Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Public Opinion and Ideology: Mythology and Pragmatism in Interaction*. New York: Praeger, 1986, xxi + 231 pp., $29.95 cloth.

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Winds of change are stirring the Soviet Union. Neither the upper reaches of the powerful, centralized party-state bureaucracy, nor the "grass roots"—where over 200 million Soviet citizens ply their daily business as workers, farmers, and office functionaries—are likely to be immune from the effects of Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

Ambitious programs of change in Western democracies depend heavily for their success on the support of public opinion *and* on the degree to which willing implementation can be expected from large civil-service bureaucracies. In the USSR, the situation is obviously different in many critical ways—yet Gorbachev's plans for change clearly require a bureaucratic compliance *not* guaranteed to a Soviet leader and may also face both opportunities and problems from a population "set" in many of its ways and reluctant to part with some elements of the Soviet-style welfare state which Gorbachev sees as among the causes of the lagging economic performance of recent years. Both *ideology* among the implementers and "public opinion," however vaguely expressed, among the rank-and-file citizenry will thus play a role in determining what happens in the USSR over the next few years.

Shlapentokh's book is, then, a timely one. A veteran Soviet sociologist (whose writings attracted a good deal of Western specialist attention while he was in the USSR), an émigré of the 1970s, he has rooted his treatment of a number of topics in this work in a deep familiarity with published and unpublished Soviet research and Western perspectives on public opinion and communication.

A continuous thread runs through much of the discussion: a duality in ideology, propaganda, *and* public opinion that counterposes "mythological" and "pragmatic" elements to produce a two-level pattern of what people "know" and how they reflect on and express it. At the public, mythological level, the message is always the same—generalities about the superiority of planning over market, the one-party system over Western "pluralism," the continuing harmony between Soviet nationalities. At the pragmatic level, "party ideology" provides to functionaries at various levels of responsibility more nuanced guidance and justification for policies that may change and could only be "derived" with great difficulty from the public ideology. That the mythology and its universal assertions may contradict the experience of rank-and-file citizens is not necessarily critical—repetition itself teaches a lesson about resistance to change.

> Many of the postulates of official propaganda are not taken seriously by the majority of the people. But their continuous repetition

> performs an important function in signaling to all that the political and social system remains intact, and that the authorities will act to block those who seek to change this system. (P. 40)

What, however, of a *leadership* which aims at change and must communicate that message to the masses? It is at times like these, as Shlapentokh sees it, that more "reality" enters the public sphere.

> The dynamism of a regime and its tenure in office will affect the proximity of the party ideology to its public counterpart. The more dynamic and change-oriented a leader, the more the public ideology is employed to mobilize the population to achieve certain goals and the more it takes on the qualities of the party ideology. Mobilization requires the public to have some realistic perception of the state of affairs in the country and the intentions of the leadership. (P. 88)

Such, of course, was the situation of Andropov after Brezhnev, and such is the position of Gorbachev today. *Glasnost'*, "openness," in a sense denoted this greater approximation to reality of official messages, the readiness to recognize and discuss *real* problems in contrast to the public bromides of the Brezhnev years (to which so many problems are currently traced).

Is political destabilization a risk, as long-asserted myths undergo public revision? Perhaps, but a remote one. In one of the most interesting sections of his book, Shlapentokh details the *indirect* linking of various elements of the Soviet population, especially better-educated professionals, via "covert" propaganda, to real policy as reflected in party ideology. The propaganda is predominantly *oral:* lectures for restricted (but sometimes open) audiences, where speakers "employ language that has little in common with that of newspapers," where indeed an "atmosphere of confidence and mutual trust" develops to the degree that the lecturer systematically *opposes* his information to that in the public media. *Status* comes from presence in the audience—and is enhanced as the attender becomes a source for people *not* there. Information parceled out in such fashion serves a guidance function but also integrates those who share it in an "insiderism" more likely than not to increase their acceptance of the system.

Beyond this, it is important to note that the Soviet citizen, en masse, has lived with, and successfully reconciled, the myth–practice gap for some time. "The values of the mythological level are perceived by individuals in a highly abstract form and are accepted in that form, but their translation into behavior in specific situations is taken as impractical and utopian" (p. 120). In other words, as Shalpentokh nicely puts it, "people sincerely support hard work, honesty, sobriety and the other dominant values they ignore in their behavior." And, as long as this "pragmatic" side of public opinion finds expression in *individualistic* form, even by millions of individuals, myth, too, can be maintained. But if in a time of change an emergent shared awareness allows collective expression, the risk of decreasing the gap between public and

pragmatic ideology—and opinion—becomes clearer. "Harmony" of this sort in the public mind was last reached, in the Soviet bloc, in Poland in 1980–82; a harmony ended with the imposition of martial law.

Gorbachev must seek to *mobilize* public opinion as an element in his program of change; he must also seek to *limit* damage to the elements of public ideology essential to the system while amplifying the scope of pragmatic ideology—and all this in the face of the fact that much of his economic program, over the short run at least, will seem "antiwelfare" in mass public opinion. It is a daunting job—Shlapentokh's work provides a very solid guide, for Soviet specialists and social science generalists alike, to some of the dimensions of the task he has taken on.

Martin Bulmer, ed., *Social Science Research and Government: Comparative Essays on Britain and the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 406 pp.

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I recall participating in a Woodrow Wilson International Center roundtable in which Walter F. Mondale was the featured discussant. As the meeting progressed, it became surprisingly apparent that Mondale held some pretty negative sentiments about the extent to which social science had shown itself able to contribute to the easing of social tensions. I say *surprisingly* apparent because then Senator Mondale had not too long before introduced congressional legislation calling for the establishment of a Council of Social Advisors and the issuance of a national social report. Asked why, given his doubts about the efficacy of social science, he remained a staunch proponent of social science in government, Mondale drew an outburst of laughter when he replied that both politics and social science are so practically inept left to themselves, they owe it to society, if not to one another, to see whether working more closely together can make a positive difference.

While *Social Science Research and Government* has no direct connection with the incident related above, the book gives the reader a chance to test the Mondale conjecture against the observations of twenty knowledgable commentators on the science-in-government scene. The underlying question posed by the book is why social research has not been more successful in influencing the formulation of policy. The contributors to the volume furnish a variety of answers implanted in a collection of case studies and analytic-style accounts of the interaction between social science and government since the Second World War (mostly) in Britain and the United States (principally).

Though satisfyingly responsive to the whys and wherefores of the underlying question, the real value of the book lies not in the novelty of

the answers or the light they throw on the place of research in the policy-making process, but in the detailing and documenting of what is already widely known among those most likely to be interested in the subject. Except for the neophyte, the reader will find little here that has not been said before. However, it has never been better expressed, more comprehensively treated, or more conveniently packaged for further consideration from the comparative viewpoint. Apart from anything else, this combination of attributes makes the book a worthy addition to the library of anyone concerned with the utilization of science in public decision making.

All works of this kind face the problem of fashioning structure and coherence out of mere relevance. *Social Science Research and Government* attempts to deal with the problem by dividing the contributed articles into three topical sections: the first portrays the institutional arrangements by which, historically, social science has become interfaced with government; the second describes how applications of social scientific methods to certain areas of policy-making have fared in the past; and the third recounts the recent assault on public support for social research and the uncertainty this has created about the future—the bloody but unbowed attitude of some scholar-bureaucrats notwithstanding.

Each topical section begins with an introductory essay by Martin Bulmer, who selected the contributors and edited their offerings. These essays, along with Bulmer's other contributory chapters, lend the volume a degree of integration it would otherwise lack. (British sociologist Bulmer is a well-established figure in the field of policy research studies and a leading contributor to the literature on political utilization.)

Bulmer describes the book as striving toward a preliminary comparison between the situations in Britain and the United States—a comparative exercise, he calls it, albeit a loose rather than a tightly knit affair. The problem is that his articles are nearly the only ones that make a decent showing in this regard, most of the rest (three-quarters by my count) containing no more than a few desultory remarks on the matter. In the case of one article, titled "Comparative Aspects of Randomized Experiments for Planning and Evaluation," the term "comparative" turns out to have a cross-*disciplinary* rather than a cross-*national* frame of reference.

The comparative aspect is, however, more successfully realized by the intermixing of British and American contributors within each section. Also, an appreciable number of the authors can be credited with having both academic and experiential backgrounds in international research in addition to their qualifications with respect to social science per se. For example, Colin Campbell, formerly of York University in Toronto and now at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., collaborated with Donald Naulls of St. Mary's University in Nova Scotia to produce a study of the relationship between social science training and the policy roles played by governmental officials in the United