

## The International Scene

# *Glasnost*' in the Archives? Recent Developments on the Soviet Archival Scene

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**Abstract:** Soviet archivists and researchers are looking to a new spirit of historical awareness to penetrate and transform the functions and mandates of archival service. One manifestation of the new openness in Soviet society is the discussion and open criticism of the existing archival system that has been appearing in the Soviet press. The author traces that discussion and draws on extensive experience with Soviet archives to describe access, appraisal, and description policies and practices. If trends toward more *glasnost*' continue in Soviet society and its historical scholarship, they will require that the current discussion and criticism lead to fundamental restructuring of archival policies and practices.

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“[SOVIET] ARCHIVES ARE SUPPOSED to be recognized as a center of culture and science, but instead, during the years of stagnation [the Brezhnev era], they have turned into a bureaucratic organization with the main aim of ‘preserving’ agency secrets.” So begins a sharply worded open letter in May 1988 by the Scholarly Council of the university-level institute for training archivists, the Moscow State Historico-Archival Institute (*Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi istoriko-arkhivnyi institut*), known by its acronym MGIAI.<sup>1</sup> The letter, published in the newspaper *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, is symptomatic of the critical discussion of archival affairs that has been appearing in the Soviet press over the past two years, reflecting the new *glasnost'* that has been sweeping Soviet society.

In its letter the MGIAI Scholarly Council refers to the archives as “the service of societal memory.” In the Soviet Union, as in other countries, archives are in fact the guardians of the documentation of the society in which they serve. The organization and function of archives and the manner and ease with which they make their riches available to researchers have much to tell us about the nature and pretensions of the society they serve as well as about its history. If *glasnost'* is really going to penetrate Soviet society and if there is to be true *perestroika* of its intellectual underpinnings, there will necessarily be changes in archival policies and practices. This raises a series of questions.

For researchers, of course, the most obvious and practical question is, will there be more and better access to a broader range of documentation? In the Soviet context of restricted archives and restricted access to information, a second question is equally important. Will there be increased access

to appropriate finding aids and reference facilities that will permit researchers adequately to identify and to utilize archival materials? For archivists the question is, will a new spirit of historical awareness penetrate—and to what extent will it transform—the functions and mandates of the archival service?

There are broader questions for Soviet society. Will there be more openness about what documentation is selected for permanent archival preservation and how the archives operate? Will there be more honesty and open historical awareness in reporting and publishing archival documentation—even about the “blank spots” and more negative aspects of post-revolutionary developments?

Although developments necessarily move slowly in the archival realm, the recent discussion and open criticism of the existing system that has been appearing in the Soviet press gives reason to hope for change. One of the most hopeful aspects of these current developments is that much of the most significant current discussion of archives is taking place in a broad intellectual context and historical perspective. The assault on the Soviet archival administration and the cries for archival reform are being set forth as part of a major appeal for a reconsideration of the Soviet approach to history and historical thought.

The fact that some of the most outspoken appeals are coming from the major training ground for archivists in the USSR, the Moscow State Historico-Archival Institute, is significant. One of the leading figures in these developments is the historian Iurii Nikolaevich Afanas'ev, who was appointed rector of MGIAI at the end of 1986.<sup>2</sup> Since

<sup>1</sup>“Spasti sluzhbu sotsial'noi pamiati, Pis'mo v gazetu,” (Signed) Uchenyi soviet Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo istoriko-arkhivnogo instituta, *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 31 May 1988, 6.

<sup>2</sup>Afanas'ev, as a specialist trained in French historiography, worked for many years in the Institute of General History of the Academy of Sciences. With obvious strong Party credentials, in 1983 he was appointed to the editorial board of the main theoretical Party journal *Kommunist*. His article, “Proshloe i my,”

his appointment, Iurii Afanas'ev and his associates at MGIAI have brought the Soviet archival system to center stage as part of a relatively outspoken movement for *glasnost* in history and for restructuring (*perestroika*) the historical consciousness of society and the Soviet approach to historical research.

In his inaugural lecture as rector, excerpts from which were published in *Moscow News*, Afanas'ev set off the controversy and provided the intellectual framework by insisting that he "would primarily use the word 'stagnant' to characterize the state of domestic historical science which in many respects is lagging behind the present-day world level." He criticized historical writing in the USSR today for being "a servant of the lopsided 'propaganda of success'" and, what is more, as an "apology for whatever had already been achieved." He called upon historians to speed the process of "awakening from their slumbers," and to seek out "that energy of historical knowledge which is so necessary today for our society's comprehensive renewal."<sup>3</sup>

Afanas'ev himself had no experience as an archivist or in archival research prior to assuming the helm at MGIAI. The ideas he has been defending, however, have broad implications for the intellectual atmosphere and for the course of academic studies in the major training institute for archivists in the USSR. Asked about his goals as rector "for training a new generation of historians," Afanas'ev most appropriately replied in March 1987,

I think, for instance, that the preparation of specialists in the institute should be cardinally improved and enriched to such

an extent that we no longer turn out opportunists, 'priests' who recite ready-made truths, or pen-pushers who take a bureaucratic approach to archival work. We should be turning out real historians who enter the archives with a real understanding of the cultural meaning of their profession.<sup>4</sup>

Already he has sought some changes in the curriculum and has been insisting that future archivists must help society take a more honest look at its historical heritage.<sup>5</sup> Since taking over the direction of MGIAI, Afanas'ev has already succeeded in institutionalizing a forum for debate on a broad range of historical subjects, including the Stalinist period.

Afanas'ev's outspoken comments are especially significant in the present Soviet archival context, because they have provoked highly critical and defensive replies from the Soviet archival establishment. The high-level Main Archival Administration (*Glavarkhiv*) is attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR and those of the union republics—with quasi-ministerial status—as the agency of control and administration of state archives and ongoing agency records on all-union, union republic, and local levels. Following the publication of excerpts of Afanas'ev's inaugural address as rector, the editor of *Moscow News* received a phone call of protest from the director of

*Kommunist*, no. 14 (September 1985): 105-16, anticipates some of the views and attitudes he has been expressing on the subject of the role of history.

<sup>3</sup>Iu. N. Afanas'ev (Yuri Afanasyev), "Energy of Historical Knowledge," *Moscow News*, 1987, no. 2 (18-25 January 1987), 8-9. The article as printed constitutes excerpts from Afanas'ev's inaugural lecture.

<sup>4</sup>"S pozitsii pravdy i realizma," an interview with Iu. N. Afanas'ev by T. Men'shikova, *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, 21 March 1987, 3. An English version of this interview appears under the title "We Are Only Beginners," in *Socialist Register*, 1988, ed. Ralph Miliband, Leo Panitch, and John Saville (London: The Merlin Press, 1988), 79-89.

<sup>5</sup>See Afanas'ev's recent English-language article describing the MGIAI training program: Iu. N. Afanas'ev (Y. N. Afanasyev), "Professional Training of Archivists in the USSR," *Archivum* 34 (1988): 1-11. MGIAI is also the focus of a recent report by American archivist, Francis X. Blouin, Jr., "MGIAI and Archival Education in the USSR," *American Archivist* 51 (Fall 1988): 501-11. Blouin's visit was part of the initial exchange of specialists under the new bilateral archival commission.

Glavarkhiv, Fedor Mikhailovich Vaganov. Vaganov was offered a chance to reply.

Three months later in May 1987, a letter strongly criticizing Afanas'ev was delivered to the editor of *Moscow News*, sponsored by Vaganov, but signed by four Party historians from various institutions.<sup>6</sup> Having been given space to reply, Afanas'ev suggested that for him "the most important point in the group letter by [these] Party historians is the definitive statement of their nonacceptance of the very nature of *perestroika*." He concluded by again stressing that "the forthcoming renovation of socialist society certainly implies a fresh and utterly unprejudiced look at our national history."<sup>7</sup>

Six weeks later Vaganov responded more directly to the lengthy interview with Afanas'ev that had appeared in *Sovetskaia kul'tura* in March 1987.<sup>8</sup> Vaganov's bitter criticism of Afanas'ev in the same journal was also signed by A. N. Ponomarev, but it was accompanied in print by another outside expression of support for Afanas'ev.<sup>9</sup> A few days later, *Sovetskaia kul'tura* published an article by the historian V. [D.] Polikarpov, supporting Afanas'ev's commitment to more openness in historical research.<sup>10</sup> Polikarpov wrote of a high-level discussion session on Soviet historical science that had taken place at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in April 1987, where

Vaganov was apparently hissed off the platform. He quoted Vaganov's staunch opposition to the "new directions" in historical inquiry advocated by Afanas'ev: "The answers to the important questions of our Party history have been given scientifically," explained Vaganov, "and there is no need to rewrite that history . . . since it has already been written."<sup>11</sup> Three weeks later, the same paper published a full page of letters to the editor predominantly supporting Afanas'ev and *perestroika* in historical writing.<sup>12</sup>

The newspaper controversy involving Afanas'ev and Vaganov in 1987 only tangentially referred to archival problems. Yet obviously, Afanas'ev's call for a fundamental change in the spirit and freedom of historical inquiry as practiced in the USSR has important implications for archival practices. The controversy and related developments in the historical field during 1987 have been chronicled in several different articles abroad.<sup>13</sup> Discussion of historical

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>"Istoricheskaia pamiat'—rabochii faktor perestroiki: Pis'ma chitatelei," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 28 July 1987, 3.

<sup>13</sup>For a perceptive English-language account of some of the developments relating to the study of history, including the controversy spurred by Afanas'ev in the first half of 1987, see R. W. Davies, "Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution: The First Phase," *Socialist Register*, 1988: 37-78. See also the more journalistic (and less well-documented) two-part article by Dev Murarka, "Soviet History I: Recovering the Buried Stalin Years," *The Nation*, 24 October 1987, 447-51; and "Soviet History II: A New Revolution in Consciousness," *The Nation*, 31 October 1987, 486-90. A longer chronicle covers many of these same developments in more detail: Stephen Wheatcroft, "Unleashing the Energy of History, Mentioning the Unmentionable, and Restructuring Soviet Historical Awareness: Moscow, 1987," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 1, no. 1 (1987): 85-132 (for developments surrounding Afanas'ev, see especially 105-10, and 118-25). Wheatcroft's sequel follows developments to the end of 1987, but with less attention to Afanas'ev: "Steadying the Energy of History and Probing the Limits of Glasnost": Moscow July to December 1987," *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 1, no. 2 (1987): 57-114. See also the somewhat more politically-oriented account by Thomas

<sup>6</sup>P. Soboleva, A. Nosov, L. Shirikov, and S. Murashov, "Apropos of Yu. Afanasyev's article," *Moscow News*, 1987, no. 19 (17 May), 11, 13.

<sup>7</sup>Iu. N. Afanas'ev (Yuri Afanasyev), "Talking About the Past, We Must Keep the Future of Socialism in Mind," *Moscow News*, 1987, no. 19 (17 May), 11, 13.

<sup>8</sup>"S pozitsii pravdy i realizma," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 21 March 1987, 3.

<sup>9</sup>F. M. Vaganov and A. N. Ponomarev, "Ne idealizirovat', no i ne dramatizirovat'. . .," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 4 July 1987, 6. The critical reply supporting Afanas'ev's ideas appeared on the same page: Genrikh Volkov, "Byt' li nam mankurtami?"

<sup>10</sup>V. [D.] Polikarpov, "My rodом iz Oktiabria: O 'diskussiiakh' minuvshikh let," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 9 July 1987, 3.



problems in the Soviet press has continued in 1988 with Afanas'ev strengthening his demands for a more open approach to historical inquiry and for restructuring historical awareness within the broader society. Considerable discussion has also focused on more specific archival problems, starting in 1987 and continuing through 1988.

## Archival Reform

Most important in terms of immediate practical archival developments, Afanas'ev and his MGIAI associates have been directly involved in the ongoing discussion of a projected new law governing Soviet archives. A March 1988 article in *Literaturnaia gazeta* was the first public mention of what had hitherto apparently been relatively "secret discussion" of the projected major reform of archival administration. That article, written by a specialist in the Glavarkhiv research institute, VNIIDAD, however, provides no clues to the most significant points under discussion.<sup>14</sup>

More details of the reform became public in early June 1988 in connection with the celebration of the seventy-year anniversary of Lenin's initial decree on archival reorganization. That decree, signed on 1 June 1918, set the outlines of Soviet archival organization and development; and because it involved the sacred name of Lenin, it has provided an ideological—and one might almost add, mythological—jus-

tification for the course of those developments during the subsequent seventy years.<sup>15</sup>

In answer to the earlier accusation that all discussion of the new archival law was being carried on in secret, *Literaturnaia gazeta* printed a letter from an MGIAI professor, affirming the extent to which MGIAI staff had been involved in discussion of the draft law and recommending that more open discussion of the law is still needed. Coinciding with the anniversary on 1 June, the editor noted that he had received a reply (not to be published) from Glavarkhiv director Vaganov to the effect that the new law was being discussed in appropriate archival circles. "What is all this about 'secret talks,'" Vaganov queried, "if the projected law was discussed in 3,273 archivist labor collectives, and when most of them suggested corrections?"<sup>16</sup>

At the end of May 1988, MGIAI took a collective stand against the proposed new law with a strongly-worded letter from its Scholarly Council to the newspaper *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, expressing its concerns "about the state of archival affairs in the country." With a reference back to the Lenin archival decree, the council lamented the present course of archival developments, as the opening quote of this article suggests. The letter was sharply critical of the "dangerous path involved" in the proposed transfer of the archival administration to the Ministry of Justice (MINIuST), which was announced in early 1988 for several union republics: "For researchers and for the scholarly work of the archives themselves,

Sherlock, "Politics and History under Gorbachev," *Problems of Communism* 37, no. 3-4 (May-August 1988): 16-42, and the recent insightful analysis by Mark von Hagen, "History and Politics under Gorbachev: Professional Autonomy and Democratization," *The Harriman Institute Forum* 1, no. 11 (November 1988).

<sup>14</sup>Er. Khan-Pira, "Zakon gotovitsia v sekrete?" *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 11 (16 March 1988), 2. Some of my remarks here are based on discussion of this reform with Professor Afanas'ev during a visit to MGIAI in March 1988.

<sup>15</sup>See Grimsted, "Lenin's Archival Decree of 1918: The Bolshevik Legacy for Soviet Archival Theory and Practice," *American Archivist* 45 (Fall 1982): 429-43.

<sup>16</sup>The quotes from Vaganov appear in an editor's note introducing the article by B. Ilizarov: "Komy vygodny tainy. Trevoznye voprosy po povodu proekta Zakona o gosarkhiva," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 22 (1 June 1988): 7. The editor explains that although Ilizarov had not seen Vaganov's letter, his letter serves as a reply.

[this] would be most inauspicious." The authors recalled the period from 1938 to 1960 when the state archives were under the NKVD (later MVD), and they suffered from "unqualified administrators, separation of the archives from scholarship, and unfounded restrictions on access to documents." The letter asked rhetorically, "What can MINiUST—the poorest agency in the country—do to improve material-technical archival preservation?" The council recognized the need "for fundamental root reforms" in Glavarkhiv, and they proposed a high-level special council on archives. Rather than the "cosmetic reforms" that are underway for an "ineffective system," they called for decisive *perestroika* for "the service of social memory—the archives of the USSR."<sup>17</sup>

Most major Soviet newspapers carried some tribute to the anniversary of Lenin's decree, which was the occasion for an all-union archival conference and many exhibits throughout the country under Glavarkhiv auspices. A *Pravda* article highlighted an "unsuccessful interview" with Vaganov, in which he provided only a "monologue" with statistics about Glavarkhiv "achievements under his direction." The correspondent reported he was left "completely without an answer to questions about any positive steps towards *perestroika* in archival affairs." Other archivists and historians at the conference were openly, and often bitterly, critical of Glavarkhiv's continued resistance to archival access and to the more open publication of historical documentation. Several leading Soviet historians involved were quoted by the *Pravda* correspondent complaining that "special-

ists well acquainted with archival affairs for all of their lives have not been consulted" about archival reform.<sup>18</sup>

In a much more open interview published in *Izvestiia* the following day, A. I. Chugunov, the director of the Glavarkhiv research institute, VNIIDAD, voiced strong opposition to several elements in the draft archival law. Chugunov particularly emphasized the prospective negative effects of the proposed transfer of the archival administration to the Ministry of Justice.<sup>19</sup>

Recent issues of the official Soviet archival journal, *Sovetskie arkhivy*, have had several articles dedicated to *perestroika* in archival affairs, with reports on various meetings and developments in selected state archives. In contrast to the more revealing discussion of archival problems in the press, these perfunctory reports are principally devoted to discussion under way about "perfecting the organization of labor," including the "social development of collectives," better handling of the functions of planning, and the fulfillment of labor norms. There are occasional references to efforts to improve "quality control," such as the suggestion that reports on cataloging achievements might need to take into account "what items are being catalogued" instead of only "counting the number of cards produced and saved." There is no mention whatsoever of any basic reform of Glavarkhiv functions or of the widespread discussion under way about the law for archival reform.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup>V. Molchanov, "Dostup ogranichen. Netraditsionnye razmyshleniia v sviazi s iubil'cem," *Pravda*, 1 June 1988, 4. A short summary of the article under the title "Access Restricted," appears in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 40, no. 22 (1988): 22-23.

<sup>19</sup>R. Armeev, "Bez arkhivov net istorii," *Izvestiia*, 2 June 1988, 4.

<sup>20</sup>See most especially the report, "Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie rukovodiashchikh rabotnikov i spetsialistov GAS SSSR po sovershenstvovaniiu organizatsii truda v usloviakh perestroiki (Vypolniaia resheniia XXVII s"ezda KPSS)," *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1988, no. 2: 3-29; and the series of shorter reports under the

<sup>17</sup>"Spasti sluzhbu sotsial'noi pamiati, Pis'mo v gazetu," (Signed) Uchenyi soviet Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo istoriko-arkhivnogo instituta, *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 31 May 1988, 6. See also the supporting comments in answer to this article by A. Prokopenko, "Dela arkhivnye . . .," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 13 August 1988, 7.

The May-June 1988 issue, which was dedicated to the anniversary of the Lenin archival decree, carried a lead article by Glavarkhiv director Vaganov surveying Glavarkhiv achievements and goals for improvement.<sup>21</sup> Although improvements suggested include the need for "new contemporary buildings to preserve documentation of the State Archival Fond" and for improving records management and appraisal techniques aimed at "augmenting the GAF with new documents," there was no mention of improving the archival reference system. And while Vaganov boasted of "more than two thousand documentary exhibits celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution" and the publication of "some thirty collections of documents with a total press run of 400,000 copies," no statistics were given for the decreased output of finding aids.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Vaganov's glowing reports on Glavarkhiv achievements, Afanas'ev expressed more of his own opinions in a strongly worded article a few weeks later entitled "*Perestroika* and Historical Knowledge."<sup>23</sup> In this article, he went even

further than in earlier pronouncements in his call for renewed attention to open historical research in order to overcome what he termed the "social identity crisis" produced by "the total falsification of our history" during the Stalin and Brezhnev years. Afanas'ev, to an extent not seen in any of his earlier articles on history, appealed for "the need to resolve questions of archives . . . with the aim of restoring history to a scientific basis." He alluded to the active discussion of archival reform, writing that "There is still no law which regulates archival affairs in our country." "There is a project for such a law," he complained, "which has been worked over in such a way that it does not extend access to archives but, rather on the contrary, makes it more difficult."<sup>24</sup> This latest call by Afanas'ev for restructuring in historical writing and historical perceptions has produced intense criticism and further discussion in *Pravda*, but so far the published discussion has centered on basic historical problems and perceptions, rather than on archives.<sup>25</sup>

During his tour of the United States in October 1988, Afanas'ev frequently addressed himself to continuing archival restrictions and the need for a new archival law.<sup>26</sup> Soviet professional historians and

same section title "Vypolniaia resheniia XXVII s"ezda KPSS," *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1988, no. 3: 57-76. A subsequent report in the fourth issue for 1988 carries references to some declassification measures (*Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1988, no. 4: 5-6).

<sup>21</sup>F. M. Vaganov, "Zhiznennost' leninskikh print-sipov arkhivnogo stroitel'stva," *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1988, no. 3: 3-11.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 6-7, 8. A few of the points mentioned by Vaganov are repeated in his English-language article in the *American Archivist* 51 (Fall 1988): 481-485. It is worth noting that the same issue of *Sovetskie arkhivy* with Vaganov's article also carries an article by Frank G. Burke describing the U.S. National Archives in the context of the American archival organization.

<sup>23</sup>Iurii Afanas'ev, "Perestroika i istoricheskoe znanie," *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, no. 24 (17 June 1988): 2-3, 8-9. See the somewhat abridged version of Afanas'ev's article reprinted in a volume of articles under his editorship, *Perestroika: Glasnost', demokratiia, sotsializma: Inogo ne dano*, ed. Iu. A. Afanas'ev (Moscow: "Progress," 1988), 491-506. The con-

cluding paragraph on archives quoted above appears on p. 506.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Pobisk Kuznetsov, "Voprosy istoriku: O stat'e Iu. N. Afanas'eva 'Perestroika i istoricheskoe znanie,'" *Pravda*, 25 June 1988, 3 (an English translation, "Questions to a Historian," appears in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Daily Report*, *FBIS*, 11 July 1988, 71-74). See Afanas'ev's reply: Iu. N. Afanas'ev, "Otvety istorika," *Pravda*, 26 July 1988, 3, followed by further editorial comment (an English translation, "Answers of a Historian," appears in *FBIS*, 27 July 1988, 40-44). See also the reply of Igor' Dedkov, political observer of *Kommunist* and Otto Latsis, first deputy chief editor of *Kommunist*, "Put' vybran," *Pravda*, 31 July 1988, 3 (an English translation appears in *FBIS*, 3 August 1988, 54).

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, the report of his 3 November

archivists alike are understandably perturbed to have such outspoken criticism of the Soviet practice of history and archival affairs coming from a historian who has never been involved in archival research. Yet, as is apparent in the frank comments in the Soviet press, many historians and archivists are following his lead in calling for more *glasnost'* and *perestroika* in the archives as well as in history.

As of the fall of 1988, the proposal for moving Glavarkhiv to the Ministry of Justice has been forestalled, and the high-level advisory council on archives recommended by MGIAI is being established. Controversy continues over the much-needed reform of the Soviet archival system, but a new law has yet to be enacted. Discussion in the press during the last two years has focused on several specific archival subjects where reform obviously is badly needed.

### Documentary Publications

The Glavarkhiv attitude towards documentary publications has been an important element in recent discussions of the Soviet archival scene, which is understandable given the high priority Soviet archival authorities place on documentary publications. Following Party political imperatives, these programs are considered one of the most important functions of Soviet archives, with the aim of making highly selected documents available to the public, and usually with recognizable political restraints and ideological objectives. As a spinoff of the recent discussion of more *glasnost'* in history, there have been many calls for more open, scholarly, and historically revealing publication of documents.

"How many valuable publications could be achieved, if only . . . the publication function were in first place and not last . . . If only publications were strictly scholarly, and not falsifying, selective, and euphemistically termed 'popular science' (*nauchno-popularnyi*)," complained one critic of the present system.<sup>27</sup>

Formal discussion of cooperative efforts in documentary publications between historians in the Academy of Sciences and Glavarkhiv were a high priority in an open meeting at the Division of History of the Academy of Sciences in December 1986, and many critical comments were aired. Principal speeches by Glavarkhiv director Vaganov and by the president of the Archeographic Commission of the Academy, Sigurd Ottovich Shmidt, were followed by many other formal commentaries and lengthy discussion. But many of the historians attending were dubious about the possibility of concrete results.<sup>28</sup> Their doubts were echoed a year later in an open letter by the Scholarly Council of MGIAI to the newspaper, *Sovetskaia kul'tura*: "For the three years of *perestroika*, . . . not a single document has been published on Glavarkhiv's initiative, nor a single documentary collection enlightening themes of the blemishes of our history."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup>"Arkhivy i perestroika," signed pseudonymously, Asaf Litovskii, *Tochka zreniia* (Moscow), no. 4 (September-October 1987), reprinted in *Arkhiv Samizdata* (Munich) 6185, no. 16 (15 April 1988): 36.

<sup>28</sup>See "Sovmestnoe zasedanie biuro Otdeleniia istorii AN SSSR i kollegii Glavarkhiva SSSR," *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1987, no. 2: 107-09. See also the shorter comments on the meeting in the "Kronika" section of *Voprosy istorii*, 1987, no. 2: 128-29. On the basis of personal reports to the present author by historians attending the meeting, it would appear that some of the comments by historians, particularly on problems of access and reference facilities, were much more critical than the published reports indicate.

<sup>29</sup>Uchenyi soviet MGIAI, "Spasti sluzhbu sotsial'noi pamiati," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 31 May 1988, 6. See also the supportive comments in answer to this article by A. Prokopenko, "Dela arkhivnye . . .," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 13 August 1988, 7.

New York press conference, "Iurii Afanas'ev ob uniichtozhenii dokumentov v sovetskikh arkhivakh," in *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 4 November 1988, 1. He made similar statements regarding archives in several earlier presentations, including his talk at the Kennan Institute in Washington, DC, 6 October 1988.

Comments by Glavarkhiv director Vaganov give little hope of improvement in the official attitude towards documentary publications. In a public pronouncement quoted in *Pravda* in June 1988, he dismissed the idea advanced by historians of reviving the journal, *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, as an outlet for the scholarly publication of historical documents. When asked about the possible publication of wartime orders of the Supreme Commander in Chief during World War II, as an example proposed by several historians, Vaganov retorted, "What interest would there be in that? A great deal has already been done as it is to demean the significance of our great Victory over fascism."<sup>30</sup> Such attitudes would preclude the type of comprehensive microfilm publication projects that have been undertaken by the National Archives in the United States and other countries in Western Europe in an effort to make complete runs of archival documents more widely available to the public.

### Access

For researchers the first indication of *glasnost* in the archives would be increasing access to archival materials. In the Soviet context, however, access to archives involves many complicating factors. Many of the factors that adversely affect access to archives, especially for foreigners, are not really archival matters at all. Soviet archivists often react defensively to criticism of their system, but they do not recognize that many attributes of the relatively closed society and the centralized bureaucratic controls on many aspects of life in the USSR contribute to the negative impression West-

ern researchers have of access to Soviet archives.<sup>31</sup>

There has been no improvement, for example, in the most basic difficulty of traveling to the Soviet Union. A foreigner cannot simply book a seat on a train or plane and arrive—as can be done in most of the Western world—without complicated prior arrangements and approvals. Even if a prospective researcher could travel freely to Moscow and find the door to the archives, it would be impossible to get by the militia guard inside the entrance. A foreign scholar cannot, any more than his Soviet colleague, apply directly to an archives for admission, as one can in most countries. All researchers must have the official sponsorship of an appropriate Soviet institution.<sup>32</sup> In the case of state archives, application by foreigners must be made through the foreign office of the Main Archival Administration (*Glavarkhiv*) in Moscow, even for research in archives in the non-Russian republics. The complicated and highly bureaucratized application procedure often takes three months, and for foreigners, it is normally limited to those on official academic exchange programs.

An initial step in the acceptance process is approval of the proposed subject of research. In other words, it is often not just an archival matter of keeping certain files closed, but rather a broader attempt to con-

<sup>31</sup>The contrasting perspectives involved are exemplified by a Soviet critical response to my remarks on the subject of access: V. I. Vialikov, "O nekotorykh metodologicheskikh voprosakh v stat'e P. K. Grimsted (SShA) 'Mestnoe arkhivnoe stroitel'stvo v SSSR,'" in *Voprosy kritiki metodologii i teorii burzhuaznogo arkhivovedeniia. Sbornik statei*, ed. N. P. Krasavchenko and M. S. Selezneva (Moscow: MGIAI, 1980), 61-71. Vialikov is commenting specifically on a paragraph regarding the comparative ease of access to archives in the USA and the USSR in my article "Regional Archival Development in the USSR: Soviet Standards and National Documentary Legacies," *American Archivist* 36 (January 1973): 43-66.

<sup>32</sup>Application for a foreigner must be made on his behalf by the Soviet institution officially hosting his stay in the USSR.

<sup>30</sup>Quoted in "Dostup ogranichen," *Pravda*, 1 June 1988, 4. A short summary of the article, under the title "Access Restricted," appears in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 40, no. 22 (1988): 22-23.



trol subjects on which archival research is permitted. Although authority for control of access theoretically rests with the archives, in practice the matter may already have been decided before the question even reaches archival administrators.

As to the research function of archives in general, the first priority of the archives is to answer specific inquiries and to make needed documents available to Soviet state and Party agencies. A second priority is supposedly to facilitate officially sanctioned projects being undertaken by authorized researchers sponsored by Soviet research institutions. But Soviet scholars have been complaining bitterly that, despite all the necessary requests from their research institutes, they are often not being given access to all the documents they seek.

Soviet authorities have never accepted the idea of individual archival research as a legalized public right, as it is in many Western countries. In sharp contrast to archives in most Western countries, Soviet state archives are not accessible to unaffiliated individuals for private research interests. In 1964 the Glavarkhiv director, in an article published in a British archival journal, claimed that "the use of documents preserved in the state archives is completely democratic" and that "any citizen, irrespective of his social position or his place of work or education, can study in the state archives."<sup>33</sup> But the fact that Soviet and foreign scholars alike must still apply with official authorization papers from their sponsoring Soviet institution, must have their research topic approved in advance, and that once admitted they are not free to explore on their own, negates such a claim and implies a level of control that is not found in Western countries.

Nevertheless, access to Soviet archives

and manuscript repositories for foreign, as well as Soviet researchers, has gradually improved since 1956, corresponding to the increased emphasis on archival work within the Soviet research establishment.<sup>34</sup> In 1988 Glavarkhiv proudly cited statistics that "50,000 Soviet and 250 foreign researchers work each year in the reading rooms of state archives . . . [and they] receive close to a million and a half file units."<sup>35</sup> However, serious restraints on access and working conditions remain, especially for foreigners. Now, in many cases, the question is not simply access *per se*, but the quality of access.

Although it has been well known that specific restrictions were placed on certain categories of records, earlier there was no open discussion of what materials were involved. As an example of the new openness, in May 1987 an article in the official newspaper *Izvestiia* entitled "Archives Lift Restrictions" declared that numerous groups of hitherto restricted records were now being opened for research.<sup>36</sup> The article quoted a figure of more than 1,109,000 units (*dela*) that were restricted, over 750,000 of which are now being opened to researchers, and many specific record groups are named. The concluding paragraph suggested that "this is only the beginning." In July 1987 the director of the Historico-Archival Division of the General Staff gave an interview announcing recent directives for opening military records to researchers. As reported in *Izvestiia*, the director emphasized increased access to documentation from World War II.<sup>37</sup> Yet prominent Soviet historians com-

<sup>34</sup>The move toward opening Soviet archives in the mid-1950s is revealed, for example, in an article by L. I. Iakovlev, "Zadachi sovetskikh arkhivnykh uchrezhdenii v svete reshenii XX s'ezda KPSS," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1956, no. 3: 171-78.

<sup>35</sup>Vaganov, "Zhiznennost' leninskikh printsipov arkhivnogo stroitel'stva," *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1988, no. 3: 8, 9.

<sup>36</sup>I. Andreev, "Arkhivy snimaiut ogranicheniia," *Izvestiia*, 23 May 1987, 3.

<sup>37</sup>V. Shcherban', "Arkhivy stali dostupnec," *Iz-*

<sup>33</sup>G. A. Belov, "The Organization of the Archive System in the USSR," *Archives* 6 (October 1964): 219-20.

plain that they are still not being given the documents they seek from the Civil War in 1919.<sup>38</sup>

A year later, in June 1988, Vaganov quoted rather different, and again unverifiable, figures for restricted files. Asked how many fonds were closed to researchers, he answered the question only in terms of open file units, "Out of 340 million units [in state archives], 320 million are open, please, please."<sup>39</sup> Vaganov reported this same figure in a meeting of Glavarkhiv leaders later in the summer, where there were further reports of restrictions lifted from fonds in various central archives under Glavarkhiv.<sup>40</sup> The archival journal, *Sovetskie arkhivy*, recently reported that during 1987-88, the principal all-union archives for postrevolutionary state records, the Central State Archive of the October Revolution of the USSR, or TsGAOR SSSR, has removed restrictions from 318,000 file units and had declassified over 156,000 files. Mention was made of declassification of prerevolutionary police records and major fonds from the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>41</sup> This progress in declassification was also confirmed in a newspaper report published in September in *Sovetskaia kul'tura*.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, none of the Glavarkhiv figures include holdings in Communist Party, KGB, Foreign Ministry, and other archives not subject to Glavarkhiv. But how can Glavarkhiv state such figures, if archivists

themselves do not know what files are opened or closed? As a senior archivist explained the situation in one state archives in June 1988,

Archival workers have no interest in opening fonds because it is preferable for them to keep them 'secret,' since work with them brings fifteen percent higher pay. Furthermore, we archivists do not always know which fonds are open because there are no lists of accessible files. There are still no established guides to fonds. They forget that archives are scientific centers. In our case, even the scientific-methods section was liquidated. Thus archivists are left with only one function—to preserve.<sup>43</sup>

Although critics often point to preservation as the only function left for Soviet archives, the ability of many Soviet repositories to perform this function adequately is now being called into question in the wake of the disastrous fire that swept through the Leningrad Library of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in February 1988.<sup>44</sup> The lack of adequate care in preservation has been pointed out in numerous press reports about the substandard conditions of archival materials in other buildings of the Academy of Sciences, such as Pushkin House (*Pushkinskii dom*), which houses the rich collections of the Institute of Literature (IRLI) in Leningrad<sup>45</sup> and the buildings of the Gor'kii Institute of World Literature (IMIL) in Moscow.<sup>46</sup> There have

*vestiia*, 20 July 1987, 1. The article chronicles an interview with Lieutenant Colonel I. Venkov, director of the Historico-Archival Division of the General Staff.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, the complaint of the prominent historian V. D. Polikarpov, "Dostup ogranichen," as summarized in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 40, no. 22 (1988): 22.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in "Dostup ogranichen," *Pravda*, 1 June 1988, 4.

<sup>40</sup>A. Mosesov, "Arkhiy raskryvaiut tainy," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 29 September 1988, 2.

<sup>41</sup>"Arkhiynye uchrezhdeniia strany na puti uskorenii i perestroiki," *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1988, no. 4: 5-6.

<sup>42</sup>Mosesov, "Arkhiy raskryvaiut tainy," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 29 September 1988, 2.

<sup>43</sup>"Dostup ogranichen," *Pravda*, 1 June 1988, 4. The *Pravda* correspondent named Ia. I. Aleksandrov as the source of this quotation.

<sup>44</sup>See the summary of scattered Soviet press comments by Vera Tolz, "Poor Storage of Books and Inaccessibility of Archives Discussed in Soviet Press," *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 180/88 (28 April 1988): 1-6.

<sup>45</sup>See D. Likhachev, "Rukopisi Pushkina pod ugorozoi," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 21 January 1986, 6; and the reply, V. Poznin, "Otchet sobstvennogo korrespondenta 'Sovetskoi kul'tury' po Leningradu," "Pis'ma chitatelei," and "Kommentarii redaktsii," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 13 May 1986, 6.

<sup>46</sup>Iu. B. Vipser, L. M. Leonov, N. I. Tol'stoi et

also been numerous examples of poor preservation in state archives under Glavarkhiv, including allegations of extensive mold in the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts (TsGADA) in Moscow and deteriorating conditions of early Soviet films stored in the main Central State Archive of Film and Photographic Documents (TsGAKFD SSSR) in Krasnogorsk.<sup>47</sup> Devastating fires hit the state *oblast'* (district) archives in Saratov in 1972 and in Kostroma in 1982 (six months before the archives was scheduled to move to a new building), but it is only recently that archival officials have been willing to admit to such problems.<sup>48</sup>

The extent to which announced *glasnost'* policies of lifting restrictions will affect access for foreign researchers remains to be seen, but the heightened expectations are not yet being realized. Some scholars taking part in U. S. and Canadian exchange programs who were working in archives and manuscript repositories during the academic year 1987-88 reported highly satisfactory archival research experiences. And some researchers were being given access to materials that would not have been possible earlier. But other foreign researchers were reporting as many serious problems in bureaucratic delays, and in lack of access to specific fonds and reference facilities as they had earlier. One group of six American professors and graduate students working in Moscow during 1987-88 were so frustrated about their research experience in state archives as a result of inadequate access to materials and almost total lack of access to finding aids that they presented a letter of complaint to President Ronald Reagan during his visit to Moscow at the end of May 1988.<sup>49</sup>

Another senior American professor, frustrated by his attempts at access to the materials he needed, related his tale of archival woe to the weekly newspaper *Moscow News*. The resulting open letter to the editor, published in late August 1988, goes further than any Soviet published discussion to date in exposing the problems of foreign researchers in Soviet archives.<sup>50</sup> In this case, Professor Donald Raleigh, who was in Moscow for a two-month visit in early summer 1988, had been promised that the voluminous materials he had requested from Saratov would be ready for him when he arrived in Moscow. (Direct access to the local *oblast'* state archives in Saratov has been regularly refused, first, because the city remains officially closed to foreigners, and, second, because a fire in the Saratov archives in 1972 exacerbated research problems.) However, instead of finding the specific materials he had requested, Raleigh found nothing but frustrations after his arrival. Finally, he reported in the letter printed in *Moscow News*, "after a month-long wait, [he received] about ten files, only three of which [were] relevant to [his] research."<sup>51</sup>

Inadequate microfilming facilities have been among the loudest complaints of foreign researchers, who are accustomed to ordering research microfilm at will in other state archives throughout the world. The published letter describes Raleigh's problems in ordering microfilms from Soviet state archives, a situation which he rightfully describes as "nothing short of absurd."

For instance, I ordered microfilm copies of 140 pages of documents from the Main

al., "Nevidimyi miru pozhar. O sud'be nashikh bibliotek i arkhivov," *Izvestiia*, 14 April 1988, 6.

<sup>47</sup>Quoted in *Pravda*, 1 June 1988, 4.

<sup>48</sup>I have not seen any press reports on either fire, but archival officials were willing to discuss the results with me recently.

<sup>49</sup>A copy of this letter, dated 30 May 1988, together

with other reports of archival difficulties, was submitted to the International Research and Exchanges Board.

<sup>50</sup>See "The Trials and Tribulations of Professor Raleigh: A letter a comment," *Moscow News*, no. 33, (21-28 August 1988), 2.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

Archival Administration. The fact that it took them 18 months to fulfill my order didn't surprise me in the least. But I was extremely surprised when I discovered that only half of the material was what I needed; the other half was something entirely different than what I had ordered. The Main Archival Administration apologized explaining that the person who had actually been doing the filming had had some problems with her spectacles and she got a little mixed-up. . . .<sup>52</sup>

In an effort to highlight the problems, the *Moscow News* editor appended a revealing commentary by a prominent Soviet historian, who contrasted his favorable research experiences in American archives with those experienced by the foreign scholar in the USSR. Nikolai Nikolaevich Bolkhovitinov, a senior historian in the Institute of General History of the Academy of Sciences, and corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, has had among the widest experience of any Soviet historians doing research in American archives. He has good reason to commiserate with the "unenviable situation" of the foreign scholar in Soviet archives. "Unfortunately," Bolkhovitinov explained, "the situation is all too familiar to us, Soviet scholars, whose lot is but a trifle easier." In terms of microfilm orders, Bolkhovitinov had his own more gruesome tale of woe:

I'll take this opportunity to assuage my colleague's indignation. If he had to wait 18 months for his microfilm, then let me tell him about the ordinary Xerox copies I received in April 1987 which I had ordered from the Russian Foreign Policy Archives [AVPR] at the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in December of 1968 [sic., 1986]. (True, with an apology.)<sup>53</sup> In terms not previously seen in print in

the Soviet Union, Bolkhovitinov strikingly contrasted such problems with access procedures in the U. S. National Archives, where "it takes but a couple of minutes to fill in a short questionnaire . . . and any document can be obtained within a matter of minutes," where a reader has "unrestricted access to any register, catalogue and the like," and where "one can also make any number of Xerox copies . . . without queueing up or facing any other problems." Bolkhovitinov expressed delight that discussion of the "problems of archives [are] being actively conducted in the [Soviet] press.... Much is starting to change," he wrote, "but we still encounter old and sadly familiar difficulties when we come into actual contact with the archival system itself."<sup>54</sup> Bolkhovitinov expressed the sentiments of many scholars when he concluded, "I, for one, believe that archives must be made public and freely accessible to all, just as Lenin proposed in the early postrevolutionary years."<sup>55</sup>

The sharp criticism of access and working conditions for foreign researchers appears to have had some effect on Glavarkhiv policies. As of the fall of 1988, foreign researchers are reporting significant improvement in access to materials and internal finding aids for state archives in Moscow. Yet foreigners still are not permitted access to the archives themselves, but rather have to work in an isolated foreigner's search room at Glavarkhiv's Moscow headquarters. And the lack of adequate microfilming provisions continues to plague the pace and efficiency of research.

In many countries, the availability of archival documents is dependent on their date, with laws prescribing a specified time after which government files must be open to research. In an exceedingly liberal pronouncement about access published in 1975

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Professor Bolkhovitinov advised this author of the typographical error.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

and again in 1988, Glavarkhiv claimed that in the Soviet Union, "all documents may be communicated whatever may be their date."<sup>56</sup> Soviet and foreign scholars alike have found that such a claim hardly reflects reality, and recent press discussion of restrictions certainly corroborate their findings.

In connection with the new archival law, it has been proposed that a standard thirty- or fifty-year rule be introduced. "I believe, that we need to specify, as is done in all civilized countries, a period after which all secret documents become open to general access" wrote Afanas'ev in June 1988.<sup>57</sup> Vaganov categorically dismissed the suggestion of imposing a strict thirty- or fifty-year rule: "In our country, that would be a step backwards," he claimed in a letter to the editor of *Literaturnaia gazeta*.<sup>58</sup> Whether or not a date rule will be included in the new archival legislation remained an open question as of the fall of 1988. But unless there is a fundamental restructuring (*perestroika*) in Soviet attitudes towards archives and archival research, such a rule would provide a dubious solution to other prevailing problems.

One of the biggest problems of access in state archives under Glavarkhiv is that continued restrictions are imposed by depositing agencies, even after the records have come under Glavarkhiv custody. This has been an area of strong complaint by Soviet scholars, but it also affects foreign researchers, who are not free to address the agencies directly. A *Pravda* correspondent

reported in June 1988 as an example, "In the Central State Archive of the National Economy (TsGANKh), 730,000 files involving personnel records are held in the category of 'restricted access,'" whereby the researcher has to get permission from the depositing agency. In one case, the researcher would have to apply to the USSR State Construction Committee and in another case, to the Ministry of Ferrous Metallurgy. Even if such permission is granted, the researcher is still forbidden to cite the documents in a publication.<sup>59</sup> According to a 1988 comment by the director, two-thirds of the fonds in TsGANKh had been subject to such restrictions by their depositing agencies, but that number has now been reduced to one-third.<sup>60</sup>

The difficulties are not always limited to twentieth-century records, explained another recent critic of the archival scene:

Let us suppose that you came to work in the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts (TsGADA) for research in sixteenth-century documents [relating to Muscovite foreign relations]. . . . In those years there was no Party, and also no KGB. How naive! Do you know that . . . you must have in your hands permission from the Historic-Diplomatic Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?<sup>61</sup> Such restrictions are not imposed by

<sup>56</sup>As quoted in the Soviet Main Archival Administration contribution to the *International Directory of Archives/ Annuaire international des archives* (1988), 317 (French text); 322-23 (Russian text). The text is the same as the one that appeared in the previous 1975 edition.

<sup>57</sup>Iurii Afanas'ev, "Perestroika i istoricheskoe znanie," *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, no. 24 (17 June 1988), 9.

<sup>58</sup>Quoted in an editor's note, "Komy vygodny tainy," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 22 (1 June 1988): 12.

<sup>59</sup>"Dostup ogranichen," as summarized in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* 40, no. 22 (1988): 22.

<sup>60</sup>Mosesov, "Arkhiy raskryvaiut tainy," *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, 29 September 1988, 2.

<sup>61</sup>Litovskii, "Arkhiy i perestroika," *Tochka zreniia* (Moscow), no. 4 (September-October 1987), as reproduced in *Arkhiy Samizdata* (Munich) 6185 (15 April 1988): 39. Archivists in TsGADA were prohibited from showing foreigners any documents relating to foreign affairs without such special permission. The process for obtaining special permission was so complicated that, as one Polish historian explained it to me recently, he waited almost five years to get permission to consult sixteenth-century records relating to Polish-Muscovite relations. Officials from the Foreign Ministry archival administration informed the author that such restrictions were abolished in the fall of 1988.



Glavarkhiv itself, but by other controlling agencies. Yet apparently, in the new archival law under discussion, the Glavarkhiv draft is proposing to legalize such restrictions imposed by individual agencies. In a bitter critique of such a move, the Scholarly Council of MGIAI complained that further legalization of such restrictions would be "anti-democratic in its essence."<sup>62</sup> But it is not known if their criticism will prevail.

An even larger problem is that many of the most important records, especially those from the postrevolutionary Soviet period, are not under Glavarkhiv control at all. As MGIAI rector Afanas'ev complained bitterly, in a June 1988 interview in *Moscow News*:

The archives are [as] inaccessible as they were before; they have turned into a branch of the bureaucratic system and have only a selective memory. Certain departments—the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the KGB, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense and the State Committee for Statistics—establish their own rules for access to archives and this also damages archival work.<sup>63</sup>

Similar sentiments are becoming common in the Soviet press.

The most rigidly restrictive archives in the USSR are, as one might expect, the archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Since the late 1920s archives of the Communist Party have been separated from the rest of the state archival system, and since 1966, their independent status was affirmed by the declaration of a parallel Archival Fond of the Communist Party. Afanas'ev has recently suggested reform-

ing the concept of the so-called State Archival Fond to include the Archival Fond of the Communist Party, with the idea of bringing Party documentation under more liberal provisions for archival access, echoing the recommendations of the MGIAI Scholarly Council against the present dual Party-state archival system.<sup>64</sup>

Another MGIAI professor commented in more detail on the situation in a letter published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* in June 1988. "Access to these materials [in Party archives] can be received only by a member of the Party," explained Professor Boris Ilizarov. "When one considers the fundamental political and organizational power that the Party has wielded over society during the past seventy years," he continued, one would have to project that "today, up to fifty percent of all retrospective information on the history of Soviet society is locked away from wide scholarly societal consciousness. . . ." Ilizarov compares the situation in Communist Party archives to another archives renowned for its restrictions. "In the Vatican Archives there are also restrictions," he chided with some irony, "but, nevertheless, they admit not only cobelievers, but also nonbelievers."<sup>65</sup> Despite the publication of such scathing complaints, there has been little indication of improved access to Party archives, even for trusted Soviet scholars.

Manuscript divisions of state libraries and museums under the Ministry of Culture have usually provided the easiest access, partly, of course, because their contents are likely to be the least official and, hence, the least politically sensitive. Yet, since 1978, some institutions under the Ministry of Culture have adopted more restrictive policies with

<sup>62</sup>"Spasti sluzhbu sotsial'noi pamiati. Pis'mo v gazetnu," signed by the MGIAI Uchenyi soviet, *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, 31 May 1988, 6.

<sup>63</sup>Iu. N. Afanas'ev (Yuri Afanasyev), "Specific Facts, Honest Assessments," *Moscow News*, 1988, no. 25 (26 June–3 July): 8.

<sup>64</sup>Iurii Afanas'ev, "Perestroika i istoricheskoe znanie," *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, 1988, no. 24 (17 June 1988): 2-3, 8-9. See also the MGIAI appeal in *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, 31 May 1988, 6.

<sup>65</sup>B. Ilizarov, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 22 (1 June): 12.

an often-stated xenophobic rationale. The most blatant and well-publicized example of these reactionary developments has occurred in the Manuscript Division of the Lenin Library in the context of a bitter factional struggle within the staff. The unauthorized publication abroad of several Mikhail Bulgakov texts became a thinly-veiled pretext for ousting the well-respected Manuscript Division director, Sara Vladimirovna Zhitomirskaya in 1978. Her dismissal was followed by the imposition of a wide range of new restrictions and by the curtailment of important parts of the division's scholarly publication program. The American publisher Ardis had, in fact, acquired the texts involved from the Bulgakov family before the papers were deposited in the Lenin Library.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps only

Bulgakov himself could best portray the absurd realities of developments in one of the Soviet Union's most distinguished manuscript repositories.

The situation had become so difficult for Soviet researchers that, in January 1988, ten distinguished Soviet scholars, including Academician D. S. Likhachev and Archeographic Commission chairman S. O. Shmidt, presented a strongly worded open letter to the Minister of Culture, V. G. Zakharov. They lamented "the developments of the past decade," including curtailment of publications, restricted access to many fonds that were previously open for research, shortening of working hours, and the general demise of the "normal climate" in the division, which had traditionally been marked by "the highest level of scholarly work."<sup>67</sup> The minister's response a month later admitted "many difficulties in the di-

<sup>66</sup>The controversy over the Bulgakov manuscripts has been widely publicized in the Soviet press, together with comments on other aspects of the situation. See, for example, the defense of the developments by the director Manuscript Division (1981-1987), L. V. Tiganova (allegedly one of the leaders of the Party faction), published in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, no. 206 (6 September 1987), 2, together with a letter to the editor by Iurii Bondarev, Igor' Belza, and Oleg Trubachev, "V zashchitu imeni i avtorstva Mikhaila Bulgakova." A week later *Sovetskaia Rossiia* (13 September 1987) published an interview with one of the American publishers, under the title "Nelegal'no ili skrytno." Elena Proffer explained that she was given copies of the manuscripts involved by the widow and first wife of Bulgakov before that part of the Bulgakov papers had been handed over to the Lenin Library. She herself was never granted access to the Lenin Library Manuscript Division. This version of the story was corroborated by other trusted Soviet sources in Moscow, who would have been in a position to know the facts without being involved in the controversy themselves. (See also the sources cited in note 70 exonerating the Proffers.) A devastating criticism of the situation with regard to literary papers in the division, with particular reference to the Bulgakov papers, was presented by one of the professional manuscript librarians who had been involved in inventorying parts of the Bulgakov papers and who was dismissed in the course of the controversy: M. O. Chuganova, "O Bulgakove, i ne tol'ko o nem," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1987, no. 42 (14 October 1987): 6. A sampling of letters to the editor were published the following month under the title "Otkliki: V zashchitu imeni i avtorstva Mikhaila Bulgakova, Nashe bestennoe dostoianie," *Sovetskaia*

*Rossiia*, 22 November 1987, 4, together with an alternate commentary by a Bulgakov scholar, Lidiia Ivanovskaya, and an open letter to the editor: "Deviz—vozvrashchenie: B redaktsiiu gazety 'Sovetskaia Rossiia' v prezidium Vserossiiskogo fonda kul'tury." Further discussion appeared a month later under the title, "Vozvrashchenie k teme O Bulgakove, i ne tol'ko o nem," including letters signed by A. Ninov and S. Averintsev, and excerpts from several other scholars and literary specialists, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1987, no. 51 (23 December 1987): 4. See the more recent and even more lengthy discussion of the situation by Evgenii Kuz'min, "Stena: O pechal'noi sud'be znamenitel'nogo drevlekhranilishcha i eshche raz o rukopisakh Bulgakova," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 28 (13 July 1988): 5.

<sup>67</sup>"Izbrat' nakonets dostoinykh! Otkrytoe pis'mo ministru kul'tury SSSR Tov. V. G. Zakharovu," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 28 January 1988, 2. The controversy was simultaneously picked up by *Literaturnaia gazeta*, under the heading "Biurokraticheskie igry" ("Bureaucratic Games"): E. Kuz'min "Propusk . . . k Bulgakovu: Khranit' ili khoronit'—pravil'no li non-imaiut svoi zadachi arkhivisty," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 6 (10 February 1988): 2. Many of these points are also quoted by Kuzmin, "Stena," 5. Several of the signatories, including Likhachev and Shmidt, had strongly complained about the problems in the Manuscript Division at an open meeting in March 1987, an abridged stenographic report of which was published as "Diskussionnyi klub 'Pozitsiia': Uroki glasnosti i demokratizma," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1987, no. 11 (11 March 1987): 12.

vision, unresolved problems, and even mistakes." But his attitude towards research by foreigners suggested little hope for improvement. He complained, for example, that before 1978, "foreign scholars were copying without control large masses of archival materials that often had not been studied and made known by Soviet scholars."<sup>68</sup>

That attitude is symptomatic of problems foreigners have been finding in several different repositories. Particularly in the field of contemporary literature, there is an increased reluctance to permit foreign scholars access to unpublished literary works, whether or not there are any potential plans for their publication in the USSR. "But what about our priorities?" asked the assistant director of the Lenin Library Manuscript Division, V. I. Losev, in an interview in *Literaturnaia gazeta* in June 1988. "After all, these are our writers, and therefore they should be published first in our country." In conclusion, Losev complained to the correspondent: "If you had any elements of patriotism in you, you wouldn't be questioning me about this."<sup>69</sup> The correspondent continued to ask questions and ironically reported that even the editors of the approved Soviet scholarly edition of Bulgakov plays were permitted access to only seven of the fifty texts they requested. The correspondent queried rhetorically in conclusion, "Does all this come from the fact . . . that the fate of the National Library is being determined . . . by the hierarchy of bureaucrats of culture with the director of the library at the lowest level?"<sup>70</sup> The ac-

tive campaign in the press about the "catastrophic state" of affairs in the Manuscript Division unfortunately has not brought any improvements, as the same correspondent for *Literaturnaia gazeta* reported in November.<sup>71</sup>

As a variant of the attitudes expressed by officials in the Lenin Library, a more exasperating and discriminatory problem in access for foreign researchers has been reported on several recent occasions in other archives. Indeed, state archives under Glavarkhiv have been even more blatant in displaying these xenophobic attitudes, and they often refuse to make documents available to foreigners if the contents have not been previously studied by Soviet scholars, even if there are no plans for their immediate use. Foreigners frequently encounter the attitude that they—as foreigners—should not be given the opportunity for archival revelations. As a particularly blatant recent example, also in the spring of 1988, an American professor of Soviet history who had not been shown the materials requested was, after many months of constant efforts, finally granted a meeting with the director in the archives involved. "It is *our* history," the director explained to him, "and *our* people should be the ones to work on it."<sup>72</sup> If this is the attitude of the official who controls access decisions for a major state archives, it is no surprise that the professor received only six of the many files

<sup>68</sup>"Ministr otvechaet na otkrytoe pis'mo," *Sovetskaiia kul'tura*, 25 February 1988, 2.

<sup>69</sup>V. I. Losev, as quoted in Kuz'min, "Stena," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 28 (13 July 1988): 5.

<sup>70</sup>Kuz'min, "Stena," 5. A response by some members of the Party collective of the Lenin Library Manuscript Division and further commentary by the editors appeared in early October: "Eshche raz o znamenitom drevlekhranilishche," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 40 (5 October 1988): 1. The fact that the American publishers

did not get the Bulgakov texts involved from the Lenin Library was again affirmed by the editors of *Literaturnaia gazeta* in their reply to the open letter. And the editors corrected many factual details about the Manuscript Division history that had mistakenly been presented in the staff letter.

<sup>71</sup>As if to condone the appalling situation, the much-criticized new acting director, V. Deriagin was officially voted in as director without opposition in November, as described in a bitterly critical report by Evgenii Kuz'min and E. Iakovich, "Chem konchilis' vybory v GBL," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1988, no. 44 (2 November 1988): 1.

<sup>72</sup>Based on a report of an American professor to IREX, cited with permission of the scholar involved.

he had hoped to consult during a nine-month official research visit. And it is no surprise that after nine months of such frustrations, the American professor felt impelled to sign a letter to President Reagan complaining about discrimination against foreigners in Soviet archives.

## Appraisal

Access to materials in archives remains in many minds the most obvious and serious problem for Soviet scholars as well as foreigners. Researchers can hope that the current round of discussion will alert the public and authorities to some of the most glaring difficulties and improve the situation. But there is another equally serious archival problem that has not yet been adequately considered in public discussion, namely the selection of what materials are designated for permanent archival preservation. The subject needs lengthier consideration than is possible here, but it must be raised in the present context because researchers and archival reformers alike need to be more aware of its implications.

Some elements of the Soviet system of records management and appraisal were discussed in a report by Edwin C. Bridges, one of the American archivists who visited the Soviet archival research institute, VNIIDAD.<sup>73</sup> The extent of state archival control over records management and over retention and disposal is awesome, and a new law is on the drawing boards that would make it mandatory for all state agencies to conform to the new procedures.<sup>74</sup> The ex-

tent to which Glavarkhiv has control over which records will be preserved and for how long is an area of authority of which researchers are not always conscious. Yet these are the policies that will be determining what documents will be preserved for future historians as well as others who might need to use them for official purposes. The fact that Soviet state archives now retain permanently only two to four percent of the records created by government offices gives a wide range for the disposal of revealing documentation.<sup>75</sup> Records not designated for permanent archival preservation are scheduled for disposal after anywhere from five to seventy-five years.<sup>76</sup>

Some probing questions have been raised recently in unofficial sources about the nature and scope of various retention and disposal programs, and the strictness with which established guidelines are being followed. For example, an article published in the unofficial Moscow journal *Glasnost'* in July 1987 describes the burning of remaining archives relating to individuals who perished during the Stalin purges. According to the author, "archives of the USSR Procurator's Office and the Ministry of Justice were 'cleaned' of such cases (i.e., all of them were burned) in the 1960s and 1970s," but now there is "an emergency 'cleaning,'" i.e., the systematic burning of court files from the Joint Special Archives of the Military Council and the USSR Supreme Court, preserving "cases of Soviet

<sup>73</sup>See the report by Edwin C. Bridges, "The Soviet Union's Archival Research Center: Observations of an American Visitor," *American Archivist* 51 (Fall 1988): 486-500.

<sup>74</sup>The latest published regulations for records management were issued in 1974: *Edinaia gosudarstvennaia sistema deloproizvodstva (Osnovnye polozeniiia)*, ed. V. N. Avtokratov, A. P. Kurantov, M. T. Likhachev et al, under the direction of F. I. Dolgikh (Moscow: GAU, 1974). The publication carries the Council of Ministers registration number as an official regulation (Postanovlenie no. 435, dated 4.IX.73).

<sup>75</sup>Several high-level archival specialists in earlier meetings have quoted me the overall figure of five to ten percent. In a recent published interview, the Glavarkhiv research institute (VNIIDAD) director A. I. Chugunov, gives the figure of two to four percent: "Bez arkhivov net istorii," (signed by R. Armeev), *Izvestiia*, 2 June 1988, 4. Undoubtedly a higher percentage is retained by the Communist Party and by other agencies not under Glavarkhiv, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense.

<sup>76</sup>Soviet procedures for appraisal (in Russian, *eks-pertiza tsennosti dokumentov*) and the function of the Appraisal Commissions are described in *Teoriia i praktika arkhivnogo dela*, 60-107.

citizens who had been falsely charged, sentenced, and for the most part, died in the 1930s-1950s."<sup>77</sup> According to the author the files should have been transferred to TsGAOR SSSR for permanent retention, but instead, agency officials are burning "up to 1,500 files per day . . . under the pretext of 'insufficient space' for the current documentation that is needed." The report is accompanied by a moving appeal by Sergei Grigoriant, the journal editor, to General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to stop the disposal of such vital records of those who perished during the Stalin years.

Related questions along somewhat less specific lines were raised by MGIAI rector Afanas'ev during his visit to the United States in October 1988. In a press interview on the eve of his departure, in addition to negative comments on "the slower than desired process of democratization of access to archives," Afanas'ev focused on many important questions about the destruction of archival materials during the Stalin years. Of particular significance, he mentioned the already publicized matter of the alleged disappearance from Soviet archives of the secret protocols of the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 that provided for the annexation of the Baltic republics along with Western Ukraine and Belorussia into the USSR. "I cannot confirm with certainty that Stalin archives were destroyed," said Afanas'ev. "I speak only of the disappearance of very important materials."<sup>78</sup> Questioned more precisely about the fate of documentation regarding the period of collectivization, mass famine, and the Great Terror, Afanas'ev replied, "There is absolutely no basis to think that archives re-

mained inviolable. Needless to say, a regime that destroyed millions of people would not have stopped before the destruction of a few hundred sheets of paper."<sup>79</sup>

Afanas'ev did not mention the overall Soviet archival appraisal policies, whereby ninety-five percent of government documents are eventually destined for disposal. But his comments give fuel to the fire of those who question the appraisal decisions made regarding which documents should have been preserved, particularly from the Stalin years. Archivists and researchers alike must address the need for a thorough retrospective review of retention and disposal practices during those crucial decades.

The issues raised are fundamental ones. If major court records, and presumably others of a long-term significance, have been destroyed, and are continuing to be destroyed, more liberal policies of access are not, in and of themselves, going to help the more open writing of history and the exposure of the evils of the Stalin years. If the appropriate retention schedules have not been followed, or if such lower court records were designated for disposal after a given number of years, then it is the appraisal policies and practices of Glavarkhiv, and their implementation on the agency level, rather than any more liberal access policies, that will have dictated what historical records are available for future generations.

### Finding Aids

One of the most serious problems in Soviet archives for Soviet and foreign researchers alike is the lack of adequate finding aids. The problem is aggravated still further by the restricted nature and the limited quality of those finding aids available. Soviet archives, and particularly state archives, have never set a high priority on the development of user-oriented reference

<sup>77</sup>Dmitri G. Iurasov, "Unichtozhenie poslednego sudebnogo arkhiva 30-x—50-x godov," *Glasnost' Informatsionnyi biulleten'* (Moscow), nos. 2-4 (July 1987); republished in English translation, *Glasnost'* (New York), 3.

<sup>78</sup>"Iurii Afanas'ev ob unichtozhenii dokumentov....," *Novoe russkoe slovo* (New York), 4 November 1988, 1.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*



systems. The operation of the minimal reference systems that do exist establishes a fundamental barrier, particularly for foreigners, to the open exploration of archival holdings. Emphasis has always been on the prime role of the archivist: "Tell us your topic, and we (the ideologically trusted archivists) will find the materials we consider relevant for you," has been the operating principle in most Soviet state archives.

The long domination of this approach in Soviet state archival practice has meant that Soviet archives lag far behind most of their Western counterparts in developing user-oriented finding aids. Although considerable work is proceeding within state archives to improve the reference system, Soviet scholars—especially those who have been abroad and used the reference facilities that are openly available to readers in Western archives—are becoming exasperated, and in the spirit of *glasnost'* are starting to complain loudly about this problem.

Many foreign researchers do not want to leave the question of "relevance" to an archivist who may not understand their approach to a topic, particularly given the inquisitive attitude of free exploration that is emphasized in Western research methods. Although they are required to do so in their initial official application, foreign researchers are often not in a position to indicate precisely the specific fonds they want in many Soviet archives, because they have no access to lists and descriptions of available fonds from which to choose. Even once admitted to an archives, they cannot tell the archivist what file units they might wish to consult, because in many instances they are not free to examine the comprehensive inventories (*opisi*) that are the only file-level finding aid available in most Soviet archives. Nor are they given access to the extensive card catalogues that in many archives cover at least some of the holdings and that might also help in making independent and informed choices of relevant documents.

These problems stem from the basic orientation of Soviet archival practice. The inquisitive browsing and thorough exploration of finding aids that are prime ingredients of the Western scholarly and creative research mentality are still prohibited in most Soviet repositories, and especially in state archives. There has been a major improvement in this regard when, starting in the fall of 1988, foreign scholars have been given access to internal inventories (*opisi*), even in postrevolutionary state archives. Yet in some repositories, researchers are only permitted to consult those fonds (record groups) listed in advance or directly related to the subject approved in their application. Furthermore, Soviet archival reference systems are simply not geared to free and open public exploration of archival holdings.

Published finding aids are grossly inadequate, and only in a few rare cases provide information below the record-group or collection level. The latest published directory of state archives under Glavarkhiv was issued in 1956, and is sorely outdated by subsequent archival reorganization. Its ideologically oriented descriptions of holdings give little sense of the major groups of records (fonds) involved, and its bibliography is grossly inadequate. The long-awaited new edition has finally been announced for 1989.<sup>80</sup> A second volume is scheduled to follow in 1990 covering archives not under Glavarkhiv, such as repositories under the Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Culture.<sup>81</sup> In contrast to the inadequate provisions of Glavarkhiv, at present, the most comprehensive all-union directory of archives and manuscript repositories for researchers was prepared not by Glavarkhiv, nor by its high-level research institute, VNIIDAD, but, surprisingly, by the inde-

<sup>80</sup>*Gosudarstvennye arkhivy SSSR. Kratkii spravochnik* (Moscow: "Mysl'," [forthcoming 1989]) with a press run of 30,000 copies.

<sup>81</sup>See the announcement on the inside back cover of *Sovetskie arkhivy*, 1987, no. 4.

pendent initiative of a history professor and a historical bibliographer at Lviv State University in Western Ukraine.<sup>82</sup> That directory is better oriented for researchers and provides a more extensive bibliography of finding aids than any Glavarkhiv publication.

Only a fraction of the finding aids available in Soviet archives are prepared for print, and only a fraction of those published today are available for wide distribution or open circulation. Nonrestricted, or openly available, and relatively up-to-date guides are available for only two of the eleven central state archives on the all-union level, and for only four of the eleven state archives under Glavarkhiv of the Russian Federation (RSFSR) in Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>83</sup> There are no published guides for Communist Party archives or for those of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>84</sup> Glavarkhiv RSFSR has a better track record outside of Moscow, since

guides or short directories have been published for fourteen out of the sixteen central state archives of autonomous republics, for five out of six krai-level state archives, and for forty-three out of the forty-eight oblast-level state archives of the Russian Federation outside Moscow and Leningrad. In some cases, more than one edition has appeared since the 1950s, but many of the more recent publications are not widely distributed. Statistics vary for the non-Russian union republics.

The fact that these guides have been prepared does not mean that they are readily available, even in major libraries in the USSR. The problems have multiplied in the late 1970s and 1980s, at least partly as a result of changes in Glavarkhiv reference priorities and publication economies. Guides published in the 1960s and early 1970s are not only more detailed and better printed, but they are also much more widely available. The appalling lack of distribution, and hence the basic lack of access to, published finding aids for state archives is one of the most serious problems facing researchers. As determined by the present author, in the spring of 1988, more than fifty guides to state archives were not available in the Lenin Library, which boasts of receiving a copy of every Soviet publication.<sup>85</sup> Whether or not a copy reaches the Lenin Library generally appears to have little relationship to the size of the press run.<sup>86</sup> But the small press runs in which recent guides have been issued may in part be responsible for their limited distribution. For example, of the approximately fifty guides or short directories that were issued by state archives under the sponsorship of Glavarkhiv between

<sup>82</sup>I. M. Grossman and V. N. Kutik, *Spravochnik nauchnogo rabotnika: Arkhivy, dokumenty, issledovatel'*, 2d ed. (Lviv: "Vyshcha shkola," 1983). See my detailed review essay and supplemental bibliography, *Recent Soviet Archival Literature: A Review and Preliminary Bibliography of Selected Reference Aids*, published as Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, *Occasional Paper*, no. 204 (Washington, D.C., 1986). See also my shorter review essay, "A New Soviet Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories: A Major Contribution in Light of Recent Reference Aids," *Slavic Review* 45 (Fall 1986): 534-44. Interestingly enough, *Sovetskie arkhivy* (1988, no. 3: 107-08) published a summary review of my review article from the *Slavic Review*, repeating my criticism of the lack of Glavarkhiv production.

<sup>83</sup>These are all listed in the appendixes of my 1988 research handbook.

<sup>84</sup>As a major step forward in reference work the prerevolutionary Archive of Russian Foreign Policy has completed a most admirable first volume of a planned four-volume comprehensive guide to its holdings: *Putevoditel' po fondam Arkhiva vneshnei politiki Rossii*, Part 1: *Kollegiia inostrannykh del (1721-1832 gg.)* (Moscow: Istorikodiplomaticheskoe upravlenie MID SSR), 1988: 219 p.; typescript. But as of 1989, the guide is not being formally published and no copies are being made available outside the archives. I have not been permitted to visit the Central Party Archive to assess their reference system.

<sup>85</sup>These guides are all listed in the appendixes to my research handbook.

<sup>86</sup>I found guides with a press run of 1,000 copies missing from the Lenin Library, as well as some issued in 200-300 copies, while at the same time I found copies of guides in GBL and other libraries with a press run as small as 100 copies.

1981 and 1985, thirty-one were published in press runs of 300 or less, and another seven in press runs of 500 or less.<sup>87</sup>

Given the general curtailment of distribution in this period, it is difficult to find copies to consult anywhere, even in specialized Soviet research libraries.<sup>88</sup> Only two of these fifty guides had found their way to U. S. libraries by 1987.<sup>89</sup> Even more exasperating, when the U. S. National Archives requested copies of these publications, as part of the new bilateral archival exchange, Glavarkhiv responded that they were unable to obtain copies, to provide microfilm copies, or to accept a standing order from the U. S. National Archives for all of their newly published guides.

To make matters worse, five of the six guides to central state archives in Moscow and Leningrad that were issued since 1956 were officially restricted "for service use only," and hence not openly available to researchers.<sup>90</sup> The same is still true of the 1984 guide to the major archives for post-revolutionary records in the Ukrainian SSR.

<sup>87</sup>These were all included in a published list of reference publications that had been issued under Glavarkhiv auspices between 1981 and 1985, were printed inside the back covers of three issues of *Sovetskie arkhivy* (1985, nos. 5 and 6, and 1986, no. 1).

<sup>88</sup>For example, in March 1988, I found none of them in the library that services the main historical institutes of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow (ul. Dmitriia Ul'ianova, 19) and only a few in the library of the archival training institute, MGIAI. Even the archival research institute, VNIIDAD, did not have a complete set in their library, and Glavarkhiv was unable to locate them in their own reference library at their Moscow headquarters.

<sup>89</sup>A survey of several U. S. libraries, as well as the OCLC and RLIN databases was undertaken in 1987 and 1988 in the course of preparing the bibliography for my recent handbook. U. S. libraries had also received five additional publications listed, but rather than actual archival guides, these were directories or other handbooks with larger press runs that had been issued in conjunction with a more established publisher, such as the "Nauka" publishing house of the Academy of Sciences.

<sup>90</sup>This includes guides (or short directories) for TsGAOR SSSR (1979), TsGANKh (1979), TsGVIA (1979), TsGA RSFSR (1973), and the pre-revolutionary division of TsGAVMF (1966).

Earlier guides for TsGAOR SSSR (including the guide for the former TsGIAM), TsGADA, and TsGVIA date from the 1940s and hardly reflect the present organization and contents of the repositories; yet these are the only guides publicly available.<sup>91</sup> As of October 1988, the status of most of these publications remained unchanged, despite reports that under *glasnost'* more publications are being declassified in Soviet libraries. The Central State Archive of Literature and Art of the USSR (TsGALI SSSR) is the only all-union central state archives—obviously the least politically sensitive—whose recent series of guides are publicly available, but even these are difficult to obtain.

Soviet archival reference specialists are aware that computers are the wave of the future for archival reference systems, but unfortunately, few Soviet archivists have had the opportunity to master the techniques. The computer revolution that has transformed the reference systems in Western libraries and archives has yet to arrive in Moscow. As one recent Soviet commentator has phrased it,

The Scientific Reference Service for archival documents makes us forget that we live at the end of the twentieth century, or that somewhere (perhaps on Mars) there is a country such as Japan. The use of computer technology is for all practical purposes nil. A retrieval system for the period of "Great October," developed on a computer base in the Central State Archive of the October Revolution, can call forth only smiles. The total scientific reference service in Soviet archives calculates on hand retrieval.

<sup>91</sup>Second volumes of the guides for TsGAOR SSSR and TsGIAM (now part of TsGAOR SSSR) were published in the early 1950s, and a more detailed guide—twice the size of the openly available 1941 guide—was published for TsGVIA in 1949, but all three of these second volumes were issued with the restriction "for internal use only," and still cannot be consulted outside the archives.

Admittedly, there are inventories (*opisi*)—fine things—but there were also *opisi* in the seventeenth century.<sup>92</sup>

That commentator may be quite correct in assessing the Glavarkhiv/TsGAOR computer capacity, given the limitations and quality of output and the fact that it is not available on-line to researchers. But it should be explained that Glavarkhiv's computer center in its Moscow headquarters has in fact been working with TsGAOR SSSR to produce a relatively primitive index to published documents from state archives throughout the USSR relating to the so-called victory of the October Revolution, four volumes of which were available by the end of 1988.<sup>93</sup> The system is eventually intended to extend to unpublished documents as well. Another pilot project well under way there involves a database regarding architectural monuments in Moscow and Leningrad on the basis of documents in state archives. The ES-1022 computer being used is of an early generation; its operation is relatively slow and the program capacities rather limited by Western standards. Nonetheless, the experience being gained should provide a model for other projects. Another project underway is to set up a centralized computer file for all the fonds in all state archives throughout the USSR. The standardized reporting system in use by Glavarkhiv should make this project relatively easy to accomplish, but the information contained is severely restricted. There is no suggestion that this database

will ever be publicly available. Furthermore, the reference possibilities of sophisticated modern computer database systems are hardly in keeping with the restrictive attitudes towards reference access that still pervades the Soviet system.

Gains in terms of letting more researchers into reading rooms and lifting restrictions on archival files themselves have limited value without researcher access to available finding aids, and without Glavarkhiv placing a higher priority on the production of scholarly finding aids and related reference facilities. Indeed, there will be no *glasnost* in the archives until there is open access to available finding aids. There will be no *perestroika* in the archives until there are new attitudes towards reference service on the part of Glavarkhiv, coupled with a strong commitment to the development of a comprehensive, scholarly, and user-oriented reference apparatus. The computer revolution with its concomitant development of library and archival reference facilities in the West has left Soviet archives far behind at the end of the twentieth century. It will take decades of descriptive and technological efforts to bridge the gap. Equally important, it will take major changes in priorities to counteract the legacy of seventy years of authoritarian rule and ideological restraints on access to information that have shaped archival policies and procedures. If trends continue towards more *glasnost* in historical scholarship, they will necessarily spawn reforms in the theory and practice of archival affairs in the USSR. Only the future will tell what effect this recent discussion and the more open criticism of the historical and archival establishments will have on Glavarkhiv policies and practices. But fundamental restructuring of those policies and practices will still be required, because the attitudes that govern the archives today hardly appear conducive to the open exploration of the archival riches the regime has made such extensive efforts to preserve.

<sup>92</sup>"Arkhivy i perestroika," signed pseudonymously, Asaf Litovskii, *Tochka zreniia* (Moscow), no. 4 (September-October 1987), reprinted in *Arkhiv Samizdata* (Munich) 6185, No. 16, (15 April 1988): 36.

<sup>93</sup>*Pobeda Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii i bor'ba za ustanovlenie i uprochenie Sovetskoi vlasti, 25 October (7 November) 1917 g.—iul' 1918 g. Tematicheskii perechen' opublikovannykh dokumentov*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Glavarkhiv/TsGAOR SSSR/Nauchno-issledovatel'skii tsentr tekhnicheskoi dokumentatsii SSSR, 1987–88). Additional volumes in the series are in process.