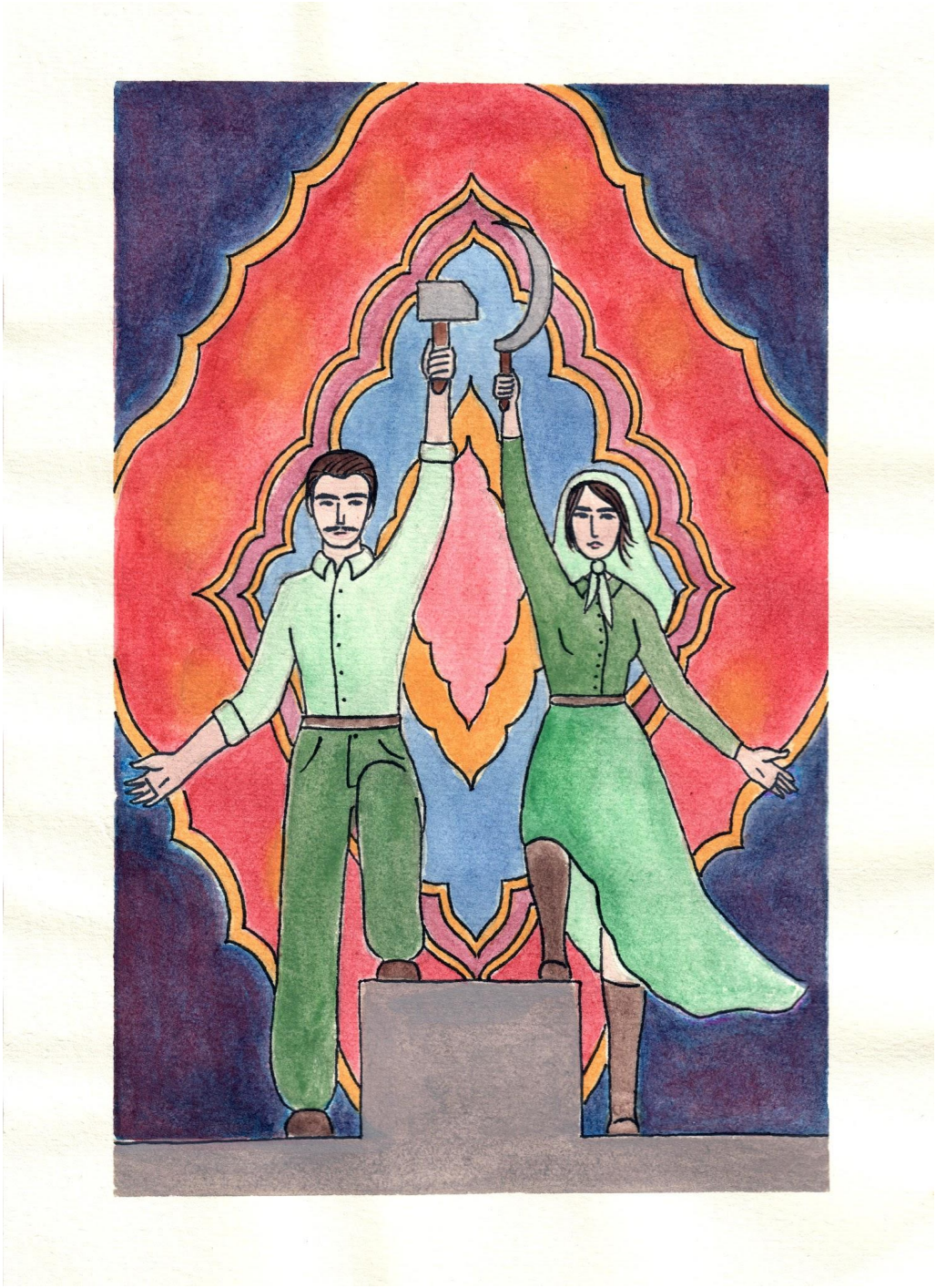
# “They Must Be Represented”: The Iranian Revolution in Soviet News Press



**Lilit Zeltzburg**

# “They Must Be Represented”: The Iranian Revolution in Soviet News Press

**Lilit Zeltzburg**

**s1416812**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MA MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

Leiden University

Faculty of Humanities

**2020**

**Supervisor:** Dr. Maaike Warnaar

**Word count:** 14673

# Contents

## Introduction

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was an event that had far-reaching consequences not only for the Middle East, but for the world. Following years of increasingly authoritarian rule by the Western-oriented Pahlavi shah, economic mismanagement, and social inequality, a series of protests that began in 1978 and grew in popularity as they carried on ultimately culminated in the overthrow of the shah's regime. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a notable and respected religious leader who had spent fifteen years in exile, came to be at the centre of the revolution. By the time of his return to Iran, his speeches had been widely circulated throughout the country, and he was the effective leader of the revolution: it was only a few days after his return that the shah's government was overthrown. Following the revolution, Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist), i.e. theocratic rule by religious jurists, was put into practice as the new system of governance. That system has been in place ever since.[1] [2]

At this time, the world was divided among the two Great Powers of the Cold War: the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Iranian Revolution was startling to both blocs. In the West, it was referred to as the "loss of Iran", and there was initially even some speculation that the USSR may have been involved in sparking the revolution through its support of the Iranian communist party Tudeh.[3] The USSR, however, was no less surprised by the events, and it struggled to formulate a coherent response to them, although it did see an opportunity for an alliance with the anti-imperialist segments of the revolution.[4] [5] The USSR's reaction to the events in Iran has been researched extensively, with interest in the topic peaking in the 1980s. Only two years after the revolution, Alvin Rubinstein wrote about the relations between the USSR and the Islamic Republic, which began on a cautiously positive note but worsened in 1980.[6] Several years later, Shahrough Akhavi wrote about the interpretations of the revolution by Soviet scholars and analysts, noting the distinction they drew between the various factions involved in the revolution and paying particular attention to the USSR's view of the religiosity of these factions.[7] More recently, in a volume edited by Suzanne Maloney, Pavel Baev discussed the effects of the USSR's confused reaction to the revolution on its future foreign policy, in

---

[1] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983): 496-525.
[2] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2013): 347-355.
[3] Ali Ansari and Kasra Aarabi, "Ideology and Iran's Revolution: How 1979 Changed the World," *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change* (2019): 6.
[4] Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "The Soviet Union and Iran Under Khomeini," *International Affairs* 57, no.4 (1981): 599.
[5] Shahrough Akhavi, "Soviet Perceptions of the Iranian Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 19, no. 1 (1986): 3.
[6] Rubinstein, "Iran Under Khomeini."
[7] Akhavi, "Soviet Perceptions."

particular its decision to intervene in Afghanistan, arguing that the USSR lost its geopolitical advantages with the new regime in Iran due to Iran's disapproval of the intervention.[8] [9]

The many articles, chapters, and monographs dedicated to the topic share several features. First of all, for self-evident reasons, many of them take a markedly Cold War stance on the issue, aligning themselves with either the USSR or the West. Second, many of them approach the issue from a rationalist, realist international relations perspective, discussing what actions states took in relation to one another and the consequences of these actions. These two factors, in turn, expose two significant gaps in the literature. With regards to the first, considering that the world forty years ago was very different from the one we live in today, and we now have access to resources that were unavailable to us then, it may well be time for a fresh look at the issue, outside of the Cold War paradigm, using the resources that we have at our disposal now. With regards to the second, the field of International Relations has also evolved and changed over the decades, and now offers us a multitude of approaches that can give us new insights into old topics. Theories such as constructivism and poststructuralism, which focus more on questions of identity and discourse in foreign policy, provide us with opportunities for a fresh perspective on this issue.[10] [11] In addition, it could be argued that as the topic moves ever further into the realm of history, we could discover new and interesting things by examining it as more than an international relations issue, using different theories and methodologies. Finally, Russian orientalism remains woefully understudied, despite being multifaceted and potentially very relevant to our understanding of Soviet and post-Soviet international relations.[12]

This thesis is an attempt to start to bridge these gaps. In this thesis, I examine the USSR's perspective on the Iranian Revolution as it was unfolding through two of the country's most important newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. These newspapers were controlled by the ruling Communist Party and were supposed to reflect the view of the Party and the government, but more crucially, they formed a platform for the view that the government wanted the Soviet citizen to internalise. Therefore, I ask the question: how did the Soviet press represent the events of and figures surrounding the Iranian Revolution of 1979? By examining newspaper reporting, we are very unlikely to learn anything about what the USSR was *doing* with regards to the issue at that moment: that is not the point of this thesis. What we *can* learn, however, is how the Soviet Union saw Iran, how it saw itself, and how it saw its own place in the world.

---

[8] Pavel K. Baev, "Bad Judgement and a Chain of Blunders," in *The Iranian Revolution at Forty*, ed. Suzanne Maloney (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019): 192-195.
[9] A. Z. Arabadjan, ed., *Иранская революция 1978-1979: причины и уроки* [The Iranian Revolution 1978-1979: Causes and Lessons] (Moscow: Nauka, 1989).
[10] Karin M. Fierke, "Constructivism," in *International Relations Theories,* eds. Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 166-184.
[11] David Campbell, "Poststructuralism," in *International Relations Theories,* eds. Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 203-228.
[12] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003): 17.

**Theoretical framework**

The press comprises media fundamentally based on written text, which transmits certain information. In the case of the USSR, the news press was controlled by the state; therefore, the information transmitted in the news press was directed and approved by the state. In order to make sense of this information, one must analyse the discourse that transmits it. For this thesis, the definition of 'discourse' as outlined by Kevin Dunn and Iver Neumann is most suitable: "systems of meaning-production that fix meaning, however temporarily, and enable us to make sense of the world and act within it."[13] A discourse is composed of a series of representations, that is, the ways in which we perceive phenomena in the world around us as filtered through the lens of language, culture, experiences, etc. The task of the discourse analyst is to demonstrate how representations are constituted and how they fit together to form a discourse, and subsequently, to explain what this discourse *does*, what it *means*, and what power structures are embedded and (re-)produced within it.[14] In the case of this thesis, the examined newspapers present a certain discourse that contains within it certain ideas about the world. Thus, the central aim of this thesis - to examine how Soviet press perceived the Iranian Revolution, and what that said about the USSR itself - can be addressed with discourse analysis.[15]

Beyond simply carrying meaning, discourse also has an active dimension, that is to say, it *does* something: it shapes the world. This means that the Soviet press, in producing, shaping, and/or circulating discourse, had a certain power. I argue that Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony is useful to our understanding of this case. Here, I define hegemony as immaterial subordination and control over a subaltern population, held in place through consent rather than (physical) coercion. Hegemony is one way in which existing power structures are maintained. It is exercised by civil society: intellectuals, media, education, etc. In essence, it forms an alternative to the way that the state exercises power, namely, through coercion (by police, the military, through the legal system, etc.). Where the state relies on coercion, hegemony allows existing power structures to convince the subaltern population consent to its subordination, because it is natural and desirable.[16] Although Gramsci separated East and West in the formulation of his theory, some scholars have argued that the theories he formulated about the West can be applied to the East, too. Heidi Yu Huang demonstrates that Gramsci's concept of hegemony can be

---

[13] Kevin C. Dunn and Iver B. Neumann, *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016): 2.
[14] Ibid, 33-40.
[15] See Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: SAGE Publications, 1997): 225-276.
[16] Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 1, no. 100 (1976): 20-22.

applied to post-Mao China, where, as in the USSR, state and civil society overlap.[17] In addition, according to Edward Said, hegemony is not an accidental byproduct of political power, but rather intentionally constructed; it is a "willed human work".[18] Hegemony is also productive, that is to say, it offers a framework through which the world can be interpreted. As such, rather than inhibiting creation, hegemony permits the continuous production of interpretations in accordance with the hegemonic framework. Conversely, this means that the 'Other' cannot be represented outside of the hegemonic worldview. This adds a layer of meaning to the Karl Marx quote that prefaces Said's *Orientalism*: "They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."[19] Applying the concept of hegemony to this case imbues the discourse analysis with meaning, since according to Gramscian theory, the Soviet press, as an important part of civil society and a link between the state and the population, would have had a crucial role in strengthening and recreating the hegemony of the ideology in power. As I will demonstrate later in the thesis, this aligns perfectly with the explicit, stated goal of the Soviet media.

**Limitations**

Studying Soviet media brings with it certain limitations. First of all, the sheer volume of the Soviet press makes it impossible to have a complete overview, simply because it is impossible to study every single organisation's newspaper or journal. If one wanted to, however, one would be met with the problem that many newspapers have not been digitised, and are therefore not accessible outside of libraries and archives in the countries that formerly constituted the Soviet Union. The newspapers that *have* been digitised, meanwhile, are in the hands of one company, and access to these digitisations is both expensive and difficult to come by. I would not have been able to conduct this research had I not been fortunate enough that my mother managed to procure a remote access library subscription that granted me access to the discussed newspapers while on a trip to Moscow. Still, some of the USSR's largest newspapers, as well as its regional press, remain inaccessible from abroad. Having faced these obstacles, the researcher is confronted with a problem of interpretation. Since much of the literature on the USSR and the Soviet press was written from a Cold War perspective, and sometimes by people who had no access to the USSR, it is difficult to contextualise certain aspects of the text. For a society where ideology is so explicitly expressed both in institutions and texts, the challenge lies in identifying to what extent the text was brought into practice.

---

[17] Heidi Yu Huang, "Gramsci and Cultural Hegemony in Post-Mao China," *Literature Compass* 12, no. 8 (2015): 409-410.
[18] Said, *Orientalism*, 15.
[19] Ibid., 1, 13.

In order to understand this, it was helpful to me to speak with members of my own family, who had lived in the USSR and some of whom had been members of the Communist Party, and who could provide helpful insights about how the state ideology was received by the population. For example, if one works only off the text, one could assume that the existence of an educational curriculum on communist ideology for all ages, culminating in the required university course on 'Scientific Communism', meant that all citizens were brainwashed into an ideology. However, when I brought up the topic to my parents one night over dinner, they groaned in unison: they still remembered how tired they were of what they perceived as being bombarded with Scientific Communism their entire lives. Even though they both believed in the ideology of the state they had grown up in - my mother was the leader of her faculty's Komsomol, my father was a member of the Party - they did not receive this ideology uncritically. These insights did not make it into the empirical section of this thesis, but they do show that further research into Soviet society is needed, particularly from a 'history from below' approach. This would help future research formulate new ideas about existing theories.

**Structure**

The first chapter of this thesis will centre on the USSR's own revolution and ideology. This is important to understand, because it helps explain how the Soviet media worked, and also provides a background to the average Soviet citizen's (intended) perception of the media's portrayal of international affairs. The following chapters will examine the discourse employed by *Pravda* and *Izvestia* with regards to the Iranian Revolution. Then, I will compare the discourses and draw several conclusions with regards to the analysis. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate that in February of 1979, the Soviet authorities wanted the people to understand the Iranian Revolution as an extension of the Soviet worldview: that history, as a progressive force, naturally led all nations to revolution and communism. This was supposed to confirm to the newspaper reader the USSR's own ideology and its position in the world as a force for progress and anti-imperialism.

# The Soviet Union

## Introduction

This chapter covers the revolutionary ideology of the USSR and the origins and function of the Soviet media. As I hope to demonstrate, regardless of the many changes and developments in Soviet society throughout the state's existence since its founding in 1917, understanding the origins of Soviet ideology is crucial to understanding how the media worked in the 1970s. In this chapter, ideology is defined as any set of ideas or beliefs that influences how people or institutions choose to behave. This definition allows for a certain flexibility in how ideology is experienced; it is understood not (necessarily) as a fixed text that one can identify with or not, but rather as a force that is personalisable to each individual and lives as long as individuals accept it and choose to become subjects of it. In other words, the ideology lives as long as individuals adopt the set of ideas embodied by the ideology as an acceptable, natural, or desirable worldview, in accordance with which one must live their life.[20]

The use of "ideology" as a concept warrants some problematisation. There are those who discuss "ideology" as necessarily coercive and dogmatic, diametrically opposed to the ideas of freedom or neutrality. By extension, this way of thinking often implies that the "us" group is neutral and un-ideological. "Ideology" is something that *other places* have, and accusations of it are used to other the "them" group.[21] This is also evident in much research, particularly stemming from the Cold War, on the USSR. In the past, researchers studying totalitarian regimes have often fallen into one of two categories. On one hand, there were those who followed the 'totalitarian model', who conceived of ideology as a set of officially established and approved "truths" that indoctrinated and oppressed individuals and tricked them into believing they are freer than they truly are. This approach on its own strips individuals of agency by presenting them as mindless, brainwashed drones of the system.[22] Another approach, the 'revisionist school', returned the agency to Soviet citizens by revealing their active involvement in sustaining the state, claiming that they performed ideology as a front while pursuing their own self-interest. However, in explaining the population's participation in the system from the perspective of 'self-interest', this approach also minimises the role of ideology in the Soviet order, which is rather strange when studying a state system so intrinsically built on and legitimised by ideology.[23] More recent research

---

[20] Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006): 13.
[21] See for example Alexander Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?" *Kritika* 6, no. 1 (2005): 171-186. In critiquing Hellbeck and Halfin, Etkind compares (former) Marxists researching the history of Marxism to cannibals, implying that writing a non-ideological history of ideology is not only possible, but the only legitimate way to write history. (173)
[22] See for example Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).
[23] See for example Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

by historians such as Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck moves beyond this divide and addresses some of its shortcomings. Hellbeck proposes a synthesis of these two approaches wherein ideology is not a static presence that is either accepted or rejected, that can either oppress or be ignored or manipulated, but rather "a ferment working in individuals and producing a great deal of variation as it interacts with the subjective life of a particular person".[24] This understanding takes into account the importance of ideology to the functioning of the state, but also allows for the agency of the Soviet individual, who exercises this agency through interaction with ideology.

The contradiction between the aforementioned approaches and the challenge of what role to assign to Soviet socialist ideology poses an epistemological problem. Is it even possible to truly know to what extent either institutions or citizens "genuinely believed" in the state ideology? I would argue that whatever the answer to this question is, it is ultimately irrelevant for the purposes of this research. It is most likely safe to assume that some people performed ideology in order to pursue their own survival, while some others truly internalised it and carried it with them even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. What we *can* know, however, is what institutions and people said themselves about their own actions. Hannah Arendt suggests that we take the self-interpretation of totalitarian governments at face value. In her own words,

> "[...] true understanding has hardly any choice. The sources talk and what they reveal is the self-understanding as well as the self-interpretation of people who act and who believe they know what they are doing. If we deny them this capacity and pretend that we know better and can tell them what their real "motives" are or which real "trends" they objectively represent—no matter what they themselves think—we have robbed them of the very faculty of speech, insofar as speech makes sense. If, for instance, Hitler time and again called Jews the negative center of world history, and in support of his opinion designed factories to liquidate all people of Jewish origin, it is nonsensical to declare that anti-Semitism was not greatly relevant to the construction of his totalitarian regime, or that he merely suffered an unfortunate prejudice."[25]

Building on this idea, I contend that what matters far more than whether ideology was genuinely believed, is the fact that it was clearly visible in the structure of Soviet society and its institutions, including the media. To this end, I will attempt to demonstrate how this was the case in the late 1970s.

---

[24] Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind,* 12.

[25] Hannah Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding," in *Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954* (New York: New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1994), 338–339.

**The Russian Revolution and its Ideology**

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics found its origins in the 1917 Russian Revolution.[26] The Revolution occurred at the coalescence of several developments that placed Russian society under immense pressure. First of all, the Tsar, vastly overestimating his own popularity, refused to pass progressive political reforms that would allow for democratisation and alleviate the plight of the country's peasants and workers. Second, the war effort was going badly, and the government printing money in an attempt to finance the ill-equipped army resulted in debilitating inflation. As conditions in the country worsened, strikes and riots broke out, culminating in the February Revolution. When soldiers in Petrograd refused to fire on demonstrators, it was clear that Tsar Nicholas had lost any support base he had left, and he was forced to abdicate. The country was left in the hands of the centre-left Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, a grassroots workers' council. These factions would engage in a struggle for power, which the Provisional Government would lose when it proved unable to solve problems like food shortages and insisted on continuing the now even more unpopular war effort.

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Vladimir Lenin, returned to Russia from exile shortly after the February Revolution. Lenin was the leader of the Bolsheviks, the majority faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, and his return greatly increased popular support for the group. Over the course of the summer, he and his ally Leon Trotsky, who in September assumed leadership of the Petrograd Soviet, pressed for the overthrow of the Provisional Government, which at this point was led by Alexander Kerensky. By late October of 1917, they were successful. In early 1918, they disbanded the democratically elected Constituent Assembly and handed over power to the Soviets, which barred non-Bolsheviks from membership. By the end of the civil war, which erupted after the October Revolution and ended in 1923, the Bolsheviks had full control over the new state.[27] [28]

The Bolsheviks encountered a number of societal dilemmas that required resolution, such as the opposition between the Tsarist legacy of empire and socialist internationalism, or between socialism and the nationalism that had also held sway over the country during the war. In order to overcome these dilemmas, they began to compromise some traditional communist ideals in favour of a politically realist stance.[29] This position, adapting Marxist thought to the political reality of the moment, would become a mainstay in the ideological expression of the USSR. Prior to the Russian Revolution, Marxist thought

---

[26] The USSR only truly became a Union several years later, in 1922, when it incorporated its constituent republics. However, 1917 should be seen as its ideological starting point.

[27] Abraham Ascher, *The Russian Revolution: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2014): 214-257, 390-393.

[28] Ronald Grigor Suny, "Toward a Social History of the October Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 88, no 1 (1983): 34-39.

[29] David Lane, "The October Revolution and its Consequences," *Obshhestvo. Sreda. Razvitie.*, no. 3 (2018): 32-33.

generally assumed that a socialist society could exist only once a society had developed past capitalism. Russia, being a pre-capitalist society in the early 20th century, was not the place where a revolution was expected. However, Lenin insisted that it was possible to accelerate this process and speed through two stages of revolution, and that Russia was ready for revolution. He was proven right in 1917 insofar as the possibility of the occurrence of a revolution was concerned.[30] This idea that the revolutionary process could be accelerated is only one of many indicators that set Bolshevism apart from Marxist ideologies that were prevalent in other parts of Europe.[31]

Although Lenin died in 1924, having led the country for the relatively short but tumultuous period of seven years, his legacy lived on in the USSR as not only the leader of the first successful communist revolution, but also as the ideological architect of the new state. This was particularly relevant after the death of his successor, Joseph Stalin. Historians have written about the so-called "Lenin cult", where after the man's death, deification of his figure assumed forms ranging from the issuing of commemorative stamps, to the canonisation of quotes from his writings, to the renaming of Petrograd to Leningrad, to the erection of a mausoleum on the central square of the capital city.[32] Joseph Stalin built upon the Lenin cult to position himself as Lenin's right-hand man, legitimate and desirable successor, and ideological interlocutor, thus constructing his own cult of personality. Importantly, when Khrushchev started his campaign of de-Stalinisation, he legitimised his argument using Lenin as an example. He referred to the fact that Lenin was opposed to hero-worship and circulated previously unrevealed documents that showed that Lenin was actually not particularly fond of Stalin, calling him "excessively rude" and calling for his removal as General Secretary of the party. As a result, Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation led to the emergence of a new Lenin cult, and his ideology was made more overt in the functioning of the state thenceforth.[33] Because of this, by the late 1970s, Lenin's ideological mark on the institutions of the USSR was more clearly visible than ever, and his own figure was mythologised in a quasi-religious way.[34]

While the Bolsheviks persecuted the Russian Orthodox Church and were formally vehemently anti-theist, they still, consciously or otherwise, used quasi-religious symbolism to disseminate their

---

[30] Keith Smith, "The Main Features of the Communist (Bolshevik) Ideology at the time of the October 1917 Revolution," *Teaching History* 48, no. 1 (2014): 35-37.

[31] The Bolsheviks were internally ideologically extremely diverse and sometimes divergent. However, in *Pravda* in 1917, Lenin published the tenets that ultimately formed the foundation of the Soviet state. The so-called April Theses provide a workable base from which to discuss Bolshevik ideology for that time period. See: Vladimir I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (a.k.a. The April Theses)," *Pravda*, 07-04-1917.

[32] Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983): 2.

[33] Ibid., 255-258.

[34] Harald Wydra, "The Power of Symbols: Communism and Beyond," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 25 (2012): 55.

ideology. The USSR's specific strain of Marxism has been called "eschatological" by historian Igal Halfin.[35] Eschatology, as the (usually religious) belief in climactic "end times" leading to the subsequent perfecting of the world, is a useful frame through which to understand the deterministic Soviet worldview, wherein history is a natural force that follows certain fixed laws and inevitably leads all human development to revolution and ultimately communism. It was this way of looking at history that led the Soviets to institutionalise the belief that socialism was a science: the immortal science of Marxism-Leninism. The eschatological worldview also implied that communism could only develop when a group of people was sufficiently developed.

In order to maintain the momentum of the revolution and institute communism, Lenin believed that, since workers were insufficiently politically engaged and class-conscious, it was necessary for a vanguard of class-conscious professional revolutionaries to form the link between the workers and the intellectuals and lead the development of the new society.[36] [37] These revolutionaries were supposed to be sufficiently educated in Marxism in order to spread the ideology among the people. He was not alone in this belief: one of the most important tenets of the revolution that united revolutionaries across the board was the commitment to transform and develop society by transforming and developing one's self. The intelligentsia was to serve as an example that would raise the undeveloped, unrefined masses to become independent, critically thinking individuals who would go on to resist and overthrow oppressive forces and allow history to move forward along its preordained, inherently emancipatory and progressive path.[38] This also legitimised the Bolsheviks' abolition of democratic structures in favour of 'democratic centralism'. Under this system, every larger organ in the Commmunist Party voted to legitimise smaller organs higher up in the party hierarchy, and dissent or 'factionalism' was seen as anti-democratic because it undermined the emancipatory role of the Party. Thus, over time, the 'vanguard' came to specifically mean the Communist Party, which controlled all government institutions.[39] For the Bolsheviks, the most important element of this process was the development of consciousness, that is: one's ability to understand the "laws" of history, to see one's own place in it, and one's own potential in helping to lay the path for a better world. By understanding the intrinsically emancipatory laws of history, the individual was encouraged to think and act on behalf of those who are oppressed, which imbued the self with a greater purpose and moral value.[40]

---

[35] Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation In Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000): 2-3.
[36] Smith, "Main Features," 36.
[37] Pipes, *Concise History,* 106.
[38] Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, 16.
[39] Ascher, *Russian Revolution*, 341.
[40] Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, 17-18.

In an essay from 1899, Lenin wrote the words that were to become the slogan of every educational institution in the country after the Russian Revolution: "[to] learn, learn, and learn!" With these words, he meant specifically that every worker should find in themselves the strength to continually educate themselves to become better social democrats: in other words, to maintain class consciousness.[41] One achieved consciousness through internal struggle against chaotic forces, which was supposed to refine the worldview into a rational and coherent whole.[42] The Bolsheviks wanted to educate the population to be politically conscious individuals who saw the importance of building and sustaining socialism and contributed to society out of personal conviction. The revolution became the lens through which the Soviet citizen was supposed to view the world. To this end, the regime established multiple political education campaigns that were intended to encourage citizens to personally and consciously identify with (the regime's interpretation of) the revolution and to see themselves as active participants in the flow of history. Children from the age of seven were expected to join the Little Octobrists, then the Young Pioneers, and finally the Komsomol, the youth organisations of the Communist Party.[43] The science of Marxism-Leninism was taught in schools and universities, and all students, regardless of discipline, were required to pass exams on ideology. The first paragraph of a 1976 edition of the Scientific Communism textbook for university students reads:

> "Scientific communism is an inseparable core component of Marxism-Leninism. It studies the patterns of the development of the worldwide revolutionary process, the patterns of the emergence and development of communist society - the highest stage of human progress. These patterns determine the main content of social changes in our age - the age of transition from capitalism to socialism."[44]

In other words, every single Soviet citizen was, from an early age, conditioned not simply to live in a communist society, but also to be able to understand and explain communist ideology. The citizen was expected to internalise and interpret the revolution and its ideals as immutable historical laws and as a source of spiritual fulfillment.[45] In essence, the Soviet communist ideology was aimed towards the

---

[41] Vladimir I. Lenin, "Попятное направление в русской социал-демократии [The Regressive Movement in Russian Social-Democracy]," *Proletarskaya Revolyuciya*, no. 8-9 (1924, written in 1899): 269.
[42] Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, 17-18.
[43] Ibid., 6.
[44] P. N. Fedoseyev, V. G. Afanasyev, K. N. Brutents et al., *Научный коммунизм* [Scientific Communism], (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976): 3. See also N. N. Tselishev, I. Ya. Koyfman and K. N. Lyubutin, *Мировоззренческая система марксизма-ленинизма* [The Worldview System of Marxim-Leninism] (Sverdlovsk: Ural University Press, 1987), a handbook on the Marxist-Leninist worldview for university students. Compare also to French national school curriculum on Développement durable.
[45] Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, 6.

development of the individual's view of the world. The Soviet citizen was expected to see their own part in the revolutionary narrative and willingly write themselves into it. Hellbeck explains that this promise of belonging to something bigger than oneself through personal transformation made the ideology appealing: "The power of the Communist appeal, which promised that those who had been slaves in the past could remold themselves into exemplary members of humanity, cannot be overestimated."[46]

An example of the culmination of the intended internalisation of and personal identification with the USSR's ideology is the phenomenon of the autobiography. An autobiography served a similar function to the curriculum vitae in the West: it was supposed to reflect an individual's personal and professional development, and it was required of every citizen applying for educational institutions, jobs, or the Communist Party. The uniqueness of the communist autobiography was that beyond listing educational and professional achievements, it focused on the development of the author's own political consciousness. The author of an autobiography was expected to convincingly demonstrate their own personal progression into Communist enlightenment. According to Hellbeck, "It is therefore safe to assume that most adult Soviet citizens were familiar, not only with this genre of self-presentation and its attendant rules, but also with the underlying assumption that their biographies were subject to rewriting, in accordance with the progression of the revolution and the development of their own, subjective political consciousness."[47] Thus, the Soviet citizen was encouraged to identify with the communist revolution and its goals not only personally, but also explicitly, in written form; not only privately, but publicly as well.

**The Function of the News Press**

The Bolshevik party considered itself the "concentrated expression of revolutionary consciousness" from its founding.[48] This did not mean that the Bolsheviks believed they would have an easy time at building consciousness among the populace. To achieve this goal, verbal communication was seen as particularly important. The Bolsheviks believed that workers had to have a grasp of the revolutionary script, the revolutionary language in order to fully understand their place in history. Without a firm command of the revolutionary vocabulary, they reasoned, the proletariat could not be truly convinced of and committed to the good of socialism. Therefore, they tried to instil consciousness through linguistic means such as reading, writing, and self-presentation. This was a challenge, considering that in 1920, approximately 60% of Russian adults were illiterate, an astronomically high rate

[46] Ibid., 13-14.
[47] Ibid., 26-27.
[48] Ibid., 19.

considering the fact that in countries such as Britain and France, illiteracy had fallen to under 5% by that time. Because of this, combating illiteracy also became a goal on the way to producing mass consciousness. In itself, this, too, fit in the vanguard's mission to civilise and uplift the masses.[49]

Building on Marx's ideas, Lenin believed that the proletariat could not achieve consciousness as long as it remained isolated. The power of the word was important to Lenin; he believed that words could make individuals conscious of the larger whole that they were part of, and mold them into participants of this whole. In addition, words were instrumental to the creation of the individual experience of communism, allowing individuals to personally relate their lives to communist history.[50] Lenin therefore argued in favour of the creation of a regularly released party publication that would connect different groups across society. He believed that a political newspaper would be the sole effective way of preparing and spreading the hegemony of the working class's ideology in Russia. This publication would have two functions. First of all, it had to be propagandistic and/or agitationist, educating "the masses" on ideology. Second, it had to be organisational, in order to add structure to the workers' movement. These two functions were essential, because Lenin saw the press as an essential part of the establishment of the intellectual vanguard that would lead the revolution.[51] The newspaper *Pravda* came to fulfill this role.

Being so crucial to Lenin's ideology, and considering their didactic function, media had to adhere to a number of principles, in accordance with Lenin's ideas: partiality (partijnost'), objectivity (ob'ektivnost'), openness (glasnost'), accessibility to the masses (massovost'). These principles might appear contradictory, but in Lenin's ideological construction they are seen as complementary. Media workers had to be partial, because it was believed to be impossible to be impartial. Lenin insisted that events could not be appraised outside of the point of view of a particular social group, class in particular, because different classes had different ideologies.[52] Objectivity, meanwhile, referred to the presentation of facts through the lens of marxism-leninism, which was seen as a scientific, and thus objective, doctrine. In this way, objectivity without partiality was deemed impossible, because events could not be truthfully analysed other than in accordance with the "natural laws" of socialism. Openness was intended to publicise the positive developments under the new Soviet order, but also to critically address any negative phenomena. Lenin saw this as crucial to stimulating broad public political participation and maintaining revolutionary momentum. Finally, accessibility to the masses demanded that the media reflect the interests of the people. It had two dimensions: first, the media was to become an organ of socialist

[49] Ibid., 19-23.
[50] Ibid., 23.
[51] Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media* (London: Routledge, 1991): 12-14.
[52] While partisan journalism existed in Europe as well, it was different from Soviet partisan journalism, because at the time when it developed, it was an inherent part of the democratic process. In Russia, meanwhile, there was no democratic process to speak of at this time. Anna Arutunyan, *The Media in Russia* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2009): 4.

democracy, linking the party and the masses, and second, the media was to serve as a measure of public opinion by inviting and processing readers' letters.[53]

Lenin's insistence on the importance of (print) media to the development of Soviet society resulted in the emergence of a formidable corpus of newspapers and journals. The aforementioned principle of partijnost' was enshrined in the first Soviet constitution of July 1918, where the private ownership of broadcasting, printing, and press was outlawed. This meant that party organisations, government bodies, and public organisations such as trade unions were the only organisations allowed to produce media. And produce media they did: besides *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, the two newspapers covered in this thesis, newspapers such as *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (issued by the Komsomol), *Krasnaya Zvezda* (issued by the Ministry of Defence), *Trud* (issued by the labour unions), and *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (issued by the USSR Union of Writers) enjoyed wide readership, among many, many other newspapers, including regional newspapers, and journals. As a result of news media being linked to organisations, newspapers were expected to act as platforms for these organisations by spreading information about important events. It was not uncommon for the newspapers to also print important documents such as party conference reports and draft laws, at the cost of printing 'regular' news.[54]

The question of censorship cannot be ignored in the discussion of the media of an authoritarian or totalitarian state such as the USSR. Indeed, there was an established censorship apparatus that controlled what was and was not expressed in the media. This apparatus consisted of two nodes of control: first, the Communist Party itself, which dictated the direction or 'line' that the media were to follow, and the Glavlit, the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press, which was an executive institution that performed the actual censorship. Despite the existence of these official censorship organs, however, censorship in the USSR should not be understood as the presence of an individual who prohibited or punished the printing of certain information. Rather, self-censorship was the norm: although Soviet newsrooms did have a professional censor, in practice it was the editor-in-chief who decided what stories were desirable for print and how far these stories should go.[55] In other words, the government had a great deal of control over the narratives that were presented to citizens.

Consumers of Soviet media, of course, knew of this system of censorship; it was by no means concealed. In addition, all media, being required to be ideological and partisan, contained a certain share of slogans and dogmatic platitudes. Therefore, mistrust of the political media was prevalent. Before *glasnost*, people would read newspapers to get the Kremlin's view of events, and try to read between the

[53] McNair, *Glasnost*, 15-23.
[54] Ibid., 16-17.
[55] Arutunyan, *Media in Russia*, 65-68, 77.

lines to detect any changes in this view.[56] Soviet citizens learned at one point to interpret media using not what was directly said, but what was implied or omitted.[57] However, it is also important to mind that outright lies were the exception in Soviet media. What mattered far more than which facts were written down was *how* these facts were presented, as that was where the distortion of truth occurred. Readers were therefore not reading between the lines of false statements, but of literary prose, in order to distill the facts from the slogans.[58]

**Conclusion**

The effects of the most formative event in the history of the USSR, the Russian Revolution, echoed throughout the entire existence of the state. Not only did the institutional structure established during the founding of the Soviet Union remain mostly unchanged, but the ideology espoused by Vladimir Lenin also continued to be visible in the way the state functioned well after his death, due in part to the revival of the Lenin cult by Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s. A large part of this ideology focused on the personal development and education of the individual in order to achieve a functioning communist collective. Every Soviet citizen was expected to internalise Marxist-Leninist ideology as a science and understand the world through the lens of the communist revolution: events outside of the USSR were also meant to be observed in that perspective. This deliberate self-identification with the revolution was evidently an exercise that citizens were used to, as every citizen would at one point in their life have to write an autobiography that displayed this self-identification. The media supported this, too; formed with the idea of strengthening the hegemony of communist ideology in their didactic function, the media were supposed to reflect the same ideology as was espoused by all societal institutions, and thus to encourage the reader's understanding of the world in accordance with the natural laws of Marxism-Leninism. Regardless of whether the reader 'truly believed' in the ideology or not, regardless even of whether the communist leadership 'truly believed' in the ideology or not, the society they were expected to function in was not simply drenched in ideology on every level, but also structurally based on ideology. As a result, both the citizen who believed and the citizen who did not believe in the communist ideology were entrenched within a system the foundations of which were laid by Lenin and his comrades during the Russian Revolution.

---

[56] Mary Dejevsky, "Glasnost' and the Soviet Press," in *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, eds. Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A. Hosking (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989): 26.
[57] Geoffrey A. Hosking, "Introduction," in *Culture and the Media*, eds. Graffy and Hosking, 2-3.
[58] Arutunyan, *Media in Russia*, 98.

## Pravda

In this chapter I will discuss *Pravda*'s coverage of the events leading up to the overthrowal of the shah's government on the 11th of February 1979 and its portrayal of the actors involved in these events. As I will demonstrate, at first glance, *Pravda*'s reporting appears to be increasingly sympathetic and encourages identification with the revolution. However, closer analysis reveals a discourse that objectifies Iran and Iranians and deprives them of not only agency, but also of any identifying characteristics. This way, *Pravda*'s coverage of the Islamic Revolution is less the coverage of the events and more a reflection of the USSR's desired view of itself. In this section, I will first give an overview of *Pravda*'s reporting pertaining to Iran over the entire month of February 1979. For this purpose, I have identified all principal actors in the articles, written out any recurring phrases or imagery in their portrayal, and will use that to describe how *Pravda* constructed a narrative of the revolution.[59] Then, I will provide an analysis of that narrative, demonstrating how through the application of Soviet revolutionary epistemology these principal actors become objects whose actions serve to confirm the Soviet worldview.

*Pravda* ("Правда", "Truth") was the leading newspaper in the USSR. It was released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). From 1976 to 1989, its editor-in-chief was Viktor Grigorievich Afanasyev, a man with a background in philosophy, who, as all editors of Pravda were, was himself a member of the Central Committee. He was also a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (the government), occupying a seat in the Soviet of Nationalities in 1979-1984 and the Soviet of the Union in 1984-1989.

The newspaper closely followed the ideological direction of the government and the CPSU, and all members of the CPSU were required to have a subscription to *Pravda*. Even though not all Soviet citizens were members of the CPSU,[60] this contributed to the paper's large readership. Whereas other newspapers were released 6 days a week, *Pravda* was released every day. International affairs and news were always confined to page 5. Most reports came from the Soviet press agency TASS, with a minority of articles being supplied by a reporter on the ground or a commentator. International news reports all came from the previous day, whereas the newspaper covered domestic news on the same day. Generally, the big news would be positioned in the centre of the page, with smaller stories and commentary placed around the sides, sometimes in the form of small bulletins. Iran was in the middle of page 5 for all of February 1979, which shows that the Soviets were clearly very interested in what was going on there.

---

[59] This method is outlined and discussed in detail by Roxanne Lynn Doty in her research on the Philippines. Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines," *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (1993): 297-320.

[60] Membership of the CPSU generally hovered around 10%. T. H. Rigby, "Soviet Communist Party Membership Under Brezhnev," *Soviet Studies* vol. 28, no. 3 (July 1976): 317-337.

*Pravda* constructs a narrative that positions the overthrowal of the shah and the revolution as the culmination of Iran's battle against (American) imperialism. The main characters in this battle are the shah, Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar, and the USA on the side of imperialism, and on the other side Iran, the Iranian people (sometimes also signified as "demonstrators"), and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. This binary division is used constantly to make sense of the situation and create a narrative wherein the revolution makes sense within the Soviet worldview. There is little room for nuance within this binary, and any actors mentioned in the reporting fall on one or the other side by default. As events unfold throughout the early days of February, some segments of one category may split off and join the other - usually, the side of the revolutionaries. This sometimes happens very literally; a news report from 12 February states that as soldiers turn against Bakhtiar's government, they *melt into* the ranks of the demonstrators.[61] In other words, as the soldiers turn against one side, they are no longer part of "the army", but rather become part of "the people". This carries with it the message that "the people", as a uniform and ubiquitous category, are inherently and unanimously against imperialism, and that therefore, anyone on the side of imperialism is inherently against "the people".

Most coverage on the events in Iran is report-style, dry, facts-based, with very little in the way of analysis. A randomly selected paragraph from the February 1, 1979 issue reads:

> "Generals remaining loyal to the shah also attempted to organise a show of the force of the army. However, the progression of tanks, armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers with soldiers from the shah's guard down the central street [of Teheran] was blocked by hundreds of thousands of people. As a result of the collision/encounter/confrontation between demonstrators and armed forces, several tens of people were killed or injured."[62]

However, the dryness of the reports does not mean that the coverage was objective. Besides the fact that news selection and word choice is in itself always subjective, within the same article, one can find giveaways regarding the sympathies of the newspaper. A few paragraphs later, the article, reporting from Paris, states that:

> "The country is in a state of anxious anticipation. The situation is moving towards denouement. Correspondents today report that people on the streets of Teheran are saying that the soldiery intends to use Khomeini's arrival as an opportunity to deal

[61] "События в Иране [Events in Iran]," *Pravda*, 12 February 1979, 5.
[62] "Иран: обстановка остается напряженной [Iran: the situation remains tense]," *Pravda*, 1 February 1979, 5.

> with the leadership of the anti-shah opposition and to drown in blood the national revolutionary movement."[63]

An important detail to note is that these kinds of statements are often portrayed as coming *from other sources*, not from Soviet correspondents. The previously mentioned article also discusses an article from the Washington Post which states:

> "The evacuation order is the most convincing evidence of the sudden decrease in US influence over the events in the country, which only a few months ago was considered a bastion of Western interests in the region of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean."[64]

In referring to *other sources* when making claims that fit into the Soviet narrative, Pravda highlights and adds legitimacy to statements seen as crucial to supporting the constructed discourse.

Repeated allusions to foreign involvement in the revolution are of interest, as they bolster the narrative of the revolution as a grand battle against imperialism. In the February 11th issue, political commentator V. Bol'shakov lays the blame for the US "losing" Iran on alleged involvement by the CIA.[65] In the February 13th issue, another political commentator, Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, stresses that foreign intervention or meddling in the revolution would be "impermissible".[66] The February 1st issue, on the other hand, reports on a statement released by an American anti-war women's organisation cautioning against American intervention in Iran.[67] By February 15th, the allusions to foreign involvement become particularly egregious, with claims that the West is spreading misinformation with the intent of provoking civil strife in the country, as well as the USA being implicitly blamed for violence perpetrated by ex-SAVAK agents: "As is known, the shah's security organisation SAVAK is the brainchild of the CIA, and its agents have long been organising various types of provocations to create an excuse for American open military intervention in Iran."[68]

Early on in February, the Soviets seemed to still be figuring out what to make of the events in Iran, although they appeared cautiously sympathetic. However, quite early on, it appears that the narrative is established that the revolution is a true popular uprising, not dissimilar to the Russian revolution of

---

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] V. Bol'shakov, "Нужен 'мальчик для битья' [Wanted: a whipping boy]," *Pravda*, 11 February 1979, 5.
[66] Vsevolod Ovchinnikov, "Иран: накал народного восстания, заметки политического обозревателя, [Iran: escalation of national uprising, political observer's notes]" *Pravda*, 13 February 1979, 5.
[67] "Обстановка остается напряженной", *Pravda*.
[68] "Иран: обстановка остается тревожной [Iran: the situation remains worrying]," *Pravda*, 15 February 1979, 5.

1917, and the sympathy for the revolution is made more explicit. This comparison encourages the Soviet citizen's identification with the Iranian revolution. *Pravda* draws on ideological and historical parallels with the USSR and its founding revolution by offering its readers increasingly vivid, recognisable depictions of the motions of the revolution. One particularly noteworthy moment is the drawing of a parallel between the resigning Iranian Prime Minister, Shapour Bakhtiar, and Russian Prime Minister Alexander Kerensky, who was overthrown during the October Revolution by the Bolsheviks. This comparison, too, is said to come from Western press: "Bakhtiar, whom the Western press has baptised 'the Iranian Kerensky'".[69]

To a casual observer, it might appear odd that the leading newspaper of the militantly atheist USSR would be sympathetic to a revolution with a strong religious character such as the one in question. For *Pravda*, however, the religious aspect does not at all appear to be an obstacle to the construction of the narrative of the Islamic Revolution as similar to the Russian revolution. The specifically Islamic aspect of the revolution and the religiosity of many revolutionaries, including Ayatollah Khomeini, is mentioned, but their importance is buried under repetition of the imagery of tens of thousands of people of all walks of life uniting to overthrow the imperialist, oppressive regime of the shah. Khomeini himself is referred to commonly as the leader of the "political-religious" opposition in early February, graduating to leader of the "national anti-shah movement" by the 11th.[70] In a way, it is as though *Pravda* wants to stress that the political side of the revolution and the key figures leading it is far more important than the religious side.

Furthermore, much of the discourse revolves around power imbalances in the situation. Generally, adding to the encouragement of Soviet identification with the Iranian revolution, it is portrayed as anti-imperialist. Even before the revolution is explicitly shown in a sympathetic light, the forces of the shah are referred to commonly as "mercenaries of imperialism".[71] Most if not all reports stress these power imbalances and present the struggle as between unequal forces by drawing oppositions: the demonstrators versus the army, the people versus the shah, Iran versus imperialism.

Thus, *Pravda*'s coverage of the revolution appears to present the events in a sympathetic light. In short, *Pravda*'s narrative is as follows: that the Iranian people, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, have dealt a critical blow to the powers of imperialism, represented by the shah, his government, and the USA, and that now Iran is on its way to freedom and development. The USA is repeatedly criticised for being imperialist, unwilling to relinquish the control that it unjustly tries to exercise over a foreign country, and even prone to violence to protect this control. The Iranian people, on the other hand, has united to fight

---

[69] "Иран: накал народного восстания [Iran: escalation of national uprising]," *Pravda*, 13 February 1979, 5.
[70] "Бои в Тегеране [Fighting in Teheran]," *Pravda*, 11 February 1979, 5.
[71] "К событиям в Иране [On the events in Iran]," *Pravda*, 5 February 1979, 5.

the shah, a puppet of the USA, and is now demanding the right to determine its own fate. In this dynamic, Ayatollah Khomeini is seen as a legitimate representative of a large segment of the population and, as the figurehead of the revolution, becomes an almost Lenin-like character in the narrative, despite his religiosity.

Upon closer examination of the discourse, however, we can uncover several intriguing details. What stands out is that although Iran, the Iranian people, and Ayatollah Khomeini are presented as the protagonists of this story and the shah and his government as the antagonists, neither the former nor the latter are subjects in the discourse. These actors only appear to have agency, but in actuality, their actions are only given meaning within the framework of *Pravda*'s worldview and the binary between imperialism and anti-imperialism. The Iranian people and the shah are turned into objects; the *true* subjects in this situation are the USSR and "world imperialism", represented by the USA.

There are several elements of the discourse that contribute to the objectification of the Iranian revolutionaries. First of all, although the descriptions of the events of the revolution become increasingly vivid and visual, there is very little that actually characterises the events or characters as specifically *Iranian*. The descriptions employed evoke universal imagery of revolutionary scenes, presumably to remind the reader of the parallels with the Russian revolution, but this imagery is so generalisable that it is at times unclear whether one is reading a report on events in Teheran in 1979 or the climax of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*:

> "And although after the start of the curfew at 16.30 additional contingents of troops were positioned in the streets, the demonstrators filled the entire city. In the eastern part of the capital, around the Farahabad military base, thousands of people are constructing street barricades, digging trenches. The military personnel of the base is distributing arms to the populace. [...] The skirmishes in the city did not end with the nightfall. As a result of numerous fires, the city is shrouded in a veil of smoke."[72]

In other words, the descriptions of the events are almost completely devoid of locality and temporality, which are both sacrificed to support the narrative of a grand battle against imperialism. Second, when the reader is reminded that the events described are, in fact, taking place in Iran, this generally happens through the mention of a foreign-sounding name or religious title. This, together with the occasional repetition of the fact that Iran is "underdeveloped" and even somewhat backward due to its oppression by imperialism, marks a certain distance between the Soviet reader and Iran, and feeds into certain preconceived, Orientalist ideas about what that backwardness means and how to understand it.

[72] "Бои в Тегеране," *Pravda*.

This may be why the religiosity of a large segment of the opposition and opposition leader Ayatollah Khomeini is tolerated: as long as Iran is still marked as sufficiently different from the USSR, it is permitted a certain degree of backwardness. On the other hand, considering the fact that *Pravda* chooses to sacrifice a great deal of nuance in order to fit the revolution into this anti-imperialist narrative, Ayatollah Khomeini's religiosity may not even have been presented as a problem at all. His ideology and policies are never discussed in any detail, because for the narrative, they simply do not matter. The only statements of his that are ever quoted, even when taken from foreign media, are the ones that attack the forces of imperialism, and thus fit *Pravda*'s narrative.[73] Therefore, even Ayatollah Khomeini loses all his personality, including his religiosity, because all that is required of him as a discursive character is that he be anti-imperialist.

As a result, *Pravda*'s constructed narrative relies on intertextuality and the Soviet reader's recognition of historical discursive parallels to set a stage where not Iran, but the Soviet Union is positioned front and centre. *Pravda* presents Iran as a mirror for the USSR: on one hand, it reaffirms the USSR's revolutionary worldview by providing a new example of a popular revolution similar to the one that founded the USSR, and on the other hand, it confirms the USSR's status as developed and progressive, unlike Iran. However, perhaps ironically, by objectifying Iran, Iranians, Khomeini, and the shah, *Pravda*, positioning the USSR as opposed to all forms of imperialism and foreign oppression, is in fact reproducing the very same orientalist, imperialist dynamics that it claims to counter.

[73] "События в Иране," *Pravda*.

## Izvestia

This chapter will cover the second major newspaper of the USSR, *Izvestia*, and its coverage of the Iranian Revolution. As I will demonstrate, *Izvestia*'s coverage of these events is overall quite similar to *Pravda*'s, but differs in several crucial aspects. *Izvestia* is generally sympathetic with regards to the events it describes, but it also positions the discussed topic at a larger distance from its readers, relying more on romantic imagery to get its point across than on identification with Soviet revolutionary ideology. Although the differences between *Pravda* and *Izvestia*'s reporting on the revolution are notable and meaningful, the newspapers' separate constructed narratives are not only based on, but also lead to the same interpretation of the events, namely that they are a confirmation of the Soviet view of the world and the 'natural' flow of history. This means that *Pravda* and *Izvestia* imbue the Iranian revolution and the actors involved in its development with the same meaning. Despite this fact, the function of this meaning leads to a different outcome. Where *Pravda* uses the events in Iran to affirm the foundational ideology and worldview of the Communist Party, *Izvestia* uses this ideology to interpret these events, but does not actively and explicitly *seek* to make a statement about the USSR - even if that is inevitably the result. In this section, I will explore *Izvestia*'s reporting on Iran in the month of February 1979, provide an overview of the overarching narrative constructed in these reports, and further discuss how this narrative displays *Izvestia*'s perspective on the Iranian Revolution.

Where *Pravda* was the newspaper of the Communist Party, *Izvestia* ("Известия", "News Reports" or "Tidings") was the newspaper of the Soviet government. It was released 6 days a week. The editor-in-chief in 1979, Pyotr Fyodorovich Alekseev, was a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU, as were many of the newspaper's other editors-in-chief. For unclear reasons, under his leadership, the paper's circulation decreased to only half of what it was under the previous editor-in-chief. In many ways, it might appear that *Izvestia* would be essentially the same as *Pravda* both in form and in content, being released by the government, which was controlled by the CPSU, and its editors-in-chief generally being party bureaucrats. However, the papers were different in several crucial ways. Most importantly, the fact that *Pravda* was specifically a party newspaper, and *Izvestia* was not, meant that *Pravda*'s main purpose was to inform its readers from the *party's* perspective, whereas *Izvestia* could focus more on conventional journalism and even entertainment, giving it somewhat more liberty in its choice of focus, if not its perspective on the most important issues. Notably, *Izvestia* was also characterised by its very scenic, epic, almost 'slice of life' style of reporting, which in itself formed a genre known as *ocherk* ('sketch'). This style of reporting made the newspaper more accessible and entertaining to read.[74]

[74] Anna Arutunyan, *Media in Russia*, 98.

Reportedly, Lenin himself valued *Izvestia* more than *Pravda* because the former was the medium of the new form of governance, whereas the latter was "only" the medium of the Communist Party. It was also considered the more "liberal" of the two newspapers, and was favoured by the non-Party intelligentsia.[75]

Like *Pravda*, *Izvestia* featured reports on Iran for all of February on its international news page, page 4. Right away, it is evident that the newspapers both describe the same events, and the reporting is very similar, to the point where some articles in *Izvestia* include sections that appear in *Pravda* almost verbatim. Usually, these are articles attributed to TASS, the Soviet news agency. One example of this is the reporting from February 15th, which not only repeats sentences that also appear in Pravda, but also focuses on the same topic, namely alleged Western (intended) interference in the revolution and the "machinations of the counter-revolution".[76] However, this similarity also brings with it the main differences between the two newspapers. First of all, *Izvestia* places much greater emphasis on US or Western interference in Iranian affairs, dedicating far more space to the topic than *Pravda* in every single article. A statement from the chair of the Iranian communist party Tudeh is paraphrased in detail:

> "The fate of the revolutionary movement in Iran is defined first and foremost by the will of the Iranian people. However there can be no doubts about the fact that the international solidarity of all honest people is a very important factor to the success of this movement. The people of our country [Iran] are counting on the fact that this solidarity will manifest not only in this stage, now that the battle against imperialism and its vassals in Iran is being fought not to life, but to death, but that it will also remain after victory, when the people will build a new, free Iran."[77]

In this phenomenon, we also occasionally see the tactic, employed by *Pravda*, of referring to Western press to legitimise the newspaper's own perspective:

> "Political observers, analysing the development of events in Iran, unanimously ("единодушно") note in their commentaries, that the results of the anti-shah uprising of the Iranian people have dealt a crushing blow to the interests of the imperialist powers in the region. The English newspaper 'Daily Telegraph' remarks that 'Western states have not received such a blow since the times of Suez.'"[78]

---

[75] Mikhail Kozhokin, "Были первыми [We were first]," Izvestia, 11-3-2002, https://iz.ru/news/259250.
[76] "Срывая происки контрреволюции [Disrupting the machinations of the counter-revolution]," *Izvestia*, 15 February 1979, 4.
[77] "Воля Иранского народа [The will of the Iranian people]," *Izvestia*, 10 February 1979, 5.
[78] "Иран в огне восстания [Iran in the fires of uprising]," *Izvestia*, 13 February 1979, 4.

The second main difference from *Pravda* is that the reporting in *Izvestia* is far more vivid and visual, almost romantic, and reports written by its own correspondent, A. Ahmedzyanov, are given more space than *Pravda* affords to its Teheran correspondent A. Filippov. Ahmedzyanov is clearly an adept writer, presenting the events in a theatrical and captivating way, in contrast to the more dry reports in *Pravda*. Some passages in his work read almost like adventure novels, such as this report:

> "Early in the morning of February 10th we and the other correspondents tried to reach the place of the events. Behind Jaleh Square we were stopped by [unlegible], who were transporting out the wounded. [Unlegible], who were regulating the traffic, in proof of the fact that it was dangerous to move any further, gestured at a stretcher with a body under a nearby wall. In the deceased we recognised correspondent for the 'Los Angeles Times' J. [Joe Alex] Morris, with whom we had exchanged impressions only the previous night. This was already not the first casualty among foreign journalists."[79]

In contrast, *Pravda*, also reporting on the death of the same journalist, wrote on the 11th of February:

> "[United Press International] reports that a correspondent of the American newspaper 'Los Angeles Times', J. Morris, was killed in the crossfire upon arrival to the scene of the events."[80]

As was the case in *Pravda*, *Izvestia* also portrays the Iranian people as one unanimously anti-imperialist bloc by allowing actors opposed to the shah to "join" the ranks of the "people" and excluding those Iranians who were not opposed to imperialism. For example, the February 14th report claims that the creation of a "free, democratic society" is met by "all manner of resistance from external and internal enemies of the Iranian people", implying that those Iranians who are not in favour of the "free, democratic society" in question are not part of the "Iranian people", but on the contrary, their enemies.[81] The reporting also continuously stresses the unity and cooperation of the people against the oppressors:

---

[79] A. Ahmedzyanov, "Поступь восставших [The advance of the uprisers]," *Izvestia*, 12 February 1979, 4.
[80] "Бои в Тегеране," *Pravda*.
[81] "Иран: решительная поступь народа [Iran: the decisive advance of the people]," *Izvestia*, 14 February 1979, 4.

> "At 10:00 it became known that the cadets, in support of the patriots of the Farahabad flight academy, took the initiative in their own hands, despite the fact that the monarchists were shooting at them from helicopters. At 11:00 seven thousand students of the Teheran university came to their aid. The cadets handed out arms to the students and the people."[82]

Ahmedzyanov clearly had a flair for the dramatic, as he ends the article climactically with the following paragraph:

> "At 17.00 the insurgents gained control of the building of the national radio, which for the first time in the history of Iran broadcast to the people in the name of the 'Iranian Revolution'. With his voice shaking from excitement, the newsreader declared to the people: 'heroic compatriots, this is radio station 'Voice of the Iranian Revolution'; the national revolution in Iran has triumphed!'"[83]

Ayatollah Khomeini is mentioned somewhat less in *Izvestia* than in *Pravda*, and is not portrayed as much as the undisputed leader of the revolution. Nor is his religiosity in any way masked or explained away. Rather, his authority is given legitimacy through references to Tudeh, such as the one mentioned earlier, wherein the Iranian communists express their full support for Khomeini's demands. In addition, *Izvestia* also relies on the Soviet deterministic view of history as an unstoppable force of nature to explain, justify, and problematise Khomeini's religiosity all at once. Also on February 12th, political analyst A. Bovin refers to the revolution as the "inevitable final" of the events of the past year. He presents the revolution as part of the natural flow of history, previously impeded by interference from arrogant foreign powers. Significantly, he says:

> "[...] only a broad coalition, a factual union of all genuine opposition forces - regardless of differences in social, political or religious questions - can develop such a force of political pressure, that can upset all the calculations of the reaction. The role of religious leaders, religious sentiments in the Iranian events will be the subject of earnest attention and lively discussion for a long time to come. However it may be, the cooperation of the religious and secular flanks of the opposition, the massivity of the

[82] Ahmedzyanov, "Поступь восставших."
[83] Ibid.

> revolutionary movement have helped to neutralise the army, and thus to avoid the bloodshed and destruction brought by civil war."[84]

By stating that the role of religion in the revolution will be "the subject of lively discussion", Bovin problematises religiosity as a phenomenon, while also creating discursive space wherein the phenomenon is allowed to exist in the context of the Soviet perspective on the revolution. Moreover, religiosity is also justified, as by stating that the cooperation of the religious and secular opposition has avoided bloodshed, it is also implied that without this cooperation, the secular opposition alone would not have been able to avoid bloodshed.

Where *Pravda* never wrote directly about the USSR's relationship to the revolution, choosing instead to highlight recognisable parallels with its own history to reflect its place in the world, *Izvestia* appears not to be concerned with such subtlety. That much is clear in part from the constant and overt accusations of Western imperialism, but also from passages such as the following:

> "During the press conference, Western journalists, seeking sensation, asked the representative of Bazargan's government the question about in what way the Soviet Union tried to exert influence over the revolutionary events occurring in Iran. The sensation did not materialise. The representative of Bazargan [unlegible]: 'We are not aware of efforts of the Soviet Union to interfere in the revolutionary events of Iran. The Soviet Union did not make any efforts to interfere in the internal affairs of Iran and correctly observed the principles of good neighbourly relations.' It cannot be said more clearly."[85]

In such passages, we can observe several things. First, and most evidently, there is an undermining of the credibility of Western journalists, who are accused of sensationalism. Second, following from the first observation, there is the refutation of any (real or imagined) accusations of Soviet interference in the revolution. Third, since Soviet non-interference is referred to as "correct" and "good neighbourly", those who do *not* practice non-interference, whom we, per the text, know to be the US, are implied not to qualify for these characterisations. The article continues to laud the USSR, describing a development also discussed by *Pravda*, but far less extensively, as follows:

---

[84] A. Bovin, "Неизбежный финал [Inevitable final]," *Izvestia*, 12 February 1979, 4.
[85] A. Ahmedzyanov, "Революционный шаг народа [The revolutionary step of the people]," *Izvestia*, 13 February 1979, 4.

> "Iranian society received the news of Soviet recognition of the temporary government of Iran with great satisfaction. Here, in part, they note the readiness of the USSR to sustain and develop relations between the two countries on the basis of equality, good-neighbourhood, respect for national sovereignty, and non-interference in one another's internal affairs. News has also emerged of recognition of the temporary government of Iran by Syria, Pakistan, Libya, Mauritania, India, Sudan, and a number of other states."[86]

Upon reviewing this month of reporting, one can draw several conclusions. First of all, US imperialism is a clear theme in *Izvestia*'s reporting on the revolution. *Izvestia* skips the pretense that the revolution is a standoff between the shah and the Iranian people and comfortably and explicitly characterises it as the grand battle against imperialism that is implied in *Pravda*. At the same time, *Izvestia*'s reporting does not encourage the reader's identification with the revolution in the same way that *Pravda*'s reporting does. Because the locality and temporality that were often missing in *Pravda*'s reports on the revolution are more present in *Izvestia*, there is actually more distance between the reader and the Iranian revolution. Through the almost romanticised descriptions of the events, the reader is invited to empathise with the revolution, not to identify with it; Iran is "on our side", but not "just like us". This romanticisation also objectifies Iran and Iranians, but this is not done with the explicit, stated goal of confirming an ideological narrative about (the worldview of) the USSR, as is the case in *Pravda*. *Pravda*, by nature of the medium as a party newspaper, would have been expected to provide ideological reporting and to construct narratives about the world that would fit within the party ideology. For *Izvestia*, on the other hand, the stakes were not as high to coordinate every single detail of its reporting with the party ideology, and it could instead focus on bringing its readers the news in a less dogmatic, more entertaining way, using the *ocherk* style of writing. This adds yet another layer of distance between the reader and the revolution: although the reader is encouraged to sympathise with the Iranian people, the events transpiring in Iran are also packaged as interesting, educational entertainment for the Soviet reader. For all its ruminations on exploitative American imperialism, *Izvestia*, too, reproduces imperialist, orientalist power dynamics, albeit in a different way from *Pravda*. In romanticising the Iranian revolution and converting it into an exciting and entertaining process that the reader can follow from the safe distance of their own home, *Izvestia* positions the USSR as the subject and Iran as the object of the narrative. The USSR can observe Iran, but Iran cannot do the same to the USSR. For the Soviet citizen, the events unfolding in Iran are educational and entertaining; for the Iranian, they are matters of life and death.

---

[86] Ibid.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The Soviet Union was a state built on a foundation of an ideology that had been instituted and meticulously coordinated by the Communist Party, the successor to the Bolsheviks that stood at the cradle of the revolution that it had developed out of. A core aspect of this revolution was the idea that the people had to be led to consciousness and redemption through ideological education, specifically emanating from a group of enlightened communist intellectuals. The Soviet media were tasked with this grave responsibility; educating Soviet citizens and conveying an ideological direction from the Communist Party. This was also the case for *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. The USSR's leading newspapers were specifically supposed to generate popular consent to the hegemony of the CPSU by upholding the state's ideological structure. Thus, anything published in these newspapers represented one, more, or all of the following:

a) the government's view of certain events;

b) the view of events that it was desired for the citizens to hold;

c) the view of events that the government desired the people to think it itself held.

This was the case for the Iranian revolution as much as for any other internal or external event. Any reports on the events in Iran said something about the Soviet powers: either what their perspective on the issue was, or the perspective they considered desirable, or the perspective they wanted to be considered desirable regardless of whether or not they held it. In other words, these reports tell us more about the Soviet Union than they do about Iran.

*Pravda*, being the Communist Party's own newspaper, presented the event for its readers and Party members as an organic, popular revolution against monarchist oppression and American imperialism. The revolution was to be seen as a natural point in the progression of history. Iran is presented as just like the USSR, with its own tzar (the shah), its own Kerensky (Bakhtiar), and its own Lenin (Khomeini). The characters in the discourse are largely divorced from their personhood, creating the bizarre situation where Ayatollah Khomeini, fundamentally a very religious figure, was rarely referred to as such. The religious aspect of the revolution is given very little attention at all, and always counterbalanced with exclamations on the massive, popular nature of the opposition. *Pravda*'s reporting constantly toes the line between downplaying the role of religion in the revolution in order to position it closer to the USSR, and 'allowing' Iran to have its religiosity with the strict understanding that Iran is not yet as developed as the USSR. The revolution is made comprehensible through the lens of the USSR's own revolution.

As the government newspaper, meanwhile, *Izvestia* was under less direct pressure to give an explicitly didactic, ideological interpretation of the revolution. In a sense, it is almost taken for granted that the readership will correctly interpret the events. *Izvestia* could thus provide more entertaining

reporting on the issue with its signature *ocherk* style. Less explicit is not truly less ideological, however. The narrative crafted by *Izvestia* is that of Iran, a distant, undeveloped, yet sympathetic nation, rising against its imperialist, and by extension, American, oppressors. Khomeini, although recognised as the leader of the revolution, is legitimised by his critical support from the Iranian communist party, which renders his religiosity unproblematic. The fact that the 'Iranianness' of the event is far more clear in *Izvestia* than in *Pravda* serves to distance it somewhat, and allows the newspaper to transform it into a story that is as educational as it is entertaining and exciting to follow. Iran's revolution is not quite like that of the USSR, but it fits into the same perceived historical pattern.

Together, the newspapers craft a narrative based on several assumptions that ultimately lead to certain conclusions about the Iranian revolution, but more importantly, the USSR's place in the world. First of all, the narrative both concludes that and is supported by the 'scientific communist' idea that all human development and history inherently moves towards revolution and communism. The Iranian revolution serves as an example to this: the Iranian people, in standing up to imperialist and capitalist oppression, are seen as actors in this natural progress of history. It follows that, having developed to the point of revolution several decades earlier, the Soviet Union serves as an example of what such revolution should ideally lead to. Now, the USSR respects the will of the Iranian people and the sovereignty of the Iranian state, unlike the imperialist, meddling Americans, which have so far been impeding the Iranian people on their path to development. Such statements are corroborated with quotes from and references to foreign media, never made directly by the Soviets themselves. This leads to the holistic image of the USSR as an ultimately benevolent and progressive force in the world, painted through the eyes of foreign media in the Soviet Union's two largest newspapers.

This returns to the fact that the Soviet media were explicitly expected to have a didactic function. They were supposed to help people develop personally as revolutionary subjects by learning to see the world through the Soviet revolutionary ideology. Considering that we know that the Soviet government initially did not really know what to make of the Iranian revolution, the cautious sympathy expressed in the newspapers is particularly notable. Ten years later, popular foreign affairs-focused television programme *Mezhdunarodnaya Panorama* ('International Panorama') dedicated a segment to the tenth anniversary of the Iranian Revolution wherein it is stated that the Iranian revolution had not brought the progress that the Soviet Union had been so optimistic about, but "a regime that had transformed into a dictatorship of the servants of a cult".[87] The attitude towards the revolution had completely changed over those years, in part due to the effects of *glasnost'* and the *perestroika*. This makes the observations in this

[87] Sovetskoje Televidenie, GOSTELERADIOFOND Rossii, "Международная панорама. Эфир 12.02.89. Иранская революция - 10 лет (1989), [International Panorama. Broadcast 12.02.89. Iranian Revolution - 10 years (1989)]," 12-02-1989, video, 9:27, https://youtu.be/t_rgXvuXRp8.

thesis all the more interesting, as it proves that the first impulse of the Soviet media was to interpret and explain an unexpected international development in such a way that it would conform to and affirm the state ideology. In other words, when the government was unprepared to respond to the revolution, the first recourse was to try to conform it to its ideology and provide the citizens with an interpretation that supported the Soviet worldview.

It may be tempting to add these observations to an understanding of the Soviet Union as an oppressive, dogmatic, authoritarian state. It is not my intention to argue that that was not the case - that much should be unobjectionable. However, ideology is not unique to communist authoritarian states. While the Soviet press was directly controlled by the government, we would do well to remember that similar propaganda existed in the West, too. Children growing up in the West may not have had to pass Scientific Communism in order to graduate university, but they were not free from ideology, either. All discourse carries ideology in one form or another. Future research could take the form of a comparison between Western and Soviet media, or look for potential differences in the discussion of this topic in regional Soviet press, or even track the development of the Soviet perspective on the Iranian revolution through Soviet media and historiography. As for this research, I have shown that the USSR's perspective on Iran had little to do with what Iran did or did not do, and more with how Iran could be made to contribute to the Soviet citizen's worldview, and the legitimisation of the Soviet Union's foundational ideology both to itself and to the world. The Iranian revolution was made a mirror image of the October revolution. And perhaps, in a way, this is similar to how in Cold War era Western academia, the USSR was made a mirror image of the capitalist West.

# Bibliography

## Primary sources

### *Pravda*

"Бои в Тегеране. [Fighting in Teheran]" *Pravda*. 11 February 1979.

Bol'shakov, V. "Нужен 'мальчик для битья' [Wanted: a whipping boy]." *Pravda*. 11 February 1979.

"Иран: накал народного восстания [Iran: escalation of national uprising]." *Pravda*. 13 February 1979.

Ovchinnikov, Vsevolod. "Иран: накал народного восстания, заметки политического обозревателя [Iran: escalation of national uprising, political observer's notes] ." *Pravda*. 13 February 1979.

"Иран: обстановка остается напряженной [Iran: the situation remains tense]." *Pravda*. 1 February 1979.

"Иран: обстановка остается тревожной [Iran: the situation remains worrying]." *Pravda*. 15 February 1979.

"К событиям в Иране. [On the events in Iran]" *Pravda*. 5 February 1979.

"События в Иране [Events in Iran]." *Pravda*. 12 February 1979.

### *Izvestia*

Ahmedzyanov, A. "Поступь восставших [The advance of the uprisers]." *Izvestia*. 12 February 1979.

Ahmedzyanov, A. "Революционный шаг народа [The revolutionary step of the people]." *Izvestia*. 13 February 1979.

Bovin, A. "Неизбежный финал [Inevitable final]." *Izvestia*. 12 February 1979.

"Воля Иранского народа [The will of the Iranian people]." *Izvestia*. 10 February 1979.

"Иран в огне восстания [Iran in the fires of uprising]." *Izvestia*. 13 February 1979.

"Иран: решительная поступь народа [Iran: the decisive advance of the people]." *Izvestia*. 14 February 1979.

"Срывая происки контрреволюции [Disrupting the machinations of the counter-revolution]." *Izvestia*. 15 February 1979.

### *Others*

Fedoseyev, P. N., V. G. Afanasyev, K. N. Brutents et al. *Научный коммунизм* [Scientific Communism] Moscow: Politizdat, 1976.

Lenin, Vladimir I. “Попятное направление в русской социал-демократии [The Regressive Movement in Russian Social-Democracy],” *Proletarskaya Revolyuciya*, no. 8-9 (1924, written in 1899): 240-273.

Lenin, Vladimir I. “The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution (a.k.a. The April Theses).” *Pravda*. 07-04-1917. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm

Sovetskoje Televidenie, GOSTELERADIOFOND Rossii. “Международная панорама. Эфир 12.02.89. Иранская революция - 10 лет (1989), [International Panorama. Broadcast 12.02.89. Iranian Revolution - 10 years (1989)],” 12-02-1989. Video, 9:27. https://youtu.be/t_rgXvuXRp8.

Tselishev, N. N., I. Ya. Koyfman and K. N. Lyubutin. *Мировоззренческая система марксизма-ленинизма* [The Worldview System of Marxim-Leninism] Sverdlovsk: Ural University Press, 1987.

## Secondary sources

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran Between Two Revolutions.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Akhavi, Shahrough. “Soviet Perceptions of the Iranian Revolution.” *Iranian Studies* 19, no. 1 (1986): 3-29.

Anderson, Perry. “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci.” *New Left Review* 1, no. 100 (1976): 5-78.

Ansari, Ali and Kasra Aarabi. “Ideology and Iran’s Revolution: How 1979 Changed the World.” *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change* (2019).

Arabadjan, A. Z. ed. *Иранская революция 1978-1979: причины и уроки* [The Iranian Revolution 1978-1979: Causes and Lessons]. Moscow: Nauka, 1989.

Arendt, Hannah. “On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding.” In *Arendt, Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954.* New York: New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1994.

Arutunyan, Anna. *The Media in Russia.* Berkshire: Open University Press, 2009.

Ascher, Abraham. *The Russian Revolution: A Beginner’s Guide.* London: Oneworld Publications, 2014.

Baev, Pavel K. “Bad Judgement and a Chain of Blunders.” In *The Iranian Revolution at Forty*, ed. Suzanne Maloney, 192-195. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019.

Campbell, David. “Poststructuralism.” In *International Relations Theories,* eds. Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith, 203-228. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Cleveland, William L. and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2013.

Dejevsky, Mary. “Glasnost’ and the Soviet Press.” In *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, eds. Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A. Hosking, 26-42. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989.

Doty, Roxanne Lynn. “Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines.” *International Studies Quarterly* 37 (1993): 297-320.

Rubinstein, Alvin Z. “The Soviet Union and Iran Under Khomeini.” *International Affairs* 57, no.4 (1981): 599-617.

Dunn, Kevin C. and Iver B. Neumann. *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016.

Etkind, Alexander. “Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?” *Kritika* 6, no. 1 (2005): 171-186.

Fierke, Karin M. “Constructivism.” In *International Relations Theories,* eds. Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith, 166-184. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Halfin, Igal. *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation In Revolutionary Russia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.

Hall, Stuart. “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’.” In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, 225-276. London: SAGE Publications, 1997.

Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on my Mind.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Hosking, Geoffrey A. “Introduction.” In *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, eds. Julian Graffy and Geoffrey A. Hosking, 1-5. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989.

Huang, Heidi Yu. “Gramsci and Cultural Hegemony in Post-Mao China.” *Literature Compass* 12, no. 8 (2015): 404-413.

Kozhokin, Mikhail. “Были первыми [We were first].” Izvestia. 11-3-2002. https://iz.ru/news/259250.

Lane, David. “The October Revolution and its Consequences.” *Obshhestvo. Sreda. Razvitie.*, no. 3 (2018): 31-41.

McNair, Brian. *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media.* London: Routledge, 1991.

Pipes, Richard. *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution.* New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Rigby, T. H. “Soviet Communist Party Membership Under Brezhnev.” *Soviet Studies* vol. 28, no. 3 (July 1976): 317-337.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Smith, Keith. “The Main Features of the Communist (Bolshevik) Ideology at the time of the October 1917 Revolution.” *Teaching History* 48, no. 1 (2014): 35-38.

Suny, Ronald Grigor. “Toward a Social History of the October Revolution.” *The American Historical Review* 88, no 1 (1983): 31-52.

Tumarkin, Nina. *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Wydra, Harald. “The Power of Symbols: Communism and Beyond.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 25 (2012): 49-69.

**Cover art:** by author. *Hide the matches from the children*. 2020.