiles of Gor'kii oblast'* and other such non-war related books in the first half of 1942. Ibid., no.13-14, September 1942, pp.51-54.

28. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.22, d.2294, ll.96-97. An October 1942 Kuibyshev *obkom* order noted that agitprop work in the majority of cities and districts remained unsatisfactory, that secretaries of some *raikoms* were completely ignoring mass political work and that the majority of Kuibyshev's party organizations had completely abandoned propaganda work in places of residence. Ibid., f.17, op.43, d.1050, ll.16-17.

29. An August 1941 editorial in *Propagandist* complained about the weakening of rural political work, saying that kolkhoz leaders had "forgotten" about mass party work and were not connecting economic activities with political work, to the detriment of the harvest. Many rural party cells had not called a meeting since the war began. In several rural party organizations, leaders had decided that political work could now be relegated to subordinate personnel or more peripheral sections of the party *aktiv*. *Propagandist*, no. 16, August 1941, pp. 1-3.

30. Ibid., f.88, op.1, d.861, l.32.

31. Ibid., f.17, op.43, d.1050, l.94.

32. Institut Marksizma i Leninizma, f.71, op.30, d.34, t.3, ll.5-6 (Hereafter IML) (Stenographic copy of document from the Party Archive of Kuibyshev *Oblast'* [PAKO]: f.656 op.33 d.72/86 pp.1-48.) That fall, at a multi-*oblast'* meeting of *obkom* propaganda secretaries and newspaper editors in Kuibyshev, officials complained vociferously that the use

of urban political cadres and party officers as plenipotentiaries had assumed gigantic proportions. Between January and August 1943, the Kuibyshev *obkom* sent over 800 plenipotentiaries from the cities to the countryside. IML f.71, op.30, d.34, t.4, ll.61-62. (PAKO f.656, op.33, d.72/86, ll.1-48.) In April 1943, the Central Committee issued an order mandating that only qualified agronomists and other agricultural cadres be sent to the countryside. Nevertheless, complaints continued through the end of the war in party orders and in internal discussion about the abuse of plenipotentiaries. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK*, v.7 (1938-1945) Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskaiia literatura, pp.406-407.

33. IML f.71, op.30, d.34, t.3, ll.6-7. (PAKO, f.656, op.33, d.72/86, ll.1-48.) The abuse of plenipotentiaries was cited in a rare published order from the Central Committee Directorate of Propaganda and Agitation (UPA) in January 1943. The directive noted that all the workers of one *raion* agitprop bureau had been spread among kolkhozes and the *partkabinet* locked up, later to be converted to a dormitory. *Propagandist*, no.1, January 1943, pp.45-48.

34. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.43, d.1340, l.204. The propaganda chief for Novosibirsk *obkom* complained in March 1943 that reading rooms had essentially been abandoned—they lacked newspapers, magazines, agitational brochures and even agitators themselves.

35. 1943 inspection reports from Arkhangel'sk, Tula, Riazan' and Ivanovo speak of hundreds (usually the majority) of idle, destroyed or otherwise non-functioning reading rooms and political enlightenment and propaganda institutions. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.122, d.30, ll.1-18, 289-302; op.122, d.31, ll.1-13, ll.43-56.

36. By February 1944, almost all of Moscow's libraries had been destroyed by battle or wartime neglect and no one was available to clean up and work in libraries or do cultural work. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.44, d.989, ll.152-153.

37. In March 1945, 168 of Novosibirsk *oblast*'s reading huts lacked their own space and were working out of *selsovet* or kolkhoz offices. In a number of *raions* of neighboring Bashkiriia, kolkhoz clubs and reading huts had been taken over by local clergy, with the evident support of local leaders, for use in religious services and discussions. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.45, d.1013, ll.224,226; d.1330, l.16; op.88, d.647, l.12. Although city agitprop departments also lost offices and reading rooms in the cities, the effects were not as serious as in the countryside. In urban areas, political departments usually did not have their own



buildings. Instead, agitprop work was more firmly grounded in industrial enterprises and state institutions, under the direct or indirect authority of *gorkoms* and *raikoms*.

38. Documentation of "distortions" is often elliptical, because party functionaries, nervous about reporting and implicating themselves in the possibly dangerous political mistakes of others, frequently reported simply that agitators had explained questions on current events "incorrectly" to their audiences or that "distortions of the party line" had occurred.

39. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.22, d.1918, l.41.

40. Specific criticisms were launched against Academician Tarle and were also part of a campaign against him and the Institute of History. *Ibid.*, f.88, op.1, d.886, ll.15-17; op.1, d.889, ll.34-35; f.17, op.44, d.970, ll.164-5.

41. During the Moscow crisis of October 1941, Shcherbakov told the Moscow *aktiv* that the German offensive was a last ditch effort for victory: that Hitler's armies were still strong, but desperately undersupplied in personnel and materiel and desperately in need of a victory because they could not survive another winter of war. The reasons for Shcherbakov's overoptimism are easily understandable. But the Germans were hardly on the verge of defeat. *Ibid.*, f.88, op.1, d.851, l.1.

In March 1943, M.B. Mitin reported to Shcherbakov about a speech Aleksandrov had made to 800 lecture cadres. Perhaps encouraged by the recent victory at Stalingrad, Aleksandrov said that the Red Army fought best in winter and that this was not accidental. Citing victories over the Swedes and Napoleon, he argued that the tradition of the Russian army throughout history had always been to defeat enemies in winter. Mitin condemned the overoptimism of Aleksandrov's predictions of a quick German defeat—exactly what Aleksandrov had long been criticizing ordinary agitators for doing. After reading Aleksandrov's lecture himself, Shcherbakov noted his essential agreement with Mitin's criticisms. Mitin's title was not listed in this or other documents, but published histories list him as a member of the Soviet bureau of military-political propaganda (which was charged with propaganda and counter-propaganda behind enemy lines), an active lecturer and an academician. Since he was criticizing the actions of someone who was his superior in the agitprop directorate, and considering Aleksandrov's contrite reply to the memorandum, it seems reasonable to conclude that Mitin was also connected with the security organs. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.125, d.131, ll.38-41.

42. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.44, d.990, ll.111, 127.

43. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.43, d.1049, l.279.

44. In some cases, the popular theater was not conducted by agitators, but by non-agitators as a kind of burlesque of agitprop work. For example, Comrade Liashenko of Kuibyshev noted cases in which "charlatans" took Stalin's *Questions of Leninism*, "opened it to a random page, read aloud and made commentaries." *Ibid.*, f.17, op.43, d.1049, l.279. An April 1942 issue of *Propagandist* contains a speech given by Leningrad propaganda secretary Makhanov at a Moscow propaganda training course in which he talked about "vagrant" or freelance lecturers, which suggested a circus-like or popular entertainment quality to certain lectures: "Before the war, we battled so-called 'wild' vagrant lecturers—lecturers who arrive with the recommendation of Moscow or Leningrad, give a lecture without pre-screening, a lecture full of nonsense. Before the war they were intolerable and now even moreso. We now have 'lecturers' like one in Cheliabinsk, who comes not alone, but with an impresario who visits various organizations saying that his companion can give lectures on the war or any theme. In Ordzhonikidze krai, in the city of Voroshilov, 'lecturer' Goikh reads smart, flowery but empty lectures on the international situation...his lectures are empty, full of harmful chatter." *Propagandist*, no.3, April 1942, p.7.

45. *Ibid.*, no.7-8, June 1942, p.57.

46. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.44, d.990, l.132.

47. Makhanov warned lecturers not to accede to popular demands for lectures on international themes if they were not trained to give such lectures. According to Makhanov, some lecturers talked "vibrantly" about international affairs but little about the intense work on the home front that still needed to be done to supply the Red Army. A. Makhanov, *Propagandist*, no.5, March 1943, pp.34-37. Later in the war, as Soviet troops approached and invaded Germany, Soviet journalism and propaganda became more vicious. But propaganda of revenge about the subhuman nature of Germans proved counterproductive. Stalin stopped it abruptly after Soviet troops entered Germany. See Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, New York: Dutton, 1964, pp.964-968.

48. IML, f.71, op.30, d.34, t.3, l.146. (PAKO f.656, op.33, d.72/86, ll.1-48.)

49. RTsKhIDNI f.17, op.43, d.1641, l.17.

50. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv obshchestvennykh dvizhenii, f.80, op.2, d.33, kor.54, l.63 (Hereafter referred to as TsGAOD; it was formerly the Moscow City Party Archive); RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.43, d.1050, l.104

51. *Propagandist*, no.17, September 1943, p.42.
52. Boldovskii further complained that the factory committee had ceased presenting lectures on economic or production themes. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.44, d.768, l.254.
53. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.45, d.1013, l.186.
54. TsGAOD, f.80, op.3, d.29, kor.58, l.60.
55. Although *oblast'* and lower-tier party committees continually reported large and impressive attendance figures to Moscow, given widespread problems with lecture quality, there is good reason to question the accuracy of the figures, as well as the voluntariness of attendance. A Kuibyshev *oblast'* order of October 1942 noted very low attendance figures (about 20%) of kolkhozniks at political talks. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.43, d.1050, l.17. Other reports frequently spoke of low attendance at party meetings and at ideological training sessions for newly inducted members.
56. United States National Archives, Record Group 740.0011, European War 1939, p.22193.
57. *Propagandist*, no.17, September 1941, pp.2-3.
58. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.43, d.1050, l.91.
59. Open derision of agitprop or "cultural" work could be used as sign of dedication to military production. In February 1944, Novosibirsk *gorkom* secretary Iakovlev spoke of party members who bragged about not having been to the cinema or participated in sports for two years. He expressed his concern that some party members were focusing too much on production, to the detriment of their overall "cultural" education. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.44, d.1021, ll.133-4. In December of the same year, the head of the Sverdlovsk *oblast'* education department complained about unsatisfactory political enlightenment (*politprosvet*) work in villages. He blamed the "ignorant, scornful attitude of some *raikom*, *gorkom* and *raiiispolkom* leaders toward political enlightenment work" for the closing of hundreds of reading rooms and the generally poor state of political education work. *Ibid.*, f.17, op.44, d.1216, ll.220-222.
60. *Ibid.*, f.629, op.1, d.102, ll.32-3.

61. Ibid., f.17, op.125, d.16, l.103.
62. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.22, d.1811, l.88. The transcript of this meeting apparently formed the basis for a *Propagandist* editorial later that month. According to the editorial, only five, "incompetent" agitators had been assigned to one of the biggest workers' dormitories in Orekhovo-Zuevo. The editorial reported "responsible (*otvetstvennye*) personnel think that work in dormitories lowers their authority among workers and therefore do not conduct agitation work." *Propagandist*, no.17, September 1941, pp.2-3.
- At a *gorkom* plenum in February 1944, Silant'ev, the secretary of Moscow's Rostokinskii *raion* cited the case of the director of a civil defense committee (who had never been in the army) who was quoted as having said: "An officer's honor is higher than party honor." RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.44, d.989, l.120.
63. Speaking in June 1942 to the Red Army military-political propaganda council, Shcherbakov said that political workers consider political work to be their lowest calling. According to him, army political workers preferred to sit in offices and staff headquarters than agitate among the troops. Ibid., f.88, op.1, d.946, l.3.
64. Ibid., f.17, op.43, d.1050, l.104.
65. Ibid., f.17, op.43, d.1052, ll.55-58.
66. Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.1021, l.99.
67. Ibid., f.17, op.22, d.1811, ll.11-12.
68. RTsKhIDNI f.17 op.44 d.768 p.274.
69. In June 1943, Novosibirsk *obkom* officials discussed problems in the Kol'vanskii *raion*, where party cadres were not reading any books or party journals, but were said to be simply taking a quick glance at the newspapers they received. Ibid., f.17, op.43, d.1342, l.67. Complaints about this and other *raions* continued. At an August 1944 meeting, *obkom* agitprop secretary Pesikina complained that very few cadres were engaging in independent ideological study. Many party members, including party secretaries, paid no attention to the journals *Bol'shevik*, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo* and others. Although all members were receiving these journals, almost no one was reading them. Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.1023, ll.84.
70. Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.990, l.142.

71. Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.768, l.244. At the February 1944, Moscow *gorkom* meeting, party leaders discussed the case of comrade Z\_\_\_\_, a leader of a study circle for candidate members in a railroad shop, who "hammers out communists." Z\_\_\_\_ could not answer questions as to why the party was called Bolshevik, which other parties existed in pre-revolutionary Russia or what the word "fraction" meant. When asked what was the difference between the party's rules and its program, he could only answer "The rules are the discipline." Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.989, ll.114-115. Moreover, many party members seemed ignorant of the history and ideological formulas on the war itself. In June 1945, Sverdlovsk *obkom* officials reported cases of ideological teachers and students who had no idea of what "racist fascist ideology" meant. Ibid., f.17, op.45, d.1520, l.96.

72. In a March 1943 essay in *Propagandist*, A. Makhanov complained of "narrowness" in themes of party lectures—that certain party lecture groups did far too many lectures on international themes and far too few on questions of local production, party history, or Russian history and culture. *Propagandist*, no.5, March 1943, pp.34-37.

73. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.44, d.1023, l.85. The reasons for party members' reluctance to engage in ideological study resembled the reasons these same cadres often declined to engage in mass agitation work. To repeated requests to begin ideological study, cadres often responded by saying "This is not the time" or "Let others study [ideology and politics], I'm standing my ground in production." Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.990, l.127.

74. This contempt and apathy toward agitprop work would continue long past the war. Stephen White has documented the same types of attitudes and behavior in his study of political culture and Soviet politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Although some of his work conflates political behavior (attending meetings, voting, etc.) with belief, White's analysis of the operation of the agitprop organs during the Brezhnev era demonstrates the persistence of the attitudes documented in the present study during World War II two and three decades later. Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics*, New York: St. Martin's, 1979 (especially ch.6).

75. K.S. Karol, *Between Two Worlds: The Life of a Young Pole in Russia, 1939-1946*, New York: Henry Holt, 1983, p.273.

76. A 1944 report from Moscow's Krasnopresnenskii *raion* noted non-attendance at lectures because workers were delayed in cafeterias or bread lines. Two of the *raion's* oral newspaper readers read so monotonously that fewer than half of their assigned workers attended readings. At political lectures, the attendees were mostly party and economic

managers. Few ordinary Communists, Komsomols or non-party workers attended. TsGAOD, f.69, op.8, d.13, kor.96, ll.9,23.

77. RTsKhIDNI, f.17, op.22, d.1811, l.87.

78. He was describing poor progress in courses for PPO secretaries to promote study of the recently published collection of Stalin's wartime speeches and orders (*O velikoi otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo soiuz*). Ibid., f.17, op.44, d.1021, l.134.

79. As Shcherbakov's previously cited remarks about the abandonment of political work and the disintegration of the party suggest, with so many new wartime members, the struggle to make people speak in the party's idiom was also a struggle to reforge the party as a social unit.

80. Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: History, Culture, Text," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California, p.17. (In this passage, Hunt is referring to her earlier work, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.)

81. See Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State*, p.255.