Speaking Truth is Power: 
Glasnost as a Weapon of Dissent 
In Late Soviet Russia

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To Professor Linda Gerstein, who taught me that to bake a cake you need butter, sugar, flour, and eggs.
ABSTRACT

In 1968, a group of Soviet dissidents began to print their own newspaper, the *Chronicle of Current Events*, and to work with western reporters to spread their message about the illegality of the ruling regime. By using their own media forms, the dissidents were able to break the government’s monopoly on information. More importantly, they used the media technologies to advocate for their two key, interconnected goals of *glasnost*, or openness, and the rule of law. The dissidents made two main arguments. First, that *glasnost* was integral to creating an equitable and fair justice system. Second, that speaking truth was legal and not something the government could prosecute. *Glasnost* served as both a rallying cry and as a weapon. The dissidents called for openness, but also used their media outlets to expose events the government wished to keep quiet.

In choosing the two mantras of legality and *glasnost*, the dissidents consciously put themselves in the shadow of previous groups of Russian reformers who had the same demands. They placed themselves in a historical debate. The dissidents also sought to differentiate their version of *glasnost*, complete openness, from various government leaders’ definitions of the term.

This thesis seeks to explore the way dissident media outlets forced the dual goals of *glasnost* and respect for the rule of law. It will examine the causes and forms of dissident media, and their relationship to the idea of legality. It will also look at the dissidents’ calls for *glasnost* in a historic context, seeking to understand how the dissidents interpreted the term differently than previous generations.
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INTRODUCTION

At the end of my freshmen year, I found myself writing the first of many papers on the use of media in the Soviet Union. In particular, I was examining the role the dissidents' use of new media technologies, particularly television, played in their success in overthrowing the Soviet system in Czechoslovakia. My first paper ends with a throwaway line (I was a freshman) comparing the dissidents' use of media to Gutenberg's invention of the printing press.

That idea should have been developed more, so I'll take the opportunity to do that here. When Gutenberg created the printing press and printed the first Bible, he broke the Catholic Church's monopoly on information. Until that point, ordinary lay people did not have access to Bibles in their home. They could not interpret the biblical stories on their own; rather they relied on church leaders to teach them the meaning and importance of the sacred text. When lay people could suddenly own bibles, and read them on their own, the Church's power inevitably weakened. They lost the interpretative control they had over parishioners.

The rise of the printing press and its relation to the rise of the Protestant challenge to Rome, serve as a useful historical analogy to the role of dissident media outlets in the Soviet Unions. Like the Gutenberg bible, the dissident media outlets broke the monopoly on information, in this case the state's monopoly. Similarly, the free flow of information proved to have a radical effect on the Soviet government's control over its citizens.

This thesis examines the way the dissidents' use of media broke the government's and the party's stronghold on information. I will explore the way the dissident media outlets forced the dual goals of glasnost and respect for the rule of law, in spite of the authorities best efforts to defeat the dissidents. In the first section, I will explore the historical context
for the dissident movement and what sparked its formation. In the second section, I will discuss the various forms of dissident media and how they came to symbolize the glasnost that the dissidents called for. In the third section, I will explore the relationship between glasnost and legality. In the final section, I will examine the historical debates about glasnost in Russia and the difference between government’s calls for glasnost and the dissidents’ calls.

Before going any further, a brief discussion of sources is merited. For this project, I used a great deal of primary sources, all written by members of the dissident community. However many of my secondary sources were written by members of the movement or those highly sympathetic with it. For instance, Ludmilla Alexeyeva, a key member of the dissident community wrote Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights, after immigrating to the United States. It is a through examination, but her biases shine through it. She paints the dissidents as selfless heroes on a quest to save Russia and shies away from any criticism of the movement or its heroes. Most scholarship on the movement is written in similarly glowing tones. More contemporary scholarship, most notably by Ann Komorami, of the University of Toronto, and Ben Nathans, of the University of Pennsylvania, is moving away from this model and beginning to take a more critical look at the movement. The vast majority of scholarship though remains highly complimentary.

In 1965, the Soviet dissident movement began in earnest with the arrest of two Soviet writers, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel. The pair was tried under Article-70, slandering the state. To members of the burgeoning dissident community, the arrest and trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel symbolized everything they had feared. The Soviet Union, it seemed

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to them, was re-entering the Stalinist era of show trials and political trials. They staged a protest on Moscow’s Pushkin Square calling for *glasnost*, or openness, for the trial and for the rule of law to be followed explicitly in the trial proceedings.

From that moment on, the issues of legality and *glasnost* became the two key rallying cries for the dissident community. They sought open discussion of the issues facing the Soviet Union and for the rule of law to be applied equally to all Soviet citizens. In order to spread their message, the dissidents turned to their own media forms.

The dissident community began to publish its own newspaper, the *Chronicle of Current Events*, in 1968. The paper was published using *samizdat* technology. Most of its coverage focused on the events taking place behind closed doors at political trials. The *Chronicle’s* editors believed that their open discussion of trials would force the government to obey the rule of law. Transparency would prevent the prosecution from fabricating testimony or planting evidence.

The dissidents also made use of foreign media sources, including western radio stations and newspapers, as well as foreign publications of the *Chronicle*, to spread their message both within and beyond the Soviet Union. In their work with foreign media outlets, the dissidents focused on what they viewed to be examples of government illegality, particularly trials.

The very use and existence of dissident media outlets demonstrates the dissident commitment to *glasnost*. Their discussion in print and on Western Russian-language radio broadcast using shortwave transmissions into Russia guaranteed at least some open discussion of events in the Soviet Union that otherwise would have been ignored. The dissidents’ newspaper, the *Chronicle of Current Events*, and their work with western
journalists, publishers and radio stations, allowed them to openly discuss life in the Soviet Union. It stood in stark contrast to state publications. Moreover, in doing so it represented the dissident call for *glasnost*, openness and honesty in discussion, language and law.

The dissidents’ decision to focus on the rule of law and *glasnost* consciously put them in the shadow of historical groups of Russian reformers, most notably the Decembrists and the Westernizers. These groups called for a rule of law rather than autocracy in Russia. Many of their demands, made in the nineteenth century, closely mirror the goals of the dissident movement. They sought to limit the control of the autocrat and the secret police in enforcing the law as they pleased, and rather have a strict reading of it. The dissidents saw themselves as continuing this line of dissent by using media to call for the rule of law in the Soviet Union.

The *Chronicle* and other dissident news sources made it their goal to make public the law, not only to guarantee that the government followed the laws, but also to ensure that citizens would be able to act within the law. The dissidents taught that laws needed to be simple, clear and accessible; media sources were one way of accomplishing this.

The dissident’s media was also a way to combat the issue of “double speak,” the phenomenon of government officials saying one thing, while meaning and doing another. Media outlets, by juxtaposing the language of Soviet officials with their actual actions, were able to demonstrate how little the word of official publications meant. It was a way of shining light on the lies that were “double speak.” Dissident publications would combat lies with openness.

The motivation behind these two goals was a very real fear of the return of the Stalinist era. While most members of the dissident movement of the 1960s had not been
personally persecuted by Stalin, they had families and friends who were. They had seen the consequences of the 1930s show trials and general disregard for legality. Dissidents felt they had learned the lessons of the Stalinist era, that silence was complicity. Speaking out publicly was the way to prevent persecutions from returning.  

Nikita Khrushchev had made a similar argument about the importance of *glasnost* and transparency at his speech at the 20th Party Congress in 1956. In it, he called for a limited discussion about the truth of the Stalinist years. Khrushchev was not the first, or last, leader in Russian history, to call for open discussion. In the 1860s, Emperor Alexander II and his cabinet had called for open discussion about the elimination of serfdom and reform of the legal system. In the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev would co-opt the term *glasnost* as a key part of his reform agenda. It was not just dissidents, then, who used *glasnost* as a tool, but the government as well.

The dissidents, however, did not call for *glasnost* as a tool of reform, but rather as a weapon of revolution. They did not want a slow, controlled release of information but total and complete openness in the government's actions. Their use of media would guarantee this and help to instill the rule of law in the Soviet Union.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since its inception in 1965, the Soviet dissident community fought for two main interconnected goals: glasnost and the rule of law. These goals became clear at the December 5, 1965 March on Moscow's Pushkin Square, which is arguably the movement's date of birth. Approximately 200 people marched on the square calling for a fair and open trial of two Soviet writers, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel.

Sinyavsky and Daniel

Sinyavsky and Daniel were arrested under Article 70 of the Criminal Code, which outlawed anti-Soviet propaganda. The trial marked the first time this law applied to works of fiction, and the first definitive indication that Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev would have limited tolerance for dissent in his empire. Both Sinyavsky's The Trial Begins (published under a penname "Tertz") and Daniel's This is Moscow Speaking (published under the pseudonym "Arzhak") attacked Stalin and implied the Stalinist era was returning. Daniel's story described a "public murder day," when the Party would order its citizens to kill one another. The Trial Begins was a fictional account of The Doctor's Plot in 1953, a false accusation of an assassination plan against Stalin by Jewish doctors.

A large part of the prosecution's argument hinged on the fact the authors had published their works abroad. The prosecution claimed Sinyavsky and Daniel had purposefully attempted to make the Soviet state look corrupt and immoral on the world stage. They had undermined the Soviet Union in a public, global forum.

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3 Alexeyeva, 9.
4 Shatz, 123.
Observers declared the trial a sham for a number of reasons. For one, the charges were trumped up. Shatz writes, "They were accused of slandering the Soviet government and people, of slandering Lenin and of enabling some Western commentators to use their works for anti-Soviet purposes-hardly the 'especially dangerous crimes against the state' referred to in the law code." Max Hayward, an English literature expert who translated and published a transcript of the trial, offers further proof of the injustice at the trial. For example, no witnesses were called at the trial, except for those subpoenaed by the state. In addition, the accused were not allowed access to defense lawyers.

Hayward focuses a great deal of his attention on the treatment of the two writers in the Soviet press. Soviet law said the accused must be considered innocent until proven guilty, but Izvestia, the government's newspaper, felt it was above this rule. Hayward writes:

The pieces are written in the classical style of the Russian satirical feuilleton, speak with heavy sarcasm of the accused, quote their words in order to mock them, and in general assume the guilt of the two men before the court had reached its verdict. The defendants are presented as cowardly felons who squirmed under the withering attack and iron logic of the prosecution (as one sees from the transcript, this was far from the case).

This sort of style is exactly what the Chronicle sought to combat with its coverage. Izvestia was more concerned with mocking the accused and discouraging others from following their path than presenting any sort of factual reporting of their account.

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5 Shatz, 119.
7 Ginzburg, 27.
The final, and most serious, concern about the Sinyavsky and Daniel trial were the excessive sentences given out. Sinyavsky received five years hard labor, while Daniel was sentenced to seven.\(^8\)

The dissident community viewed the trial as evidence of re-Stalinization, and as a catalyst for action. Shatz explains that it gave their movement a new rallying cry: legality. He writes:

Many of those who voiced such complaints stated that they disagreed with the writers' views or with the methods; they had used to publish them. Nevertheless, they felt compelled to protest against the arbitrariness and unfairness with which the case had been handled. There were no public complaints about the laws themselves or about the judicial process or the legal system in general; it was assumed that the law was just but had not been properly applied. The critics therefore demanded that the trial be reviewed and the writers acquitted (because they had obviously not violated the laws under which they have been tried) or at least that their very hard sentences be reduced.\(^9\)

Members of the movement first began a letter writing and petition campaign in support of Sinyavsky and Daniel. They circulated letters calling for the government to apply the law, as it was written, to its citizens. But younger members of the movement wanted to move at a faster, more radical pace. They turned to protests and demonstrations.

**Pushkin Square Rally**

On December 5, 1965, a little over a month after Sinyavsky and Daniel were arrested, approximately 200 students gathered in Moscow's Pushkin Square calling for a fair and open trial.\(^10\) Aleksandr Yesenin-Volpin, a mathematician and poet, organized the rally. Yesenin-Volpin had long been interested in calling for a rule of law, rather than the rule of the Party, the KGB, or a singular autocratic ruler, in the Soviet Union. This is reflected in the

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\(^9\) Shatz, 122.

\(^10\) Shatz, 123.
demonstration’s goal. The protestors called for glasnost, or openness, with the trial proceedings. They did not argue the writers were innocent, but simply that they had the right to a fair and public trial.

Yesenin-Volpin circulated a leaflet before the rally making the demonstration’s point explicit. It read:

In the past, unlawful actions by the authorities have taken the lives of millions of Soviet citizens. This blood stained past demands vigilance in the present. It is more prudent to give up one day of tranquility than to spend years suffering the consequences of lawlessness that has not been stopped in time.

Soviet citizens have a means for resisting capricious actions of the authorities. That method is the Glasnost Meeting whose participants chant only one slogan: WE DEMAND GLAS-NOST FOR THE TRIAL OF (followed by the last names of the accused)!” or where the participants display a corresponding banner. Any shouts or slogans that depart from demands of strict adherence to laws must be regarded as counter-productive or, possibly, provocational must be halted by participants of the meeting.11

As he explicitly states, the point of the meeting is to call for glasnost, and nothing else. It was about calling attention to the government’s illegality, and the consequences of it. He hoped the protest would force the government to follow its own laws regarding trial procedures.

In her memoir, The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era, Ludmilla Alexeyeva, a key member of the dissident movement and one of the founders of its newsletter, the Chronicle of Current Events, explains how radical Yesenin-Volpin’s teachings about legality were. She writes that it was a “simple but, unfamiliar idea to Soviets: all laws ought to be understood exactly the way they are written and not as they are interpreted by the government.”12 The government could not arbitrarily apply the law as it pleased.

12 Alexeyeva, 275.
The Rule of Law and Glasnost

For Yesenin-Volpin, and subsequently other members of the dissident community, glasnost and legality were inherently linked. Robert Horvath makes this point in his essay, “The Dissident Roots of Glasnost.” He writes, “Volpin’s advocacy of glasnost was closely bound up with the legalism that was so central to the notion of pravozashchitnik, a defender both of inalienable rights and the letter of the law, which guaranteed glasnost during court proceedings.” Transparency would lead to the rule of law because the government would be shamed into follow its own laws. The movement focused much of its energy on calling for glasnost and the rule of law, as well as illustrating what that meant for the Soviet Union through its use of media sources.

De-Stalinization as a Motivations for Glasnost

One of the broader questions is why the dissidents decided to focus on the glasnost and legality as their rallying cries. In their view, they were necessary pieces of the de-Stalinization effort. The dissidents believed that it was only by speaking openly about the illegality of the regime that they would be able to prevent the rise of another Stalin-like leader.

Memory of Stalin

The dissidents clearly remembered well the effect the lawlessness of the Stalinist age had on them and their families. While few of the dissidents of the 1960s were personally persecuted during the terror, many of them had family members who were. Sinyavsky serves as a helpful example. Sinyavsky was by all accounts was a normal, compliant citizen until

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1951 when his father, a revolutionary hero, was arrested. A family friend described the effect of the arrest on him, saying, "The arrest of his father in 1951, on some absurd pretext, was a deep shock to him. For the first time, the problem of injustice, of lawlessness, of the suffering of the innocent, confronted him in his intimate family life." His father had committed no crime, yet was still imprisoned. The injustice and illegality of the Soviet government suddenly became clear.

**Silence as Complicity**

The memory of the terror and the loved ones affected by it haunted the dissidents. Shatz argues the dissidents felt personally responsible for the destruction of the Stalinist era, and for preventing it from happening again. He writes:

One of the themes the dissidents voice most frequently when asked to explain their actions is a strong sense of personal guilt over the repressions of the Stalin era, and a determination to redeem that guilt by combating injustice in the present. Even when they themselves in no way participated in the repressions, the silent acquiescence, the passivity, and the unquestioned faith in the authorities that Soviet society displayed under Stalin torment them and compel them to speak out.¹⁵

Shatz offers multiple examples of the dissidents speaking out, such as Bogoraz’s explanation at her trial of why she chose to protest the invasion of Czechoslovakia. She said, "Had I not done this [protest], I would have considered myself responsible for these actions of the government, just as all adult citizens of our country bear the responsibility of our government, just as our whole people bears the responsibility for the Stalin-Beria camps, the death sentences."¹⁶ By staying silent, she would have allowed and implicitly condoned the

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¹⁴ Shatz, 155.
¹⁵ Shatz, 150.
¹⁶ Shatz, 127.
system of lawlessness. It was only by speaking out and calling attention to the disregard for the rule of law that the Soviet system could be saved.

Bogoraz’s words echo those of a 1975 essay by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a leader of the movement, “Participation and the Lie.” In his piece, Solzhenitsyn argued that honesty was the only way to undermine the Soviet state. The state, Solzhenitsyn writes, is built on a system of lies and that exposing the truth would cause it to crumble. He writes, “Only we, knowing out system, can imagine what will happen when thousand and tens of thousands of people take this path--how our country will be purified and transformed without shots or bloodshed.”17 By openly acknowledging the flaws in the Soviet system, the violence, and systematic persecutions, the people could reclaim the state.

The dissidents felt they had learned the lessons of the 1930s. Silence was complicity when it came to the terror. Writing of the generation of the 1930s, Nadezhda Mandelstam had said, “The phrase ‘I cannot be silent’ was often on the lips our parents’ generation. The same could not be said of ours.”18 The dissidents of the 1960s vowed not to stay silent. To not speak out against the system was to support it.

The Chronicle of Current Events and the related forms of dissident media were a way of protesting what they viewed as the process of re-Stalinization. Glasnost was a way of combating it. Openness would make it more difficult for the regime to act without regard for the law. By forcing the attention of the Soviet people and the world to the government’s illegality, the government would, in theory, be forced to change its ways. Glasnost and legality were interdependent. The dissidents believed truth and openness were legal, but they

also believed that *glasnost* was a precursor to the rule of law. Open discussion of illegality would shame and pressure the government into changing its behavior.

**Glasnost and Legality as Tools in De-Stalinization**

The dissidents chose the rule of law and *glasnost* as themes for their movement because they felt they were integral to the de-Stalinization process. By speaking openly about the ramifications of a lawless society and creating a clear, understandable law code, the dissidents felt they could prevent the return of the Stalinist terror.

In his essay, "The Importance of Law in the Study of Politics and History," Leonard Schapiro, of the London School of Economics, traces the legal tradition of Russia. Midway through the essay, he discusses the dissident movement, writing:

> The small, but not uninfluential, dissent movement which has grown up, persisted and expanded among scientists and intellectuals, variously described as the democratic or the human rights movement, demands no changes in Soviet law or theory: all it demands is that the existing laws should be observed, and those things which are not forbidden by the law should be freely tolerated.\(^{19}\)

His words aptly summarize Yesenin-Volpin's teachings about the importance of clarity of law. The dissidents sought to use their media outlets to illuminate what exactly was within and outside the law. The focus on legality can easily be viewed as a de-Stalinization effort. The *Chronicle*, and other media sources, would help to clarify the law, and prevent another Stalin-like figure from abusing it. The dissidents applied pressure, through their media sources and Western media pressure, to the Soviet government, forcing it to apply the laws exactly as they were written. They were calling for a rule of law, rather than the rule of a tyrant, like Stalin, or a police force, like the KGB.

In a *samizdat* essay, "Ideocratic Consciousness and Personality," dissident Dmitri

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Nelidov argues the way the law was enforced in the Soviet Union caused the rise of “double speak,” the idea that words and policies did not actually mean what they said. He writes:

A government, after all, which endlessly speaks about freedom and the thorough development of the personality, cannot simply write in its constitution: there is no freedom of conscience, there is no freedom of the press, there is no freedom of speech and of demonstration. It acts much more cunningly. It concludes something like a secret agreement with its citizens. I will speak to you of your freedom but you act as if there was no freedom. And, in general, that was how the citizens behaved. Otherwise they would not have had to pay so dearly.  

Nelidov argues that this double speak affected people at a basic, biological level. It became engrained with in them. They knew that while the law may say something was legal, that did not mean they could not be arrested for doing it.

However, Nelidov argues the Chronicle undermined and deterred these biological effects of censorship. He writes, “The perversion of consciousness becomes a principle which attempts to impose itself on vision, hearing, and speech. The Chronicle, in calling things by their real names, opposed this perversion.” By creating a sense of glasnost, the Chronicle helped to shatter this sense of dual consciousness. Dissident media forced exposure to the way life truly was in the Soviet Union. People would, as the famous Czech dissident Vaclav Havel later said, live in truth.

There was a moral aspect to the glasnost that the dissidents were creating through their use of media outlets. They were working to heal the injury done by the double speak. The Chronicle, in both the domestic and the Western version, the correspondence with western journalists, and foreign radio all served this purpose. They made confrontation with the truth unavoidable and fought the government and the Party’s ideological chokehold on

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21 Nelidov, 285.
the Soviet Union.

According to Benjamin Nathans, a current history professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Yesenin-Volpin argued in his philosophical treatise that there was a relationship between double speak and legality. Nathans writes:

In effect, Vol'pin [sic] is replacing the Utopian dream of creating a new type of human being with an analogous dream of creating a new type of language: transparent, rational, and unambiguous. Until that time, it seems, we will not be able to "trust our own thoughts," our intuition or our self from all forms of belief via the construction of an ideal language. Specifically, it calls for a reform of the Russian language so as to make it conform more closely to the requirements of ‘modal logic’ the branch of logic that classifies propositions according to whether they are true, false, possible, impossible, or necessary. 22

Yesenin-Volpin, in effect, was calling for the same thing with language as he did with the Soviet Law code. Both language and the law code should be clear and understandable; but most importantly say what it means. There was to be no hidden meaning. Obviously, this was a Utopian ideal. The law always needs to be interpreted; it is why legal systems have judges and lawyers. The dissidents, however, wanted it interpreted in an equal and comprehensible manner, rather than the arbitrary Soviet justice system. Speaking openly, through The Chronicle and other media outlets, was to enforce this idea and the value of legality simultaneously.

When taken together, the focus on openness in legal codes and in language help to demonstrate the dissidents’ de-Stalinization efforts. In an essay, “Soviet Society in the 1960s,” Vladislav Zubok, a current historian at Temple University, argues de-Stalinization efforts can be categorized in to two types: from above or from below. He writes, “It is important to recognize two facets of Soviet de-Stalinization: first, institutional and

ideological de-Stalinization (from above), carried out by the Kremlin leadership, and second, the social, intellectual, and even spiritual de-Stalinization (from below) that took place in the minds, hearts, and souls of individual Soviet citizens.”

The use of dissident media outlets represents both these efforts. While it certainly was not a part of the administration, it did apply pressure on the government to enforce a rule of law through its trial coverage. In this way, it pushed for de-Stalinization from above through government reform. As for de-Stalinization from below, dissident media outlets assisted by purifying language. Dissident media outlets served as examples of clear, simple easy to understand language, and called for the law to be modeled in the same way.

DISSIDENT MEDIA AS AN EXAMPLE OF GLASNOST

In the late 1960s through the early 1970s, members of the Moscow dissident community began to create their own media forms and to co-opt existing foreign forms. They had three main goals in doing so. First, they broke the government's monopoly on spreading information. They sought to create an alternative set of news sources committed to spreading the truth, in contrast to government and Party publications, which were more concerned with promoting a Party agenda. Additionally, the dissidents' use of media demonstrated their commitment to glASNOST and served as an example of what legal and free expression would look like.

The White Book and Trial Publications

In 1966, Alexander Ginzburg, a Moscow dissident, began to circulate the White Book, a compilation of documents relating to the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel. As discussed in section one, members of the dissident community viewed the trial as an injustice, and Ginzburg used the White Book to advance this agenda. The White Book included a partial trial transcript collected by the defendants' families, as well as a litany of documents casting doubt on the presentation's case.

Ginzburg was subsequently arrested and tried for his publication. Another Moscow dissident, Pavel Litvinov, took careful notes of this trial and published his account of it in The Trial of the Four. Like Ginzburg's White Book, The Trial of the Four included a detailed description of the events leading up to the trial, a transcript of the trial, protest letters in support of the accused and official press accounts of the trial. Peter Reddaway, a former

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professor of political science at George Washington University who translated the *Chronicle* and published it abroad, argues that the two books spawned a new form of Soviet literature, “trial books.” This genre included books such as Natalya Gorbanevskaya’s *Red Square at Noon*, which detailed the trials of those who protested the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Trial books directly connected to Yesenin-Volpin’s philosophy of glasnost, because he taught that it was only through publicizing trial proceedings that the government would change its behavior and begin acting in a legal manner.

**The Chronicle**

In addition to sparking other trial books, the *White Book* served as the ideological precursor to the *Chronicle of Current Events*, an underground *samizdat* newspaper. *Samizdat* functioned similarly to a chain letter. Dissidents passed around texts, furiously typed out multiple carbon copies, and then gave them away to start the cycle over again. For instance, Gorbanevskaya typed seven copies of the first issue of the *Chronicle*. One was given to a Western correspondent, five distributed to dissidents who would type out copies, and the final copy saved, also for reproduction.

In the spring of 1968, a group of Moscow dissidents met to discuss what they perceived to be the government’s systematic crackdown against dissent, in light of the trials of Sinyavsky and Daniel, and Ginzburg. Gorbanevskaya felt that it was necessary to

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27 Alexeyeva and Goldberg, 10.
publicize these events. Her friends and she agreed to produce a bulletin of sorts, to expose the truth about life in the Soviet Union. They titled it the *Chronicle of Current Events.*

The *Chronicle* was published on and off from April 1968 through 1983. Its editors reported on events that were ignored or manipulated in the official party publication, *Pravda* (truth), and the government newspaper, *Izvestia* (news), such as trials, searches of dissidents' apartments, conditions in labor camps and censorship of publications. The *Chronicle* served as an alternative to news sources offering only approved information. As the saying went, there was no truth in *Pravda* and no news in *Izvestia.* The *Chronicle* sought to correct this phenomenon by offering simple, factual accounts of events that would either be ignored or falsely propagandized by Party publications.

In his history of the Chronicle, *Russia's Underground Press: "The Chronicle of Current Events,"* Mark Hopkins explains the *samizdat* system makes it nearly impossible to know with any certainty the circulation numbers of an issue of the *Chronicle.* He writes, “A single *Chronicle* number might total between 1,000 and 10,000 individual copies. Each number might, in fact, vary in total copies, depending, for example on the extent of KGB harassment at the time or availability of paper. Multiply by ten for the number of readers per issue and the total reading audience in the Soviet Union of a *Chronicle* issue might be 10,000 to 100,000.”

The geographical reach of the first issue was limited to Moscow, but subsequently spread to Kiev and Leningrad.

The first issue consisted entirely of information Gorbanevskaya collected from her friends in the Moscow dissident circle. It focused on petitions written and circulated by them.

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29 Hopkins, 10-11.
30 Hopkins, 10-11.
31 Hopkins, 148.
The early issues of the *Chronicle* depended entirely on the Moscow group to complete the reporting. Much of it happened by chance. Hopkins describes how the *Chronicle* group came to report on the case of Valery Ronkin. The KGB arrested Ronkin, a Leningrader, for leading a socialist reading group. The Moscow group only discovered his case when one of their own, Larisa Bogoraz, met Ronkin's wife while they were both traveling to visit their husbands in prison camp. 32 The *Chronicle*’s reporting was based on chance encounters like this and the trust that those gathering information would not go to the KGB.

As the *Chronicle*’s reach grew, so did its reporting network. Issue five of the paper gave its readers explicit instructions as to how to submit information. It reads, “Anybody interested in seeing that the Soviet public is informed about what goes on in the country, may easily pass on information to the editors of the *Chronicle*. Simply tell it to the person from whom you received the *Chronicle*, and he will tell the person from whom he received the *Chronicle*, and so on.” 33 In both its reporting and distribution, the *Chronicle* made use of the informal dissident networks to share and spread information.

As with trial books, the *Chronicle* focused on reporting news that would otherwise go undiscussed. It forced open the truth about the government’s actions, particularly with trial irregularities, as will be discussed in section three. The dissidents felt that making public the blatant illegality at Soviet trials would shame the government shamed into changing its ways. Glasnost would create reform and a rule of law. Trial books and the *Chronicle* were a way of creating the glasnost that Yesenin-Volpin had called for.

32 Hopkins, 8-9.
Western Publications of the *Chronicle*

The dissidents did not limit their attempts to create transparency to the domestic circulation sphere. They made use of foreign radio and newspapers, as well as western publications of the *Chronicle*, in order to spread the truth, and shame the Soviet Union, on a world stage. In 1969, Yury Galanskov, a member of the dissident community who assisted Ginzburg with the *White Book*, wrote an essay about the Russia penal system and called on Westerners to pressure the Soviet government to change them. He wrote, “The Western press, and especially the Western radio-stations broadcasting to Russia in Russian, publicize arbitrariness and acts of crude coercion by Soviet official personnel, and thus force the state bodies and officials to take quick action. In this way the Western press are fulfilling the tasks of what is at present lacking in Russia, an organized opposition, and thereby stimulating our national development.” 34 The western press could help to represent the dissident opposition to the government in the Soviet Union and around the world.

As western journalists and scholars traveled between the Soviet Union and the West, they carried with them copies of *samizdat* manuscripts, which they then published abroad. These texts came to be known as “*tamizdat,*” or published over there. They were integral to spreading the dissident message abroad, and also within the Soviet Union because many *tamizdat* texts were smuggled back into the Soviet Union or broadcast back over shortwave radio on foreign language stations.

The *Chronicle* had multiple foreign incarnations. In 1969, after Russian literature scholar Max Hayward translated issue number five of the *Chronicle*, and published them in *Survey*, a British journal focused on Soviet issues. Shortly after, Reddaway, then a scholar at

34 Reddaway, 225.
the London School of Economics, began to translate the first eleven issues of the *Chronicle*. In 1972, he published *Uncensored Russia*, an annotated collection of the issues.

Simultaneously in London, Dr. Zbynek Zeman, an émigré from Czechoslovakia, began to work with the human-rights group Amnesty International to publish English language translations of the paper shortly after they were published in Moscow. English language distribution eventually reached 3,000 copies per issue. 35

More relevant to our discussion is the New York publication of the *Chronicle*. In 1972, Valerii Chalidze, a young Soviet physicist and a prominent member of the dissident community, married to Pavel Litvinov’s cousin, visited New York on a government-approved lecture tour. Once he arrived though, the Soviet government promptly took away his citizenship, leaving him exiled in New York. Shortly after, it had become clear the *Chronicle* had been forced to stop “publishing” due to KGB pressure. Chalidze, with financial backing from a New York businessman with a keen interest in Soviet human rights, Ed Kline, began publishing *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, in the spring of 1973. The Kline-Chalidze *Chronicle* followed the model, in content and style, created by the *Chronicle of Current Events*.

Reddaway served as the London editor of the New York *Chronicle*. In an interview with Hopkins, he explained that the New York group was overwhelmed with information. He stated:

> We were amazed at the volume of material forwarded to use; it was really enormous, so much so that it was never able to fit all the available material in one issue. The sources are many: for instance, we have received a great deal from the so-called democratic circles, the humanists, as it were, of the Soviet movement for human rights. We have received, and still receiving [sic], a lot of material from labor camps,

35 Hopkins, 94.
psychiatric institutions, and from the activists of the Jewish Exodus movement." Material was smuggled out of the Soviet Union by tourists, western journalists, academics and diplomats.

Hopkins writes that the Kline-Chalidze *Chronicle* had two audiences. The first was "in the United States and Western Europe, and composed of journalists, government officials, human rights advocates attached to various civic organizations, and scholars. The other audience is the Soviet population itself. Some 2,000 copies of a Russian translation of each issue of the Chronicle of Human Rights in the Soviet Union are printed and most of those are intended for the Soviet Union." As it was with the Moscow *Chronicle*, the goal was to force transparency about the government’s actions within both the Soviet Union and abroad.

When the Moscow *Chronicle* resumed “publishing” in 1974, Chalidze and Kline decided to continue to publish their version as well, because their paper could reach influential policy makers in the U.S. faster than the Moscow version could. With this decision, we see the dissident movement’s emphasis on openness about Soviet affairs extended beyond a domestic level, and became international in focus.

These foreign publications of the *Chronicle* served the same purpose as the Moscow *Chronicle*, to spread information that would otherwise be suppressed. They fought silence and censorship through their publication. They helped to create the *glasnost*, which the dissidents desired.

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36 Hopkins, 130-131
37 Hopkins, 133.
Western Newspapers

Members of the dissident community also worked closely with western journalists to gain coverage in their newspapers.

Susan Jacoby, an American reporter in Moscow, wrote in her memoir *Moscow Conversations* that dissidents were integral to American reporters stationed at the Moscow bureau. Unlike most Russians, they did not fear the chance to talk with a Western reporter, but rather embraced it. They focused their interviews on the same topics the *Chronicle* reported, forcing attention on otherwise censored topics. Jacoby writes:

The dissenters are a small, diverse collection of people who disagree strongly on long-range goals for Russia; their main area of agreement is their determination to make the Soviet authorities observe their own laws. Their chief activity is publicizing official actions against other dissenters; they view the publicity as an important guarantee that no one will quietly disappear into prison or exile, as in the Stalin years. The dissenters naturally need foreign journalists to transmit the news of their activities to the outside world. Stories about Soviet political dissent published in foreign newspapers ensure that many Russians also hear the news.38

Barbara Walker, a current professor at University of Nevada, Reno, takes Jacoby’s argument a step further, arguing that the very existence of relationships between dissidents and Western journalists illustrates the dissident commitment to *glasnost*. She writes, “Arguments for this principle of openness were developed in a variety of ways—from Sakharov, for whom it was the path to successful and peaceful internal and foreign relations, to Boris Shragin, for whom it was an essential expression of human dignity and conscience. In Eastern Europe, these principles were articulated by Vaclav Havel, who argued for an escape from the ritualistic and hypocritical ideology of the Soviet bloc through ‘living in truth.’ For many Soviet dissenters, their relations with Western journalists were in a sense an

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extension of that principle of openness. Rather than hiding from the West and the world, the dissidents made public the truth about life in the Soviet Union.

**Foreign Radio**

Part of the reason dissidents worked with Western journalists was the relationship between Western newspapers and radio stations. If a story appeared in the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, it would likely be read on a news show on the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe or BBC Foreign Service.

Alexeyeva writes in her memoir about the beginning of this relationship. At the Sinyavsky and Daniel trial, during every court recess, the defendants' wives would come outside and give an update to their supporters. Alexeyeva writes, "And every evening reports on the trial and commentary were carried by foreign radio broadcasts. Thanks to this procedure, the West learned about the trial, and especially important, so did people all over the Soviet Union." By corresponding and working with Western journalists, the dissidents would be able to spread their message further than they ever could with the *Chronicle* alone.

Foreign radio was a particularly potent tool for the dissidents to showcase their commitment to *glasnost* because it reached a large audience in the Soviet Union. In *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War*, Kristen Roth-Ey, describes a 1968 survey by the government’s radio and TV research bureau, which found that 47 percent of people openly identified themselves as listeners of foreign radio and another 10 percent said they were regular listeners. The big draw was news coverage. It was not just getting information that went otherwise unreported, but getting it

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41 Alexeyeva, 276.
quickly. Roth-Ey writes that in government media, “fewer than 1 percent of the news segments covered events that had happened within the previous few hours, almost none were live, on-the-scene reports (0.5 percent of the total); about 25 percent of the airtime was given over to discussion of events or ideas with no clear time reference at all.”  

"Just as with Pravda and Izvestia, the official news radio sources left their audiences wanting."

In the late sixties, Radio Liberty began broadcasting a program consisting entirely of samizdat publications. Announcers would read publication after publication about the human rights movement in the Soviet Union. Frequently, entire issues of the Chronicle were read over the air. Hopkins explains that radio coverage expanded the Chronicle’s reach exponentially. While a typical issue of the Chronicle would reach 1,000 to 10,000 readers, he estimates “millions” would have heard it over radio.

Soviet Media

The collective idea behind the dissident’s use of these media outlets was that they allowed for open discussion, while the Soviet press organs did not. The official press was not concerned with reporting the news, but rather promoting the government and Party’s agendas.

Hedrick Smith, the New York Times Moscow correspondent in the seventies, described his visits to the Soviet newsrooms as completely counter to a western newsroom. He wrote:

Whenever I visited Pravda or Izvestia, there was none of the deadline frenzy of the Western press, the rush to beat the competition into print. Senior journalists worked


44 Hopkins, 149.
in roomy offices rather like American boardrooms done in Spartan furnishings and decorated with inspiring portraits of Lenin; and their pace was leisurely. The reason was obvious: news in our sense was not their primary business. At Pravda, editors told me that less than 20 percent of their paper was devoted to breaking news—unless Brezhnev or some other leader delivered a major speech, in which case it was printed verbatim. Visiting Pravda in late morning, I have frequently seen the next day’s paper all ready except for a few blank holes.  

The goal of these papers was not to report late breaking news. Rather, they sought to glorify the government and the Party. Smith explains that rather than writing about a Soviet plane crash, the Soviet papers will spend months reporting Western plane crashes to convey the message that life is worse in capitalist countries.  

The idea that journalism was to endorse the government’s revolutionary goals dated back to the Stalinist era when socialist realism became the official literary doctrine of the Soviet Union. At its most basic level, the doctrine of socialist realism declared art must be for the people and for the Party. It needed to be broadly accessible and promote the Party’s agenda. However, it was more than an artistic doctrine. All written documents now had to reflect socialist “truth.” Katerina Clark writes:

At this time, as at no other, the boundaries between fiction and fact became blurred in all areas of public life—in meetings of? The press, speeches, ceremonials in those incredible carnival-like mass processions where “enemies of the people” were borne in effigy, in the infamous political trials of 1936-1938—the difference between fiction and fact, between theater and political event, between literary plot and factual reporting, all became somewhat hazy.  

The lines between fact and fiction had become blurry, and the doctrine of socialist realism straddled it. Socialist “truth” was now expected in all aspects of society, not just in fictional literature.  

Sheila Fitzpatrick explores how this phenomenon infiltrated journalism and official

46 Smith, 492.  
documents in the Soviet Union in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*. She explains that the “news” which was reported followed the rules of revolutionary romanticism. It acknowledged the shortfalls of current society, but focused on the future. Fitzpatrick writes, “It was ubiquitous in Soviet journalism of the 1930s, and its traces can also be found in every bureaucratic report and statistical compilation of the period. In the socialist-realist view of the world, a dry, [a] half-dug ditch signified a future canal full of loaded barges, a ruined church was a potential kolkhoz clubhouse, and the inscription of a project in the Five-Year Plan was a magical act of creation that might almost obviate the need for more concrete exertions.” 48 It was all part of the revolutionary process to build socialism.

The doctrine of socialist realism continued through the 1960s. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had a somewhat schizophrenic relationship with the arts. At times, he appeared to be a liberal reformer, pushing against censorship, but he frequently fell back into promoting socialist realism. For instance, in 1962, Khrushchev shut down the young artists’ exhibit and held a series of admonitory meetings with writers, one month after the publication of the influential de-Stalinization novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, where he explained that the “thaw” was to be extremely limited. He spoke of the “spicy” topics writers were attracted to—labor camps, prison and exile and reiterated the point of his secret speech, that speaking openly about these topics undermined the Soviet Union. He said, “A sensation, ‘spicy’ stuff, is produced, and who falls upon it? This ‘spicy’ stuff will, like

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carrion attract flies, huge fat flies, and all kinds of bourgeois scum will crawl from abroad.”

Writers, he said, should only write about such topics if they could do so in such a way that promoted the goals of the Party and the government. Otherwise, “spicy topics” needed to be ignored and not discussed.

Non-fiction writers, such as historians and journalists, were expected to follow the rules of socialist realism as well. Smith described Soviet history writing, saying, “Soviet history is treated as an unimpeded and uplifting march toward a more plentiful and joyous collective existence.”

Journalism followed the same rules. News reports, in Pravda or on government radio had to support the government’s goals. Simo Mikkonen offers the example of the Sino-Soviet split as evidence of the lack of information on Soviet Radio. He writes, “For years, Soviet media pretended that nothing was wrong, while RL kept broadcasting news about the corrosion of relations. Many actually considered news of the Sino-Soviet split to be Western propaganda until the reality became clear to everyone. In the long run, cases like this, which indicated that the foreign broadcasters had been right, further eroded trust in the Soviet media and drove people to seek accurate news from foreign broadcasts.”

Foreign radio became analogous with samizdat publications. Government sources could not be trusted to provide full and truthful accounts of events. Concerned citizens had to look elsewhere.

Michael Meerson-Aksenov, a member of the dissident community, argued in 1977 that this process created an “ideocracy,” a society where a sole ideology dominated. In the Soviet Union, only ideas endorsed by the government, and approved by glavit, the state censorship

49 “Khrushchev Speaks Again,” In Khrushchev and the Arts, compiled by Priscilla Johnson and Leopald Labeled, (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1965), 181.

50 Smith, 488.

agency, could be published. He described the effect the ideocracy had on society, writing, "Reality begins to demand ideological interpretation; ideology is a deformation of this reality. For example, key ideas of communism such as "proletarian revolution," "class enemies," "ideological struggle," "enemies of the people," "building communism," and others do not reflect reality." Writing was not about truth, but about promoting socialism and its official values.

Samizdat publications, like the Chronicle, countered this “socialist” truth with actual truth and openness. Items published in samizdat were trusted simply because they were not government sponsored. Meerson-Aksenov describes a popular anecdote, which illustrates how closely samizdat came to be associated with truth. He writes, “a father of a family types out Lev Tolstoi's War and Peace--a classic Russian work that may be bought cheaply in any book store. When he is asked why he is doing this, he answers: ‘My son is in school where they are studying War and Peace. He must read it for the course but he refuses to read anything that is not in samizdat.’” The only written word Soviet citizens were willing trust was samizdat.

Meerson-Aksenov opens his piece by writing, "The dissident movement and samizdat are two sides of the very same process which may be called the awakening of the consciousness of Soviet society." No longer would the atrocities committed by the government be hidden or ignored. Samizdat forced open conversation and discussion, even if it was on onionskin paper. Samizdat and other dissident publications broke the state’s media

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53 Meerson-Aksenov, 19.
monopoly in a powerful way. They offered Soviet citizens a real alternative news source to
the state propaganda sources.

In this way, dissident media outlets came to represent *glasnost*, or openness. They
spoke openly about the truth in a way that no other outlet did. The dissidents, using their
media outlets, were able to force *glasnost*. 
LEGALITY IN DISSIDENT MEDIA

The dissidents, led by Yesenin-Volpin, believed that the transparency media outlets created would force the government to follow its own laws. Examining the Chronicle's coverage of trials helps to illustrate the dissident obsession with legality and glasnost. The Chronicle's coverage of trial proceedings created the glasnost the dissidents called for. We can see this by examining the Chronicle's reporting on Ginzburg's trial and the trial of the six people who demonstrated to protest the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

While Ginzburg's case has been previously discussed, an explanation of the demonstrators' trial is merited. On the night of August 20-21, 1968, the Soviet Army invaded Czechoslovakia, quashing the budding independence movement. On Sunday August 25, seven members of the Moscow dissident community including Larisa Bogoraz, Yuly Daniel's wife, Pavel Litvinov, and Natalya Gorbanevskaya, took to Red Square. The KGB immediately arrested six of the protestors, all except for Gorbanevskaya who had her infant son with her in her baby carriage.

In a letter to the Chronicle, published just ten days after the invasion, Gorbanevskaya described the scene, in the middle Moscow's Red Square. She wrote, "At midday we sat on the parapet at Execution Place and unrolled banners with the slogans LONG LIVE FREE AND INDEPENDENT CZECHOSLOVAKIA, SHAME ON THE OCCUPIERS, HANDS OFF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, FOR YOUR FREEDOM AND OURS. Almost immediately a whistle blew and plainclothes KGB men rushed at us from all corners of the square." 54

54 Reddaway, 99.
Issues four through ten of the *Chronicle* detailed the trial proceedings of the protestors and the subsequent trials and prosecutions of their supporters.

Closed Trials

The *Chronicle* began its coverage of both trials by establishing that they were closed to the general public. Of Ginzburg’s trial, the *Chronicle* reports, “The trial was formally public, but admission to it was only by permit.”55 The paper then explains that while 116 people formally requested permits, they were all denied. The trial violated the Soviet law requiring open trials. Fifteen of the protestors’ family members were allowed in the trial, but warned that if they vacated their seats at any time during court recesses they would lose their seats.

The *Chronicle* furthered its point on the closed nature of the two trials by demonstrating that the KGB had carefully stocked the room with its supporters. At Ginzburg’s trial, the only people who received permits to enter the trial were closely linked with the Party. They included, “a large number of K.G.B. agents and members of Komsomol operational squads, and a few representatives of the legal profession (e.g. only two passes were issued to the Moscow Collegium of Lawyers), the remainder of the audience obtained their permits principally from district committees of the Communist Party.”56 No members of the public attended.

The KGB took a different tack with the demonstrators’ trial. The *Chronicle* reported that rather than packing the courtroom with its own people, the KGB specifically chose “the

55 Reddaway, 74.
56 Reddaway, 75.
public," then kept them sequestered away from those protesting the trial with vodka and dominos. 57

The *Chronicle* focused in on the closed nature of trials not only because they were an example of Soviet illegality, but as an explanation of its own existence. The *Chronicle* existed to force an "open" trial. The paper would ensure trial proceedings were available, even if the public could not physically attend. It served as a message to the government that what happened at a closed trial would not remain public. The *Chronicle* would make even private trials public.

**Illegal Trial Proceedings**

Unsurprisingly, much of the paper’s coverage focused on the illegality of the trials and legal proceedings. The opening words of the *Chronicle*’s inaugural issue juxtaposed the trial of the four with the beginning of worldwide Human Rights Year. It reads:

On December 10th, 1968, twenty years will have elapsed since the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of Human Rights.

On December 10th, 1967, Human Rights Year began all over the world.

On December 11th, the trial was due to begin in the case of Yury Galanskov, Alexander Ginzburg, Aleksei Dobrovolsky, and Vera Lashkova. 58

The comparison between the Declaration of Human Rights and the trial implies that the Party was acting outside the Declaration. The Declaration of Human Rights stated all people had the right to a fair and public trial and would be presumed innocent until proven guilty. 59 In its first issue, the *Chronicle* systematically demonstrated the Party had ignored these regulations.

57 Reddaway, 116.
58 Reddaway, 53.
The first issue of the *Chronicle* points out about Ginzburg’s trial that the four on trial had been detained illegally. It reads, “All four were arrested in January 1967 and had spent nearly a year in Lefortovo prison, in violation of article 97 of the Russian Criminal Code, according to which the maximum period of pre-trial detention may not exceed nine months.” The same issue also reports Article 238 of the RCCP had been violated because the judge immediately dismissed witnesses following their testimony whereas they were legally obligated to remain in the court room.

The majority of the reporting on the protestors’ trial centered on the holes in the prosecution’s case. Many of the prosecution’s witnesses proved problematic.

For instance, the prosecution called five members of the military who had detained the protestors. The men were said to have served in the same military unit and just were coincidentally in Red Square during the protest. However, “on the very first day, under cross-examination, these people became confused in their statements about their previous acquaintance with one another. Apparently for this reason, on the second day the three who had not been questioned the first day turned out to be ‘absent on business’ and the court decided not to question them, despite the protests of the defendants and their counsel.” Once it became evident the Prosecution’s witnesses were problematic, and had been fed a story, they simply disappeared.

One of the prosecution’s other witnesses, Oleg Davidovich, directly contradicted all of the established evidence. He also insisted that he had been in a department store when witnessing the demonstration, but the store was well known to be closed on Sundays.

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60 Reddaway, 73.
61 Reddaway, 116.
Finally, the *Chronicle* offered evidence of KGB manipulation of witnesses. It reads, "On August 25th this policeman submitted to his superiors a report on what had occurred, without any reference to a disruption of transport. On September 3rd he submitted a new report stating that there had been a disruption. As was proved in court, between August 25th and September 3rd he had been called to the KGB."\(^{62}\) With these three pieces of information, the *Chronicle* undermined much of the prosecution's argument and implied it had been almost completely fabricated.

**Persecution of Supporters**

The *Chronicle* also focused much of its efforts on the trials' aftermath, the subsequent prosecutions of members of the dissident community. Following both trials, members of the Moscow dissident community were persecuted for their support of the guilty parties.

On February 15, 1968, Yesenin-Volpin and Gorbanevskaya were forcibly committed to psychiatric facilities. Gorbanevskaya, who was pregnant, was suddenly transferred from a maternity wing to a psychiatric ward, she was held with a "threatened miscarriage." Eight days later, on the 23rd, a psychiatrist admitted that she did not need psychiatric help and she was subsequently released. The police arrested Yesenin-Volpin at home and brought him to a psychiatric hospital. The *Chronicle* reported, "The reason given was that Volpin had not reported for a long time to the psychiatric out-patients' department where he was registered (and to which he had not once been summoned during the past four years)."\(^{63}\)

Like its coverage of trials, the *Chronicle*’s reporting on the forced hospitalizations of Yesenin-Volpin and Gorbanevskaya focused on the illegality of these measures. In its

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\(^{62}\) Reddaway, 117.

\(^{63}\) Reddaway, 81.
reporting, the *Chronicle* first argues that the instruction to forcibly hospitalize someone violated the law. It reads:

> The only official basis for such actions could be the instruction ‘On the immediate hospitalization of mentally ill persons who constitute a danger to society see the collection *Health Legislation*, vol. 6, Moscow, 1963.’ In the first place, however, this is only official and not legal, since the very fact of compulsory measures of a medical nature are prescribed by a court. Moreover, the hospitalization of ‘socially dangerous’ persons directly conflicts with a fundamental principle of legality—that of the presumption of innocence, since it is a person who has actually committed an offence who is recognized as socially dangerous and this can be decided only by a court verdict.  

Because Yesenin-Volpin and Gorbanevskaya had not been brought to court and sentenced to a psychiatric facility, their hospitalization was illegal. Moreover, the *Chronicle* reported the care they received violated the law, which required that patients receive an examination by a commission of three people within 24 hours of their arrival. Neither Yesenin-Volpin nor Gorbanevskaya were given such an examination. Finally, their families were not notified that they had been hospitalized.

**Coverage as Glasnost**

The common theme running through these descriptions of closed trials, manipulated testimony and prosecutions is the Party’s total and willful ignorance of the rule of law. However, there is a broader issue at play as well. Stories of the Party’s illegality were completely ignored in Party publications. The *Chronicle* was the only source of the information.

Reddaway described the contrast between them in the introduction of *Uncensored Russia*. He writes,
The Soviet press is usually—especially in many areas where politics enter—a primary source of inferior worth...It is, moreover, usually written in turgid, stereotyped language, chocked with clichés of phrase and concept...

The *Chronicle*, by contrast, focuses precisely on many of those aspects of Soviet life where the official press is most inadequate. It illuminates them, like the best primary sources, in precise unemotive language. It is uninhibited by censorship, yet in taking advantage of this is constrained by potent considerations to achieve a high level of accuracy. In brief, it both articulates the demands of aggrieved groups in Soviet society and throws fresh light on those institutions with which the groups conflict. Meanwhile almost nothing of all this is reflected—at least recognizably—in the official press. 65

The *Chronicle* very consciously positioned itself as a foil to official party news sources. Unlike *Pravda* or *Izvestia*, which only reported stories that supported the government’s agenda and perpetuated the “double speak,” the *Chronicle* reported the truth in clear, understandable language. This is evidenced by its continued criticism of the Party’s coverage of two trials.

In its first issue, the *Chronicle* summarized thirteen letters protesting the Trial of the Four. Three of them directly criticized *Pravda*’s reporting on the trial. A letter signed by twenty-four members of the Writers’ Union condemned the “obscurely worded and contradictory newspaper articles in *Izvestia* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda.*”66 Friends and relatives of the accused wrote two letters refuting “facts” presented in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.

The letters in particular questioned F. Ovarchenko’s article, “Lackeys” in *Pravda*, published shortly after the trial’s conclusion. The article, masquerading as a news story, included blatant character judgments about the accused. Ovarchenko carefully manipulates the trial proceedings to indict the four, frequently ignoring what he found useless and making up testimony as he found necessary. For instance, Ovarchenko writes, “When the homes of

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65 Reddaway, 16.
66 Reddaway, 77.
Ginzburg, Galanskov and Dobrovolsky were searched, dozens of anti-Soviet publications received from abroad were seized. However, no such evidence was found in Ginzburg’s apartment. Ginzburg’s testimony contradicts Ovarchenko’s story as well. He stated, “He [Dobrovolsky, one of the prosecution’s witnesses] have evidence that I had a secret depository in my house which, he Dobrovolsky, claimed to have seen. However, after two searches no such secret depository was found in my house.” Ovarchenko’s article was filled with instances like this, and Ginzburg’s family and friends questioned its veracity in their protest letters.

The Chronicle deemed Evening Moscow and Pravda’s coverage of the demonstrator’s trial similarly problematic. Neither publication included a full account of the charges, only “disruption” of public order, or mentioned that this disruption was a demonstration against the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Rather, the coverage focuses on personal, ad hominem attacks against the accused. For instance, Pravda “reported” that Litvinov, “having found time in the spell between his drunken bouts to marry and abandon a wife and four-year-old son without means of support, led a life of debauch.” Rather than describing the charges against them or the evidence given, the Party publications focused its energy on making the protestors seem as unsympathetic as possible.

During her testimony, Bogoraz presciently guessed how the Party’s publications would describe the trial. The Chronicle reported:

It was precisely this kind of ‘information’ that Larissa Bogoraz had in mind when she said in her closing speech on October 11th, ‘I have no doubt that public opinion will approve the verdict. Public opinion will approve of three years’ exiled for a talented scholar and three years in the camps for a young poet, first because we shall be
depicted as parasites, renegades and purveyors of a hostile ideology and second because, if people appear whose opinion differs from that of the 'public' and who have the audacity to speak out, they will soon end up here."70

Bogoraz's words help to illustrate why the Chronicle came to exist. The goal of the Chronicle was to communicate to the public at large the truth about the Party's actions, not the "truth" Pravda and Izvestia reported on. While trials were closed and the Party's publications gave a censored version of the truth, the Chronicle offered a complete and honest version of the events. There was no double speak, just the truth. It was the glasnost the demonstrators had called for at Yesenin-Volpin's protest. The Chronicle, and other dissident sources, broke the chokehold these sources had by providing a truthful account of the government's illegality.

**Glasnost and Legality**

This transparency, the dissidents argued, would force the creation of a rule of law. For the dissidents, glasnost and legality were inherently tied. Legality could not exist without glasnost.

The other side of this relationship was the dissidents' continued insistence that truth was legal. This theory dated back to Ginzburg, who insisted he could not be tried for slander because everything printed in the White Book was true.

While working on his project, Ginzburg argued it was an entirely legal endeavor. There was no law against publicizing trial proceedings and he insisted he could not be accused of slander because everything he wrote was true. Ginzburg went so far as to give the KGB a copy of the White Book.

Throughout his trial, Ginzburg insisted he was innocent. In his testimony, Ginzburg

70 Reddaway, 120.
stated there was no way the *White Book* could be construed as slander because it was factual. During questioning, he stated that, “I don’t consider them anti-Soviet; they contain no slanders, no deliberately false fabrications and no calls for insurrection.”\textsuperscript{71} He explained he hoped that by showing Party officials what a farce the trial had been, Sinyavsky and Daniel would have been granted a re-trial or at least lighter sentences.

Leonard Schapiro, then the leading Russian scholar at the London School of Economics, agreed with Ginzburg’s legal claim. In the foreword of the western publication of *The Trial of the Four*, he wrote

> The very heart of the offence according to the article under which the defendants were charged is the ‘slanderous’ nature of the statements which they made: yet all evidence designed to show that the criticism they made was fair and true was rigorously excluded by the judge as irrelevant. This alone, apart from the innumerable violations of procedural rules, is enough to show that the trial was rigged and predetermined political farce.\textsuperscript{72}

The argument that truth could not be slander began to permeate the dissident community. Their media outlets, at least in theory, were legal, because they told the truth.

The case of Andrei Amalrik helps to illustrate this point. Amalrik served as the liaison between the dissident community and western journalists from 1966 until his arrest in 1969. Like Ginzburg, he was arrested for slander, and like Ginzburg, he insisted he had simply told the truth. He followed Ginzburg’s model and argued that since he had said nothing false or dishonest in his interviews with foreign correspondent, he could not be guilty of slander. While Amalrik refused to answer questions at his trial, he did make a closing statement, which was published in “The Chronicle.” He stated, “The charges brought against me concern the dissemination by me, verbally and in print, of views which are here called

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\textsuperscript{71} Litvinov, 109.
false and slanderous. I do not consider either the interview given by me or my articles and books to be slanderous.” 73

The *Chronicle*, too, from its inception, insisted on its own legality. Just as Ginzburg insisted the *White Book* was truth, not slander, so did the *Chronicle*. Issue five reads, “The *Chronicle* is in no sense an illegal publication, and the difficult conditions in which it is produced are created by the peculiar notions about law and freedom of information which, in the course of long years, have become established in certain Soviet organizations.” 74 It was not any written law that caused the *Chronicle* to operate as an underground newspaper, but the way the government enforced the law.

There was nothing illegal in the paper’s pages, because it reported events as they happened. The *Chronicle* editors were obsessed with accuracy for this reason. Their paper would be considered libelous if it contained any inaccuracies. Issue seven states, “The *Chronicle* aims at the utmost reliability in the information it publishes. In those instances when it is not absolutely certain that some event has taken place, the *Chronicle* indicates that the piece of information is based on rumour [sic]. But at the same time the *Chronicle* requests its readers to be careful and accurate in the information they proved for publication.” 75 Accuracy allowed them to insist on legality. Truth was, at least in theory, legal.

The *Chronicle* was obsessed with truth. It believed it was a legal publication, as long as it was only reporting events as they occurred. It connects to the idea of *glasnost*, which

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74 Reddaway, 54.
75 Reddaway, 58.
was about openly speaking the truth. The *Chronicle* and other forms of dissident media would combat the Party’s lies and secrecy with truth and open discussion.

An extension of this idea was reporting events in an even, measured tone. To support its claim that it was not calling or inciting any sort of action, the *Chronicle* carefully wrote all of its stories with a simple matter-of-fact tone. The paper explained this in its eighth issue. It states, “The *Chronicle* makes every effort to achieve a calm, restrained tone...The *Chronicle* tries to refrain from making value judgments—either by not making them at all, or by referring to judgments made in *samizdat* documents.”[^76] The *Chronicle* editors hoped its accuracy and careful tone would protect it against charges of slander in a court of law.

The *Chronicle*, and other forms of dissident media, then, did not just call for legality; they served as examples of legality. They demonstrated what a legal form of open discussion looked like. It was factual and even-keeled. Nothing about its content or existence was outside the Soviet law code.

The 1936 Soviet Constitution guaranteed to its citizens the rights to freedom of speech and freedom of press.[^77] The government outlawed libel against the state, but speaking truth in any form was at least theoretically legal. As Nelidov states in his essay, the government stated such rights existed but citizens and officials acted as though they did not. The *Chronicle* and trial books countered this thought process. They were proud and defiant examples of what free speech and freedom of the press would look like in the Soviet Union. There was nothing illegal in the publications. They could not be libelous because they reported factual accounts of events, and the law protected a free press. *The Chronicle*, and

[^76]: Reddaway, 55.
other dissident media sources, served not only as potent examples of glasnost their open
discussion, but also of what a truly free press, acting within the law, would look like. It
demonstrated to everyone what following the letter of the law, rather than how it was
enforced would look like.

The connection between glasnost and legality can be traced back to the beginning of
the dissident movement, with Yesenin-Volpin’s Pushkin Square demonstration and the White
Book. The idea became an influential and integral part of dissident ideology, culminating in
not just the publication of the Chronicle, but also the founding of the Committee on Human
Rights in November 1970. Three prominent members of the movement, Andrei Sakharov,
Valerii Chalidze and Andrei Tverdokhlebov, established the group and “made glasnost a
central tenet of its theoretical and practical work.”78 The group argued that it was only
through openness that human rights would be established in the Soviet Union.

In December 1970, Chalidze made his first major report to the committee. In it, he
stressed the connection between legality and glasnost. He wrote, “We must strive for
publicity in all matters pertaining to the defense of rights. Open court proceedings, public
discussion of administrative decisions on rights, press coverage of the problem of rights—
only when all this becomes customary can we hope for increasingly effective protection of
human rights.”79 In order to protect human rights, and to instill a rule of law, the public
needed to be informed of human rights violations. It was only through publicity that the Party
would be forced, or shamed, into changing its ways.

78 Horvath, 180.
79 Valerii Chalidze, "Important Aspects of Human Rights in the Soviet Union." In The Political, Social and
Religious Thought of Russian 'Samizdat'- An Anthology, ed/ Michael Meerson-Aksenov and Boris Shagrin.
Chalidze argues that another component of glasnost was understanding exactly what was and was not legal. He writes, “Man must know his rights in order to realize them, in order not to be misled by seeming prohibitions—even this condition is not always fulfilled...Legal education is an important part of any system for this the defense of human rights in society.” The laws needed to be open and accessible so people could know how to stay within it.

The Chronicle served both these purposes, two years before Chalidze’s essay. The Chronicle actively worked to publicize trial proceedings and explained in its coverage exactly what was legal and what was not. The Chronicle was glasnost. It would create openness where there was none. It was able to crack the monopoly of information.

80 Chalidze 213.
OFFICIAL VS. DISSIDENT GLASNOST

In calling for glasnost and legality, the dissidents put themselves in a historical model laid out by government bureaucrats and outside reformers of the 19th century and by the Soviet Premier Khrushchev. In both instances, government leaders had called for reform of the legal codes and at least a limited form of glasnost.

19th Century Reform Efforts.

From 1825 through the 1860s, under Czars Nicholas and Alexander II, Russia underwent a series of reforms, culminating in Alexander’s abolition of serfdom in 1861. While the freeing of the serfs was certainly the most dramatic of the reform efforts, many of the other reforms enacted and discussed closely mirror what the dissidents called for in the 1960s.

Nicholas I had come to power following the Decembrist Uprising of 1825. The Decembrists were a group of educated, elite, upper-class men, who took to the streets demanding “Constantine and Constitution.” Constantine was Alexander’s younger brother, who they believed should take the throne, instead the youngest brother Nicholas, but the more important demand was the call for a Constitution.

The Decembrists were a mix of reform-minded military men and a younger, more radical group of soldiers. Both groups were grounded in the secret societies that had arisen in Russia following the Napoleonic Wars. Marshall Shatz writes of these men, “Upon their return to Russia, their acute sense of having saved their country from foreign conquest combined with the tradition of state service, which was still strong in their class, to produce a feeling of personal responsibility for Russia’s social and political progress. They developed fundamental reservations about the twin pillars on which the existing system in Russia
rested: autocracy and serfdom.” 81 The Decembrists were a varied group when it came to what exactly they were demanding. The leaders all had different opinions on what the best system of governance for Russia. Some called for a republic, others a federated system and still more a constitutional monarchy. 82 The common thread running through these potential forms of government was the desire for a Constitution, something that would prevent the Czar from arbitrarily abusing his power.

The Russian poet Pushkin summarized the Decembrist’s call for a rule of law in his poem, Ode to Freedom. Pushkin argued that the Czar had two options: embrace the rule of law, or face revolutionary violence. He wrote,

And that’s a lesson to the czar:
Your punishments and your rewards
Your prison walls and all your altars
Are not protection you can trust.
Be first to bow your heads
Under the sanctuary of Law
And then tranquility and freedom
Will guard the throne forevermore. 83

The Decembrists believed that it was the rule of law and not of tyranny that would ensure peace and stability throughout the nation.

Many members of the dissident community felt a kinship with the Decembrists. In 1976, to honor the 150th anniversary of the uprising, nearly 100 members of the dissident community gathered on the Senate Square in Leningrad, with signs reading “Glory to the Decembrists—the First Dissidents of Russia.” 84 Alexeyeva wrote, “The regime no longer had any need for citizens, for citizens have a way of being a nuisance. They demand reforms,

81 Shatz, 32.
82 David Ransel, “Pre-Reform Russia,” in Russia: A History, ed. Gregory Freeze (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1997), 156.
83 Alexeyeva and Goldberg, 34.
they demand the rule of law. And sometimes, as on December 14, 1825, they stand up to defy the state.” 85 Alexeyeva goes on to put the dissidents not just in the shadow of the Decembrists, but in the entire philosophical tradition of the later Westernizers, a group of reformers who felt Russia should follow the Western political model.

**Westernizers vs. Slavophiles**

Throughout Nicholas I’s reign, a discussion waged over the best way to go about reforming Russia. There were two main schools of thought, referred to as the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. Slavophiles felt the key to ensuring Russia’s strength as a nation was for the nobility to return to its Russian roots. Westernizers, in contrast, felt that the Russian system was “backwards” and needed to be overhauled. Schapiro describes the Slavophiles, writing “They rejected constitutionalism in favor of the traditional Russian autocracy, and regarded Russia as fortunate in having escaped both Roman law and the rigid formalism, as they saw it in the Roman Catholic Church.” 86

Westernizers, in contrast, led by Alexander Herzen, called for Russia to embrace a system of law, like that in the West. In the first example of *tamizdat*, Herzen published a journal, *Kolokol* (“The Bell”), which advocated for the abolition of serfdom. Herzen was the first to publish Pushkin’s *Ode to Freedom*, consciously putting himself in the shadow of the Decembrist’s call for a Constitution. 87

The two groups’ view of *glasnost* illuminates the dichotomy between them. Both the Slavophiles and the Westernizers embraced the notion of *glasnost*, but they defined it in vastly different terms. Slavophiles, Kenez writes, “advocated not Western-style intellectual

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85 Alexeyeva and Goldberg, 35.
86 Schapiro, *Russian Studies*, 41.
87 Alexeyeva and Goldberg, 35
freedom in a democratic society, but openness in discussing public affairs. The Slavophiles wanted to allow the Russian people to voice their concerns, but at the same time did not want to limit the power of the autocrat." 88 Westernizers, in contrast, argued for limited autocracy and complete intellectual freedom.

Alexeyeva establishes a link between the dissidents and their westernizing predecessors. She writes, "Being Russian, Westernizers are not born to rights and liberties. To them, rights and liberties are ideals." 89 Just as the reformers of the 1860s had called for law and glasnost, rather than autocracy, so did the dissidents 100 years later. Alexeyeva makes the case the dissidents carefully put themselves in the shadows of previous reformers. In doing so, she illuminates the so-called "Myth of the Decembrists." The Decembrists were mythologized not just for their demonstration, but also for Czar Nicholas' punishment of them. The Czar exiled the Decembrists to Siberia, and in act of devotion, their wives followed them. David Ransel argues that this was an important part of their appeal, writing, "Although women had made such sacrifices earlier, the Decembrists' wives were the first to be inscribed as a literary model and hence the first to provide a script to Furrisan women's selfless devotion to the cause of resistance to autocracy." 90 The Decembrists and their wives became the ultimate martyrs for a political cause. Like the Decembrists, the dissidents felt the way to prevent autocratic tyranny was the establishment and enforcement of a rule of law.

89 Alexeyeva and Goldberg, 36.
90 Ransel, 157.
**Emperor Alexander II**

One of the key reforms of the 1860s, brought to fruition by Alexander II, was the creation of the Bench and Bar in 1864, which codified the legal system in Russia and established credentials for lawyers to join the field. The reform was part of a larger movement for *zakonnost*, which Bruce Lincoln defines as “the lawful order that governed the behavior of men and rulers in the West.”\(^{91}\) Lincoln argues that reformers in Alexander’s bureaucracy believed creating *zakonnost* in Russia would dramatically improve life in the nation. He writes:

Not only must *zakonnost* limit the unfettered arbitrariness of state officials, but it also must define the legal procedures that would eliminate the pervasive system of administrative surveillance that senior officials used to control the behavior of their subordinates. *Zakonnost* thus could help to control the abuses of arbitrary power within Russia, could help to break down the rigid system of estates...and in the future, could create a society in which all citizens enjoyed equality under the law.\(^{92}\)

His description of the goals of *zakonnost* mirror almost perfectly what the dissidents called for one hundred years later. The dissidents felt that equal protection and treatment by the law would make it nearly impossible for the government, or a single leader, to persecute its citizens. The rule of law would check the power of individuals.

The most striking similarity between the government bureaucrats of the 1860s and the dissidents of the 1960s is the discussion of relationship between *zakonnost* and *glasnost*. V.A Tsie, a bureaucrat serving under Alexander II, argued that *glasnost* was a requisite for the rule of law. He wrote, “Nowhere does *glasnost* have such a fundamental and undoubted utility as in legal proceedings. It provides the oppressed with an opportunity to enjoy the


protection of the law, and it alone, with its all-shattering power, can shake and finally eradicate the most shameful ulcer of our society—corruption.93 Prince Petr Dolgorukov argued that glasnost would counter the arbitrariness of the Czar's bureaucrats. He wrote, "Glasnost is the fiercest enemy of [administrative] abuses, and secrecy is their ally and protector."94

Their arguments are remarkably similar to views extolled by Yesenin-Volpin and the dissidents behind the Chronicle, and other media outlets. The ideology driving the Chronicle was that open discussion of persecutions and show trials would force the government to reform. Publicity would destroy corruption and abuses of power. It is identical to the argument made by Tsie and Dolorukov. Glasnost would lead to the rule of law.

Khrushchev's "Secret" Speech

In his seminal de-Stalinization speech at Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev also called for both glasnost and the rule of law. Khrushchev's speech was radical; he argued the only way to begin healing the Soviet Union and the Party after the Stalinist era was to openly speak about it and to expose the truth about those years.

Khrushchev offered two solutions to prevent the rise of another Stalin-like figure: open discussion and the rule of law.

Speaking of legality, the Soviet Premier said, "To restore completely the Leninist principles of Soviet Socialist democracy, expressed in the constitution of the Soviet Union, to fight willfulness of individuals abusing their power. The evil caused by acts violating revolutionary Socialist legality which have accumulated during a long time as a result of the

93 In the Vanguard of Reform, 184.
94 In the Vanguard of Reform, 184.
negative influence of the cult of the individual has to be completely corrected.” By following
the Soviet constitution to the letter of the law, abuses of power, like Stalin’s, could not occur.
Stalin’s actions were illegal, Khrushchev argued, and future leaders would need to act within
the law.

Khrushchev also argued that it was only through open and honest discussion of the
Stalinist years that the cult of personality could be banished. He spoke, openly and officially,
for the first time, about the purges and destruction of the Stalinist era. The bulk of
Khrushchev’s speech focused on Stalin’s purge of the Party. He described the mass arrests
and the executions. He said, “The vicious practice was condoned of having the NKVD
prepare lists of persons whose cases were under the jurisdiction of the military collegium and
whose sentences were prepared in advance. Yezhov would send these [execution] lists to
Stalin personally for his approval of the proposed punishment. In 1937-1938, 383 such lists
containing the names of many thousands of party, Soviet, Komsomol, Army, and economic
workers were sent to Stalin. He approved these lists.” 95 It was the first time such a thing had
been publically admitted.

Khrushchev argued that, while exposing the truth about the Stalinist years was
necessary, it was important that the Soviet Union not do this in front of Westerners. “We
should in all seriousness consider the question of the cult of the individual. We cannot let this
matter get out of the party, especially not to the press. It is for this reason that we are
considering it here at a closed congress session.” 96 Khrushchev’s somewhat schizophrenic
opinions on openness are also evidenced by what he left out of the speech. While he exposed
and denounced the Party purges, any discussion of the terror against the population and the

96 Khrushchev, “The Secret Speech.”
persecution of the intelligentsia went unsaid.

Khrushchev then was calling for a limited and very restrained form of glasnost. In the final lines of the speech, Khrushchev re-affirmed his commitment to socialist realism, not just as a literary tenet but also as a key part of the revolutionary process. He said:

We will be forced to do much work in order to examine critically from the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint and to correct the widely spread erroneous views connected with the cult of the individual in the sphere of history, philosophy, economy, and of other sciences, as well as in the literature and the fine arts. It is especially necessary that in the immediate future we compile a serious textbook of the history of our party which will be edited in accordance with scientific Marxist objectivism, a textbook of the history of Soviet society, a book pertaining to the events of the civil war and the great patriotic war.97

Truth was to be socialist truth.

The high-water mark of de-Stalinization occurred in 1962 when Khrushchev personally approved the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich98, which followed a prisoner through a typical day in a labor camp. For the first time, a piece of officially approved and published literature acknowledged the existence of labor camps.

At the time, the publication of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich was momentous. Jacoby describes Dmitri, a college student, who thought when reading the book, “Things might have changed enough so there was actually a possibility of publishing honest writing.”99 Vladislav Zubok describes a Moscow schoolteacher who wrote in her diary, “From that moment, people would begin to speak and think freely, and not a single scoundrel would be able to indict them for anti-Soviet speeches.”100 The idea of being able to speak

97 Khrushchev, “The Secret Speech.”
98 Shatz, 110.
99 Jacoby, 237.
100 Zubok, 80.
openly was completely thrilling.

In the novel, Solzhenitsyn makes an argument for complete openness and honesty when discussing the Stalinist years. In one scene, he makes it clear he has refused to censor his novel in order to get it published. Two prisoners, Kh-123 and Tsezar, discuss the film *Ivan the Terrible*. While Tsezar argues that the film is a work of genius because of its camera angles and artistic beauty, Kh-123 says it is a piece of propaganda. Tsezar responds it is the only way it would have gotten past the censors. Kh-123 retorts, “Let through, you say? Then do not call him a genius! Call him a toady. Say he carried out orders like a dog. A genius doesn’t adapt his treatment to the taste of tyrants!”

Solzhenitsyn, as an artist, refused to censor his novel. He truthfully described life in the labor camps. It was a radical argument against socialist realism in all its forms. A writer’s duty was not to support the Party’s goals or to speak of “revolutionary truth,” but to speak actual truth.

**Gorbachev’s Glasnost**

The dichotomy between Khrushchev and Solzhenitsyn helps to illustrate the difference between official and dissident *glasnost*, which came to a head under Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev would identify *glasnost* as the signature piece of his reform efforts. However, Gorbachev used the term as the Slavophiles, not the dissidents, intended it. Kenez writes, “Gorbachev and his comrades understood the term as ‘constructive’ criticism, that is, the voices of people who took the existence and superiority of the Soviet system for granted.” Just as the Slavophiles did, Gorbachev was calling for a limited amount of open discussion,

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while still guaranteeing the ultimate authority of the government. He felt “speaking the language of truth” would strengthen the Soviet government’s stance with its people and with the world.\textsuperscript{102}

The dissidents were dismayed by his use of the term. They felt he had co-opted their term, and not delivered on what it meant. Government officials carefully avoided mentioning the dissident roots of the term, and had constructed a definition of it that ran counter to what the dissidents believed true \textit{glasnost} was. Sakharov, at this point the de-facto head of the dissident movement, spent much of 1987 speaking about the “continuing detention of those who had spoken out too soon for \textit{glasnost}.”\textsuperscript{103} Gorbachev’s \textit{glasnost} was vastly different from the dissidents’ because while Gorbachev spoke of \textit{glasnost}, he still believed the government should retain at least limited control over media technologies. It was, in the dissidents’ view, a restricted and false \textit{glasnost}.

A group of ten prominent dissident émigrés, including Vladimir Bukovsky, a student of Yesenin-Volpin’s, released a manifesto, first published in world media and then in the \textit{Moscow News}, titled “Let Gorbachev Give Us Proof.” In it, they demonstrated the hollowness of Gorbachev’s \textit{glasnost}. It reads:

\textit{Glasnost} essentially implies some public discussion where everybody can take part without fearing reprisals irrespective of the views expressed. \textit{Glasnost} should include both the right to receive information and the right to spread information because both are inseparably linked in the single process of society’s control over the government. Rather than the official campaign of criticism of Soviet reality there should be free access to copying equipment to promote greater \textit{glasnost} as we understand it. If the Soviet leaders wish to enjoy trust among the public, it is necessary for them to recognize at least several independent publishers not subject to party control.\textsuperscript{104}

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\textsuperscript{102} Ronald Suny, \textit{The Soviet Experiment : Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States} (New York : Oxford University Press, 1998), 481.
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\textsuperscript{103} Horvath, 191.
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\textsuperscript{104} Horvath, 190.
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It was a manifesto in support of everything the Chronicle stood for: free, independent and truthful media. It also pointed out the flaws in the government’s embrace of glasnost. While Gorbachev and other government officials called for openness of discussion, the government still controlled the technology that would allow for the distribution of information. A truly free press, and freedom of discussion, could not exist with state censorship still controlling much of the media technology. For truly free circulation of information, the government needed to relinquish all of its remaining control over media outlets.

Gorbachev struck back against the dissidents, arguing they had anti-Soviet motives. When explaining the need for open discussion, he stated, “In our country, all of society is on the same side of the barricade.” The dissidents, however, were on the other side of the barricade, and thus, excluded from the public debate.

In comparison to Gorbachev, the dissidents viewed glasnost as a weapon of revolution, rather than a tool of reform. While Gorbachev called for glasnost, the government continued the practice of censorship. With dissident forms of media, and the dissident view of glasnost, nothing would be hidden because the government was no longer solely in control of releasing information. By taking control of media outlets, dissidents could influence and manipulate the topics and tone of conversation in the Soviet Union. It was a radical departure from government-created glasnost.

The free flow of information would undermine the Soviet state. The dissidents recognized this and sought to harness the power of glasnost through their use of media outlets. Dissident media was as much a reflection of dissident values as it was a tool in their fight against the government.

105 Horvath, 191.
By demonstrating to Soviet citizens and the world at large how the Soviet government was actually behaving, the dissidents were able to undermine the government. Transparency meant the Soviet government was acting in the court of world opinion and could no longer simply act as it pleased. There would be consequences on the world stage.

That is not to say that this dissidents’ devotion to *glasnost* and media outlets, or even Gorbachev’s *glasnost*, were the cause for the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ann Komaromi, a current historian at the University of Toronto, wrote of the dissidents’ use of *samizdat* publications ultimate effect on Russia, “Such obvious historical importance may in fact be the problem. The political dynamics of the Cold War tended to fix the idea of dissidence in the minds of many western observers as opposition to the Soviet regime. The fixed binary made it tempting to romanticize dissidents and their cause. Dissidents, however, had little or no demonstrated impact on the Soviet regime, during Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika, during the fall of the Soviet regime, or in helping to shape a more democratic and just government after the end of the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁶ The Soviet Union ultimately fell not because of any of the actions taken by the dissidents, or by their newspaper, but because of the arms race and the collapse of the economy.

Komaromi ultimately concludes that the legacy of *samizdat* is its discussion of legality. She writes, “What endures over time from the human rights legacy? The Soviet dissident legal strategy has proven to be a unique contribution to rights discourse.”¹⁰⁷ The dissidents set the model of broadcasting human rights abuses for the entire world to see, and shaming perpetrators into changing their ways. *Glasnost* as a weapon is their legacy.

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¹⁰⁷ Komaromi, 90.
CONCLUSION

The dissidents’ legacy of using glasnost as a tool for demanding the rule of law has been apparent the past few months in Russia, as anti-Putin protesters have turned to the internet both to break the government’s monopoly on media and to demand reforms.

In February 2012, the New York Times ran a story about Russian media, and the way a group of young protesters was subverting traditional news sources. Alessandra Stanley wrote about Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s media strategy during his campaign for the Presidency. Putin’s campaign regularly released “long mission statements for Russia’s future; each one is framed on the news like a tablet from Moses.” Typical television news stories feature Putin, looking strong and virile, highlighting his ideas for Russian future. However, Stanley reports, Putin was coming up against a roadblock: the Internet.

Stanley writes, “But heavy-handed, Soviet-style image control is also a problem for the Putin campaign in the Internet age. Bloggers and political Web sites not only contradict government-tailored newscasts, they also offer an alternate, unscripted reality — live, via cellphone camera and Skype.” The protesters were making use of new media technologies to get their message out, around media closely associated with government.

The protesters were posting photos and videos, taken by smart phones, of clear examples of voter fraud in the elections. They had clear proof that the government was lying and the Internet offered them a way to broadcast that. Just like the dissidents, they

109 Stanley.
intended to use publicity as a way of demanding change.

David Remnick, the editor of the *New Yorker* and former *Washington Post* Moscow correspondent in the late eighties, offers another example in a piece he recently wrote for his magazine about the new generation of protesters. He describes the case of Yevgenia Chirikova, an environmental activist at odds with Putin’s government. In the spring, government officials declared her an unfit mother and threatened to take away her daughters. Chirikova felt that she had no one turn to. The government officials had sided against her; she needed a direct voice to her fellow citizens. She made a video and posted it online. The response was immediate. She told Remnick, “After that the ombudsmen on the rights of children apologized.”

By circumventing government media, and telling her story, Chirikova was able to fight the government’s abuses. Transparency, *glasnost*, is a weapon in the quest for human rights.

By turning to the internet as an uncensored media form, the 2011 protesters put themselves in the model of the dissidents of the 1960s and 1970s. They believed *glasnost* would force the government to enforce fair elections. The *samizdat Chronicle of Current Events* and the western re-publications of it, as well as stories about the dissident movement guaranteed that the government could not act in secret. Truth and openness were requirements for legality.

This claim is hardly new for the current generation of protestors, or even the Soviet dissidents. The Soviet dissidents carefully put themselves in the model of the Decembrists and the Westernizers, claiming that the rule of law rather than an autocrat was necessary for Russia to succeed. The rallying cry since 1825 has been the same. It should not be a singular

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ruler choosing how the law is enforced, but a system of clear written laws to limit an autocrat from doing so. By making these abuses of power known to the public, glasnost became a weapon in the battle for legality.

In an interview with Mark Hopkins, Gorbanevskaya explained the motivations behind the formation of the Chronicle. "Basically there was an attempt to lay out the facts, to describe the violation of rights, to quote articles of law. Nothing was exaggerated. The love for objectivity was in the air. Was this un-Russian? I don’t think so. Herzen’s Kolokol contained a mass of pure information." Gorbanevskaya references Herzen’s journal as a model for the Chronicle, because of its commitment to exposing the truth and printing materials that would otherwise be censored, but the phrase “mass of pure information” could just as easily have been applied to the Chronicle, or the blogs of the modern protestors. In each case, the goal was the same: to use exposure and confrontation with the truth as a catalyst for reform.

112 Hopkins, 23.
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