

Serguei Alex. Oushakine “Stop the Invasion!”: Money, Patriotism, and Conspiracy in Russia

The practices of conspiracy theory form a tensely articulated pact with therapeutic culture through the logics of stress, trauma, injustice, self-made agency, and redemption. Taken separately and together, conspiracy theory and therapeutic culture constitute fields of feeling that channel the contradictions of contemporary social transformations and their effects. They knot together desire and despair, progress and collapse, enchantment and disenchantment, nostalgic and futuristic yearnings, and the search for everything from purity to community. This is the nature of a modern nervous system. It is also the nature of [the] meta-discourse of modernity.

Susan Harding and Kathleen Stewart (2003: 263)

A COMMEMORATIVE EVENT THAT THE ALTAI COMMITTEE OF SOLDIERS' Mothers organized on November 15, 1999 in Barnaul, the administrative center of the Altai region (Siberia), initially did not promise anything unusual. By presenting a newly published book of obituaries, *We Were Waiting for You, Sons . . .*, the event was supposed to publicly remember 114 Altai soldiers killed in the first Chechen war (1994-1996). By 1999, the Mothers' Committee had been actively involved for more than 10 years in “memorializing” (*uvekovechivanie*) the losses of Altai soldiers in

various military conflicts of the 1970s to 1990s: from Afghanistan to Abkhazia, and from Tajikistan to Chechnya. Unlike their colleagues from the Moscow Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the Altai women stayed away from openly confronting Russia's government about its military policy. Instead, they domesticated their losses by persistently inscribing traces of soldiers' deaths in the everyday fabric of the city—by creating a regional Museum of Local Wars, by displaying memorial plaques with the names of deceased soldiers, by rearranging soldiers' graves in the city's main cemetery, and by organizing high-profile memorial events. It was personal memory, not political justice, that was their main focus.

The book presentation, however, marked the emergence of a very different tendency. The mothers' usual, small-scale memory work was overshadowed by a desire to establish larger historical links and spatial connections. Staged in a local theater in downtown Barnaul, the commemorative ceremony was attended by the mothers, veterans of local wars, politicians, and journalists. A short video film that opened the event put a peaceful, spiritual cast on the last hundred years of Russia's history by presenting endless images of churches and pictures of Russian landscapes. A voice-over narrative that accompanied the video spelled out a very different message. The serene visual backdrop was in a radical contrast to a story that presented the century as a lasting chain of external attacks and internal treachery: from the Russian-Japanese war of 1905 to the plan of psychological war against Russia allegedly created by Allen Dulles in the 1950s; from Germany's invasion in 1941 to Russia's current battles with Islam in the Caucasus.

Suddenly, the century of history emerged as a century of heroic struggle and resistance to alien forces, a resistance that is "deeply rooted" in Russian tradition, as one of the presenters put it. The main slogan of the ceremony reminded the audience of the purpose of this lesson in history: "To Remember in Order to Live." The poem read at the opening of the book presentation—a simultaneous message to a "distant ancestor" and to a close descendant ("son")—summed up this

interplay of outside pressure of anonymous (but hostile) forces and internal resistance well:

The battlefield is ablaze
My ancestor, now I recall our tie
It is my blood
That you shed on the Kulikovo battlefield . . .
Our blood is intact
Even though it has been shed many times
It forgets nothing
Remember, son, you share the blood of your ancestors.¹

The importance of biospatial connections was emphasized in a more politically overt way as well. When a group of contemporary dancers in black dresses performed their disjointed movements on stage, the screen behind them depicted footage of the Russian deputies voting in December 1991 in favor of dissolving the Soviet Union. The voice-over simultaneously gave the dictionary meaning of the word “cosmopolite” as a person who does not recognize the specificity of the relationship with the motherland, thus bringing back sinister associations with the Stalinist anti-Semitic campaign against “kinless cosmopolites” (*bezrodnye kosmopolity*). Aleksandr Surikov, governor of the region at the time, attended the presentation, too; he sponsored the publication of the book of memory and even authorized the introduction to it. In his short speech he finally linked the theme of cutoff roots with the notion of treason. As the governor put it, the soldiers’ deaths were the “price for the betrayals” that began with the splitting of the Soviet Union. “It is a bitter price. But this is the price we have to pay for the life of our state. We’ve got no other state.”² Justified by a lack of choice, the life of the state became associated with deaths in families, while the rhetoric of grief helped to transform the state violence in Chechnya into a self-victimizing discourse on the history of betrayals.

This episode vividly outlines several important aspects that I will discuss below. As the ceremony suggests, personal loss tends to be

translated in terms of national traumas and suffering. Individual biographies are merged with historical narratives about battlefields and spilled blood, while the state and the motherland become symbolically indistinguishable. Perhaps more important is that this triangulation of the self, loss, and the nation-state is framed within a larger context of the experienced vulnerability or imagined threat. The suffering self is equated with the Motherland in danger.

Starting in the 1990s, this patriotism of despair, with its combination of the traumatic and the conspiratorial, has become especially emblematic of the postmillennial Russia. Inability to convincingly explain individual or collective losses has resulted in an intensive production of popular conspiracy narratives aimed to bring to light hidden forces and concealed plans of “evil outsiders.” As I shall show, in these narratives, references to pain and suffering are often linked with fundamental economic changes in the country. Emerging market relations both polarized people and simultaneously activated what Jean and John Comaroff have fittingly called the “will to connect” (2003b: 297).

Scholars studying transitions from noncapitalist economic orders to capitalist ones have already pointed out that these moves inevitably involve a comprehensive reorganization of the moral presumptions necessary for justifying new choices and alternatives. For instance, Michael Taussig observes that “there is a moral holocaust at work in the soul of a society undergoing the transition from a precapitalist to a capitalist order. And in this transition both the moral code and the ways of seeing the world have to be recast” (1980: 101). Readjusting their moral and social optics, Taussig suggests, groups and individuals tend to resort to preexisting cosmogonies, using them either as sites of resistance to the emerging order or as a means of mediation. Rites and myths are the most visible forms of such sociosymbolic reconfiguration (101). Katherine Verdery, in a similar vein, argues that the radical change of the property regime that followed the collapse of socialism “alters the very foundations of what ‘persons’ are and how they are made” (2000: 176).

Stories and rituals that I analyze in this article present further striking evidence of the uneasy process through which new social reali-

ties and new social identities are imagined, negotiated, and internalized in postsocialist Russia. In many of these stories, the “invisible hand” that is supposed to guide the free market is made dramatically real in various scenarios of manipulation (see also Verdery, 1996:180-84; Ries, 2002). The post-Soviet uneasiness about the increasing social role of capital is translated into stories about universal lies and deceptions. The perceived exposure to foreign values and capital is often counterbalanced with ideas of an enclosed national community and unmediated values. Increasingly, Russo-Soviet culture is construed as “inalienable wealth,” as a particular form of socially meaningful property that could be shared among people but that could not enter commercial circulation or exchange (Weiner, 1985).

Instead of dismissing these narratives as yet another example of the post-Soviet return to the “archaic” and “mythological” (Gudkov, 2005), I will approach them as a historically specific form of symbolization that not only endows its authors and consumers with some interpretative agency and social identity (Hellinger, 2003: 226) but that also provides them with a plausible organizing plot in a situation where established patterns of interactions and traditional forms of rationality lost their orienting function. As Kathleen Stewart convincingly pointed out, “Conspiracy theory . . . reenacts trauma; it’s always returning to something you thought you knew but could not quite account for. It looks for the trace and fastens onto it. It’s a fascination that quickly turns into horror and then lends itself to fascination again” (1999: 17). In other words, it is not the actual theoretical content of post-Soviet conspiracies that I am interested in exploring here. From that point of their “theory,” conspiracy theories are all alike. Rather, I want to draw attention to those unsettling and dislocating experiences of the post-Soviet transformation that have made conspiratorial thinking popular in contemporary Russia.

This article examines a set of interviews and materials that I collected in Barnaul. During my fieldwork from 2001 to 2003 and shorter visits from 2004 to 2005, I attended meetings and interviewed individual members of local political and religious groups. Originally,

my informants included such diverse groups as Western-oriented liberals, hard-core Communists, neohippies, and neopagans. Here I focus mainly on Communist, National-Bolshevik, antiglobalist, and religious groups that were most active in the city during my fieldwork.

“EVERYONE LIES, EVERYONE STEALS”

In post-Soviet studies of Russia, it has become a commonplace to view the existing Communist movement as a hangover of the previous period, a political phantom that persisted rather than developed. This perception has some validity. A majority of supporters of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (the KPRF, as it is usually called) belong to the generations that developed their political views in the Soviet period. Communist-oriented groups and organizations are most active in areas outside major industrial and cultural centers, usually in rural and newly demilitarized provinces. Given these two factors, scholars of Russia routinely frame Communist-inspired actions as “protest-like” behavior, as a backlash *against* liberalization and reforms, not as an intrinsic and inseparable part of these processes (Shestopal, 2004; Sedov, 2003; Kiewiet and Myagkov, 2002; Wegren, 2004).

The situation is not that simple. From 1991 on, the Altai regional parliament was continuously controlled by a pro-Communist coalition. However, the typical “Communist prototype”—“a retired *babushka* with a hearing aid who tries to relive her Communist youth,” as a young Barnaul Communist described it to me—had very little in common with people who were actually associated with Communist institutions in the region. In fact, many Communist deputies elected to the Altai parliament in 2004 were 30 or 40 years old. People who worked for local leftist organizations were relatively young, too: most of them were born in the 1970s and 1980s. Many studied at local universities, majoring in social sciences; there were quite a few who became full-time politicians. To avoid historical and terminological confusion, I refer to this new generation of Communists as “neocommunists,” or “neocoms.” Increasingly, this group describes itself as the “children of reforms” (*deti reform*), resolutely distancing itself from the generation of

“pro-Western and liberally-minded ‘children of perestroika’” who came of age in the 1980s and early 1990s (Ekart, n.d.).

Providing numerous and extensive descriptions of the “detrimental impact of capitalism,” my neocommunist informants often started by identifying an unexplainable gap between new economic relations and practices of daily life produced by this economic order. It was precisely this disjuncture of the economic and the quotidian that I was interested in exploring. How did young people in Altai react to the limited applicability of their social knowledge and interpretive skills? What symbolic resources did they draw upon in order to produce meaningful structures in the context of uncertainty?

On December 16, 2002, Aleksei Z., an 18-year-old member of the radical National-Bolshevik group (*natz-boly*) agreed to meet with me in front of an old shopping center, the Central Universal Store (*TsUm*), in downtown Barnaul. Picking a place for the interview was not easy. It was snowy and windy outside; the temperature had dropped to -10°F. In this weather, the *natz-boly*'s usual place of socializing, the Eternal Flame Square near a local monument to the martyrs of Socialism, did not look very attractive. The *TsUM* was crowded, and there was nowhere to sit. Finding a place to have a talk with Aleksei was a problem. Apart from flashy, loud restaurants and fast-food stands—the two extremes that defined the public space in the city—there were very few affordable cafés. Nor was there any developed pub culture. Shopping malls, one possible indoor hangout, tended to be cluttered with stalls and kiosks to maximize the real estate's revenues. Public libraries required special passes (or a passport). In a warmer season, things might look different in Barnaul, but from October until early May the shape of public space remained narrow. A Baskin-Robbins around the corner was a plausible choice, but Aleksei's reaction to it was negative. He explained that as an antiglobalist he found it objectionable. There was a more personal story to tell, too. Earlier in the fall, Aleksei, together with several other National-Bolsheviks, had smashed several big windows of the Baskin-Robbins to protest the invasion of global capital into the region. Police never discovered them, yet revisiting the crime scene did not sound like a very good idea. I respected

his choice, but the cold weather was also persuasive. Vacillating, Aleksei picked the Baskin-Robbins in the end because it was closer. As became clear, Aleksei's knowledge of this particular form of global capitalism was rather distant: he had never been inside the Baskin-Robbins. Apparently he had also grossly overestimated its impact on the local economy. During the entire two hours of our conversation, we remained the only customers in the café, a fact that deeply surprised him.

Our interaction with the salesperson, a young girl behind the bar, provided some interesting local information about adopting global trends to "native" tastes. The place was plastered with posters advertising its seasonal special: "genuine hot chocolate for 69 rubles!" (about \$2.20). I asked if the chocolate was indeed real. A bit hesitant in the beginning, the girl explained that it was not. The *real* "real hot chocolate" would be "way too expensive," and it would be "too bitter" anyway. Hence, the drink was "diluted by half" with water. Having settled on tea (7 rubles), we started a conversation for which the image of partially "genuine chocolate" seemed to be a perfect metaphor.

From the very beginning Aleksei told me that he had joined the National-Bolshevik Party because he saw "nothing good in our state order [*stroï*]," and our discussion was mostly focused on his views of the state and the fate of Russians. The party's active (and at times violent) defense of the Russian nation had led the mass media to associate it strongly with fascism (Likhachev, 2002, chap. 2; Job, 2001; Mathyl, 2002). But Aleksei rejected that view, maintaining that it was completely wrong: the party was not fascist—it was "patriotic." Being "half-German," as Aleksei put it, he did not welcome fascism at all: "Patriotism is good, but fascism is too much." Yes, he agreed, the party's main slogan, "Russia—for the Russians!" was interpreted sometimes as nationalistic; but the party had already modified its ideological policy. Now the slogan was supposed to be inclusive: anyone who "lives in Russia and likes it can claim to be a Russian (*russkii*)." As he summed it up, the party's ideology was nothing but "naked patriotism" (*golïi patriotizm*). Perhaps even more important was the fact that the party was the only organization that remained "honest," as Aleksei Z. empha-



Figure 1. National-Bolshevik. *Limonka* 195 (May 2002) <http://limonka.nbp-info.ru/195/195_12.htm>.

sized during our conversation. It “says what it thinks,” and the party’s members “don’t lie, they tell nothing but the truth.” This description sharply contrasted with Aleksei’s account of the situation in Russia: “Today everyone lies; everyone steals. The whole country steals because of our [leadership’s] politics. . . . In short, some people are good at stealing, while others work for those who steal.” Then followed his brief summary of the period of changes:

People were used to building socialism, and they had this goal [*stimul*] to build communism. Gorbachev destroyed all that overnight. People rushed about, fussed about, and

ended up with nothing. Those who managed to steal a lot, they rose above others [*podnialis*]; they opened their firms; they became oligarchs. The majority initially hoped that all these changes were for the better, but they missed the turn. Now some of these people drink themselves to death; some toil for their masters.

With some adjustments, it is possible to read this narrative, in which the universal deceit and corruption among strangers are opposed by truth shared only among close friends, as yet another edition of the theme of cynicism, imposture, or dissimulation that has been firmly linked with the Soviet period. One can also read this story of lying and stealing as an inverted trope of dispossession, as an attempt to explain and justify the process through which people “missed the turn” and “ended up with nothing.” Firmly linking immorality (“stealing skills”) and property, the story shaped the perception of the new capitalist order and its moral economy as a system of lies and thefts. In turn, a connection between the truth and naked patriotism was used to morally overcome the state of post-Soviet material dispossession.

The interplay of these two lines of narration—lying/stealing vs. truth/patriotism—significantly determined the development of Altai leftists’ discourse in general. Not only did it emphasize the structural intertwining of the economic and the symbolic, but it also drew attention to distinct logics that each narrative suggested. The interrupted circulation that stealing introduced and the flawed communication exchange that lying indicated were counterbalanced by uncoined values of truth/patriotism that resisted any exchange or circulation.

“HISTORY ALREADY LOVES YOU!”

In 2001, a group of young Altai neocommunists and the antiglobalist organization Alternativa started publishing their own newspaper, *Pokolenie* (Generation), using their age as their main organizing category. In the first issue, the newspaper’s authors presented themselves as a

“young opposition to the [ruling] regime,” and compared *Pokolenie* to “a breath of fresh air in the smoky Motherland, which has been burned down by reformers” (Malen’kii prazdnik pokoleniia,” 2002). The slogan of the newspaper, “History already loves you!” (*Istoriia uzhe liubit vas!*), emphasized *Pokolenie’s* clear attempt to suggest a positive alternative to the dominant tendency of turning Soviet history into a grim list of political crimes and persecutions, into a “black book of Communism,” as one publication had it (Courtois et al., 1999).

Pokolenie became a major outlet for organizing political events and campaigns. For instance, in December 2002 Altai leftists conducted an essay competition among the region’s schools in order to stimulate students’ interest in the eightieth anniversary of the Soviet Union’s creation (December 31, 1922). The theme of the competition, “The Soviet Union Is My Address,” was borrowed from a Soviet-era hit song written in the mid-1970s. The song’s chorus line is often quoted in mass media or used as the headline for multiple nostalgia shows on TV. This choice brought with it a historical reference that perhaps was not entirely intended. In the 1970s, the song was originally meant to weaken one’s attachment to one’s place of birth (“a small motherland”) and to provide some romantic flavor to the organized migration of workers to construction sites in the Far East. Regardless of its initial context, however, it is striking that just as in the past, a search for a sociopolitical “address” was preceded by a sense of dislocation, whether this dislocation was caused by a move to a remote construction site or by a vanished country.³

Among 70 entries in the competition, a majority were about the Great Patriotic War, “the only remaining sacrality,” as Aleksei Ekart (2003), the leader of *Pokolenie*, called it.⁴ Many participants also tried to draw comparisons between Soviet and post-Soviet periods. One student, for instance, wrote:

I realized that the Soviet people were several steps higher in their moral attitudes than myself or my generation. . . . I think individualism is not typical for the Russian national

consciousness, even though a lot of people in my generation welcome it. They will be disappointed later, for individualism leads to alienation, loneliness, and self-isolation; it destroys links between generations. We should be developing according to our traditions; that is to say, we should follow the Russian path (quoted in Ekart, 2003).

Together with the trope of universal falsehood, the anxiety about individualism that opposes the traditional “Russian path” was a major theme in my discussions with Altai neocoms. Emerging in different contexts and articulated in different metaphors, this threat of “alienating individualism” (and the private property that reifies it) contrasted with the idealized collectivity that was allegedly so typical for the Soviet people.

This romanticized view of the generalized “people” (*narod*) is important. Like many other key cultural concepts, *narod* provides a stable conceptual container, a familiar symbolic form for new experiences and meanings. Usually understood as inclusive and all-embracing, the term often refers to “populace,” “folk,” or “nation” (see Ries, 1997: 27-30). Frequently, it references something traditional, earthy, and provincial: a fundamental social layer that can withstand the extravagancies of fickle urbanites. Russian populists (*narodniki*) of the 1870s famously turned *narod* into a cultural and moral icon, into a repository of knowledge and skills that were to epitomize the Russian way of life. Of course, bonds of solidarity that my informants retrospectively associated with the “Soviet people” were no more real than the “innate communism” that the populist movement of the 1870s discovered in the Russian peasantry. For my discussion here it is crucial that in both cases appeals to *narod* were used primarily to frame a reaction against capitalism in Russia. In both cases, appeals to popular knowledge and the *narod*’s daily experience were supposed to undermine the “abstract intellectualism” of yet another generation of bookish Westernizers. In his analysis of populist ideology, Andrzej Walicki reveals the core of this attitude: “The Russian democrats [of the 1860-70s] were so much impressed by [Marx’s] *Capital*, especially by the description of the atroci-

ties of primitive accumulation, that they decided to do everything to avoid capitalist development in Russia, thus becoming full-fledged, “classical” Populists” (1979: 225).

More than a century later, Altai neocoms were inspired by a similar process. Evgenii M., a 20-year-old antiglobalist and a big fan of William Burroughs and Gabriel García Márquez, framed his reaction to the second coming of capitalism in Russia in the following way:

In the Soviet period, there was this communion [*prichastnost'*] with something big. People felt that they were part of a certain whole, a part of a certain totality. And now everything is completely atomized. Maybe this is the way Americans want to think about themselves. But if we recall Aristotle's idea that man is a social animal, we would see that his idea was realized pretty well in the Soviet period. Today, in the post-Soviet person the level of this sociality [*sotsialnost'*] is next to zero. Everyone is as isolated as a grain of sand.

It is precisely this experience of being socially marginalized and pushed beyond meaningful networks and relations in the present that brought back the desire for the connectedness of the past. The historical component of this “meaningful totality” often remained unarticulated. It was not the actual Soviet experience that my informants were trying to rediscover. Rather, it was the “sociality” missing in the present that the reclaimed Soviet backdrop helped to reveal.

In January 2003, summarizing the results of the essay competition mentioned earlier, 29-year-old Aleksei Ekart, a former teacher of history, the main leader of Altai's neocoms, and a recently elected member of the regional legislative assembly, wrote in *Pokolenie*:

Only 10 years ago, from each and every corner one could hear a lot of scorn and contempt addressed to the totalitarian Soviet Union, to the cursed CPSU [Communist Party of

the Soviet Union], and to the bloodthirsty tyrannical Soviet leadership. You can still hear all that even now, especially if you spend a lot of time in front of the TV. But if you take a break and look back, if you think just for a moment, then in your consciousness . . . there would emerge the Great Country; the country where life was a thousand times better and more honest than the loathsome reality of today. . . . There is a new generation that is seeking the truth, even though this generation's thoughts are still shaped by stereotypes imposed by the regime. With time, these stereotypes will peel off, although the regime's ideologues and owners of the television-screen would try to impose new clichés again. But one cannot hide the Truth. . . . Looking back at the Soviet Union from a destroyed and poverty-stricken Russia, contemporary school students see the Mighty Giant whose birthday is a true holiday. . . . These students are young communists; they just don't know it. They speak the same language as the KPRF's members do! And one day they will realize that things should be named accordingly. . . . very soon, like a thunder [they'd say to current politicians]: 'Pygmies, get off the stage of History; a new red generation is here!'" (Ekart, 2003)

Ekart's statement touches upon several major issues. Today's "loathsome reality" is counterbalanced by the honest past and a search for the truth. In turn, the (Soviet) Mighty Giant reappears in the foreseeable future as a powerful (and consolidated) "new red generation" that displaces (atomized) pygmies of the present. The present is negatively charged and then rhetorically bypassed altogether by affirming the past and by projecting it into the future. The here and the now are constructed as a virtual territory of stereotypes, as a faceless and timeless space (*bezvremen'e*) colonized by the industry of ideological clichés. Characteristically, various leaflets frequently pasted by neocoms and *Pokolenie* around the city demonstrated the same tendency. The slogan

“History already loves you!” was usually accompanied by “The future belongs to us!”

The language of imposed stereotypes highlighted an important development of the trope of universal falsehood so typical of Altai leftists. Soviet-style deception as a tactic, as a flawed form of social exchange and distancing (“They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work”), became devoid of its implied malfunctioning reciprocity. Instead, it was elevated to the status of strategy for the manipulation of consciousness. By describing hidden or violent technologies through which stereotypes were imposed, my informants explained away the collapse of the Soviet Union and the current state of affairs in Russia.

These politically charged attempts to unmask the lies and falsities of capitalism have developed historical roots. After all, for more than 70 years the newspaper titled *Pravda* (Truth) was the official outlet of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Today, the Soviet *Pravda* is close to nonexistent, and a “new red” *Pokolenie* replaced the old Marxist idea of alienation with the notion of an illusionary subjectivity produced by the media.⁵

UNCOINED VALUES VERSUS FAKE MONEY

Pravda-seeking neocoms in Altai often started their intellectual search with a basic historical question: “How did the collapse of the Soviet Union become possible?” The neocoms’ answer was straightforward. Andrei Andreev, a frequent writer for *Pokolenie*, observed, “There must have been a radical change in the minds of the Soviet citizens, and it was undertaken very cunningly. Forces interested in destroying Soviet civilization carried out a brilliant operation. Yet people neither stopped it, nor did they even notice it. Some of them even thought that this was the only possible course of development during the last fifteen years of our history” (2002: 5).

The brilliant operation in question is what neocoms termed a “technology of domination,” realized through the “manipulation of social consciousness.” The purpose of this manipulation, *Pokolenie*’s authors insisted, was to “preprogram” the masses’ opinions, desires,

and even psychological conditions in order to ensure a type of behavior suitable to the interests of those who owned the means of manipulation. Unlike Soviet propaganda, manipulation is a hidden process. As Andreev explained, “Manipulators work tacitly (like thieves) on the subconscious level,” convincing people to act in a way they never would act otherwise (2002: 5)

Igor K., a 26-year-old member of the Altai Slavonic Society and an active member of the Communist Party, explained in an interview how this manipulation works. Drawing my attention to the (seemingly) widespread “American films about psychos [*man’iaki*],” he contrasted them with the Russian detective genre. The difference, as Igor’s argument went, was crucial. Detective plots require a “work of mind.” To be able to narrow a circle of potential suspects down, one has to think and to analyze. By contrast, in American films about maniacs, everything is irrational and meaningless. Anyone can do anything to you at any time. One has to be on a constant alert, expecting to discover a maniac in every social encounter. As a result, Igor concluded, this culture of suspicion encouraged “hatred of others” and promoted “individualism and mutual distrust.”

Using very different material, Andreev reached a similar conclusion in his article on manipulation. Combining old schemes of Soviet Marxism, conspiracy theory metaphors, and the post-Soviet fascination with “neurolinguistic programming,” a special set of linguistic techniques that allegedly could influence one’s behavior and attitudes,⁶ he wrote: “Programming works successfully when people are transformed into an ‘atomized crowd.’ One way to achieve such an atomized state is by promulgating the ‘myth’ of civil society, which makes everyone believe that civil society is an absolute good, and that it is impossible to achieve without private property, competition, individual freedom (egotistic individualism), the law-based-state, etc. . . . This is exactly how the ‘atomized’ crowd is created” (Andreev, 2002: 5).

I have already shown how property and immorality became intrinsically linked in the Altai neocoms’ imagination. Andreev’s writing logically completed the narrative of dispossession by adding to it the theme

of victimhood. As a result, for the Altai neocoms, the post-Soviet redistribution of property—with oligarchs on the one pole and those who “ended up with nothing” on the other—appeared to have two sources of origin. Not only were people deprived of “stealing skills” necessary for participating in the redistribution of property, but they were effectively blocked from taking any significant part in this process by being subjected to heavy psychological manipulations and programming.

One of the neocoms’ favorite examples of this manipulative and atomizing programming was the privatization campaign in Russia, during which the Yeltsin government quickly transferred most national assets into private hands. Within a decade, a state-dominated economy became an economy with mixed forms of property ownership: by 2002 the number of state-owned enterprises was only 3.78 percent of all officially registered companies (Analiz, 2004: 87). The campaign is usually associated with Anatolii Chubais, the head of the State Committee on Management of State Property at the time (see Goldman, 2003: 141-43). Under Chubais’s leadership, in the fall of 1992, about 150 million privatization checks were distributed in Russia. Each citizen got one check, regardless of his or her age. Usually known as *vouchery* (vouchers), the check could be sold for cash or invested in a piece of public property. By the end of the campaign on July 1, 1994, more than 240,000 enterprises became private; over 40 million citizens—30 percent of those who received privatization checks—chose to own shares of privatized enterprises (Kokh, 1998: 31, 39). Popularly considered the largest scam in Russian history, this privatization is often labeled “grabitization” (*prikhvatizatsiia*), and many hold it responsible for the immense economic polarization of contemporary Russian society.

When questioning privatization, Altai neocoms did not focus on its actual economic results. They were more concerned with trying to understand how it was possible to convince a huge number of people to give up their property. Describing their views on privatization in interviews and publications, my informants often referred to the work of the prolific Russian essayist Sergei Kara-Murza (n.d.), a Moscow-based historian of science. Beginning in the 1960s, Kara-Murza (born in 1939)

worked within the system of the Academy of Sciences, the highest research institution in the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1990s, he published a series of books that discussed the role of ideology in social life. Kara-Murza's magnum opus, the almost 700-page *Manipulation of Consciousness*, came out in 2000, and it was especially popular among *Pokolenie's* authors. In the book, citing major Western philosophers—from Antonio Gramsci to Michel Foucault, Guy Debord, and Jurgen Habermas—Kara-Murza depicted how in “so-called democratic society” manipulation alters people's desires and behavior by implanting “idea viruses . . . that give birth to monsters that disable one's own mental capacities” (2000: 92).⁷ The book is heavy on anecdotes and theoretical conclusions and contains very little evidence about people's actual responses to the technologies of manipulation. One of his ideas, actively publicized by the Altai neocoms, is summarized below.

In an extended excerpt from *Manipulation of Consciousness* published in *Pokolenie*, Kara-Murza explained the reasons behind the success of privatization. He particularly singled out one symbolic strategy of the substituting mediation that “reformers” relied upon: “Cunning ‘architects’ [of privatization] launched [*zapustili*] a false metaphor in [people's] consciousness.” This “false metaphor” equated “public [*obshchestvennaia*] property” with “nobody's property.” In turn, public access to property was restricted by vouchers. Given the state of hyperinflation in the country at that time, vouchers were quickly accumulated by would-be oligarchs (Kara-Murza, 2002: 8).

Kara-Murza's focus on metaphorical substitutions in the process of privatization was not as paranoid as it might sound. In the collection of reviews, *Who Owns Russia*, published in 2003 by *Kommersant-Vlast'*, Russia's major and most informative weekly, there is a section with the heading, “A Short Course on Capitalism in Russia.”⁸ In an ironic twist, each year of the decade is associated in this section with a particular economic trend typical for that time. For example, to indicate the boom of the chaotic retail trade that started in 1993, the year is named as the “year of the commercial kiosk.” Nineteen ninety-six is “the year of seven bankers,” a description that referred to the period when Russia's

seven major commercial banks allegedly managed to establish full control over the Russian president and the government (*seminbankirshchina*). The description of 1992 is illustrative: “1992—The Year of the Voucher. It was exactly in 1992 when every citizen was granted a right to a part of the people’s economy [*narodnoe khoziaistvo*] in the shape of the voucher. Even though this right was symbolic, it was precisely the voucher that started privatization and ruined the thesis that everything around belongs to the people, that is to say—to nobody” (*Komu prinadlezhit*, 2003: 11).

The quick evolution from the people’s economy to nobody’s belongings is essential here, as is the recognition of the merely *symbolic* importance of the right to property in the shape of the voucher. It is even more striking that both supporters and opponents of privatization recognized the symbolic significance of the voucher. Interpretations of this significance, of course, differed drastically.

When I interviewed Maria K., a local bureaucrat working for the office of cultural affairs, our discussion took an unexpected turn. Complaining about the grim state of the nation’s culture and language, Maria singled out the lack of popular understanding of current changes, aggravated by what she labeled “the expansion of imported words.” Not knowing the actual meaning of imported words, she adamantly insisted, people become hostages to the hidden content that these words bring with them. “Look, we were told about *elektorat* and *vautcher*. But *vautcher* actually means “fake money” [*fal’shivye den’gi*]. See how we were duped from the very beginning?”⁹ I protested, trying to explain that “voucher” usually means something else in English. My explanations were firmly rejected: “In America it is a slang word; precisely, in America. And where did Chubais study? At Harvard, that is to say, in America. They brought it over here and implemented it. And today we have this dominant attitude that anything could be done in a false kind of manner because it *might* work this way!”

Chubais did not study in America (let alone at Harvard), but neither this fact nor the actual meaning of “voucher” really mattered in this context.¹⁰ What was important instead was the displacing move

through which repatriation of capitalism was imagined. Social injustice was linguistically (and geographically) linked with the West; it was preprogrammed by the West, as the Altai neocomms would have said.

Of course, regarding vouchers as fake money was only a reflection of the anxiety about the lost certainty of social exchanges. Aleksei P., an active member of the Altai Slavonic Society, pointed to the root of this symbolic destabilization in his interview, drastically opposing the short-term monetary exchanges to the long-term moral perspective. As the 24-year-old man put it, Soviet ideology provided meaning for people's lives: "People lived not with a single idea of how to stuff their stomachs, but with an idea of creating something new. Even if it was a utopia, it does not matter now; there *was* a supreme goal. The best accomplishment of the Soviet period was the fact that there was created a society that was *not* based on money."

In this quotation (as well as in many others) money was rarely seen as a vehicle of exchange or as a store of value. Rather, it was conceived as a condensed metaphor of change itself, as a "false value" that replaced previous utopian projects and informal relations. Associated with falsehood and substitution, money was frequently juxtaposed to real values. What appeared to be problematic was the conversion scale that could bring these two spheres together. What caused uneasiness was the absence of a mediator able to transform a nonmonetized collectivity into a collectivity created by the circulation of the generally accepted equivalent. What was at stake, in other words, was a question of the price that one was willing to pay for such a transformation.

Hand-in-hand with the "oligarchic dictatorship of the wild market" (Buldakov, 2002: 14), the all-permeating manipulation of capital finally finds its fullest representation in another crucial substitution, pointed to by Altai neocomms. As Vitalii Buldakov, a leader of the newly organized Altai Communist Union of Youth (Komsomol), put it, the simplest way to manipulate people's consciousness consists in "substituting artificial and virtual-cultural needs of the consumer society for one's real needs." Performed mostly by the mass media, such a substitution produces the "illusion of one's own subjecthood" (*illuuziia*

sobstvennoi sub"ektnosti) (2002: 14). How does that happen? Buldakov's main arguments were drawn from his experience in a summer seminar on psychological methods, organized in 2002 by professors of sociology from Altai State University. In his article "A 'Harmless' Psychology," the leader of the Altai Komsomol group explained: "An object is invested with a symbol of a certain need, and it becomes valuable not by itself but as a carrier of a certain culture—and history-specific need." Once invested, such needs are universalized. As a result, "freedom is illusory, since all the alternatives are predetermined. Priorities have been selected; the choice has been made. Society is under total control" (2002: 14).

There is a certain irony in the neocoms' oscillation between nostalgia for the meaningful totality of the Soviet past and the fear of a new totality of illusory freedom, between the lost utopia and the horror of predetermined needs. Buldakov's conclusion indicates a possible way out of this deadlock: the critique seems to be aesthetically driven. What is important is not the need associated with a particular object but rather one's ability to value the object by itself. Exchange-value and use-value, which normally determine the social life of things, are both completely discarded here. Instead, a new value class is constructed (Parry and Bloch, 1989: 15). Aggravated by false and illusory connections among atomized individuals, the lost sense of authenticity is restored through appealing to absolute standards of measurement. The following citation from *Pokolenie* is a good example of this anxious search for a reliable touchstone. Explaining why liberalism cannot be "our own value," 18-year-old Margarita Nurmatova wrote in 2002:

By now we've been trained to get accustomed to the West for quite some time. Turn on any TV channel, and you'd watch an American speech or Americanized ads, Americanized serials or Americanized shows. . . . It is hard to withstand this pressure. Russian reformers have everything they need: mass media, administrative power, money. Today the most important thing is to hold out against all the temptations,

to resist various attempts of turning us into “free individuals” of the Western mold, that is to say, into “human material” that could be used for destroying Russia. We should remain the way we are—just as nature and history have created us. Not everything shiny is gold. Gold is us. And the best gold is Russia itself” (*Pokolenie*, no. 6:1).

Naïve as it might be, this description nonetheless reflects a strong yearning for standards destabilized by the quick advance of postsocialist capitalism in Russia. It reveals an attempt to secure some meaningful control over the flow of ideas and commodities. Its strong anti-Western language should not hide the underlying concern with the perceived debasement of local cultural values. What could function as a new source of legitimacy in this case? In what form were social relations abstracted by neocommunists?

Similar to the Altai Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers discussed earlier, Altai neocoms tried to maintain their confidence in the social order by appealing to two main cultural forms: the nation’s trauma and place of origin. As with many other symbols discussed here, the importance of these two forms is determined negatively: claims to particular cultural forms and practices are rooted in the recognition that loss of these cultural possessions would radically affect both the group’s self-perception and its ability to relate to others (Welsh, 1997: 17; Rowlands, 2004). As a part of what Richard Rorty called the “final vocabulary,” these symbolic practices reveal that “beyond them there is only hopeless passivity or a resort to force” (1989: 73). Viktor Shklovsky in his *Sentimental Journey* had a striking observation that sums up this foundational role of loss-and-land in Russians’ self-perception. Writing after the Bolshevik Revolution and World War I, he observed, “It is impossible to lead the dead into battle, but you can line them up, cover them with a little sand and use them for a roadbed” (2004: 188). As the metaphor of the roadbed paved by the dead suggests, this “cultural transmission of loss” unfolds in a particular interindividual territory (Rowlands, 2004: 219). The motherland (*rodnaia zemlia*) acts as a perfect totality

that simultaneously provides an ultimate moral ground, a dominant national symbol, and a literal physical container for the martyrs of the past and the future. Artem Manakov, a Barnaul student, wrote to the editor of *Pokolenie* in his letter titled “On Russia: With Love and Pain. Fighting for Russia”:

In the world’s history, there is no other land, except for Russia, that three times shed the blood of its own people in order to rescue the West, as well as the whole world from enslavement. . . . But every nation has a breed of people who associate their motherland (*rodnaia zemlia*) only with gas, oil, or metals. This is the only value that it has for them. [Russia’s] reformers are trying to assess [the land] through auction, and then to sell it exactly to this breed.

For me, Motherland [*Rodina*] means the graves of my ancestors. It means sweat, blood and the tears of our people. For what have millions of people died? Did Russian peasants, merchants, tsars, and secretaries-general carefully pull together my Fatherland so that a peddler could sell it piecemeal? He could spit on my Motherland. . . . The Soviet soldier saw burning huts and birch trees, he saw the grief of mothers, children, and elders; he saw the motherland (*rodnaia zemlia*) burning down. He also saw the enemy, and he crushed this enemy without pity. Today our land is not on fire, nor is there an enemy at the borders. But one invisible force has already passed our borders; this force destroys everyone and everything. This force imposes norms alien to our peoples: the cult of the Golden Calf. Tomorrow, having conquered our land, the enemy won’t spare our churches, our culture, or our history (Manakov, 2001: 1).

Used as a screen for projecting traumatic histories of the past and economic anxieties of the present, the motherland (*rodnaia zemlia*) constantly fluctuates here between the symbolic and the material,

between the sign and the referent, resisting any stable localization. The quote also suggests an interesting semantic triangulation within which the meaning of the motherland emerges. It is a combination of land-death-enemy that brings together the sociotemporal (dead ancestors) and the sociospatial (“enemy at the borders”) dimensions and activates the traumatic again and again (“For what have millions of people died?”). I follow this unstable symbolism of the land by looking at how people in Altai translated this vision of the enclosed community and inalienable wealth into local politics. The region itself was framed as a part of cultural property that should be preserved from any form of commercial or political circulation.

THE REGION IN DANGER

In the spring of 2004, the usually quiet Altai region was turned into a political hot spot, attracting much attention from the national and even international media. Aleksandr Surikov, the incumbent governor, decided to run for a third term. In 1996 and in 2000, he had already won two gubernatorial elections, actively supported by the local Communists. Strictly speaking, Surikov’s third campaign should not have happened. Federal law precludes anyone from being elected for the same state office more than two terms in a row. But the law came into effect only in 1999 and did not specify any particular date from which already served terms should be counted. Controlled by Surikov, the regional legislative assembly in 2001 removed the two-term limit from the region’s statute, and made it clear that nothing in the local regulations or in federal laws could prevent Surikov from running for his *second* “second” term.

Altai legislators were not alone in their preoccupation with figuring out how many terms “two terms” actually were. Ever since the federal law was adopted, the interpretive calculation of terms became a favorite pastime for many regional assemblies. (These inventive exercises in political chronology were abruptly stopped in the fall of 2004, when President Vladimir Putin decided to get rid of the direct elections of governors altogether.) Surikov’s third campaign was important not because it provided one more example of the political longevity

of old Soviet cadres. It was an immense symbolic orchestrating of the campaign that heavily relied on the popular anxiety associated with the arrival of capital that attracted a lot of attention.

Originally planned as a routine confirmation of Surikov's third "mandate," the election was supposed to go smoothly and quickly. Surikov ran a low-key campaign under the slogan "*Happiness to you, my compatriots!*"¹¹ But he did not manage to get enough votes in the first round. Surprisingly, the election revealed an unexpectedly strong opposition. With 39.3 percent of votes, Mikhail Evdokimov, a nationally famous stand-up comedian, was elected to run against Surikov in the second round.

Within a week, the general tone of the election campaign drastically changed. Dissatisfied with his team, Surikov hired a leading Moscow PR company to manage the second round. Within several days, Barnaul was plastered with huge billboards. Their white signs read against red and black backgrounds: "Stop the Invasion and Come, Vote, and Defend Altai!" A popular FM-station, "Russian Radio in Barnaul," came up with a political commercial that epitomized the essence of the election in three slogans: "Hands off Altai! Say no to Moscow oligarchs! Vote and Defend Altai!" In addition, people's mailboxes were stuffed with copies of a leaflet published by the "social union of Patriots of Altai." The title of the letter conveyed the message bluntly: "The Region is in Danger! (*Krai v opasnosti!*)"

Suddenly, Altai emerged as a territory on the verge of being "looted" and "occupied" by greedy and cunning Moscow capitalists (Chernyshev, 2004). The election drama reached its peak less than 24 hours before the votes were cast. The day before the election, the regional administration announced through the mass media that the regional security service detained three charter planes from Moscow that had landed in Barnaul's airport early in the morning. As the media reported, the charters were "paid for by commercial institutions," and they brought 463 men and a woman ready to discredit or disrupt the election (Vybory, 2004). The next day the planes (and people) were apparently sent back to Moscow, but nobody ever came forward with an explanation. Nobody took responsibility for a failed "invasion," and

the incident remains one of the murkiest moments of the campaign (*Kak vtorgalis'*, 2004; Chernyshev, 2004: 34-36).

Evdokimov, with his cultivated image of a “simple countryman,” with multiple stories about a country cabin that he built in his native Altai village, with his strong passion for saunas (*bani*) and homemade Siberian dumplings, could not be farther from the picture of a “greedy Moscow oligarch” that Surikov’s PR team (from Moscow) tried to propagate. Nor was Evdokimov actually foreign to the region. He had been born in Altai, and despite his eventual move to Moscow, he frequently visited the area, bringing his fellow actors to the region to film one of the most popular comedy shows on national television. Having no political experience whatsoever and constrained by a lack of money, specialists, and (seemingly) ideas, Evdokimov responded to his opponent with a different version of the same region-is-in-danger theme. Denied any visible access to local TV and radio channels, the comedian repeated his party line in his meetings with people: the incumbent administration had already looted the region, and it was time to take it back. Surikov’s massive billboards and multiple posters were challenged by small yet omnipresent (and hard to remove) stickers, on which a gloomy globe with a blood-red silhouette of the Altai region bore a stamped sign, “I am selling it. Surikov.”

On April 4, 2004, Surikov lost the election by more than 3 percent.¹² Tired of a situation of “stable stagnation,” many people voted for change. After all, in different capacities, Surikov had been in charge of the region since 1991, when he was initially elected to preside over the regional assembly. However, popular hopes for radical change, associated with the new administration of “Altai’s Schwarzenegger,” as Evdokimov was quickly dubbed, proved to be in vain. Attempts to see in Evdokimov yet another American actor-turned-politician failed too. Hopes for a regional version of Reaganomics — “Evdokimonomics,” as a local journalist called it—turned out to be groundless (Nikulkov, 2004). No invasion of Moscow oligarchs, allegedly hiding behind the governor, was in sight, nor was there any corrupting influx of capital.

The biggest and most bitter surprise of the election was a discovery that the election was just a vanity campaign of a popular star

with no political program to realize or any strong ambitions to burn. Originally considered by many as the “governor of hope,” throughout his first year Evdokimov could achieve nothing, apart from appointing a handful of his friends (Goncharenko, 2004: 41-8). The governor’s frequent and extended trips to Europe only aggravated the situation. At the end of March 2005, less than one year after the election, the local legislative assembly passed a vote of no-confidence in the governor. Both sides appealed to President Putin, with no visible result. The deadlock lasted through the summer, and was resolved unexpectedly: on August 7, 2005, Mikhail Evdokimov died in a car accident, when his Mercedes, exceeding 180 km/h crashed into a Toyota, coming from the opposite direction. Following the new procedure, President Putin nominated a new candidate for the governor who was quickly approved by the local assembly. On the day when the new governor was sworn in, a leading national polling company published results of a recent survey, in which 52 percent of respondents viewed Evdokimov’s death as an assassination staged as a car crash (Sevriukov, 2005: 2).¹³

Two moments in this campaign are worth emphasizing. One is an active deployment of the theme of danger and threat, which was expected to produce a mobilizing effect. It is significant that the danger was persistently construed in economic terms—either as an “invasion” of capital from the outside (“greedy oligarchs”) or as a local, home-grown, corruption (“region on sale”). The second moment deals with the way that the mass media and my informants chose to characterize the election. Regardless of their actual political preference, a majority of voters and the media perceived the campaign as an operation that was masterminded behind the scenes, as an event whose true meaning *must* be guessed and deduced from various hints and signs. Half a year after the election, I interviewed a wide range of people in Barnaul, from local political scientists, philosophers, and journalists to young radicals and members of the conservative business community. Most still expressed a deep conviction that the mysterious politico-economic force that has brought Evdokimov to power would soon come out of hiding. There was no particular agreement about the geographic

origin of these “interest groups.” Guesses ranged from the neighboring Novosibirsk to remote Vladivostok in Russia’s Far East to Krasnodar in Russia’s south. This desire to locate the agency of economic and political changes elsewhere is quite important. Ironically, the will to connect with a higher power in another place radically preempted the existing environment. Imagining alternative—or at least nontransparent—webs of meaningful relations, these emerging cosmogonies indicated a certain shift in the mode of questioning political figures, too. The metaphoric inquiry “Who is Mr. Putin?” that was so common during the late 1990s, was replaced in the first decade of the 2000s by the metonymic “Who is behind Mr. Evdokimov?” In other words, a search for unfamiliar comparison and unknown codes was marginalized by a search for masked traces and concealed connections.

The search for hidden forces was reflected in yet another way. I was told many times that the election was a product of “dirty technologies,” an outcome of “black PR.” Or at least it was an expression of “a manipulated quasi-democracy,” as a local professor of political history put it (Chernyshev, 2005). Again, there seemed to be a general consensus that words and people were not what they purported to be. As this article has demonstrated, a similar operation of discursive dissociation of the real object and its visible identity could be discovered in many other settings. Framed through a rhetorical pairing of invasion and manipulation, this patriotism of despair structured various narratives about post-Soviet dislocation, dispossession, and detachment. What the election campaign highlighted very clearly was a strong belief that manipulative invasions (of liberal values or Moscow oligarchs) were not accidental but followed a certain logic, if not a master plan. The general picture would become clear as soon as one found out who was *really* hiding behind Evdokimov.¹⁴

A SUFFICIENTLY GENERAL THEORY OF GOVERNANCE

Maria K., a woman in her mid-thirties, was one of my main contacts in Barnaul. She spent several years working with local nongovernmental organizations and eventually started working for the regional government. When I interviewed her, she worked for the office of cultural and

educational affairs in the Altai region. Actively involved in staging and supervising local public events associated with official holidays (Victory Day, New Year's Eve), Maria was also in charge of programs on patriotic education in the region. One of our meetings took place shortly after she supervised a regional competition among school students for the best performance of patriotic songs. Maria passionately complained about the dazzling political diversity of the performed songs that ranged from military ballads of White Russians who had left the country after the Russian Revolution to late Soviet romantic pop songs about Mother Russia, to post-Soviet patriotic military chansons:

Imagine a teenager, with no feeling of distinction (*chuvstvo razlicheniia*) at all, who sits and listens to all this. He sits there and slowly goes out of his mind. He has no clue what Russia means, where the motherland is. Some people favor the czar, some—the patriarch, some—Trotskyites, some—Communists. We do not train the feeling of distinction at all. . . . But information governs the individual; it is like water: your body gets what you drink. People are information animals. What could happen, if they cannot make distinctions? Well, this is why we get skinheads who grew up in one culture and monarchists who were shaped in a different culture. We get all kinds of groups and groupings today. These groups are all created by those who have access to the levers of governance. In a very accurate fashion, they play these groups against each other, and in the right time and in the right place they get the result they need.

As in many other cases in this article, depictions of the rapid fragmentation of the environment that had looked so solid and coherent in the recent past generated here a search for a cultural explanation that could justify the evident disintegration. Cultural polyphony was construed not as a representation of autonomous, independent groups and tendencies but as a deliberate outcome of post-Soviet governmen-

tality. Atomizing diversity was linked with a particular regime of power that diffused any consolidated challenge by purposefully differentiating the field of social relations. What seemed to be unusual here was Maria's emphasis on the feeling of distinction that could be trained and applied to surrounding informational flows. It was Maria who introduced me to a group that took such training seriously: the local seminar on the Concept of Social Security, or "a seminar on the Concept," as she called it.

In the winter of 2002, I attended several sessions of the seminar that took place in an auditorium of the Altai State Pedagogical University. The seminar seemed to be open to anyone who wanted to come, but given the fact that even getting in the building required a special pass, the seminar could not be convened on the university premises without an official permit. The sessions that I visited lasted about two hours, and were typically structured as a short lecture followed by questions and a group discussion. Judging by their questions and appearances, people who attended the seminar came from very diverse educational and economic backgrounds. Most participants were men between 20 and 60; there were also a few women in the audience. Each session covered a particular aspect of the Concept of Social Security (*Kontseptsiiia obshchestvennoi bezopasnosti*), also known as the "Sufficiently General Theory of Governance." After each session, participants could buy books and newsletters on the Concept. As I discovered later, introductory lectures by the organizer of the seminar (a graduate student at a local technical university) and his interpretations of current events were heavily based on materials published in the biweekly newsletter *Mera za meru* ("measure for measure," "tit for tat"), easily available from newspaper stands throughout the city. In what follows, I outline the main ideas of this seminar by using its publications, as well as the notes I took during the sessions in 2002.

The Concept was apparently developed at the end of the 1980s by a group of officers working in military colleges and academies throughout the country. Later the group was joined by technical intelligentsia from provincial universities. In the 1990s, this group tried to institu-

tionalize itself as a political movement; it even managed to present its views to the members of the Russian parliament in 1996 during a session on national security. The movement's activity has been mostly concentrated in St. Petersburg and Novosibirsk, but it has a network of local chapters as well. When in 1997 the movement organized its first congress in Moscow, it managed to attract representatives from 54 regions of Russia (Moroz, 2005: 68). The party's website claims 11,000 members in 52 regional chapters (Edinenie, n.d.).

It is hard to estimate the actual political weight of this group. Some Russian newspapers and scholars have traced a close connection between the leadership of the Conceptual movement and high-profile Moscow politicians (Soldatov and Borogan 2004). In 2003, representatives of the movement ran for office in the parliamentary elections; even though their party *Edinenie* (Unification) failed to cross the 5 percent threshold, it was supported by more than seven hundred thousand people throughout the country (Moroz, 2005: 14). In Barnaul, Maria K. was absolutely confident that the leadership of the region was well aware of and quite sympathetic to the ideas of the movement. However, it was impossible to either confirm or deny this assertion. In 2004 the party candidates ran for seats in the regional assembly but managed to get only 1.8 percent of all votes.¹⁵ Apart from its possible political influence, the Concept is an important symbol that connects in a plausible way apparently disjointed facts, processes, and motivations by weaving together issues of new economy, patriotic feelings, and a strong desire for an organizing plot.

Since the middle of the 1990s, the group associated with the Concept has been publishing a string of books and brochures as a part of the series *Library of Conceptual Knowledge*. Usually the publications are not signed, and the texts are presented as the "common property of Russian culture." There is a certain mystical aura that accompanies these texts, too. The short standard blurb printed in each book of the series warns: "When using these materials for personal purposes either in the form of fragmented citation or as a reference, the reader accepts personal responsibility. If such a usage creates a context that distorts

the meaning or the integrity of cited materials, this person might face the chance of being subjected to ‘mystical,’ extra-judicial retribution” (Dostatochno, 2003).

The basic premise of the Conceptual movement is hardly controversial: Russia entered the new millennium while experiencing a condition of “conceptual uncertainty.” Administrators and politicians carry out opposing, contradictory, and even mutually incompatible plans (*Rossiia, Rus’!*, 2001, 12-13). There is a profound lack of “knowledge and understanding of what kind of state and what kind of society we are building” (*Mera za meru*, 2002c: 1). As its publications suggest, this conceptual uncertainty is not a result of an accidental combination of individual ignorance, political factors, and historical circumstances. Rather, it reflects the strong desire of “the world financial mafia of globalists” to get rid of Russia altogether (*Mera za meru*, 2002c: 1). However, they suggest, politically driven interpretations of the Cold War should not be taken seriously. It was not ideological differences between Russia and the Western world that were important for the mafia of globalists. After all, as the argument goes, the Soviet Union and the United States were not that different in terms of their economic bases. In both countries, it was the “corporate ownership of means of production” that provided the structural backbone for the political system. But the two countries radically differed in the ways their respective corporate ownerships were established. Unlike in the United States, where “corporations of hereditary clans” were created during the last two centuries, in the Soviet Union similar clans were shaped only in the late Soviet period, as a “symbiosis of the Party *nomenklatura* and the directorate of major industrial enterprises” (*Mera za meru*, 2003: 3).

It was precisely this ideological-cum-managerial post-Soviet elite that became the main target of global influence, the authors of the Concept insisted. The “world masterminds” (*mirovaia zakulisa*) chose the Soviet Union as one of their main objects of influence first of all because they realized that their level of consumption could be sustained only by limiting consumerism throughout the world and by establishing global control over pivotal energy sources (*Mera za meru*, 2003: 3). This is why,



Figure 2. A Sufficiently General Theory of Governance: Subject vs. Object. Each diagram suggests a higher level of generalization of governance: from managing a car (the first diagram) to managing Russia (the second diagram), to managing Russia's managers (the third diagram). Source: *Mera za mery*, September 2002. Courtesy of the newspaper.

during the cold war, informational outlets such as the Voice of America, Radio Liberty, and the BBC proclaimed the improvement of living conditions in the Soviet Union as their main concern, while in fact they “tacitly pursued both the seizure of the USSR’s natural resources, and the annihilation of the country as such” (*Mera za meru*, 2002b: 3).

This general outline of geopolitical disposition was then followed by another conceptual conclusion. One issue of *Mera za meru* has a diagram that presents the process of governing in general and for Russia in particular. The diagram is simple: the “object of governance” (a car or Russia) is connected with the “subject of governance” (a person or state institutions) in a double way. First, the subject directly influences the object, and then it receives feedback on its own action by analyzing the outcome of its influence. As the newspaper suggests, given the success of the “informational pressure” that the “globalists” have had on Russia, the same mechanism for “seizing governance” could be used by anyone. Predictably, it was the Conceptual Party Edinenie that was seen as the perfect subject to realize this “remote control over bosses” (Dostatochno, 2003: 193-99). Just as during the process of destroying the Soviet Union, the subject (elites) and the object (the country) could be subjected to informational pressure, the feedback channel could also be tapped. By exercising informational influence at schools and universities, in companies and enterprises, across cities and the countryside, the successful “correction” of the subject’s goals of governance could be ensured on every level. Perhaps even more important, the project of “entering governance” (*vkhozhdenie v upravlenie*) should be realized in regard to members of local and federal parliaments, to the heads of all administrations, and finally to all heads of state (*Mera za meru*, 2002b: 3).

These conspiracy narratives and scenarios perfectly fit the type of symbolic production that Frederic Jameson labeled “the poor person’s cognitive mapping” (1988: 356). Yet, as recent studies of politics of paranoia in postwar America indicate, such a dismissive attitude usually neglects two important aspects of the conspiratorial mode of “thinking critically” (Dean 2000).¹⁶ One of them is the political gesture that conspiracy narratives produce. As Timothy Melley convincingly

suggests, conspiracy theory is closely linked with the profound doubt about the dominant methods of knowledge production and about the claims to authority by those who produce this knowledge (2000: 13). The second important feature of conspiracy theory is the particular form in which its will to connect is realized. Providing “an interface between the immediate existential experience . . . and larger global systems of knowledge,” conspiracy theory nonetheless avoids a usual retreat from globalization into marginalized enclaves and fragmented ghettos (Mason, 2002: 50).

As has been shown, post-Soviet narratives, brought to life by market irrationality, stemmed from a dual desire to register profound disagreement with the dominant view of Russia’s development and, at the same time, to offer a new cosmogony, a new type of connectedness, a new form of totality that could effectively replace fragmented or dysfunctional cultural frameworks of the previous period. Political control of the Soviet regime and consumerist illusions of the market society were replaced by the fantasy of a large-scale presence in convoluted networks of relations. The fear of individual isolation attributed to capital was overcome by a vision of polymorphous embeddedness in the constant flow of information.¹⁷ The main message of this post-Soviet conspiracy, though, was a promise of linking rather than its confirmation. The scenario of seizing governance suggested that everyone and everything *could be* connected, if only through informational pressure.

The publications of the Conceptual movement offer an extensive variety of such potential plots and tacitly realized scenarios. Many treatises in the library are filled with formulas, diagrams, mathematical equations, cybernetic schemes, and extremely close readings of official documents and artistic texts. One example of these exercises in “conceptual power,” as it is usually called by its authors, was the interpretation of events that occurred on October 23, 2002, in Moscow when a group of Chechen terrorists and suicide bombers took 800 people hostage during the performance of the musical *Nord-Ost*. The October issue of *Mera za meru* published a long letter from the presidium of the Conceptual Party that outlined the hidden logic of the event:

It is obvious that the main GOALS of *the hostage taking* are the following:

1. To remove Putin from his position of the head of the country.
2. To make the Russian people accept the regime of international fascism [established by the “world master minds”] . . . and the return of the Yeltsin clan (“Family”) to power, which would manifest the end of fights among Russia’s ruling clans.
3. To start the dismembering of Russia by using the country’s regions as the basis for a new confederation “Russ-Union” [*Rossoiuz*] under the leadership of Yeltsin (*Mera za meru*, 2002a: 1; emphasis in the original).

Bizarre as it is, this excerpt nonetheless highlights the basic anxiety about the actual and imaginary fragmentation of Russian society and points out the main source of this obsession with disintegration: the institutional collapse of the Soviet Union. The dissolution of the USSR was perceived as a paradigmatic model for the possible dismembering of Russia itself.

As with many conspiracy theories, what makes them interesting is not the reasoning behind them but their particular ability to “convert metaphors into metonymies” (Harding and Stewart, 2003: 280) and thus to restore the whole picture. The success of conspiracy is rooted in the leaps of imagination that establish similarity between apparently unconnected events, objects, and people. In the quoted paragraph, the hostage taking was viewed as the beginning of a multilevel and multi-sited operation aimed at weakening Putin’s power in order to clear the way for Yeltsin’s return. To quote from the same letter:

There were threats to Putin articulated by [Boris] Berezovskii, an old and loyal friend of the Yeltsin “family.” There was an attempt to create the superstate union between Russia and Belarus, so that Yeltsin would become

the head of it. There was the Ostankino TV-tower fire.¹⁸ There was an explosion in a Moscow underpass; there was the submarine *Kursk* disaster; there was a terrorist attack in Kaspiisk on May 9, 2002. There were many other events that were designed to provoke people's discontent with Putin, to demonstrate his inability to establish order in the country, and thus to stimulate his removal. (*Mera za meru*, 2002a: 1)

In Russia, the newspaper insisted, such a removal would be beneficial for all "clans" interested in preserving the assets accumulated through privatization. Internationally, as the article indicated in October 2002, a politically feeble Putin would have to give in to the US leadership and to put up with the US desire to start a war in Iraq. Since Yeltsin and his clans were so helpful during the time of reforms in "promoting the interests of Europe and America, not the interests of Russia itself," they could reasonably expect now that "the US leadership would defend them from Putin" (2002a: 1).

It is the Concept's ability to connect "objective multiple qualitative distinctions in an unambiguous fashion" that *A Sufficiently General Theory of Governance*, the manual of the movement, singles out as its main theoretical advantage (Dostatochno, 2003: 188). Within this context, governance is associated with one's ability to ensure the "stability of the object from the point of view of the predictability of its behavior" (21). In a situation of change, ability to predict requires a special kind of interpretive skill. For the Conceptual movement, only a "mosaic type of consciousness" could trace the connections among diverse facts and objects, paths and patches. That is to say, fragmented bits and pieces of information could be seen as parts of a meaningful (yet disconnected) mosaic panel only by those who possessed the necessary mental glue.¹⁹ Without such a skill (the will to connect), individuals would be constantly exposed to the manipulative media that treated them as a mere container for disjointed views and impressions. Unable to form their own "world picture" or to predict their own behavior, "object-

individuals” would be totally dependent on frameworks provided by others, becoming an easy target for external influences or internal impulses (281-82).

In his essay on “paranoia within reason,” George Marcus rightly suggests that there are at least two important factors that help to keep conspiratorial schemes of “understanding” afloat. The end of the Cold War did not automatically remove its epistemological premises, its ways of questioning the unknown, as well as its constitutive metaphors. The symbolic legacy and structuring residues of the Cold War, Marcus suggests, made conspiratorial frameworks “an expectable response to certain *social facts*” (Marcus, 1999: 2; italics in original). Second, a broader crisis of representation reveals the inadequacy of existing channels of communication, modes of translation, and genres of interpretation. Hence, “paranoia within reason” is a result of striving for “knowledge in the absence of compass” (Marcus, 1999: 5). I suggest that there is another important factor that helps us understand the intellectual and emotional attractions of conspiratorial thinking in contemporary Russia. The end of the Cold War (with the demise of the Soviet Union that accompanied it), and the contemporary crisis of representation were intensified in Russia by a rapid transition to the market-driven economy and to the unprecedented “monetization” of social relations. Produced in the course of privatization, an extreme social differentiation activated a variety of discourses rooted in mistrust. Economic dispossession and social fragmentation were accompanied by “a moral holocaust” (Taussig, 1980: 101), leaving behind various forms of “bare patriotism.” Surprisingly enough, the articulation of loss and dislocation did not generate practices of disengagement. In fact, if the perceived feeling of disconnectedness resulted in anything, it was the incredible production of popular and theoretical discourses that exposed missing links and discovered hidden structures. These discourses helped to justify failed or unequal exchanges (“We were duped”). Simultaneously, they situate the “true” origin and usually negative content of these socio-semantic inadequacies “outside” or “behind.” The popularly shared linkage between money and lies or capital and corruption resulted in

yet another important strategy: attempts to rediscover real national values, uncontaminated by the logic of the market were called upon to overcome the corrupt and false present. The mutual recollection of the country's negative past was often used to shape new forms of solidarity and belonging. This national poetics of despair was not without its own value, however. Used as a lowest common denominator, this conscious resort to suffering often managed to generate communities of loss bound by the solidarity of grief.

NOTES

1. The Kulikovo battlefield mentioned in the poem had a special meaning in this bloody amalgamation of the national and the spatial. Located in central Russia (the Tula region), the battlefield was the place where on September 8, 1380, Russian soldiers, led by the Moscow prince Dmitrii Ivanovich, for the first time in history defeated the troops of the Golden Horde. The battle is traditionally seen as a crucial moment in the process of the liberation of Rus from Tatar domination and as a powerful step toward the emergence of a consolidated Russian state. In his canonical *History of Russia from the Ancient Times*, written in the nineteenth century, Sergei Solov'ev indicates that about 400,000 soldiers participated in the battle. The number has been disputed, but regardless of the actual figure, the battle is often presented in Russian historiography as an ultimate "fight between Europe and Asia" (1963: 2:286-87).
2. I quote the governor from a videotape of the event that I obtained during the fieldwork.
3. In 2005, a somewhat similar attempt was undertaken by pop singer Oleg Gazmanov. One of the most popular songs of the year was his clumsy ballad "Made in the U.S.S.R." Known for his patriotic bent, in his new song Gazmanov strung together a long list of Russo-Soviet names and objects (the Riuriks, the Romanovs, Lenin and Stalin / This is my country) interrupted by a chorus line: "I was born in the Soviet Union. / Made in the U.S.S.R."). As the singer explained it: "[In the song] I decided not to debate what is good and what is bad; these are

- our symbols. . . . We grew up with them. Why should we erase them from our memory?” (Chernykh, 2005: 8; see also Arvedlund, 2005).
4. The Great Patriotic War refers to the Soviet participation in the Second World War—from June 22, 1941, when Germany entered Ukraine, to May 9, 1945, when Germany capitulated.
 5. For a treatment of this “manipulative” approach in contemporary Russian literature see recent bestsellers of Sergei Minaev (2007; 2008).
 6. Almost any big bookstore in Russia now has a special section on “neurolinguistic programming” (NLP), a special set of linguistic techniques that allegedly can influence one’s behavior and attitudes. Sometimes this section is a subdivision of a larger section of books on PR; in other cases books on NLP are categorized as a subfield of psychology. Supporters of this approach like to refer to the “effect of the twenty-fifth frame” as the most typical example of the programming on the subconscious level. See Kovalev (2004).
 7. Elsewhere, Kara-Murza outlines the logic of manipulation this way: “We won’t force you [to do anything] but we’ll get into your soul and subconsciousness and turn everything in such a way that you’d want to do it yourself” (2000: 26).
 8. The title is a thinly disguised ironic reference to *A Short Course on the History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)*. Allegedly edited by Stalin, this famous hagiographic volume outlined the canonical version of the party’s history in 1938, in the middle of purges.
 9. Yegor Gaidar, the head of the Russian government that started privatization, recalls in his memoirs that Boris Yeltsin supported the privatization plan but was resolutely against the term “voucher,” which he considered “almost an indecent word.” Yeltsin effectively banned the word, and government officials used the expression “privatization check” instead (1999: 169).
 10. While Chubais did not study at Harvard, some Harvard scholars did influence the privatization process in Russia in a serious way (Wedel, 1998a, 1998b; McClintick, 2006; Yale Connection, 2002).
 11. In the original (*Schastia vam, zemliaki!*), “compatriots” is rendered as

zemliaki, a word that has the same root as “land” (*zemlia*) and that usually emphasizes the commonality given by the same place of birth. Unlike *sootechestvenniki*—that is, people who have the same Fatherland—*zemliaki* tend to be more locally oriented and geographically bound.

12. In the second round, M. Evdokimov had 49.53 percent, A. Surikov—46.29 percent.
13. The Levada Center polled 1,600 respondents throughout Russia; 34 percent of them thought it was an accident, 14 percent did not have any opinion (Sevriukov, 2005: 2).
14. A set of materials on the results of the 2004 elections, published by Altai scholars in the summer 2004, is a good example of this interpretative strategy (Chernyshev, 2004).
15. Communists won, with 26.6 percent of the votes (*Svobodnyi kurs* 2004).
16. For studies of the role of paranoia in political life see Marcus (1999); Knight (2002); West and Sanders (2003); Pratt (2003); and Waters (1997).
17. For less convoluted versions of political conspiracy in post-Soviet Russia, see Norka (2004); Prokhanov (2002); Morozov (1999).
18. The Ostankino TV center is the main communication hub that hosts Russia’s major radio and TV stations. On August 27, 2000, a fire destroyed the tower’s transmitting equipment; for several days some TV and radio stations could not broadcast in the Moscow region.
19. In a less radical form, the same post-Soviet will to connect bits and pieces of information into a coherent plot is reflected in the incredible popularity of the detective novel in Russia since the early 1990s. For an extensive discussion see Olcott (2001).

REFERENCES

- Analiz. *Analiz protsessov privatizatsii gosudartsvennoi sobstvennosti v Rossiiskoi Federatsii za period 1993–2003 godov*. Moscow: Olita, 2004.
- Andreev, Andrei. “Manipuliatsiia soznaniem: Rossiia ne mozhhet pogibnut’.” *Pokolenie 12*: (2002): 5.

- Arvedlund, Erin E. "Celebrating the U.S.S.R. in Song. Uncle Joe and All." *The New York Times*, May 7, 2005.
- Buldakov, Vitalii. "Bezobidnaia" psikhologiiia. *Pokolenie* 13 (2002): 14.
- Chernykh, Evgenii. "Oleg Gazmanov: Mne zapreshchali pet' v Kremle pro Sovetskii Soiuz." *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, April 7, 2005.
- Chernyshev, Iurii. "Evolutsiia politicheskogo rezhima v Rossii i 'fenomen Mikhaila Evdokimova.'" *Altaiskaia shkola politicheskikh issledovanii*, 2005 <<http://hist.dcn-asu.ru/ashpi/ashpi/research/2005/phnmn.html>>.
- Chernyshev Iurii, ed. *Dnevnik Altaiskoi shkoly politicheskikh issledovanii*. Vols. 19–20. Barnaul: Izdatel'stvo Altaiskogo universiteta, 2004.
- Comaroff, John, and Comaroff Jean. "Transparent Fictions: or, The Conspiracies of a Liberal Imagination: An Afterword." *Transparency and Conspiracy*, Eds. West and Sanders (2003).
- Courtois, Stéphane, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, and Jean-Louis Margolin. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. Trans. Jonathan Murphy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Dean, Jodi. "Theorizing Conspiracy Theory." *Theory and Event* 4:3 (2000): 255-271.
- Dostatochno. *Dostatochno obshchaia teoria upravleniia*. Novosibirsk: NIKA, 2003.
- Edinenie. n.d. *The Official Website* <<http://www.kpe.ru/about/>>.
- Ekart, Aleksei. "Nyneshnie shkol'niki vynosiat prigovor rezhimu 'demokratii.' Moi adres—Sovetskii Soiuz." *Pokolenie* 16 (2003).
- . "Urusskikhnetpravykhidei! 'Nashbronepoezd' dlia 'deteireform.'" *Forum*, n.d. <<http://www.forum.msk.ru/files/040122164727.html>>.
- Gaidar Yegor. *Days of Defeat and Victory*. Trans. Jane Ann Miller. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.
- Goldman, Marshall I. *The Piratization of Russia: Russian Reform Goes Awry*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Goncharenko, A. I. "Gubernator nadezhdy." *Dnevnik Altaiskoi shkoly politicheskikh issledovanii*. Ed. Iurii Chernyshev, Vol. 19–20. Barnaul: Izdatel'stvo Altaiskogo universiteta, 2004.

- Gudkov, Lev. "Ideologema 'vruga': 'Vragi' kak massovyi sindrom i mekhanizm sotsiokul'turnoi integratsii." *Obraz vruga*. Ed. L. Gudkov. Moskva: Novoe izdatel'stvo. 2005.
- Harding, Susan, and Kathleen Stewart. "Anxieties of Influence: Conspiracy Theory and Therapeutic Culture in Millennial America." *Transparency and Conspiracy*. Eds. West and Sanders (2003).
- Hellinger, Daniel. "Paranoia, Conspiracy, and Hegemony in American Politics." *Transparency and Conspiracy*. Eds. West and Sanders (2003).
- Jameson, Frederic. "Cognitive Mapping." *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Job, Sebastian. "Globalising Russia? The Neoliberal/Nationalist Two-Step and the Russification of the West." *Third World Quarterly* 22:6 (2001): 931–49.
- Kak vtorgalis'. "Kak vtorgalis' na Altai': Vospominaniia ochevidtva o zagadochnom charternom reise 3–4 apreliia. 2004." *Altai Daily Review*, April 12, 2004 <<http://www.bankfax.ru/page.php?pg=23478>>.
- Kara-Murza, Sergei. n.d. Personal website <<http://www.kara-murza.ru/index.htm>>.
- . "Ograblenie po Chubaisy." *Pokolenie* 13 (2002).
- . *Manipulatsiia soznaniem*. Kiev: Oritani, 2000.
- Kiewiet, Roderick, and Mikhail Myagkov. "Are the Communists Dying Out in Russia?" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 35 (2002): 39–50.
- Knight, Peter, ed. *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.
- Kokh, Alfred. *The Selling of the Soviet Empire: Politics and Economics of Russia's Privatization. Revelations of the Principal Insider*. New York: Liberty Publishing House, 1998.
- Komu prinadlezhit. *Komy prinadlezhit Rossiia*. Moscow: Vagrius-Kommersant, 2003.
- Kovalev, Sergei. *NLP effektivnogo rukovodstva, ili kak upravliat' kem ugodno i gde ugodno*. Rostov/Don: Feniks, 2004.
- Likhachev, Viacheslav. *Natsizm v Rossii*. Moscow: Panorama, 2002.
- Malen'kii prazdnik pokoleniia." *Pokolenie* 6 (2002).

- Manakov, Artem. "S liubov'iu i bol'iu o Rodine. Bitva za Rossiю," *Pokolenie*, no. 5 (2001).
- Marcus, George E. "Introduction to the Volume: The Paranoid Style Now." *Paranoia within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation*. Ed. George E. Marcus. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Mason, Fran. "A Poor Person's Cognitive Mapping." *Conspiracy Nation*. Ed. Knight (2002).
- Mathyl, Markus. "The National-Bolshevik Party and *Arctogaia*: Two Neo-fascist Groupuscules in the Post-Soviet Political Space." *Patterns of Prejudice* 36:3 (2002): 62–76.
- McClintick, David. "How Harvard Lost Russia." *Institutional Investor Magazine*. (January 2006).
- Melley, Timothy. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Mera za mery. "Govoriashchii karp iz 'Lebedinogo ozera' SShA." 13:3 (2003).
- . "Chtoby ne byt' travoi na pole boia." 40:1, 2002a.
- . "Chto i kak delat'. I delaetsia uzhe." 36:3, 2002b.
- . "Vne politiki—vne zhizni." 34:1, 2002c.
- Minaev, Sergei. *Media Sapiens-2: Dnevnik informatsionnogo terrorista*. Moscow: AST, 2008.
- Minaev, Sergei. *Media Sapiens: Povest' o tret'em stroke*. Moscow: AST, 2007.
- Moroz, Evgenii. "Istoriia "Mertvoi vody"—Ot strashnoi skazki k bol'shoi politike. *Politicheskoe neoiazychestvo v postsovetskoj Rossii*. Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2005.
- Morozov, Sergei. *Zagovor protiv narodov Rossii segodnia*. Moskva: Algoritm, 1999.
- Nikul'kov, Vladimir. "Politik ushel, dela ostalis'." *Ekspert—Sibir* 7 (2004): 21.
- Norka, Sergei. *Zagovor protiv Rossii*. Moskva: Vargius, 2004.
- Nurmatova, Margarita. "Ne vse zoloto, chto blestit. No lutschee zoloto—nasha Rossiia." *Pokolenie* 10 (2002).
- Olcott, Anthony. *Russian Pulp: The Detektiv and the Way of Russian Crime*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

- Parry, Jonathan, and Maurice Bloch. "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange." *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Eds. J. Parry and M. Bloch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Pratt, Ray. "Theorizing Conspiracy." *Theory and Society* 32 (2003): 255–71.
- Prokhanov, Aleksandr. *Gospodin Geksogen*. Moscow: AdMarginem, 2002.
- Ries, Nancy. "'Honest Bandits' and 'Warped People': Russian Narratives about Money, Corruption, and Moral Decay." *Ethnography in Unstable Places: Everyday Lives in Context of Dramatic Political Change*. Eds. C. Greenhouse, E. Mertz, and K. Warren. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.
- . *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation During Perestroika*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Rossiiia, Rus'! *Khrani sebii, khrani*. Novosibirsk: BKZ, 2001.
- Rowlands, Michael. "Cultural Rights and Wrongs: Uses of the Concept of Property." *Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy*. Eds. K. Verdery and C. Humphrey, Oxford: Berg, 2004.
- Sedov, Leonid. "Rossiiskii elektorat: Desiatiletiniaia evolutsiia." *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 10 (2003): 60–69.
- Shestopal, Elena. "Avtoritarnyi zapros na demokratiu." *Polis* 2 (2004): 25–28.
- Solov'ev, Sergei. *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen. V piatnadstati knigakh*. Vol. 2. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoi literatury, 1963.
- Sevriukov, Valerii. "Kadry. Priglashen na glavnyi rol'." *Trud*, August 26, 2005.
- Shklovsky, Viktor. *A Sentimental Journey: Memoirs, 1917–1922*. Trans. Richard Sheldon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Soldatov, Andrei, and Irina Borogan. "Razliv 'Mertvoi vody.'" *Moskovskie novosti*, March 19, 2004.
- Stewart, Kathleen. "Conspiracy Theory's World." *Paranoia within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation*. Ed. George E. Marcus. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Svobodnyi kurs. "Dannye po vyboram na Altae." March 15, 2004.

- Taussig, Michael T. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980.
- Verdery, Katherine. "Privatization as Transforming Persons." *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*. Eds. Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000.
- . *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Walicki, Andrzej. *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*. Trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979.
- Waters, Anita. "Conspiracy Theories as Ethnosociologies: Explanation and Intention in African American Political Culture." *Journal of Black Studies* 28:1 (1997): 112–25.
- Wedel, Janine R. *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe 1989–1998*. New York: St. Martin's, 1998a.
- . "The Harvard Boys Do Russia." *The Nation*, June 1, 1998b.
- Wegren, Stephen K. "The Communist Party of Russia: Rural Support and Implication for the Party System." *Party Politics* 10:5 (2004): 565–82.
- Weiner, Annette B. "Inalienable Wealth." *American Ethnologist* 12:2 (1985): 210–27.
- Welsh, Peter. "The Power of Possession: The Case Against Property." *Museum Anthropology* 21:3 (1997): 12–18.
- West, Harry G., and Todd Sanders, eds. *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographies of Suspicion on the New World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Vybory. "Vybory gubernatora Altaiskogo kraia hotiat sorvat'." *Svobodnyi kurs*. April 3, 2004.
- "Yale Connection to Harvard Russian Fraud Case." *Yale Insider*, September 21, 2002. Archived by Johnson's Russia List, September 22, 2002, #6450 <<http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/6450.cfm>>.