

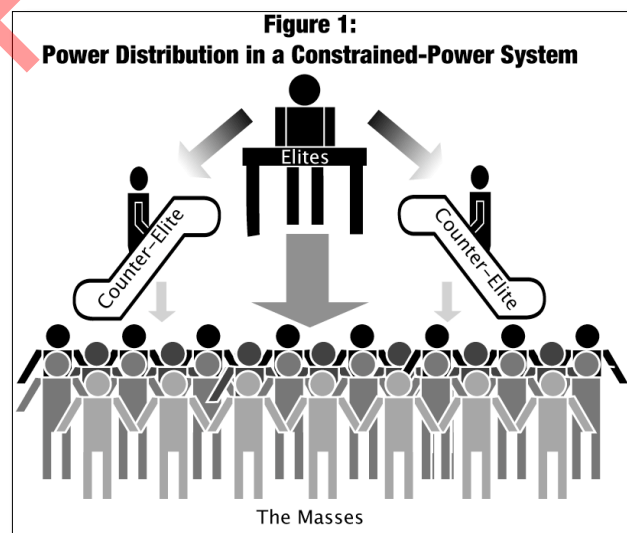
Much of the history attempting to explain the demise of the Soviet System *ex-post* focuses on one particular characteristic. It was “the people,” or it was “the culture.” The fault was with Communism itself, or perhaps the immediate cause was the resurgence of nationalism that destabilized the system and led to its collapse. Without evaluating these individual causes (for some are surely more explanatory than others), it is clear that the dissolution of the Soviet Union left in its wake a legacy of political, economic, and social relationships which (to varying degrees) persist to the present day.

One such relationship is the process of political change and reform in the political sphere. Trotsky argues in *The Peculiarities of Russian Development* that Russia’s development historically lagged behind Europe’s due to its geographic separation from the European center (Trotsky, 3). This separation meant that Russia, more so than other nations, was susceptible to revolutionary types of change. Is Trotsky’s point still valid today?

The following discussion will explore some existing models of change, using them to understand the Moscow city Duma election. Could the long-suffering pro-Western opposition ever displace the pro-Kremlin majority? First, we will consider this question by examining the models and applying them to the situation. Next, we will explore other explanations of change to see if the developments in Moscow are indeed revolutionary. Finally, we will conclude with a set of recommendations to opposition leaders in Russia.

## Models of Change

Before beginning, I shall reprise my model of power relations discussed in my previous essay. In this model (see Figure 1), there exists a permanent conflict between “elites” (those who control the most resources and claim to legitimately represent “the masses”) and “counter-elites” (actors who control some resources, also claiming legitimacy). This conflict can be understood as “politics” generally or “revolution” in its extreme form<sup>1</sup>. From this model I concluded that the specific relationship between elites and counter-elites in



the Soviet Union was defined by the relative scarcity of power in the system. Moreover, the structure of this system is such that any revolution would displace both elites and counter-elites, but would not by itself end the conflict between the two groups.

Analyzing the patterns of change is an activity can be considered within my broader model of power relations

<sup>1</sup> While the masses are obviously a necessary element in the successful execution of politics and revolutions, the power relationship is almost never between elites and the masses, simply because the size of the masses means that somebody needs to represent them in negotiations with the elites.

between elites and counter-elites. Such an understanding effectively contextualizes the cases used in the discussion and allows expanded utility from some of the historical perspectives that follow.

Alexander Moytl's model provides an effective definition of the process of revolution: the process of an opposition group creating "parallel sovereignty" actors by (often illegally) supplanting the existing state structure (the elites) (Moytl, 103). This creation of "incipient statehood" involves both the conversion of the group's abundant factors (money, organization, people, etc.) into incipient statehood and the advancement of a credible claim on some territory.

Moytl observes this process in the former-Soviet satellite states and concludes that successful independence movements (e.g. the creation of "parallel sovereignty") depend not on the tactics used by the opposition to assume power, but rather the distance from an Imperial<sup>2</sup> center and the legitimacy granted to the movement by the international community (Ibid., 116-7).

Moytl also accounts for the emergence of nationalist movements in 1988 in these same satellite republics. In 1988, these states were arguably never "closer" (if not in the physical sense certainly in terms of its relationship) to the imperial center (Moscow). And yet, they were never expressing so much independence. To explain this Moytl finds that it was glasnost and the other Gorbachev-era reforms, which created a space for legitimate criticism of the government (Ibid.) But once it became acceptable to criticize the government legitimately, then illegitimate criticism soon followed (Moytl, Class Discussion, 5 Dec 2005). The Soviet Union, effectively admitting that it had made mistakes by allowing legitimate dissent, gave up a significant amount of power. Into this space Moytl finds, new forms of resistance grew and spread.

Moytl's conclusion may be surprising to revolution-theorists who have spent much of their energies "organizing" counter-elites for revolution. Nevertheless, his analysis shows the usual explanations for revolution – existing political independence, size of the armed forces, the effectiveness of existing leaders – do not explain the behavior that in the case of the former Soviet satellite states. Moreover, the efficient cause of revolution in authoritarian societies begins with a slight opening for counter-elite legitimacy -- a "gap in totalitarianism" (Moytl, 178). Moytl's advice to budding counter-elites is, then, to develop external legitimacy until the authoritarian society can no longer support itself. Once that happens, counter-elites should prepare to strike and execute their revolution.

Bunce also observes this "totalitarian gap". She observes that the repression of dissident movements has declined with time. For instance, the repression after the rise of Solidarity in Poland (1980-1981) was less violent than the Czechoslovakian Reform Movement (1967-1968), which was less violent than the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (Bunce, 44). Bunce believes that there was a "growing gap at home and within the empire" between the power that

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<sup>2</sup> I do not assume that the Soviet Union was or was not an "Empire." Alexander Moytl makes uses this term in making his conclusions. The debate of whether the Soviet Union was or was not an Empire continues, and I shall defer to that existing debate rather than take a position either way.

elites should have been able to wield (given the fact that the system was a totalitarian dictatorship) and the power they were actually able to muster on the street. This raises an interesting question – was this kind of power gap unique to the Soviet Union, or is it the case that leaders of other types of organizations exhibit the same kind of totalitarian gap?

Zbigniew Brzezinski's argument (it should be noted, as an ardent anti-Communist) is that this kind of power deficiency is unique to the Soviet Union. He believes that "utopian social engineering is fundamentally in conflict with the complexity of the human condition" and because the yearning for freedom is so basic, totalitarian gaps will exist wherever totalitarian leaders exist to enforce their power over society (Brzezinski, 232). One reading of Bunce's (and Moytl's, for that matter) evidence shows that indeed, opposition rose whenever Soviet leadership exerted its "utopian social engineering." But what, then explains Trotsky's impassioned argument for socialist development in the first place? And why did the system persist for the better part of a century if it is so fundamentally against human nature? Brzezinski might argue that the *degree* of totalitarianism inspires a greater degree of antipathy towards the system itself, but then why did revolution not take hold in the relative liberalization following Stalin's death? It would seem that there is a temporal component of Brzezinski's statement that he ignores – for in the long run his statement seems correct, but in the short term the answer is not so clear.

Moshe Lewin, by contrast, examines the structural factors within the Soviet Union and points to these for his explanation of the system's demise. In Lewin's view, the centralization necessary to run a totalitarian state meant that an unprecedented amount of power was executed from Moscow, and particularly from the bureaucratic apparatus. This centralization led quickly to ossification -- the propensity for unaccountable decision-making and disconnect from local needs (Lewin, 288). Moreover, this structure implied a totalitarian view of decision-making. That is, solutions were imposed system-wide, even if they were obviously inappropriate. This type of decision-making stifled dissent, prevented "creative destruction," and valued "big thinking" rather than concentrating on local management challenges (Lewin, 289). Lewin notes that these effects weren't just felt in the lower-ranks. In fact, executives of the highest level felt the same pressure to follow totalitarian decision-making rules and resist dissenting from the permanent, entrenched state apparatus (the bureaucracy). Thus, Gorbachev's reforms can be interpreted, in part, as a tool to displace the bureaucracy by depending less on their services and creating a new stream of criticism. While Lewin's analysis is useful in understanding the fall of the Soviet Union, he provides little general prescriptions, and his conclusions other than the ossification of totalitarian systems. A significant question exists in Lewin's analysis: if the system collapsed because of centralization leading to ossification, then why did it collapse when it did? Lewin, at least in this analysis, does not provide a convincing answer to this question. While Lewin's analysis can explain the broad structural factors contributing to the collapse of the Soviet Union, it seems that Moytl's model is better at explaining both the structural and the efficient cause of the system's collapse. Moreover, Moytl's analysis can be used in cases beyond the Soviet Union.

Adrian Karatnycky's analysis of revolution develops from the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine. Contrasting with Moytl, Karatnycky argues that a confluence of long-term domestic factors and an effective, multi-stage strategy led to the successful transfer of power (Karatnycky, 3). In Karatnycky's view, an opposition community to Leonid Kuchma's government grew in the decade that he was in power. Resulting from Kuchma's inability to control every aspect of Ukrainian society, various communities of opposition in the media, the rising middle-class, among glasnost-socialized politicians, and defrocked lieutenants developed during Kuchma's tenure. Periodically, these communities would attempt to displace the regime – but would always fail. Nevertheless, Kuchma was never able to completely extinguish this threat.

When Kuchma stepped down from office and an election to replace him in November 2004 was widely criticized as being unfair, the communities of opposition would transform into a movement. Demonstrations, gathering after the election grew quickly and Kuchma's heir-apparent Viktor Yanukovitch could not credibly dismiss the counter-elite threat posed to its leadership.

The situation was at a stalemate. Viktor Yushenko, would take advantage of this situation by successfully pursuing a dual-track strategy to displace the Yanukovitch and the other elites.

Despite the fact that the election had been officially called, Yushenko nevertheless declared himself President and began to draw regional governors to support his side. He eventually persuaded key military leaders to support his actions, confusing the security apparatus and making violent confrontation between government forces and the Yushenko protestors less likely. Yushenko also gathered local leaders who had fallen out of favor of Kuchma's favor. By exploiting the enmity between these leaders and Kuchma, Yushenko cleverly opened another line of attack on the government. Regardless of their merit, Yushenko actions cannot be considered as being anything other than against Ukraine's law. Indeed, they were revolutionary.

Yushenko's second strategy sought to sheathe these actions as legitimate. He appealed to the Parliament to call for a new round of elections and decry the previous vote as unfair. He exploited the growing international media's interest in the protests to increase international pressure on the government for new elections. Because Kuchma (and therefore, Yanukovitch) controlled access to most national media outlets, Yushenko was forced to build a grassroots campaign for office. This network of active supporters proved to be more organized than Kuchma's network of more passive government organizations.

### Karatnycky's Model of Political Change

#### Requirements for Change:

1. Development of civil-society institutions
2. Politicians socialized to permit openness
3. Rise of an active middle class
4. Opposition penetration of mainstream media, with media's dissatisfaction with elite directives
5. The opposition runs a grassroots campaign
6. The existence of a united, experienced opposition community

#### Strategy for change

1. Revolutionary
2. Constitutional

Eventually, the pressure from both these strategies brought the Yanukovitch side to the table, where a 3<sup>rd</sup> round of elections were scheduled. This time, the international media observed the vote, and domestic interest had been piqued. Yuschenko won the election and took office.

While Karatnycky tends to collapse the history of this event into an easily digestible (and victor-affirming) narrative, his model of change is nevertheless clear. In order to bring down an authoritarian elite, the various counter-elite communities must unite into a movement, which can exploit a weakness of the elite class. Next, the counter-elites need to secure international legitimacy (if not outright support) while developing legitimacy among the masses. It is only here that the counter-elites will find success in their “revolutionary” activities, which ultimately will allow them to secure power from the elite class<sup>3</sup>.

Karatnycky’s explanation of Yuschenko’s strategy clearly derives from Moytl’s more general model of change. The revolutionary strategy is akin to Moytl’s “incipient statehood,” and his constitutional strategy -- especially with respect to international legitimacy -- is similar to the importance of external actors in the success of a revolution. Karatnycky’s explanatory value takes Moytl’s more general model and adapts it to a contemporary situation.

Both Moytl’s model and Karatnycky’s application present arguments at odds from my model of power distribution articulated above. I argue that because the distribution of power in the Soviet System was relatively scarce, a fundamental change in the system must be revolutionary. But Moytl finds that both in the period before the Civil War in the satellite republics and (again, in the satellite republics) during the waning days of *glasnost* nationalist movements gathered support and wrested power from the Soviet elite. This transfer of power was not the wholesale transfer of power from one group to another (that is, it was not revolutionary). In fact, it was evolutionary. Today, politics in Russia are more accessible than in the Soviet era – that is, power is a relatively more abundant resource today. Does that mean that my model no longer applies?

This is possibly true, but since I found that the scarcity of power is the dependent variable on which one could predict the degree to which a change in the system is revolutionary, I would argue that observing change in a more (or, for that matter, less) abundant power system would confirm or doom my hypothesis. However, if my model is useful, then it would imply that a more power-abundant system would lead to a less-revolutionary change of power.

From the evidence presented above, Moytl’s model and Karatnycky’s application of that model provide the best analysis of change. The following discussion will therefore use these tools to analyze a potential change in Moscow

### **An Orange Revolution in Moscow?**

The Moscow City Duma elections<sup>4</sup>, scheduled for 4 December 2005, are generating intense interest not

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<sup>3</sup> As I pointed out in my first essay and still maintain, this transfer of power is not the end of the story. Unless the counter-elites are successful in completely pacifying (or exterminating) the elite class, future conflicts between these groups are inevitable.

<sup>4</sup> As of this writing (3 December 2005), the outcome of the elections are unknown. A discussion of the results of the election can be found in Appendix 1

because of the outcome (the pro-Kremlin United Russia party is projected to win at least 40% of the vote) or because of its importance. It is, according to *The Washington Post*, a “largely anonymous rubber-stamp body” (Finn, “Winner is The Least of It In Moscow City Election” *The Washington Post*, 3 Dec. 2005). Rather, the elections are likely to determine the future of Moscow’s powerful and charismatic mayor Yuri Luzhkov and the future of the infant pro-Western parties ahead of the 2007 parliamentary elections. Beginning his career in public service during glasnost, Luzhkov is characterized by the Post as “a political pragmatist,” the paper notes he has “worked to transform Russia’s capital by overseeing entrepreneurial initiatives and extensive construction efforts” and “. . . is widely beloved among Muscovites for his can-do image, but he has wary relations with the Kremlin, particularly President Vladimir Putin, who in 2000 won the top office that Luzhkov had wanted for himself.” (Ibid).

The OVR officially supports Vladimir Putin, and outwardly Putin and Luzhkov support each other. Yet, there are signs of discord. On 24 February Luzhkov met with Putin to discuss “unconstitutionally redistributing governing and budgetary power in the Federal government’s power” and called on Putin publicly to “personally intervene in the situation.” (Andrei Bagrov, *Kommersant*, 28 Feb 2005). He has criticized the government’s centralization of power plans, describing the political situation as “shabby left wing and no right wing at all.” (Ivan Rodin, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, n.278). Let us explore these opposition parties more deeply.

Rodina, an ultranationalist party, has been described by *Time Europe* akin to a double-decker bus: “Establishment intellectuals with nationalist views are riding on the upper deck; neo-Nazis [Russian National Unity party members and other radicals [on the lower-deck]. (Yuri Zarakhovich, “The Purpose Is To Create A New Russian Civilization”, *Time Europe*, 1 Dec 2005). Much of the press coverage focusing on Rodina has been its nationalist rhetoric and racist ideas, and rather than running a grassroots campaign for office, Rodina has spent much of its resources defending its position on the ballot in court. It claims only 37,000 members nationwide, but has made impressive electoral gains since 2003 when it was created by Kremlin strategists (connected with OVR) as a foil for the Kremlin’s opposition.

Rodina’s strategy only partly implements Moytl’s model. It has effectively exploited the “authoritarian gap” and begun to stake out a space where it can challenge OVR. But it has completely neglected the transformation of its abundant factors into incipient statehood, and its nationalist rhetoric is unlikely to win external support. Should Rodina desire a role other than political gadfly, it should alter its strategy to become consistent with Moytl’s model. However, Rodina has time to ponder a change in its strategy; as of election day it was removed from the ballot.

Yabloko, the liberal party, possesses a better opportunity at posing a challenge to the elites. It has spent precious political capital this summer agreeing to run united with liberal Union of Rightist Forces (SPS) party (EIU Country Report, 14 Oct. 2005) and the Russia Greens. It was present in Kiev last December and has expressed concord with liberal parties in Ukraine. And it has packed its list with prominent human rights activists and other leaders

of non-governmental organizations (Anatoly Medetsky, "Yabloko Is Betting On NGO Activists" *The Moscow Times*, 2 Dec 2005). In its "Road Map to Russian Reform" program, Yabloko proposes "establishment of an independent judiciary and measures to reduce the influence of the oligarchs in politics" as well as other liberal-style reforms (EIU Country Report, 9 September 2005). Yabloko's strategic partnership with other liberal parties is aimed at waging a disciplined, united grassroots campaign. Its choice to pique Putin's enmity against the NGO sector by including these activists on its slate may hurt its position with the Kremlin, but will raise its profile internationally. While Yabloko has done little to take advantage of the totalitarian gap (preferring to construct itself as the "competent manager" rather than Rodina's gadfly), it can support movements by other parties (including Rodina and the Communists) to push for reform of the electoral process. While these reforms would benefit these other parties (possibly at the expense of Yabloko), for the elite class to be displaced, OVR's authority must first be credibly challenged<sup>5</sup>. All these actions are consistent with creating the requirements for change found in Karatnycky's analysis. Yet unless voter turnout is high (by 4:00 PM on 4 December, only 25% of eligible ballots had been cast), it is unlikely that Yabloko will clear the 10% threshold to occupy seats on the Duma. And even if it is allowed to sit, 10% (or even 15% in a best-case scenario) is a long way from being able to capture a plurality. Yabloko must continue to develop the requirements for change over which it has control.

The factors over which Yabloko does not have control seem to be nevertheless tending towards Yabloko's preferred direction. Of the requirements Karatnycky argues must be present in order to attempt change, three (development of civil society, glasnost-socialized politicians, opposition penetration of mainstream media) are fully present. Arguably, Moscow is growing its middle-class (although recent economic slowdowns could stunt this growth).

But most immediately, Yabloko must seek the development of the requirements for change by working to accelerate the rise of the middle class and improving its unified community of opposition. One opportunity for Yabloko is, paradoxically, to exploit Luzhkov's relationship with Putin. Luzhkov, who is retiring from politics, has a higher incentive to buck party discipline than at any other point in his career. And, because his future as Mayor depends on both the Kremlin's appointment and the Duma's approval, Luzhkov would have a strong interest in working with Yabloko if the process fails to go smoothly. An alliance with Luzhkov would help Yabloko's profile in Moscow and provide opportunities to develop a relationship that could be beneficial should Luzhkov become frustrated with the Kremlin. At the moment, Luzhkov and Yabloko are enemies on the Duma. But, as it has long been observed, politics makes strange bedfellows, and Yabloko would have much to gain from a partnership with Luzhkov.

It must also seriously develop its organization. Yuschenko's party was successful because it developed a

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<sup>5</sup> Indeed, one would suggest that the initial challenges to OVR's hegemony on the council *should* be made by the other parties, as they would suffer the costs of losing but the benefits of the successive challenges would be delivered (in part) to Yabloko.

network of supportive organizations and a grassroots campaign throughout the country. Yabloko must find common cause with more liberal organizations, and begin to create a permanent grassroots campaign. Especially as it grows in power, Yabloko will increasingly be the target of OVR's impressive resources. A determined and organized opposition is the only defense for such an attack.

Yabloko should realize that an opposition is going to take time. Even if it performs spectacularly well in the city Duma elections on the 4<sup>th</sup>, it will be challenged just as fundamentally (and arguably more so) in the 2007 national elections. As the evidence seems to indicate, Brzezinski's statement above may hold in the long term, but in the short term, and especially during times of crisis, the freedom gained from less centralized decision-making may be seen as something to avoid.

Yabloko should also heed the analysis of Lewin and Gross: both note how an entrenched, powerful structure can successfully subvert reform. And although OVR's operation includes neither the *nomenklutura* nor the Red Brigades, it will most certainly resist reform from the opposition (this is all the more the reason for Yabloko to associate with Luzhnov)<sup>6</sup>.

Should this advice allow Yabloko to displace OVR, Trotsky's claim that Russian politics is relatively prone to revolutionary movements will be contradicted. For a "revolutionary" change in power will have happened without the revolution. Both Moytl's model and Karatnycky's application provide an option for political change without revolution. While I have amended my model to hypothesize an inverse relationship between power scarcity and revolutionary change, more testing of this hypothesis is necessary. One hopes (and not for this reason) that change on the Moscow City Duma will provide positive evidence for revolutionary change without revolution.

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## **Appendix 1: The Results of The Moscow City Duma Elections**

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When I wrote this paper, the outcome of the Moscow City Duma elections were unknown. The vote was held on 3 December, and the results provide some interim confirmation to the hypotheses raised in the previous analyses. OVR did better than expected, capturing 48.1% of the vote. But many voters, reports *The Moscow Times*, expressed dissatisfaction with the candidates and the process (Simon Saradzhyan, "United Russia Seizes a Huge Lead" *The Moscow Times*, 5 December 2005). Turnout was unusually high, benefiting the opposition parties. The Communists received 17.5%, and Yabloko exceeded their goal of 10% (they won 11.3%).

If Yabloko can hold their coalition together, with these results they have a chance at gaining seats in the 2007 national Duma elections. But while their success is dependant on a number of factors (many of which are today unknown), I would argue that the recommendations following from the above analysis remain key for their future success.

## **About the Cover**

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