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The Disagreeing Audience

Change in Criteria for Evaluating Mass Media Effectiveness With the Democratization of Soviet Society¹

Paradoxically, the advent of glasnost and the democratization of Soviet society appear to have diminished both agreement with mass media and trust in them. At the same time, the disagreeing audience—as compared to the agreeing one—demonstrates more self-consciousness and social activity, conditions indicating greater preparedness for perestroika and the restructuring of Soviet society. These results were obtained from surveys in 1985 and 1987 of 2,000 Byelorussians aged 16 to 30 in five social class categories: collective farmers, workers, technical employees, secondary and professional school students, and university students. Survey results are compared to a content analysis of reports of problems on Soviet radio and television and in youth newspapers (750 texts in 1985, 850 in 1987). The author concludes that under conditions of “monopropaganda,” in which mass media are managed by a single sociopolitical group, disagreement with the media becomes a socially positive force for the democratization of society.

In the Soviet Union as in most countries of the world, mass media have become one of the most important means of spiritual as well as political and socioeconomic development. By the 1970s coverage of the population by various media had become nearly complete. The first program of Central Television can now be viewed by 96% of Soviets, and the first program of All-Union Radio can now be received by 100% of the population. Certain central and local newspapers reach 80% to 90% of potential readers (Fomicheva, 1987).

Under these conditions, the mass media have come to realize that their actual effectiveness should be determined qualitatively. The “target” or

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"program-target" method is most widely used. Here media effectiveness is determined by the degree to which the set target is reached, controlling for consumption of time and resources (Grushin, 1979; Pozdniakov, 1975).

It was noted by Marx that purpose is a system-forming element of any activity. The target audiences for the majority of publications are unambiguously determined on the basis of efficiency. Such scientific definitions differ little from the political ones constantly reproduced in the respective directives, however. Usually they include "ideological-and-political education of the masses," "development of social activity of the people," and "formation of Marxist-Leninist outlook and ideological position of a personality" (Baikova, 1978; Pozdniakov, 1975).

In accordance with this approach, the effectiveness of media influence on an audience is interpreted as approximation of the social-reality models (regarded as systems of certain knowledge, values, and norms) promoted by the mass media and present in mass consciousness (Firsov, 1987). A reader's, listener's, or spectator's accepting the models proposed by the newspapers, radio, and TV and including them into his or her cognitive-emotional and motivational structure is a "positive result" of mass media functioning, whereas a person rejecting these models represents a "negative result" or at least the absence of a "positive result."

The main hypothesis of my research is based on the assumption that the audience accepting the models proposed by mass media should be characterized by a higher level of self-consciousness and social activity than the audience rejecting those models. The main task of the study was to investigate the mechanism of acceptance of the models as well as the contributing conditions and factors. Another task emerged after April 1985: to give scientific and political assessment of the results and perspectives from the point of view of the democratization of Soviet society.

Research Methods and Procedures

Research was conducted during 1984-1988 under the direction of the author at the Problem Laboratory of Sociological Research, Byelorussian State University, under the project title "Effectiveness of Mass Media Influence on Various Groups of Youth in the BSSR." In autumn 1985 a representative sample was used to poll five main social-and-class groups of Byelorussian youth aged 16 to 30: workers, collective farmers, employees and technicians/engineers, university students, and students of secondary and professional schools. Respondents totaled 2,000, with 400 in each group. In autumn

1987 the identical questionnaire was used to poll students of the same universities and secondary and professional schools. The other four groups were not polled again because differences among them proved insignificant on most of the studied parameters. Real differentiation occurs along sociopsychological and mass communication dimensions. In addition to polls, representative annual samples of the content of problem reports of youth newspapers, radio, and TV (750 texts in 1985 and 850 in 1987) were also analyzed.

All investigation methods were based on the paradigm approach applied to mass communication studies as suggested by Finnish sociologists and developed by Soviets (Lauristin, 1987). This approach considers mass information and mass consciousness as a whole, a system of interrelated elements that form a model for defining, analyzing, and solving a problem, that is, a paradigm. The Byelorussian study also investigates several special problems determined by experts on polling and preliminary content analysis of youth media reports. These include the problem of harmonic combination of the interests of a person and society, the problem of incorporating youth in the social management process, and the problem of improving the mutual understanding and communication of youth (the problem of social deviation among youth was added in 1987).

Agreement and Trust as Expressions of Attitudes Toward Media

Formation of audience attitudes toward the contents and source of information is a complex process involving interaction of elements of different significance. Researchers of propaganda psychology and the influence of media on political behavior indicate, among others, the following elements: interest in (attention to) information, understanding it, and remembering and discussing it (Jowett & O'Donnel, 1986; Kraus & Davis, 1978). In their opinion, interaction of these elements produces agreement and trust in an audience.

Agreement with the assessments expressed in separate media reports and with the general position of a source actually creates feelings of psychological closeness and identification with the contents and source of information. From the psychological point of view, appearance and strengthening of agreement may be regarded as formation of the cognitive component of a person's position. Trust characterizes an attitude at a higher level. It has been shown that persons trusting a certain source of information are prone

Table 1

Trust of Mass Media and Agreement With Them (Percentages)

Trust of media	Agreement with media reports		
	Usually agreeing	Varying	Usually disagreeing
Usually trusting	90.7	63.6	28.0
Varying	8.5	34.4	42.0
Usually distrusting	0.7	2.0	30.0
Total	99.9	100.0	100.0

 $r = .31, p = .001.$

to disregard the elements of the contents that they do not understand or do not agree with (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953). Transition from agreement to trust, considered psychologically, is a generalization of a person's position modifying also its motivational structure.

Our research indicates that the two elements of audience attitudes toward media are closely interrelated (Table 1). A similar analysis conducted two years later produced similar results: $r = .337$ at the same significance level. Thus the relationship appears to be both close and stable. Despite this close dependence, however, the characteristics express attitudes of different magnitudes: In Soviet audiences the number of disagreeing persons is usually much greater than the number of distrusting ones. In the 1985 poll, for instance, 71.0% of the respondents usually or sometimes disagreed with the opinion of the newspapers, radio, and TV, whereas only 29.3% usually or sometimes distrusted them.

More important, agreement and trust actually "sum up" all other elements of the audience attitude toward media. Agreeing and trusting persons, as compared to the disagreeing and distrusting ones, consume mass media information much more often. They are more satisfied with the results of sending letters to editorial boards, more accepting of the propaganda "heroes" and rejecting of the "antiheroes,"² more likely to share the media "image" created by propaganda ("media is a public opinion forum accessible to anyone"), and more knowledgeable of the events reported by the media (Table 2).

As can be seen from Table 2, the number of persons never reading the newspaper *Znamia Yunosti* (the most popular BSSR newspaper, read by 85% of youth) is twice as large among usually disagreeing and distrusting persons. The number of those never listening to the radio is several times as large among the same groups (the difference is statistically insignificant for television because practically no youth never watch TV), whereas the number of

Table 2

Relationship of Audience Agreement and Trust to Other Elements of Attitudes Toward Mass Media (Percentages)

Indicators of attitude toward media	Agreement with media		Trust in media	
	Usually agreeing	Usually disagreeing	Usually trusting	Usually distrusting
Never read the newspaper <i>Znamia Yunosti</i>	13.8	30.6	11.6	23.7
Never listen to the radio	9.3	22.2	4.5	23.7
Are totally dissatisfied with results of addressing editorial boards	31.2	55.6	26.6	50.0
Think that media generally express the opinion of:				
Wide masses of the youth	25.2	11.4	23.8	11.1
Different levels of administrators	5.9	31.4	6.3	47.2
Demonstrate poor knowledge of events:				
In the USSR	19.6	45.8	14.5	46.7
Abroad	15.7	29.2	9.5	31.0

Note. The table should be interpreted as follows: Of all the respondents usually agreeing with the media opinion, 13.8% never read the newspaper; of the usually disagreeing ones, 30.6% never read it.

people dissatisfied with the results of addressing editorial boards is twice as large.

Although all these elements of audience attitudes toward mass media are closely interrelated, nowadays practically all youth consume mass information with some regularity, but the entire audience does not agree with or trust it. In spite of nearly constant levels of consumption of mass information from 1985 to 1987, moreover, agreement and trust did not grow. On the contrary, they have dropped considerably. Our research demonstrates that between autumn 1985 and autumn 1987, the number of usually or sometimes disagreeing persons increased by 13.1%, the number of usually or sometimes distrusting persons by more than 21%.

Formation and development of audience attitudes toward mass media are determined not only by the internal laws of the process but also by external conditions and factors. In the course of mass communication, interaction among three "worlds" occurs: the world reflected in audience consciousness, the world created by mass media, and the actual world of social reality. The influence of each of these worlds on the formation and development of agreement and trust in the mass media audience is considered below. In accord with the target approach, the degree of agreement and confidence are

two of the more important criteria of media effectiveness and their influence on the audience.

Personality Factors of Disagreement

When considering personality or audience factors of youths' disagreement with and distrust of media, many researchers note characteristics such as isolationism and negativism, limited social experience, contradictions between opinions and behavior, increased emotionality and susceptibility to hurt, and striving for independence combined with imitation of peer standards (Mansurov, 1985). The results of our investigation largely destroy such "scientific and political" stereotypes, which manifest hidden fears and hopes. One fear is that the majority of young people disagree with the standards, values, and norms of "grown-ups" and therefore of the media. The hope is that as people reach a certain age (say, 30 years), they "naturally" shed this disagreement. But is it really so?

Consider youth negativism. The results of both polls demonstrate that the disagreeing and distrusting come much more from the middle (21 to 25 years) and especially the older (26 to 30 years) age groups than do those agreeing and trusting. As for the limited social experience of youth, however, a paradox exists: Among workers, who have more social experience than do secondary or professional school students, the degree of disagreement and distrust is higher by 7% to 11%. Many other such paradoxes can be cited. They indicate that youth properties, though they may be prerequisites of disagreement with and distrust of mass media, cannot in themselves be considered factors influencing the direction and intensity of the process.

The results of our research and several other studies (Vihalemm, 1986) convincingly show that a crucial factor is acceptance of the values, norms, and social roles of society. One external form of its manifestation is social position and its real place in social structure and in the system of social relations. An internal form of its manifestation is ideological position: notions about the value of Marxist-Leninist ideology and morale that become behavioral motives and determine attitudes (Fridrich, 1976).

When youth are discussed, their marginal position in the social structure and system of social relations is often characterized by "not yet." The conclusion is that their internal convictions and world outlook have not yet been finally shaped. This logic has two drawbacks. First, by 16 years of age personality has largely been formed by such socializing institutions as the family, school, peer groups, and the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations.

Table 3

Relationship of Social Position to Attitudes Toward Mass Media (Percentages)

Indicators of audience social position	Agreement with media		Trust in media	
	Usually agreeing	Usually disagreeing	Usually trusting	Usually distrusting
Receive excellent or good marks	58.8	33.4	55.8	44.7
Feel no joy or satisfaction with studies	21.1	44.7	18.5	42.7
Assess psychological and moral climate in collective as "unsatisfactory" or "very bad"	13.5	38.9	19.3	39.5
Do not take part in managing collective affairs	35.6	60.0	33.4	65.8
Do not take floor at meetings on own initiative	39.5	55.6	37.9	57.9
Consider their opinion plays no role in decision making in:				
Organization (secondary or professional school or college)	32.2	44.4	29.3	43.2
City, republic, or country	41.4	61.1	42.6	73.0
Consider that they have no chance to:				
Realize their interests and abilities in activities useful to society	9.5	17.1	9.1	23.7
Participate in managing collective affairs	16.4	25.7	16.9	25.0
Communicate effectively, establish mutual understanding	1.7	18.2	3.8	11.8
Not violate political and moral norms of society	6.2	36.1	6.9	33.3

Second, formation and development of a person's convictions and world outlook continue during his or her entire life.

Consider the interrelationships between a young person's social position and his or her attitudes toward mass media. Agreement with and trust of mass media are indicators of those attitudes, whereas indicators of social position include success in school, satisfaction with studies, assessment of the psychological and moral climate in the collective, participation in managing its affairs, activity at various meetings, and assessment of personal influence and of the possibilities of self-realization.

Table 3, designed similarly to Table 2, contains data from the 1987 poll on extreme social positions and attitudes toward mass media. Consider the

youths' assessments of their possibility of following strictly (in studies, work, public activities, and everyday life) the political and moral norms of the Soviet society (this can be considered a kind of "supernorm"). Agreeing and trusting persons assess its possibility as real 5 or 6 times as often as disagreeing and distrusting persons do. In other words, people who disagree with mass media and distrust them are mainly those who are not fully included in the existing social structure and system of social relations, or who are dropping (or have dropped) out of them.

Disagreement with and distrust of mass media are far from being a prerogative of youth. The results of our previous research (Davidyuk, 1986) indicate that the number of senior persons among the disagreeing and distrusting is not less than the number of young people. In this case we mean those who were "pushed out" to the periphery of society through loss of possibilities for self-realization rather than those who lost social status through "bad luck." Both the agreeing and disagreeing include all youth groups (defined by gender, age, education, place of residence, social and professional status, etc.); their material positions do not differ considerably. The process analyzed is influenced rather by the perception by the person of his or her social position (and the entire system of social relations) and not by actual position. In other words, the decisive role belongs not to social but to ideological position—the internal manifestation of one's degree of socialization.

Attitudes toward the models of social reality promoted by mass media are determined by the viewpoint from which a reader, listener, or spectator poses a certain social problem, assesses, explains, and mentally solves it. Analysis reveals three such viewpoints: ideological-moral (educational), sociopolitical, and organizational-economic (pragmatic);³ there are three corresponding sociopsychological audience types. The first type, *ideological* or *educational*, is characterized by the statement: "The main cause of social problems is the imperfection of man himself. These problems will be solved only when educational, ideological, and socialization activities are well organized." The second or *political* type is characterized by the opinion: "The hope to educate a 'new man' is utopian. The state and public organizations must abandon formalism and bureaucratism, take larger account of youth interests, and rely on youth initiatives." The third type, *technocratic* or *pragmatic*, is summarized by the statement: "Neither education of the 'new man' nor more attention of the state and public organizations to the interests of youth will solve major social problems. They can be solved only by accelerated economic development and widening of our material, technical, and financial potential."

Comparative factor analysis demonstrates that these audience types are very stable and to a certain degree independent of the contents of the problems under consideration. They are also universal as far as sociodemographic, professional, geographic, and other social characteristics of the audience are concerned. Therefore, viewpoint may possibly be considered as one of the subject-free personality factors (Hovland et al., 1953) that affect a person's ability to comprehend communication. Additional analysis of certain descriptive indicators of these types reveals that they characterize attitudes not only toward mass media but toward social reality as a whole (Manaev, 1988), which is why viewpoint was used as an indicator of ideological position that colors social context.

The educator (ideologist) type predominates among people agreeing with and trusting the mass media. Disagreeing and distrusting persons are dominated by the pragmatist (technocrat) type. The politician type is more ambivalent—though more predominant among the disagreeing. These relationships are both in simple distributions, when questionnaire items were analyzed for the agreeing-trusting and disagreeing-distrusting dimensions, and in factor analysis through interrelationships between the position factors and the agreement-and-trust factors. For the combinations of personal and public interests, for example, the correlation of agreement factor with the factor for the ideological-educational position is $r = .086$ (minimum tolerable value .062); with the factor for the pragmatic position it is $r = .147$. Similar results obtain for other problems and for both polls.

This does not mean, however, that audience differentiation by the agreement-and-trust indicator fully coincides with the sociopsychological types—they are not the same. The pragmatist type, for example, lags behind the educator type as far as certain parameters are concerned, in the level of education and culture in particular (pragmatists have much smaller home libraries). At the same time, disagreeing and distrusting persons have larger home libraries compared to those agreeing and trusting (the difference—for more than 300 books—reaches 13% to 14%).

To sum up, attitude toward mass media depends on ideological position. Ideological position depends, in turn, on social position, much as ideological adaptation depends on social adaptation. The ideological-educational paradigm corresponds most fully to the social policy of the administrative-bureaucratic system, within which the goals of ideological education and socialization of youth dominate the goals of real increase of political and economic independence. Social and ideological positions, however, are not functionally related. One of the personality factors determining youth attitude toward mass media

is the degree of socialization in external and internal forms. Audience attitudes toward mass media and the social-reality models promoted by them also reflect attitudes toward the entire system of social relations.

Information Factors of Disagreement

Why is it the educator types who demonstrate greatest agreement with and confidence in mass media? The reason is simple. Mass media supporting the general social strategy of the administrative-bureaucratic system promoted exactly the ideological-educational approach to formulating, analyzing, and solving social problems. The political, socioeconomic, and cultural reality was most often interpreted by them as the status quo, under which solution of social problems depended on each person in his or her place, and on his or her access to information, education, and activity.

Content analysis of youth media problem reports distinguishes latent text structures differing by the paradigm elements they incorporate and by their interrelationships. The problems of involving youth in social management and of improving their mutual understanding, communication, and leisure activities, for example, are interpreted by the mass media in nearly opposite ways. The first problem is considered the responsibility of different social institutions, mainly the Komsomol; the second problem remains the responsibility of the individual and is usually considered outside the frames of labor and the sociopolitical activities of youth. Such division of labor constitutes a stereotype that is unilateral and far from harmless. The sphere of activities of social institutions includes production and politics (the individual has little importance here), whereas the sphere of activities of a person is communication, leisure, and everyday life (social institutions have no direct responsibility here).

Similar conclusions were reached by sociologists who studied formation of the ecological consciousness in the process of mass communication: "Such ways of explaining problems related to worsening of environmental conditions reflect the existing practice of nature exploitation and serve the function of its justification and protection" (Safranov, 1987, p. 136). Content analysis conducted in 1987 demonstrates that under glasnost, the situation has changed little, though a certain politicization of mass media against a background of pragmatization and deideologization of mass consciousness is observed (Manaev, 1989). The audience part characterized by dominance of such an ideological position also shows maximum agreement with and trust in mass media. "People react to persuasion which promises satisfaction of some of their requirements and interests. Persuasion is an interrelated

process within which both sides depend on the other" (Jowett & O'Donnel, 1986, p. 84).

In addition to direct comparative analysis of the contents of mass consciousness and mass information, another method based on the reverse question technique (Polikarpov, 1986) was also employed. The questionnaire included four adapted mass media texts, in each of which the hero confronts some problem. A number of questions to be put to the hero were suggested; selections permitted us to judge whether respondents approved of each action (and thereby the system of values and norms personified by it).

Ann, the hero of one text, sacrificed her personal interests for public ones (the value personified was a harmonic combination of personal and public interests). Pavel, the hero of another text, was afraid to criticize openly his boss of whom he disapproved (the value personified was active participation of youth in social management). Alexander, a third hero, being a fan of avant garde clothes and music, neglected communication and thus understanding among members of his collective (the value personified was genuine communication and mutual understanding among people). The hero of a fourth text, Yanis, was a drug addict who openly opposed his own counterculture to the traditional values and norms of the society (the value personified was a socially and morally healthy way of life). Direct open questions were also used to determine socionormative attitudes.

As shown in Table 4, disagreeing and distrusting youth are much more active in rejecting the positive hero. Conversely, agreeing and trusting youth actively reject the mass media antiheroes. Differences in appraising Pavel, for example, are nearly 19% between distrusting and trusting respondents. Differences between replies to the test and direct questions (i.e., between the personal and socionormative attitudes) are much lower among the disagreeing and distrusting than among the agreeing and trusting.

In appraisal of Ann, for example, differences between the test and direct questions equaled 22.4% for the disagreeing, 48% for the agreeing, 14.8% for the distrusting, and 47% for the trusting. The disagreeing demonstrate both closer coincidence of personal and socionormative attitudes and even a kind of showing off. Positive attitudes toward drug addict Yanis were expressed by 15% of the disagreeing, and by 8% of the distrusting, and—in reply to the direct question—by 20% and 20.7%, respectively. In other words, the agreeing and trusting (and, as noted, more socialized) demonstrate a more split, bidimensional ideological position as compared to the disagreeing and distrusting.

Maximum distance between personal and socionormative attitudes is observed in appraisals of Ann, mass media positive heroine; minimum

Table 4

*Relationships of Audience Activity and Self-Consciousness
to Attitudes Toward Media (Percentages)*

Indicators of activity and self-consciousness	Agreement with media		Trust in media	
	Usually agreeing	Usually disagreeing	Usually trusting	Usually distrusting
Wrote to media editorial boards several times	4.3	17.1	6.0	13.1
Watched video several times a month	3.4	17.1	4.2	21.6
Listened to Western radio daily or several times a week	10.1	42.8	12.9	47.3
Led in informal communication	31.9	50.0	35.4	50.0
Had 300 or more books in home library	38.6	51.4	43.0	57.4
Preferred to work in public production and not individually or oppose individuals making large profits	47.5	19.4	42.6	26.3
Considered the following to be widespread among acquaintances:				
Indifference to social life of the country	15.1	41.2	15.7	44.7
Use of alcoholic drinks	11.8	50.0	15.9	34.2
Illegal trade	4.2	11.4	4.3	18.9
Drug addiction, toxicomania	0.9	17.1	2.1	13.2
Prostitution	2.5	22.2	3.7	21.0
Could not assess the role of their opinion in the decision making of:				
Secondary or technical school or college	33.9	19.4	30.1	16.2
City, republic, or country	42.2	19.4	39.8	10.8
Gave positive replies to <i>direct</i> question on listening to Western radio	45.4	77.1	55.6	76.3
Gave positive replies to <i>indirect</i> question on listening to Western radio	71.4	88.9	79.4	89.5
Condemned Ann in <i>direct</i> question	17.3	29.6	20.4	45.2
Condemned Ann in <i>test</i> question	65.3	52.0	67.4	60.0
Condemned Pavel in <i>direct</i> question	76.9	55.2	67.4	46.9
Condemned Pavel in <i>test</i> question	61.2	60.0	59.3	40.7
Condemned Alexander in <i>direct</i> question	76.9	69.2	76.8	54.8
Condemned Alexander in <i>test</i> question	55.6	45.0	56.4	59.1
Condemned Yanis in <i>direct</i> question	84.2	60.0	80.8	58.6
Condemned Yanis in <i>test</i> question	49.5	29.0	50.8	44.0

distance obtains in appraisals of Paul, a conformist. Maximum distance between attitudes toward mass media heroes occurs among the educator (ideologist) type characterized by maximum inclusion in the mass media sphere of influence and the system of social relations. The pragmatists (by contrast) are characterized by minimum distance—1.3 times smaller than for the educator type. Politicians occupy an intermediate position once again. Such influences incorporate not only acceptance of the suggested social-reality models but active participation of the audience in their formation as well (Nadirashvili, 1979).

The disagreeing and distrusting are also characterized by greater activity in the production of mass information. The number of persons repeatedly addressing letters to the mass media editorial boards, for example, is 4 times greater among the disagreeing as compared to the agreeing and 2 times greater among the distrusting than among the trusting (Table 4). This may be because older groups in the audience more often address editorial boards in order to formulate a socially significant problem or to resolve definite questions, whereas young boys and girls are usually motivated by the desire to respond to mass media by stating their opinions on formulated problems. If someone is distrusted, he or she is not addressed to defend an opinion or, still less, to get help. Possibly here we have a case of *concordia discors* (disagreeing agreement), that is, agreement of like-minded persons who in general understand and explain the world similarly though they disagree in details. At the same time, a certain portion of the audience conducting dialogue with editorial boards is ready to defend its own alternative positions.

The results of both surveys demonstrate that the letters of usually disagreeing persons are published more often than those from the usually agreeing (the differences are 10% to 14%). Despite this fact, the disagreeing (both in 1985 and 1987) replied much more often than the agreeing that the results of addressing editorial boards did not meet their expectations (see Table 2). Letters that are published are often edited so that the position expressed in them gets distorted (the problem formulation is softened, certain arguments are omitted, or positive attitudes intensified). Distrusting persons are published less often than trusting ones (in both polls the difference is 6% to 10%). Among sociopsychological types, the most often published are the educators; on some problems the educators published exceeds the pragmatists by 14% to 17%.

Thus mass media ensure most favorable treatment for quite certain ideological positions, namely, for the positions that support or develop their

own. As a result, a *circulus vitiosus* prevails. It tends to exclude the disagreeing and distrusting audience including the readers, listeners, and spectators who address editorial boards with doubts (Manaev, 1989). More active contacts of disagreeing youths with mass media editorial boards represent not only the need for self-realization, or a challenge to traditional values, norms, and roles, but also aspiration for social orientation and adaption to the same values, norms, and roles.

Disillusionment caused by attempts of this kind was eloquently expressed by a Soviet hippy (a prominent group among disagreeing youth): "The more I knock at your door, the more I become sure that you are at home" (Fain, 1989, p. 9). Nearly one third of the disagreeing persons and nearly one half of the distrusting ones think that mass media express mainly the opinion of leaders and not the opinion of youth themselves. Among the agreeing and trusting, such replies were given by only 6% of the respondents (Table 2).

In this situation disagreeing youth are forced to search for other sources of information with alternative principles of social reality and audience interaction. One alternative is communication in informal groups of peers. Sociologists studying the problems of youth counterculture note that a "son" in modern society faces a peculiar triumvirate: The real father, an "institutionalized" father, and a *pachan*, the leader of an informal group to which he belongs (Davydov, 1980, p. 118). Crises of the first two forms of socialization inevitably lead to an increased role for the third form and become a strong factor in counterculture development. As confirmed by the 1987 data, young people disagreeing with and distrusting mass media are much more often leaders of communication (and, therefore, of other group activities) in informal groups. Differences with the agreeing and distrusting reaches 15% to 18% (Table 4). This tendency was not observed in 1985, which gives us a reason to believe that the influence of informal groups on youth socialization continues to grow. Redistribution of mass media influence takes place exactly in this direction.

Another and similarly traditional alternative information source (at least for the present generation) is Western radio. In recent years incorporation of youths into the Western radio sphere of influence has grown: In the 1985 poll Western radio was listened to by 63% of the respondents; in 1987 the share exceeded 85%. In 1985 one quarter of the listeners tuned in daily or at least several times a week and one third listened an hour or more; by 1987 these numbers had grown to 44% and 46% (Manaev, 1990). As for trust in Soviet mass media as compared to trust in Western radio, indicators show a negative correlation ($r = -.210$, $p = .001$). As compared to those who usually trust in

Table 5
Trust in Western Radio and Confidence in Soviet Mass Media (Percentages)

Trust in Western radio	Confidence in Soviet mass media		
	Usually trusting	Varying	Usually distrusting
Usually trusting	3.1	5.9	20.6
Varying	48.0	61.4	58.8
Usually distrusting	48.9	32.7	20.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

$r = .31, p = .001.$

mass media. the distrusting are 7 times more confident in Western radio (see Table 5). As for sociopsychological types, educators most agree with and trust in Soviet mass media but most disagree with and have least confidence in Western radio, whereas it is vice versa for pragmatists (politicians are most ambivalent once again).

In the years of perestroika, the activities of some national Soviet media (*Moscow News*, *Soviet Culture*, *Ogonjok*, youth programs of the Central TV) and local media (Estonian TV, the Byelorussian newspaper *Literature and Art*, the Georgian *Teacher's Gazette*) have undergone radical changes. General principles of the mass media system as a whole (the USSR has nearly 9,000 newspapers and mass magazines) remain practically the same, however, both in reflection of social reality and in interrelations with audiences. Information factors continue to stimulate disagreement. As a result, a considerable part of the audience gets actively drawn into the sphere of influence of alternative information sources. Why does this process continue to develop under the conditions of widening glasnost and democratization?

Social Reality as a Factor of Disagreement

As stated at the 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU, after April 1985 Soviet society underwent revolutionary transformation most clearly evidenced by glasnost: widening of "areas previously closed for criticism," and public discussion of "white zones in Soviet history" previously unknown to the public and, above all, to youth. These include phenomena such as Stalinist crimes, unprecedented corruption of those in power in the days of Brezhnev, catastrophic ecological situations in many regions of the country, bureaucratization of the activities of Komsomol and other public organizations, the forcing out of youth to the periphery of social life, and various other contradictions and conflicts in modern Soviet society. None found adequate

reflection and deep analysis in mass media during the stagnation period. Instead, Soviet press, radio, and TV "staged" social reality, enveloping readers, listeners, and spectators in a "play" of unprecedented scale. Even in that period, however, part of the audiences disagreed more or less with the mass media and distrusted them. In a representative survey conducted in 1980 among the employed population of the republic, replies of disagreement and distrust were given by 53.2% and 27% of respondents, respectively (Davydiuk, 1986). After April 1985, many social-reality models promoted by mass media became actually discredited, whereas models presented by alternative information sources became to a certain degree officially confirmed.

Though the level of openness has obviously increased, the institution of *glasnost* and related public attitudes have not yet undergone many considerable changes (Burtin, 1988). Such changes presuppose modification of the mass media position in the political system of the society. It is no secret that in the Soviet Union practically all the mass media are controlled by power bodies, first of all by the ruling party (not by its elected agencies but by the executive machinery). In fact, the Soviet audience faces "monopropaganda."

Suggestions of some delegates to the 19th party conference to reform mass media activities following the Bulgarian model (control by the party organizations rather than by the party apparatus) were not successful. Functioning of mass media in the monopropaganda mode inevitably leads to the vicious circle already described. Though it seems paradoxical, in the post-April 1985 period the process does not weaken but rather intensifies. *Glasnost* has considerably widened the possibilities of people to satisfy their need for information but has not satisfied their desire to express openly their own opinions.

Growth of activity and self-consciousness of traditional social subjects of the Soviet society (like study and work collectives and party and Komsomol organizations), as well as emergence of new subjects (such as self-governed public movements and organizations and various cooperatives), stimulated development of the need to express oneself publicly and to defend one's position. This need is very strong and obvious. It could not be delayed until old information-and-propaganda means acquired new contents. As a result, new means—the so-called parallel uncensored press—began to appear unofficially. In Byelorussia (BSSR) at the beginning of 1989 more than 10 such publications appeared, among which are *Novosti*, of the Byelorussian People's Front "Revival"; *Martyrolog*, of the historical and educational public society created in memory of the victims of Stalinism; *Edinstvo*, of the Confederation of Byelorussian Youth Organizations; *Byelorusskaya Tribuna*,

the independent information bulletin; *Studencheskaya Myslj*, magazine of the patriotic student organization "Dawn"; *Kontrol*, of the youth literary society "Local-Born"; and *Pravoslavnaya Myslj*, magazine of the Orthodox Church Youth.

These are not published typographically but stenciled or photocopied. Each edition varies from 2,000-3,000 to 20,000-30,000. The volume of some of them reaches two printed sheets. They are most often published monthly and are distributed at demonstrations and meetings of independent movements and organizations in informal communication groups. Whatever are the political, economic, and ideological principles of their publishers, under the conditions of monopropaganda, a parallel press inevitably becomes the alternative—with the definite negative reaction of the power bodies.

On March 31, as these publications began to win a mass audience (especially among youth), the Presidium of the BSSR Supreme Council adopted a decree declaring printing and distribution of uncensored publications to be an administrative offense:

Distribution of publications in violation of the established order . . . and containing materials that may affect state and public order, infringes the rights and lawful interests of citizens and causes a warning or fine of up to 50 rubles with confiscation of the publications.

Presence in publications of "material that may affect . . ." is not determined by court or an independent expert body, however, but by "administrative boards of executive committees of the local Soviets on the basis of reports drawn by officials of the militia" (*Sovetskaya Byelorussia*, April 3, 1989). Such concern of the power bodies for the "rights and lawful interests of citizens" does not promote the confidence of the mass media audience, which often tries to discredit competitors (*Vechernyj Minsk*, April 26, 1989).

The last decisive factor in the formation of negative attitude of youth toward mass media is the state of institutions of socialization: family, school, Komsomol, army, and production activities. The state of family socialization is depicted by data from the Soviet Children Fund, which indicate that in 1987 there were more than a half million children under state guardianship (nearly as many as in 1921 following three revolutions, world war, and terrible famine); only 5% were orphans (*Semja*, 1988). Materials of the February 1988 plenum of the CPSU Central Committee and of the All-Union Congress of Teachers indicate that secondary schools are in deep economic, organizational, and moral crisis—one that did not ease after the reforms of

1984. One indicator of the crisis is the level of crime among school children. According to data of the USSR Public Prosecutor's Office, in 1988 more than 110,000 students in the secondary and professional schools committed crimes (Katusev, 1989).

The current state of Komsomol is indicated by the dynamics of its membership, which grew constantly up to 1985, reaching 42 million persons. Since 1985 it has dropped nearly 6 million with decreases in the first year of 100,000, in the second year of 1 million, in the third year of 2.5 million. The position of the youth in production is reflected in the fact that the mean income of people under age 30 is only 70% that of the entire employed population. As a result, nearly half the budget of young families is formed by "donations" from parents (Rakovskaya, 1989). As for the army, physical and moral suppression to which youth is subjected because of *dedovshchina* (nearly unlimited power of older soldiers over new recruits) have pushed some young persons to suicide or crime. As noted by military officials themselves, the roots of barracks hooliganism are closely related to economic mistakes and to problems in the social sphere (Volkov, 1989).

Deep crises in the main institutions of socialization inevitably lead to crisis in the process of socialization itself. Possibly the most vivid indicator of this is the growth of youth crime and changes in its character. Data from the USSR Public Prosecutor's Office show that the majority of all Soviet criminals are under 30 years of age. In 1988, the number guilty of attempted murder increased among youth by 14.2%, aggravated assault by 8.7%, simple assault by 10.8%, robbery by 12%, and illegal trade by 19.2%. Every fourth crime was committed under the influence of alcohol (Katusev, 1989). Many independent youth movements and organizations do not find understanding or support from the control bodies and Komsomol and are even subjected to various pressures (Maljutin, 1988). Under such conditions, the drop of youth confidence in the main institutions of socialization inevitably spreads to the mass media and to whatever achievements of *glasnost* are demonstrated by them.

The Democratization View

Less socialized readers, listeners, and spectators—persons less adapted to existing social relations and to their reflection in the media—are a negative result of mass communication. Efforts should be made to bring these people back into the orbit of the system. Propaganda theory and practice were therefore concentrated on finding effective ways to ensure this return. We felt compelled to examine the positive results of mass communication, that is, the

social activity and self-consciousness of the audience assessed by its agreement with and trust in mass media. Indicators of activity and self-consciousness included participation in mass information production, consumption of information from alternative sources, leadership in informal communication groups, size of the home library, attitudes toward the law on individual production activities (one of the tangible signs of perestroika), assessment of social deviation among youth, and differences between personal and socionormative attitudes. The results were not only unexpected but quite stunning (Table 4).

Table 4 is constructed similarly to Table 2: Only the extreme groups on agreement and trust on the 1987 poll are included. As compared to those agreeing, the disagreeing more often address letters to media editorial boards, consume information from other sources, are leaders in informal communication, oppose individual production activities, and assess the real possibilities of their own influence at different levels of the social structure. Usually the difference is not just noticeable but twofold or threefold.

Disagreeing and distrusting persons, for example, are several times more often than the agreeing and trusting to admit that social deviations are spread among their acquaintances. According to Davydov (1980, p. 249),

The respective social figure initially drawn towards self-consciousness of a counter-culture type has been in history until the present time as "lumpen," a man of the social "bottom," product of democratization of the society as a whole as well as its separate classes and groups.

It was demonstrated above, however, that disagreeing persons are not, in general, social outsiders in the usual meaning of the term. Their nonadaptation is more internal than external. Besides, the majority of people, including young people, are not inclined to demonstrate their real vices.

It is much more probable, therefore, that the disagreeing audience just adequately assesses social reality, including the problems of youth subculture and counterculture. The opposite reaction is characteristic of agreeing, more adapted youth: They try not to notice social problems or to underestimate their scale. Exactly this reaction was considered correct in the Soviet Union during the stagnation period. After reconstruction of social life had begun, however, it was realized that social deviations are so deeply and strongly rooted in society that its revolutionary reconstruction is necessary.

The audience most under the mass media's sphere of influence has a clearly expressed bidimensional ideological position. It is demonstrated not

only by attitudes toward propaganda heroes but by attitudes toward Western radio as well. One dimension is socionormative (reaction of the type "this is accepted in society"), the other dimension is personal (reaction of the type "that is what I really think").

This split of consciousness is probably an objective phenomenon inherent in some degree in every person. It is grounded in the contradictions between the simultaneous needs of a person to be aware of his or her individuality and sociality. The degree of differences is minimal in a whole and harmonic personality, where the difference is merely a source of occasional frustration. When the split reaches a certain level, however, the individual becomes "divided," gets accustomed to this state, and cannot imagine a different condition—a phenomenon vividly described by George Orwell as "double-think" in his famous antiutopia (1989). According to Orwell, the scale and depth of double-think in public consciousness are indicators of totalitarianism. If double-think continues long enough, it not only deforms the personality but also deprives it of clarity, shape, ego, and—as expressed by T. S. Eliot (1971)—makes each individual "hollow" and empty.

Disagreement with widely accepted values and norms, as well as refusal to fulfill traditional social roles, stems from the need for self-identification and self-realization. Depending on a person's character, and creative abilities, the need may be expressed in extreme borderline forms—a psychological type found in all societies at all times. Perhaps it was best described by Dostoevsky in *Notes From the Underground*. "Oh, God!" exclaims his "underground" man.

What do I care about the laws of nature and arithmetic if, due to some reason, I dislike these laws and 'twice two is four'? Surely I shall not break the wall with my forehead if I have no strength to do it; but I shall not resign myself only because the wall is of stone and I have not enough strength. (Dostoevsky, 1956, p. 142)

Some social scientists ask whether the individual should identify with each of his or her social roles and consider their historically conventional set as fully exhausting personality or as identical to it. They reply quite definitely: "A certain dose of estrangement and an admixture of anomie are not only desirable but necessary and valuable in the present world" (Yinger, 1977, p. 843).

Less socialized and less agreeing youth deviate from the values, norms, and social roles of society. From the point of view of dialectics, however, deviation from a norm should itself be considered one of the forms of

expression of a contradiction and a source of development. A large and complex system like society attempting to dampen such contradictions inevitably becomes closed and loses internal stimuli and the ability to develop. When reflected in public and youth consciousness, the contradictions are articulated but do not change their objective nature. According to Grushin (1987, pp. 75-76),

Balance between positive and negative elements of public consciousness, from the viewpoint of relationship of consciousness to the historically specific features of a society, is an indispensable condition of the normal functioning of any society, a guarantee and at the same time an indicator of its relative stability—one of the important prerequisites for preservation of its historical definiteness.

The dialectics of system development, moreover, do not lead to inevitable replacement of the elements. Under the conditions providing for self-realization of negative elements, development does not become dysfunctional or destructive. On the contrary, it makes the system more flexible and stable and actually protects it from collapse.

The character and scale of such intrapersonality and intrasystem tendencies depend on actual socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions. The results of this study indicate that the disagreeing are insufficiently socialized, not relative to Soviet social life itself, but to its priority forms during stagnation. Socialization means not only acquaintance with social roles but also their rehearsal and assimilation. The desire to assimilate many of these roles is not inherent in everybody, however. The price to be paid, acceptance of certain ideological positions, does not suit many young people today. Many disagreeing and distrusting persons are not well informed politically (Table 2) because they prefer to be uninformed rather than misinformed (although those who fall under the influence of alternative information sources soon become well informed). For part of the audience, disagreement with and distrust in mass media is one manifestation of the Great Refusal (Marcuse, 1964), a consequence of deep crisis in the main institutions of socialization.

It follows that resistance to socialization (whether active or passive, conscious or not) can be an objective and progressive process. "Progress is ensured only by independent and self-reliant people able to win for themselves and for their cause a kind of spiritual extraterritoriality" (Mamardashvili, 1988). Attitudes toward mass media are definitely not exhausted by indicators like agreement-disagreement or socialization-nonsocialization. Even these two coordinates determine four types of attitudes (Figure 1).

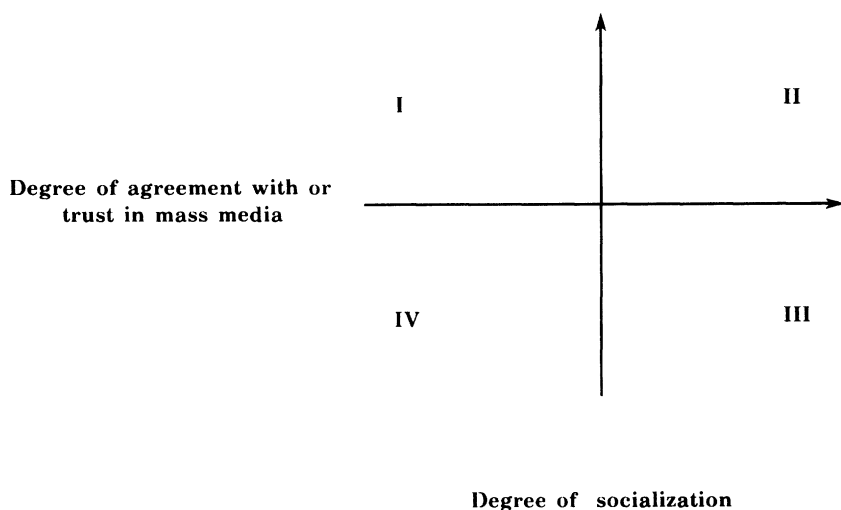


Figure 1: Types of audience attitudes toward mass media.

The educators or ideologists form mainly Type II and partially Type III. The pragmatists or technocrats are concentrated mainly in Type IV and partially in Type I. Politicians are mainly (and approximately equally) present in Types II and IV, which is why they manifest ambivalence by several indicators. Type III is probably more characteristic of older people, who are ideologically adapted but with low or unstable social positions.

Even the main sociopsychological types of audience demonstrate a high degree of heterogeneity in their social and ideological positions. Several subtypes may be distinguished among the educators and some of the politicians, that is, among the most agreeing and trusting part of the audience. The subtype that we conventionally call the *adepts* consists of successfully socialized youth who quite sincerely and by conviction accept conditions, values, and norms as well as their reflection in mass information. They are practically ignorant of alternative information sources. By contrast, the *cynics* are adapted not by conviction but in response to circumstances. For personal gain they may consume information from alternative sources. They are hollow people (ideologically and morally), the most affected by double-think. A third subtype, the *neophytes* (Type III), accepts social conditions, values, and norms mainly because they have not yet learned to appraise them

independently. This is the most unstable subtype—it is modified into other subtypes in the course of development.

At least three subtypes may be distinguished among the pragmatists and some of the politicians, that is, among the most disagreeing and distrusting audience. First, there are representatives of asocial or antisocial criminal groups. Second, there are pragmatists in the exact meaning of the word who think that public activities, propaganda, and politics are nuisances distracting them from real things: mastering their professions, managing their family and personal affairs, and spending their leisure time. (This type is now actively involved in cooperative and individual production activities.) Third, there are youth who quite consciously and by conviction do not accept the prevailing conditions, values, and norms and their reflection in mass information. This group at present provides the leaders and participants for many independent movements and political organizations. Their range is wide, from Pamiat to Demokraticheskyy Soiuz.

Undoubtedly, the social and ideological positions of these subtypes are differently incorporated in the democratization process. It is clear, however, that the disagreeing audience as a whole is not a negative result of mass communication. On the contrary, under the conditions of monopropaganda, disagreement itself objectively becomes a positive result because it stimulates development of new independent subjects and therefore the democratization of society.

In the future, the fraction of the mass audience usually agreeing with and trusting in the media will be narrowed. This tendency is grounded in nonreversible changes in the contents of ideological positions as indicated by the dynamics of development of the sociopsychological types. Under the conditions of widening glasnost and activation of public life, differentiation of mass consciousness into these types intensifies and crystallizes. According to the 1987 poll, pure types already totaled 13.7% and dominant types 76.7%. The most widespread type was still the educators, the most socialized, trusting, and affected by double-think, numbering 30.3%, up from 28.6% in 1985. The number of politicians increased from 18.7% to 24.7%, and the number of pragmatists (the least socialized, trusting in mass media, and affected by double-think) grew from 15.6% to 21.7% during the same period. The fastest growing types are the pragmatists (1.39 rate of growth) and the politicians (1.32), whereas the slowest growing group are the educators (1.06). If the dynamics of pure types are considered rather than the dominant ones, then the rate of the growth of pragmatists and politicians is still higher

(1.59 and 1.52, respectively), whereas the number of educators is actually lower. In other words, the number of young people most socially and ideologically adapted to reality and its reflection in mass media does not grow or even decreases.

This raises the question of the mass media's role in the political system, and of their social functions, because "the method of communication is not determined by mass media but rather by the structure of social relations" (White, 1984, p. 280). Monopropaganda results from the monocentricity of the entire system, including monoeconomics, monopolitics, monoideology, and monoculture, that is, monopoly of a certain form of existence of the social process and its subject. In the Soviet system mass media are organs of party, Komsomol committees, or Soviets of people's deputies; they supplement the functions of committees rather than execute their own. This is not just a consequence of personality cult, the epoch of "political voluntarism," or the stagnation period—it logically follows from the Leninist concept of the press. As Lenin wrote in 1901 in "What to Begin With?":

The role of a newspaper is not limited to dissemination of ideas only. . . . A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, but a collective organizer as well. In the latter respect it may be compared to scaffolding that, made around a house being built, marks its outline, facilitates cooperation between separate workers, and helps them distribute the work and see the general result. (p. 11)

The main idea is quite clear: A social democratic press must be an organ of the party, supplementing its functions. There is no doubt that the concept and the respective organizational efforts were extremely effective in the actual political and socioeconomic conditions of Russia in the early years of the 20th century. After the October Revolution and especially after the Civil War, when power was taken and consolidated, the situation changed radically. But neither the concept of the press nor the propaganda politics built around it changed greatly. After the decree on the press signed by Lenin on the day after the revolution that "temporarily" introduced censorship, prohibition of many alternative publications was in fact never abrogated. In June 1920, Korolenko wrote to People's Commissar on Education A. Lunacharsky: "Thanks to the 'freedom of the word' established now, the need to express openly one's views on the most important issues of public life is not satisfied. We, thinking differently, are forced to write reports for power bodies instead of articles" (Korolenko, 1920/1988, p. 199).

It is difficult to guess what new principles of mass media would have developed had Lenin lived another 20 years. In practice the concept continued to be developed after Lenin's death, in particular by ideologues like A. Zhdanov and M. Suslov. It is hardly surprising that not only Western specialists but also social scientists from socialist countries found that "the concept of mass information and propaganda accepted at present does not correspond to the changed social, political, and ideological requirement" (Szecskö, 1984, p. 7).

In the situation of monopropaganda, that is, in the presence of a single and actively functioning subject, the final purpose inevitably becomes preservation of the status quo (whatever purposes are declared formally). In the process of societal democratization, the criteria of mass media effectiveness must be changed. For mass media purposes, disagreement, distrust, and other ideological positions are a propaganda dysfunction. From the perspective of societal democratization, however, it is a natural state of affairs: Variety in the social environment is reflected and expressed in the variety of positions taken by individuals, social groups, and institutions. Thus the main conclusion of this study may be formulated. People have retained the ability and preparedness for perestroika, not thanks to, but in spite of mass media influence.

For this reason, the progressive disagreement and distrust of the mass media audience are in fact their real positive effect. In a free and open society, mass communication plays the role of the nervous system by promoting interconnection and interaction of various subjects or activities. Exactly this function was identified by Marx, who characterized a free press as "the embodiment of the people's trust in itself, speaking bonds connecting a separate person to the state and the whole world . . . a spiritual mirror where the people see itself" (1842, p. 66). Such understanding of the main social function of mass communications makes it clear that availability of a disagreeing audience (or, more exactly, an audience of different agreements) is not dysfunctional—it characterizes the freedom and openness of the society. Therefore efforts should not be directed toward return of the disagreeing into the orbit of the system but rather aimed at changing mass media structure and the principles of mass communication in the direction toward which disagreement is developing (with constitutionally defined limitations protecting the social system from destruction). A model of true democratic mass communication may be described as a universally accessible tribune where anyone can express his or her view—a kind of information market for public exchange of knowledge, values, and norms.

Transition from monoprofaganda to such a model is, of course, a long and complex problem of incorporating qualitative changes both in the political system and in public consciousness. It could develop in two directions. One is deideologization of the traditional system of mass media. The initial step could be qualitative changes in the structure and functions of editorial boards involving representatives of different audience groups (including representatives of new social subjects) with decisive vote. Their prerogative should be to define the general political line of the medium rather than solving specific journalistic problems.

The other new direction is development of parallel independent mass media. The principle here should be that each social subject with the status of a juridical person has the right to its own publication (or radio or television program) for the contents of which it is fully responsible. Here the initial step is the registration of the subjects themselves, granting them the rights of a juridical person (today refusal of the right of publication of different social subjects is often motivated by the argument that they are not juridical persons).

The results of this study and the conclusions reached do not exclude in principle the idea of the purpose-oriented approach to appraisal of media effectiveness, but they do introduce important qualifications. This approach does not work under monoprofaganda but is quite effective under socialist pluralism. The purposes of active and freely acting subjects realized through their own media are balanced by the purposes of other social subjects realized through other media. The disagreeing audience of one newspaper agrees with and actively supports the position of another newspaper, radio, or television program. Thus a mechanism of constraints and counterweights is formed—one of the major indicators of a democratic political system (Migranjan, 1988). The disagreeing audience in essence is no longer treated as deviating or as a potential or real subject of counterculture. It is rather considered a subject of the culture of a democratic society.

Notes

1. The author would like to express his appreciation to James Beniger for his assistance in revising this article and to Linnea Berg for typing the manuscript.
2. Empirical indicators of audience attitudes toward propaganda "heroes" and "antiheroes" are given in Table 4.
3. "The final aim of perestroika is to reveal fully the humanistic character of our system in all the decisive aspects—economical, socio-political and moral" (Gorbachev, 1987).

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