

# Recent Assessments of Social Organizations in Russia

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**D**uring the period of perestroika in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, there was a burst of optimism concerning the prospects for the emergence of a vigorous civil society in Russia and the other republics of the USSR when a large number of independent social groups suddenly appeared. By the late 1990s, however, Russian scholars who studied nongovernmental organizations had reached a consensus that the hopes for the flourishing of civil society in their country had been largely disappointed.<sup>1</sup> In this article I attempt to delineate the problems that are faced by organizations in the “third sector” of Russian society and to trace the causes of those problems. In doing so, I rely primarily on Russian scholarly works on social organizations in contemporary Russia, supplemented by the research findings of several Western scholars. In the concluding section of the article I seek to identify the flaws in the reasoning of earlier writings whose optimism concerning the prospects for the flourishing of social organizations in Russia proved unjustified. I argue that a significant lesson that may be learned from the experience of nongovernmental organizations in Russia since the early 1990s is that the state and the political elite can exert a powerful influence on the dynamics of social transformation in the course of a post-communist transition.

## The Optimism of the Period of Perestroika

In the late 1980s changes in the Soviet Union stimulated the rise of optimism concerning the prospects for the emergence of independent social organizations where conditions had previously been unfavorable. Some Western commentators saw reason to hope for the rapid emergence of a robust civil society in Russia and some other republics of the USSR. In this article, I define the term “civil society” as the sphere of self-activating, self-governing social organizations that are largely independent of control by the state.<sup>2</sup> The organizations in civil society consti-

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tute the "third sector" comprising nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, but interacts closely with, and is often influenced strongly by, the other two.

In the Soviet Union, the control of society by the Communist Party and state had precluded the development of civil society for several decades. Soon after Gorbachev came to power, however, he launched a program of reforms that represented a sharp change in the state's relationship with social organizations and thus stimulated the beginning of the growth of civil society.<sup>3</sup> After the unveiling of perestroika in 1986, "informal groups" that were independent of control by the party and state proliferated with astonishing rapidity.<sup>4</sup> The Soviet press reported that about thirty thousand informal groups had come into existence by 1988, and Geoffrey Hosking estimated that about sixty thousand such groups were present in the Soviet Union by 1990.<sup>5</sup> Those observers who predicted that the trends that were evident in the Soviet Union during the late 1980s would continue throughout the 1990s expected that an extensive network of nongovernmental organizations would be flourishing in Russia by the turn of the century.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of Western scholars published works that expressed optimism concerning the prospects for the further growth of independent social organizations in the Soviet Union and Russia. Such assessments emphasized that Soviet society had been transformed between the 1930s and the 1980s. Gail Lapidus described the way in which the Soviet Union had changed from a predominantly peasant society to an industrialized, urbanized society with a more differentiated social structure and "an increasingly articulate and assertive middle class."<sup>6</sup> Moshe Lewin argued that the urbanization of the Soviet Union had created a more complex society in which clusters of educated citizens coalesced to seek representation of their interests.<sup>7</sup> S. Frederick Starr reported that the urbanization of the USSR had produced citizens who were more independent, critical, and bold in defending their rights, and that rising levels of education had heightened the sense of personal autonomy and the capacity for individual initiative.<sup>8</sup> Marcia Weigle and Jim Butterfield contended that the modernization of Soviet society had "generated autonomous social interests and the need for changes in social and economic organization that were ignored or resisted by the Communist regimes."<sup>9</sup> All of those scholars agreed that Gorbachev's reforms constituted an attempt to adapt the Soviet political and economic structures to fit the demands presented by a complex, modernized society.<sup>10</sup>

Those analyses affirmed that the initiative for change in the Soviet Union had shifted from the state to society.<sup>11</sup> With the exhaustion of the political regime's capacity to engineer further social transformation, social groups had stepped forward to offer their visions of change.<sup>12</sup> Some analysts, like Starr and Lewin, suggested that the Soviet political regime had no alternative but to adapt to the demands of an increasingly impatient and assertive society.<sup>13</sup> As a result, Lewin implied, the growth of civil society in the USSR had become an irreversible trend: "The coalescence of a civil society, capable of extracurricular action and opinion making, independent of the wishes of the state, marks the start of a new age, from which there is no turning back."<sup>14</sup> Of all the scholars who have been quoted above, Starr and Lewin were most unreserved in their optimism concerning the prospects

for the further growth of nongovernmental organizations and the strengthening of civil society in the USSR. Taking a more cautious approach, Gail Lapidus emphasized that, although a civil society was emerging in the Soviet Union, the trends that had led to that development had "complex and contradictory implications," and that "constraints on far-reaching liberalization" were imposed by a number of factors, including the Soviet political structures and attitudes rooted in the political culture.<sup>15</sup>

### **Assessments of the Experience of the 1990s: The Tempering of Hopes for Social Organizations in Russia**

By the end of the 1990s, a variety of Russian and Western scholars had reached consensus on the disappointment of the hopes for the strengthening of social organizations and the rapid growth of civil society in Russia that had been aroused during the period of perestroika. As K. G. Kholodkovsky and his colleagues put it in 1998, the civil society that was emerging in Russia in the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s had not come close to fulfilling its potential several years later.<sup>16</sup> In the view of those scholars, the "takeoff" of social organizations and voluntary activism in the late 1980s had been followed by a "relative slump" (*otnositel'nyi spad*) in the 1990s.<sup>17</sup> V. G. Khoros and his colleagues were in essential agreement, noting that after the demise of the Soviet state, the potential for the flourishing of the elements of civil society "was significantly narrowed."<sup>18</sup> At the end of the 1990s, Z. T. Golenkova said that the development of the sphere of independent social organizations in Russia had been restricted, so that there was no civil society that would correspond adequately to the needs of democracy, although "small oases of autonomous social life" had survived.<sup>19</sup>

Most discouraging was the conclusion offered by Khoros and his associates that Russia not only will not succeed in following the path of the West in the growth of nonstate organizations, but also lags far behind many countries in Asia and Latin America with respect to the basic parameters of civil society.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Russia does not compare favorably with many developing or semideveloped countries in the development of independent social organizations. G. Vainshtein and K. G. Kholodkovsky both argued that civil society in Russia in the late 1990s had acquired deformed or distorted (*urodlivye*) features.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, some progress had been counted by nongovernmental organizations during the 1990s. The size of the third sector in Russia was significant; Paul LeGendre estimated in 1998 that there were about sixty thousand nonprofit organizations in that country,<sup>22</sup> and in Moscow alone, according to G. Lapina, about fifteen thousand nonprofit organizations had registered by 1999.<sup>23</sup> The positive aspects of the life of nongovernmental organizations in Russia were their mere survival, the dedication of the activists who struggled to keep such organizations going, and the services that they managed to provide for members of the population.<sup>24</sup> Valerie Sperling, an American scholar who engaged in extensive study of Russian women's organizations, described such organizations of the 1990s as expanding, but struggling.<sup>25</sup> Most empirically based scholarly analysis of the middle and late 1990s saw a limited but still growing role for nonprofit organizations in Russian

society.<sup>26</sup> Khoros and his colleagues said that in view of the legacy and conditions of their country, what was surprising was not that the structures of civil society were developing slowly, but that they were developing at all. They added, however, that the institutions of the third sector were “only a thin film (*plenochka*) on the surface of society.”<sup>27</sup> The consensus of Russian scholarly sources reinforces the conclusion of Khoros and his associates that in postcommunist Russia, nongovernmental organizations continue to play a marginal role in society, as they “remain on the periphery of social development.”<sup>28</sup> The general condition of such organizations by the end of the 1990s was disappointing in relation to the optimistic expectations that had been fostered by the changes of the late 1980s.

### **Problems of Social Organizations in Russia**

The major Russian scholarly sources on social organizations note that fundamental attitudinal problems plague attempts to organize cooperative endeavors involving voluntary participation at the grassroots in their country. Kholodkovsky and his colleagues recognize that the atmosphere (*nastroenie*) of contemporary Russian society is colored by pervasive mutual alienation and distrust among citizens.<sup>29</sup> Those authors see their country as being in the throes of the “postcommunist syndrome,” so that after the euphoria accompanying the apparent victory of democratic forces faded, most citizens came to share feelings of powerlessness, passivity, pessimism, fear of further changes, and nostalgia for a paternalistic state.<sup>30</sup> Khoros and his associates attribute some of the handicaps of social organizations in postcommunist Russia to the unintended attitudinal legacy of the Soviet system, which implicitly fostered the growth of “privatism” in people’s values in reaction to the often phony collectivism that was imposed by the party-state regime.<sup>31</sup> Kholodkovsky describes the “new Russian individualism” of the postcommunist period as a direct continuation of the opportunistic individualism of Soviet citizens, expressing the outlook of a person who feels free from the norms of the old socialist order and is highly skeptical about the genuineness of other guidelines to conduct, such as those consistent with liberal democracy and civil society. He implies that such amoral individualism discourages most Russian citizens from participating voluntarily in the work of independent social organizations that attempt to change society from the bottom up.<sup>32</sup>

Russian scholars argue that the lack of trust among citizens in Russia discourages the growth of cooperation in self-governing social organizations. Kholodkovsky reports that in relations among people in contemporary Russia, there is a low level of mutual trust, resulting in reluctance to engage in reciprocally beneficial activity outside the circle of family members and close friends, and that feelings of mutual obligation are accepted only inside that circle of intimate relationships.<sup>33</sup> Another part of the attitudinal legacy of the Soviet system is the tendency of social organizations to rely on support from the state to strengthen their position.<sup>34</sup> Olga Alekseeva has asserted that having grown up in the epoch of socialism and having been accustomed to subordination to the will of political leaders, most Russians involved in charitable societies have not acquired the habit of independent activity.<sup>35</sup>

A strong consensus of Russian scholars adds that the attitudes that have discouraged voluntary participation in social organizations have been reinforced by the economic crisis into which the country was plunged during the 1990s. Kholodkovsky says that the effect of the severe economic decline in postcommunist Russia and the disappointment of the earlier hopes for the success of political and economic reforms ensured the dominance of a mood of apathy and alienation from public life.<sup>36</sup> Oleg Ianitsky has emphasized that by the middle of the 1990s, most people in Russia were so deeply engaged in a struggle to survive and were so "morally depressed" that they were unable to serve as the basis for an environmentalist movement.<sup>37</sup> According to Kholodkovsky, the system of priorities for

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most of the population in that decade was conditioned by "a struggle for survival in conditions of economic crisis," precluding the possibility that most citizens would find it possible to give much time and energy to service that did not bring them material reward; the stresses of daily life made it impossible for the majority of people to provide a broad base

of support for social associations.<sup>38</sup> Vainshtein has observed that as most families have become preoccupied with the struggle for economic survival, the atomization of society has been intensified, hindering "the development of progressive tendencies of associational life and democratic participation."<sup>39</sup> Olga Alekseeva has noted that, as a whole, Russian society regards the noncommercial sector with distrust, and most citizens consider charitable organizations to be a form of "organized theft."<sup>40</sup> Also, there is said to be a high level of distrust among the activists of different nongovernmental organizations,<sup>41</sup> reflected in the lack of cooperation among women's organizations in Moscow, which has been described by Western researchers.<sup>42</sup> Golenkova adds that the economic catastrophe experienced by Russia during the 1990s has resulted in the "mass impoverishment" of most of the population, including those sections of society, such as the middle class and the young, that should have been the most interested in the development of civil society.<sup>43</sup>

Many nongovernmental organizations in Russia have been created in the manner described by Valerie Sperling, with a few committed activists forming groups through friendship networks or among acquaintances in the workplace.<sup>44</sup> Sperling discovered that many of the women's organizations that she studied have remained very small, being largely confined to the original group of founders.<sup>45</sup> James Richter notes that Russian social service organizations frequently have imitated "the Soviet pattern of small private worlds where a small circle of activists allocated organizational resources according to personal loyalty rather than more rational criteria."<sup>46</sup> Alekseeva said in 1994 that in the majority of Russian charitable organizations, the leaders carried most of the weight of work. She referred

to such entities as “author’s organizations,” since “everything in them is subordinated to the idea, character, and program of one person.”<sup>47</sup> (Alekseeva added that the organizations that had more staff and facilities were usually those with support from the state; most of those have carried over from the Soviet era.) As Laura Henry puts it, many nongovernmental organizations in Russia are really “NGIs,” or “non-governmental individuals—organizations based on family networks or a charismatic leader.”<sup>48</sup> The Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers are a notable exception to the general pattern in the sense that they have been able to attract participation by wider circles of members and at times have enjoyed success in influencing government policy. Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom has argued persuasively that the goals of the Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers are compatible with the dominant values of Russian society, which has made it possible for the organizations to win the trust of the public.<sup>49</sup> It might be added that a large number of the members of those committees have had a strong personal motivation to work toward their collective goals. There are very few similar examples of success among Russian nongovernmental organizations, however.

Undoubtedly, the dedication of the small circles of public-spirited activists in independent social organizations in Russia is one of the greatest assets of such organizations, as the most optimistic Western assessments of NGOs in Russia emphasize.<sup>50</sup> However, most social organizations in Russia that have been formed by a few activists with a strong sense of mission do not even attempt to recruit large numbers of new members. According to Sperling, although the women’s groups that she studied have very little income, “they lack membership-building strategies, and seem almost disinterested in attracting new members.”<sup>51</sup> She suggests that one reason that the leaders of such groups lack interest in recruiting new members is that most of those organizations do not collect dues or fees from their members.<sup>52</sup> Khoros noted that during the 1990s, many leaders of Russian nongovernmental organizations, such as environmental activists, left their social movements to find more favorable positions in business, political parties, or government.<sup>53</sup> In the middle of the 1990s, Alekseeva described a lack of professionalism and efficiency in the management of most charitable organizations, as reflected in the absence of clear relationships of authority and responsibility.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that the internal operations of some nonprofit organizations in Russia have improved since the mid-1990s, as a number of leaders of such organizations have received professionally oriented training, sometimes in workshops led by Western or Russian experts. It is hard to know how widespread such improvement has been—or how many leaders of social organizations in Russia have remained essentially indifferent to such training.<sup>55</sup>

Most of the nongovernmental organizations in Russia not only lack a strategy for expanding their membership, but also function with limited financial resources. As Kholodkovsky puts it, during the 1990s most social groups were in financial circumstances that made it difficult for them to make ends meet, so that many charitable organizations were compelled to suspend their service work from time to time.<sup>56</sup> In 1999 G. Lapina offered the assessment that the principal weakness of the third sector in Russia was its absence of means of financial support.<sup>57</sup>

A few years before, Olga Alekseeva had depicted many charitable organizations as striving to organize activities that were possible purely on the basis of their own assets, particularly with volunteer participation, without spending substantial amounts of money.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, Valerie Sperling has characterized most women's organizations in Russia in the 1990s as "resource-poor" and as "run by volunteers on 'enthusiasm,' while the economic circumstances surrounding them became increasingly desperate."<sup>59</sup> She gives a detailed description of the consequences for such organizations of their deficits of financial resources, including a lack of office space; a lack of telephones, faxes, computers, and other equipment; the inability to buy train and airplane tickets; a lack of paid staff; and the necessity for many activists in the organizations to work multiple jobs to support themselves.<sup>60</sup> Yet according to Sperling, most of those organizations did not attempt to engage in any organized domestic fundraising.<sup>61</sup> She notes that the result of severe financial constraints is to discourage women's organizations from engaging in outreach activities, whether in the form of recruiting membership, fundraising, or promoting support for their goals among the general population.<sup>62</sup> It might be added that the women's organizations that Sperling studied generally focus on feminist goals, which, as other Western scholars have noted, are not supported by most Russians.<sup>63</sup> In general, Russian women's groups are trapped in a vicious circle; their lack of an adequate basis of financial support discourages them from seeking to expand their membership or raise funds from a wide range of potential supporters, thus ensuring that they will remain inadequately funded.<sup>64</sup>

A major source of financial support for nongovernmental organizations in Western countries is grants from government agencies, which usually are provided on the basis of objective criteria in a process of competition. The fact that such a system of government assistance for NGOs has not been instituted in Russia is another source of the poverty of independent organizations in that country.<sup>65</sup> In addition, philanthropy by businesses is not highly developed in Russia, perhaps due to economic instability, the absence of legislation assuring adequate tax benefits for donations to nonprofit organizations, and the lack of a tradition of systematic charitable benevolence by corporations.<sup>66</sup> G. Lapina says that there are almost no cases "in which commercial structures in Russia directly finance any sort of social organizations or create, as in the West, public or private charitable funds." She adds that "assistance from entrepreneurs is limited mainly to one-time actions and pure philanthropy, the scale of which depends exclusively on their wishes," and also depends on the "advertising effect" that will be created by the donations.<sup>67</sup> According to Sperling, many leaders of social organizations are reluctant to seek sponsorship from outside sources, because of their fear that they will lose control over the goals of their organizations as the result of the sponsorship.<sup>68</sup> The example of Western societies shows that religious organizations can be another major source of financial support for nonprofit organizations that provide social services. In Russia, however, the Orthodox Church engages in charitable activity mainly through its own local parishes and has not established regular funding for independent social organizations.<sup>69</sup>

In the absence of financial support from numerous individual donors, grants from government, donations from businesses, or assistance from religious organizations, some nonprofit associations in Russia bring in a modest income by renting property that they own,<sup>70</sup> although that is possible only for those organizations that have offices, which mainly are groups that were subsidized by the state in the Soviet system. Also, soon after the Communist Party lost power in Russia, many nongovernmental organizations, including many charitable organizations, discovered that they could add an important source of income by engaging in subsidiary commercial activities.<sup>71</sup> According to Lapina, however, some associations that were founded as nonprofit organizations have made commercial operations their main activity, to provide a higher standard of living for their officers.<sup>72</sup> In Khoros's view, many social groups that were formed to achieve social and political reforms have been transformed into self-serving organizations, preoccupied with ensuring survival for their own structures, and implicitly, with providing economic security for their leaders.<sup>73</sup> Ianitsky observes that in conditions of economic crisis, in which fundamental changes in policy have come to appear utopian, environmentalist organizations have shifted to a more conservative strategy, striving primarily to conserve and defend their own positions.<sup>74</sup>

Finding it very difficult to identify adequate domestic sources of financial assistance, some Russian social organizations have sought funding from international sources, such as foreign governments and foundations. Feminist and environmentalist groups have been among those that have depended heavily on grants from foreign governments and foundations for their financial survival.<sup>75</sup> In Sperling's words, "driven by the lack of an economic infrastructure to support grassroots social movements, women's organizations in Russia are increasingly turning to international sources of support, which bring with them a host of benefits as well as unintended side effects."<sup>76</sup> Research by Western scholars has indicated that, although grants from foreign agencies did provide some benefit by making it possible for some women's groups to acquire better offices and equipment, the main effect of such foreign funding was an increase in divisiveness and a decrease in cooperation among Russian women's organizations, as groups competed for grants from abroad and the distinction between the better-funded insiders and the less-favored outsiders was accentuated.<sup>77</sup>

Ianitsky has used similar terms to describe the fragmentation of the Russian environmentalist movement in the 1990s, in part because of competition for assistance from Western donors.<sup>78</sup> A study of environmentalist NGOs in Kazakhstan by Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal reaches the conclusion that reliance on foreign sources of funding weakened those organizations by inducing them to tailor their goals to the wishes of international donors, while they neglected the need to build a base of support among the population of their country.<sup>79</sup> Several other scholars have offered very similar observations concerning the effects of foreign financial aid on nongovernmental organizations in Russia.<sup>80</sup> James Richter reports that "Western efforts to shore up women's organizations within the third sector have widened the gap between the activists and the rest of society."<sup>81</sup> Sarah Henderson's studies have found that foreign funding encourages



Russian women's groups to set goals that reflect the priorities of foreign donors rather than the needs and values of their potential domestic base of support, so that the aid "has widened, rather than bridged, the gap between women's groups and society."<sup>82</sup> Thus, primary reliance on international sources of financial assistance, although apparently attractive to impoverished groups, may create pitfalls for social organizations in Russia.

Although some Russian NGOs have sought assistance from foreign organizations, Iu. Zelikova and E. Fomin contend that most Russians still look on the state as "the basic philanthropist," or the main potential source of financial support for groups that seek to perform social services.<sup>83</sup> Ianitsky has detailed the manner in which environmentalist groups have strengthened their ties with regional government administrations, which became a more important source of financing for those groups during the 1990s.<sup>84</sup> He added that the allocation of appropriations from regional budgets to ecological funds depended heavily on "the will of the head of the oblast' administration or its ecological department." In the view of Sergei Zverev and his colleagues, during the 1990s social organizations and local governments in Russia often moved into closer relationships, as social organizations sought financial support from the local governments, and the local governments recruited social organizations to carry out varied tasks.<sup>85</sup> During that decade, many local and regional administrations created charitable funds and social organizations that were controlled by local officials and functioned virtually as departments of the local or regional governments.<sup>86</sup>

As Ianitsky sees it, as most environmentalist organizations have moved closer to the state, they have distanced themselves from civil society, since their dependence on regional governments for support has meant that typically a local environmentalist group has found itself "under the control of the local administration" and has become less concerned with maintaining a social base of support.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Sperling has found that the leaders of women's organizations attach less importance to their relationship with their potential supporters in the population than to their relationship with policymakers; "the movement tends to focus most on connections with the state, and least on rallying the public to their cause."<sup>88</sup> Kholodkovsky characterizes those social associations that succeeded in gaining financial support from government as "fusing with state organs and becoming encased in the bureaucratic apparatus."<sup>89</sup> Ianitsky argues that the closer ties with government agencies have transformed the leaders of the environmental movement into "ordinary state employees" (*obyknovennye sluzhashchie*) and thus have deepened the division between those leaders who have found advantageous positions, and their followers, who have been left in a much more unfavorable condition.<sup>90</sup> Consistent with that characterization, Kholodkovsky concludes that many social organizations in Russia that originally had great promise have become ossified and bureaucratized, or even worse, have become a refuge for criminal elements.<sup>91</sup>

The functioning of social organizations and their relationship with the state can only be understood fully if they are seen in a wider perspective that highlights the interests that are dominant in Russian politics and identifies the most effective

ways of gaining benefits from state agencies. Kholodkovsky points out that a major hindrance to the development of the kind of relations between the state and social organizations that would be consistent with the criteria of a civil society is the intertwining of the political and capitalist elites, which has created a combined oligarchy dominating the economy and the state.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, I. S. Semenenko contends that “the intertwining of state structures and interest groups, which are in a position to dictate for themselves the conditions and ‘rules of the game,’” has led to the forming of an oligarchical state that is incompatible with the political pluralism that would be necessary for civil society and democracy.<sup>93</sup> According to S. P. Peregudov, the interest groups that have the closest ties with state structures and the greatest influence are production associations,<sup>94</sup> which

were owned and controlled by the state in the Soviet system and which still have only nominal separation from the government. Khoros and his associates report that there has been a fusion of governmental and business elites in postcommunist Russia, so that the distance between the state administration

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and financial-industrial capital “has sharply contracted,” with a frequent exchange of personnel between business and political elite positions, facilitating a ruling bloc in which “all the elite groups have been tightly welded with one another.”<sup>95</sup> Some have characterized the dominant insider groups in contemporary Russia as “clan-corporatist structures,”<sup>96</sup> which are largely headed by people who occupied high-ranking positions in the privileged nomenklatura stratum in the Soviet system.

In a setting in which the relationships between government officials and economic oligarchs are highly bureaucratized and insulated from outside interests, the exercise of influence on decision making is determined primarily by personal connections and tradeoffs at the elite level.<sup>97</sup> Semenenko notes that the crucial factor ensuring the effective advancement of the interests of elite groups is the presence of their representatives in positions of state authority.<sup>98</sup> He also points out that regionally based interests are most effectively represented if they have ties with influential individual leaders who have good connections with the central government.<sup>99</sup> Not surprisingly, James Richter reports that nongovernmental organizations such as women’s groups are more likely to have success in garnering resources from government if their leaders have close connections with leaders in local government.<sup>100</sup> However, Laura Henry emphasizes that “there are very few institutionalized channels for public participation or NGO access” to government, since “elite groups such as the Russian oligarchs or local political officials hold the power to influence or even set policy,” severely limiting opportunities for nonelite groups to exert influence.<sup>101</sup>

Of course, the importance of personal connections and the elaboration of patron-client relationships guarantee a high level of corruption in government (or ensure that the use of power for personal gain is so much the norm that it should hardly be labeled corruption), so that Khoros and his colleagues summarize the results of the transition in Russia during the 1990s not as the growth of civil society, but as the establishment of a "client-criminal" society.<sup>102</sup> In their analysis of the contemporary Russian political system, A. A. Galkin and Iu. A. Krasin draw a stark contrast between the atomization of most of society and the tight organization of oligarchical groups at the elite level. They conclude that the "crystallization" of those elite interests at a far more rapid rate than the consolidation of the interests of grassroots groups "hampers and deforms the whole process of establishment of civil society."<sup>103</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Revenge of the State**

The basic shortcoming of the most optimistic assessments of the potential for rapid growth of independent social organizations in Russia, such as the interpretations that were offered in the late 1980s and early 1990s by S. Frederick Starr and Moshe Lewin, was their underestimation of the importance of the political sphere in influencing economic and social change. In accordance with both Marxist and liberal democratic theories, those scholars assumed that the political superstructures would play a relatively passive role in responding to the pressures for transformation that the economic and social substructures of the Soviet system were generating.<sup>104</sup> The modernization of the economy of the USSR had created an urbanized society that increasingly demanded the liberalization of the political system. The party-state regime had lost its capacity to initiate social restructuring and was retreating in the face of pressures from an increasingly assertive society. The capacity of Soviet citizens to pursue their interests by informal means supposedly suggested that they were on the verge of forming a civil society similar to that in Western countries, in which citizens' interests would be articulated in a manner consistent with the principles of liberal democracy.

Such analyses neglected the manner in which the Soviet political regime had influenced the forming of social relationships and the attitudes of Soviet citizens. We should recall that during the Stalin years, political structures achieved a high degree of penetration of social organization.<sup>105</sup> In his study of state-owned factories in China, Andrew Walder has perceptively delineated the way in which central planning in the economy and Communist Party penetration of the workplace have created a pervasive pattern of patron-client relations and taught citizens to take advantage of personal ties and corruption to serve their interests and the needs of their families.<sup>106</sup> Ken Jowitt has deftly depicted the impact of Leninist political systems on popular attitudes and mores, as citizens learn to distinguish between the sphere of intimate personal relations, in which trust and loyalty may be preserved, and the public sphere, where ethical principles do not apply and amoral, self-seeking behavior is permissible.<sup>107</sup> When Starr reported that Soviet citizens were pulling strings and cutting deals to obtain benefits for their families,<sup>108</sup> he described the kind of behavior to which those citizens had been social-

ized under the Soviet regime. But that behavior actually is inimical to the growth of independent social organizations, in which interpersonal trust is an indispensable element of social capital for those seeking to develop organized, cooperative endeavors. The influence of the Soviet party-state regime had pervaded social organization, even informal social relationships and popular attitudes, in a way that demonstrated the state's impact on society. Under communist rule, "society" was not developing autonomously, since the character of social relationships and the manner of pursuing personal interests were colored by the pervasive influence of the state.

The political regime has continued to have a crucial impact on social organization in postcommunist Russia, in a way that many scholars did not anticipate before the demise of the Soviet system. The importance of the political dimension for the forming of civil society had been neglected by some observers, but it had been underlined by Andrew Arato as early as 1991, when he emphasized that the growing number of autonomous social groups would not be able to resolve the crisis of Soviet society by themselves, but would need to create "new institutions of political mediations" to achieve their goals.<sup>109</sup> The writings of those who expected the automatic emergence of networks of social organizations in a robust civil society as a result of the industrialization and urbanization of the Soviet Union reflected the assumptions of modernization theory, with its emphasis on the common effects of the economic and social trends that accompany modern technological development. Yet shortly before the breakup of the USSR, Steven Fish insisted that the key to the dynamic of change in Russia would be "found in the supremely *political* factors of *domination* and *resistance*, which are not captured by modernization theory and socio-economic analysis."<sup>110</sup> Several years later it was apparent, as Vainshtein remarked, that in postcommunist Russia the principal agents of social transformation were groups in the political elite, and state power (*vlast'*) was "the main engine of social transformation," which retained "the capacity to manipulate social changes to serve its own interests."<sup>111</sup> Perhaps the greatest surprise in Russia since the early 1990s, in relation to the expectations of those who had hoped for the growth of independent social organizations and democratic governance in that country, has been the degree to which the state has been able to maintain its dominance over society.<sup>112</sup>

It is widely recognized that while the economy of Russia was undergoing major transformation during the 1990s, elite groups were able to control the forming of new property relations and the new class structure.<sup>113</sup> It has become clear that those who held the levers of power in the Russian state manipulated the process of the privatization of property to ensure that they would benefit from that process.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the state has exerted powerful influence on the character of the social organizations that have taken shape in postcommunist Russia, and the political elite has had considerable success in manipulating the channels of representation of social groups to protect its own interests. One of the insights that we may gain from observing the experience of Russia since the early 1990s is that organizations in the third sector do not develop in isolation from the state and the economy, but are profoundly influenced by the history and character of

institutions in those sectors.<sup>115</sup> The experience of social organizations in Russia since the late 1980s confirms the insights of the neoinstitutionalist perspective offered by Theda Skocpol:

The meanings of public life and the collective forms through which groups become aware of political goals and work to attain them arise, not from societies alone, but at the meeting points of states and societies. Consequently, the formation, let alone the political capacities, of such apparently purely socioeconomic phenomena as interest groups and classes depends in significant measure on the structures and activities of the very states the social actors, in turn, seek to influence.<sup>116</sup>

Although the formal structures of the Soviet state have largely been replaced, the traces of their influence are still apparent in social as well as political institutions.<sup>117</sup> That paradoxical situation can be explained, at least in part, by the generalization that was articulated by Alexander Smolar in the mid-1990s, when he said that after the Communist Parties lost power in a number of countries, although the formal structures of the old system were replaced, the “shadow society” of informal social ties survived.<sup>118</sup> As we have seen, the attitudes and behavior of Russian citizens still reflect the influence of mores of the Soviet system, leading to distrust and apathy, which have been intensified by the struggle for survival that has been necessitated by the consequences of economic transformation for the majority of the population. The attitudinal context is a major factor creating an unfavorable environment for the expansion of independent social organizations that might serve as channels of popular initiative, carrying out change from the bottom up. Unfortunately, as studies by several scholars have shown, most nongovernmental organizations of Russia are caught in a vicious circle, in which their inadequate base of financial support severely constrains their potential to increase membership and raise funds, thus ensuring the perpetuation of their threadbare material status and inducing them to depend on patronage from government officials as a means of attracting funding.<sup>119</sup>

The most impressive accomplishment of social organizations in Russia has been to survive in such unfavorable circumstances. I would argue that although such organizations can only be characterized as marginal in terms of their financial base, their political impact, and their role in the lives of most citizens, we should not rule out all hope for the expansion and strengthening of third sector organizations in Russia. In the first place, we should remember that independent social organizations in that country are still very young. Second, as Laura McIntosh Sundstrom’s research on the Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers has shown, organizations whose goals are understood and supported by the majority of the population do have a chance to achieve considerable vitality. It is true that stories of such successes among Russian social organizations are still very rare. It is also true that foreign organizations that have given grants to Russian nongovernmental organizations have been criticized for often failing to consider NGOs’ potential for gaining a base of popular support within domestic society. Yet a third cause for hope is that it is possible that Western funding agencies may learn from their experience, particularly in light of such criticism, and may direct more assistance to organizations whose goals evoke an enthusiastic response from large groups of Russian citizens.

Social organizations that perform services of value to large segments of the population of Russia may gradually win greater trust from the majority of the people, although they still must struggle with the serious problem of a deficiency of financial resources. Even though the period of the most rapid and dramatic postcommunist transition in Russia is over, there is no reason to assume that the institutions that the transition has produced are impervious to change. As we leave behind the hopes of either apocalyptic triumph or catastrophic collapse for civil society in Russia, we may look for signs of more "small deeds" accomplished by nongovernmental organizations in that country. My purpose in this article has not been to demonstrate that the prospects of social organizations in Russia are hopeless. Rather, my purpose has been to argue in favor of a neoinstitutionalist interpretation of the development of such organizations, an approach that could benefit from the sobering lessons of the period since 1991 and that would focus on the interaction between state and society, the dialectic of the mutual influence of political structures and social groups.

#### NOTES

1. In this article, the terms "social organization" and "nongovernmental organization" are used interchangeably. The choice of terminology to describe such organizations seems to depend on the professional and disciplinary specialization of each author. The label "social organization" corresponds to the Russian term *obshchestvennaia organizatsiia*, which can also be translated as "public organization," and implicitly refers to nonstate (*negosudarstvennye*) organizations. There is considerable overlap between the meaning of "nongovernmental organization" and the meaning of "nonprofit organization," or "non-commercial organization."

2. There are many different definitions of civil society. The conception that is used in this article is similar to that of M. Steven Fish, "Russia's Fourth Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July 1994): 31; and Heath B. Chamberlain, "On the Search for Civil Society in China," *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (April 1993): 202–09. The arguments in favor of the generalization that a strong civil society contributes to the base of support for a democratic political regime are summarized by Larry Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July 1994): 7–11. On the relationship between civil society and democracy, see also Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

3. Gail W. Lapidus, "State and Society: Toward the Emergence of a Civil Society in the Soviet Union," in *Politics, Society, and Nationality inside Gorbachev's Russia*, ed. Seweryn Bialer (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989), 123–24.

4. Lapidus, "State and Society," 138; Vladimir Brovkin, "Revolution from Above: Informal Political Associations in Russia, 1988–1989," *Soviet Studies* 42, no. 2 (April 1990): 233, 234; Jim Butterfield and Marcia Weigle, "Unofficial Social Groups and Regime Response in the Soviet Union," in *Perestroika from Below: Social Movements in the Soviet Union*, ed. Judith B. Sedaitis and Jim Butterfield (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 175; Jim Butterfield and Judith B. Sedaitis, "The Emergence of Social Movements in the Soviet Union," in *Perestroika from Below: Social Movements in the Soviet Union*, 1; Marcia A. Weigle and Jim Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regimes: The Logic of Emergence," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 1 (October 1992): 15; Anne White, "Charity, Self-help and Politics in Russia, 1985–91," *Europe-Asia Studies* 45, no. 5 (October 1993): 797.

5. Geoffrey Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 64.

6. Lapidus, "State and Society," 125–26.
7. Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation*, expanded ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 147.
8. S. Frederick Starr, "The Soviet Union: A Civil Society," *Foreign Policy* 70 (spring 1988): 28–31.
9. Weigle and Butterfield, "Civil Society," 18.
10. Lapidus, "State and Society," 12.
11. Starr, "The Soviet Union," 34: "The initiative for ideas had shifted from state to society in a process of de facto democratization."
12. Butterfield and Sedaitis, "The Emergence," 1, 10. See also Butterfield and Weigle, "Unofficial Social Groups," 175, 191, about the changed relationship between the state and society in the Soviet Union.
13. Starr, "The Soviet Union," 27; Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon*, 172.
14. *Ibid.*, 147.
15. Lapidus, "State and Society," 130, 142, 143.
16. K. G. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii: Struktury i soznanie* (Moscow: Nauka, 1998), 213.
17. *Ibid.*, 150.
18. V. G. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: Mirovoi opyt i problemy Rossii* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1998), 267.
19. Z. T. Golenkova, "Al'ternativy i perspektivy razvitiia grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Rossii," in *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo: teoriia, istoriia, sovremennost'*, ed. Z. T. Golenkova (Moscow: Institut Sotsiologii RAN, 1999), 14. She reached a similar conclusion in "Civil Society in Russia," *Russian Social Science Review* 40, no. 1 (January-February 1999): 4: "Civil society in Russia today is undeveloped; it is in a formational stage; many of its elements have been suppressed or 'blocked.' . . . But certain of its specific elements, driven into small oases of autonomous social life, do exist." The general conclusions of the Russian scholarly sources cited above are supported by Graeme Gill and Roger D. Markwick, *Russia's Stillborn Democracy? From Gorbachev to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 205: "A robust and vigorous civil society has not emerged." See also 249–51. Those authors describe civil society in contemporary Russia as "stunted" (251).
20. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 291, 303.
21. G. Vainshtein, "Formirovanie grazhdanskogo obshchestva v Rossii: Nadezhdy I real'nost'," *Mirovaia ekonomika I mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* 10 (1998): 33; Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 218–19.
22. Paul LeGendre et al., *Working with the Non-Profit Sector in Russia* (Kent, UK: CAF Russia, 1998), xvii, 2.1. I. E. Gorodetskaia, "Vozrozhdenie blagotvoritel'nosti v Rossii," in *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii: Zapadnaia paradigma i rossiiskaia real'nost'*, ed. K. G. Kholodkovsky (Moscow: Institut Mirovoi Ekonomiki i Mezhdunarodnykh Otnoshenii, 1996), 102, had estimated that about 35,000 nongovernmental organizations were operating in Russia by 1995. To provide some basis of comparison, Gorodetskaia says that at the beginning of the 1990s, there were over 250,000 nongovernmental organizations in Britain, about 600,000 in France, and nearly one million in the United States.
23. G. Lapina, "Sotsial'noe izmerenie 'tret'ego sektora,'" *Rossiiskii ekonomicheskii zhurnal* 7 (1999): 87, reported that in Moscow, about 15,000 noncommercial organizations had registered.
24. That assessment is consistent with the observations offered by Gorodetskaia, "Vozrozhdenie," 102. That source also suggested that the leaders of many NGOs had begun to take a more professional approach to their work. In an explanation of the motivation of the leaders of some social organizations, Olga Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet detiam? O rabote blagotvoritel'nykh organizatsii* (Moscow: CAF, Rossiiskoe Predstavitel'stvo, 1994), 36, makes the point that in some organizations, such as those of parents of children with disabilities, most leaders have a personal reason for work in the organizations, connected with

their children's condition.

25. Valerie Sperling, *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 14.

26. Lapina, "Sotsial'noe izmerenie," 90.

27. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 294.

28. *Ibid.*, 187.

29. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 208.

30. *Ibid.*, 233.

31. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 287. That conclusion is consistent with the analysis of attitudinal trends in societies under communist rule that is provided by Alexander Smolar, "From Opposition to Atomization," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (January 1996): 33: "Flight from the public to the private sphere may be regarded as a natural reaction to years of forced participation and mobilization. Everyday life under socialism taught people to survive as individuals and to fear any association with independent collective action." Lapidus, "State and Society," 129, had observed that during the Brezhnev years there had been a trend toward the increasing privatization of social life in the Soviet Union, as many citizens shifted their energy from participation in public endeavors to the pursuit of private interests in the areas of unofficial culture and material consumption. Steven Fish, "The Emergence of Independent Associations and the Transformation of Russian Political Society," *Journal of Communist Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 1991): 328, depicted cynicism as abundant—and idealism in short supply—in postcommunist Russia, with the consequence that few Russians were willing to dedicate substantial time and energy to work in independent political organizations. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 196, reports that one factor "contributing to the lack of networking and coalition building between Russian women's groups is the totalitarian legacy of 'atomization.'"

32. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 236–37.

33. *Ibid.*, 236.

34. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 201.

35. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 45. She argued that many Russians were so afraid of change that they preferred a "beggary existence to a change in the style of life and type of pursuits, as they expected an improvement in position from the next ruler" (47).

36. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 210.

37. Oleg N. Ianitsky, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie v Rossii: kriticheskii analiz* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk, Institut Sotsiologii, 1996), 118. The conclusion that, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, "environmental advocacy groups in Russia have been dramatically weaker and far less mass based" is also endorsed by Leslie Powell, "Evaluating Foreign Strategies: Foreign Foundations and Russian Environmental NGOs," working paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000, 7.

38. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 54, 141. Gorodetskaia, "Vozrozhdenie," 106, explains the small number of volunteers involved in the work of charitable organizations in Russia in terms of the economic conditions that make it difficult if not impossible for most citizens to devote time and effort to any cause that does not promise to give them material reward.

39. Vainshtein, "Formirovanie grazhdanskogo," 33. That conclusion is also consistent with the comparative perspective provided by Smolar, "From Opposition to Atomization," 3, 34.

40. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 46. That agrees with the assessment by Sergei Zverev, E. F. Vinikurov, and A. B. Shein, *Opyt i problemy finansirovaniia NKO Rossii* (Moscow: CAF, Rossiiskoe Predstavitel'stvo, 1998), 13: "Despite the fact that the number of social organizations in Russia is very large, the attitude of the majority of the population toward them is cool, to put it mildly."

41. A. Iu. Sungurov, "Mediating Organizations in the Structure of Civil Society: Certain Problems of Russia's Political Modernization," *Russian Politics and Law* 38, no. 4 (July-August 2000): 59, reprinted from *Politicheskie issledovaniia* 6 (1999): 34–48, sees



the main barrier to the development of cooperative ties among nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in Russia as "the mutual distrust characteristic even of activists in the various NPOs (not to speak of most real and/or potential subjects of civil society, now emerging)."

42. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 45, 47–48, 182, reports that "networking" or cooperation among separate women's groups is weak, especially in Moscow. She found greater unity among women activists in Ivanovo, a regional center, in which there is a much smaller number of women's groups. On the lack of cooperation among women's groups in Russia, see also James Richter, "Citizens or Professionals: Evaluating Western Assistance to Russian Women's Organizations," working paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000, 3. A number of scholars who have published research on Russian women's organizations have confirmed that conclusion.

43. Golenkova, "Al'ternativy i perspektivy," 18.

44. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 24.

45. *Ibid.*, 25.

46. Richter, "Citizens or Professionals," 5.

47. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 36.

48. Laura A. Henry, "The Greening of Grassroots Democracy? The Russian Environmental Movement, Foreign Aid, and Democratization," working paper, Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 2001, 10. See also Sarah L. Henderson, "Importing Civil Society: Foreign Aid and the Women's Movement in Russia," *Demokratizatsiya* 8, no. 1 (winter 2000): 69.

49. Lisa McIntosh-Sundstrom, "Transnational Norms and Domestic Contexts: The Cases of Women's and Soldiers' Rights NGOs in Russia," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August–September 2001, 13, 14, 20. She argues that the breadth of public support for the Committees of Soldiers' Mothers reflects popular Russian culture's respect for a woman's traditional role as a mother, as well as general awareness of severe physical harassment of draftees in the military and popular opposition to the first war in Chechnya in 1994–96.

50. M. Holt Ruffin, "Introduction," in *The Post-Soviet Handbook: A Guide to Grassroots Organizations and Resources*, rev. ed., ed. M. Holt Ruffin, Alyssa Deutscher, Catriona Logan, and Richard Upjohn (Seattle: Center for Civil Society International, 1999), 6; and Marcia A. Weigle, *Russia's Liberal Project: State-Society Relations in the Transition from Communism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 377–78. They stress that the high degree of motivation of the leaders and other activists in Russian NGOs is one of the strongest assets of such organizations. Many Russian scholars would agree with that point, and I would certainly affirm it. Those sources, particularly Weigle, differ from the consensus of Russian scholars and from the findings of empirically grounded research by several Western scholars in attributing activism and a devotion to voluntary service to wide circles of the population of Russia. Almost all Russian students of civil society emphasize the sharp contrast between the energy and dedication of a few social and political activists, on the one hand, and the passivity, apathy, and distrust among the majority of the population, on the other hand.

51. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 42. See also 46, 141, 171.

52. *Ibid.*, 171, 172.

53. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 196. See also Powell, "Evaluating Strategies," 8.

54. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 49.

55. In extensive contacts with officers of nongovernmental organizations of three widely separated cities in Russia (Kostroma, Vladivostok, and Syktyvkar) during the last three years, I have encountered some who have begun to attain higher levels of professional expertise in the management and promotion of such organizations, and others who are not interested in enhancing their knowledge of those subjects.

56. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 144. See also Gorodetskaia, "Vozrozhdenie," 107: "The main problem of Russian charitable organizations today is their

all-embracing poverty. . . . In practice, the majority of organizations make ends meet with difficulty and often are forced to stop work on those social programs which demand any sort of significant expenditures.”

57. Lapina, “Sotsial’noe izmerenie,” 89.

58. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 38. She added that at least 70 percent of Russian charitable organizations had only declarations of intentions and no actual programs of activity.

59. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 38, 43.

60. *Ibid.*, 169–70, 178–79. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 45, reported in 1994 that the most serious problem for most Russian charitable organizations was their lack of premises (*pomeshchenie*).

61. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 46. It is also evident that most social organizations in Russia do not recruit a large number of volunteers for their work, nor attempt to do that. LeGendre, *Working with the Non-Profit Sector*, 2.19.

62. *Ibid.*, 47, 261.

63. Russians’ “widespread rejection of feminist principles” is emphasized by McIntosh-Sundstrom, “Transnational Norms,” 24, 31. She notes the lack of public sympathy for attempts to remedy discrimination against women in employment and the sexual harassment of women in workplaces, which are problems of epidemic scale in contemporary Russia. Her argument about the lack of support for feminist values among most of the Russian public is reinforced by Richter, “Citizens or Professionals,” 23, and Tina Nelson, “Democratization, NGOs, and New Technologies: Building Connectivity for Russian Women’s Groups,” working paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, 13, 23.

64. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 177.

65. Lapina, “Sotsial’noe izmerenie,” 89.

66. Iu. Zelikova and E. Fomin, *Blagotvoritel’nye organizatsii Sankt-Peterburga: Spravochnoe izdanie* (Sankt-Peterburg: Sankt-Peterburgskii filial Instituta Sotsiologii RAN, 1996), 97. Those authors point out that when business firms in Russia do furnish assistance to charitable organizations, they usually provide products, equipment, and other noncash benefits, rather than monetary contributions.

67. Lapina, “Sotsial’noe izmerenie,” 89.

68. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 172.

69. Lapina, “Sotsial’noe izmerenie,” 90.

70. Alekseeva, “Kto pomogaet,” 43.

71. *Ibid.*, 44. It seems to be true that the organizations that existed in the Soviet system and inherited some assets from the Soviet era (and often receive some minimal financial assistance from the Russian state today) are more likely to be able to establish commercial enterprises.

72. Lapina, “Sotsial’noe izmerenie,” 88: “Unfortunately, some organizations, having been formed as noncommercial, factually are losing that quality, using their activity mainly for the satisfaction of the personal demands of participants.”

73. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 203.

74. Ianitsky, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie*, 119.

75. LeGendre, *Working with the Non-Profit Sector*, 2.10, reports that Russian women’s organizations and human rights organizations depend mostly on foreign grants for their income, while “social welfare organizations” do not rely heavily on financial support from abroad.

76. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 14. See also 52, 227.

77. *Ibid.*, 232, 233, 236. That generalization is also supported by Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 190, and Richter, “Citizens or Professionals,” 23.

78. Ianitsky, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie*, 120. Ianitsky also attributes divisions among environmentalist groups to other factors, particularly the deliberate attempts by Russian governmental agencies to foment such divisions, and the divergence in ideological goals in the 1990s among ecologists in Russia who had seemed to form a unified front in the late 1980s.

79. Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, "The NGO Paradox: Democratic Goals and Non-Democratic Outcomes in Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 7 (November 1999): 1280.

80. Sarah Mendelson, "Unfinished Business: Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Eastern Europe and Eurasia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 48, no. 3 (May/June 2001): 21. Mendelson's article summarizes the results of a major research project based at Columbia University.

81. Richter, "Citizens or Professionals," 2.

82. Henderson, "Importing Civil Society," 75; see also Henry, "The Greening," 3, 11–12; McIntosh-Sundstrom, "Transnational Norms," 41–42; Sarah L. Henderson, "Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and the Nongovernmental Organization Sector in Russia," *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 2 (March 2002): 140; and Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 236, 264.

83. Zelikova and Fomin, *Blagotvoritel'nye organizatsii*, 82.

84. Ianitsky, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie*, 121.

85. Zverev et al., *Opyt i problemy*, 17. That trend is also noted by E. Belokurova, "Vozdeistvie 'tret'ego sektora' na stanovlenie liberal'noi modeli sotsial'noi politiki v Rossii," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* 10 (1998): 48. That trend reportedly occurred both on the local (city and district) and regional (oblast, krai, or republic) levels.

86. Alekseeva, *Kto pomogaet*, 32; Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 188, 189. "But one can assess such measures as an attempt by the state to place under control the activity of those organizations which dispose of financial independence."

87. Ianitsky, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie*, 123, 138.

88. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 97.

89. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 144. The authors note that some nongovernmental organizations found another way of achieving financial support, by taking part in organized criminal activities. Of course, involvement with organized crime by some Russian nonprofit organizations has further damaged the reputation of such organizations in general, thus increasing their difficulties in obtaining support from the population.

90. Ianitsky, *Ekologicheskoe dvizhenie*, 149. Labeling the leaders of social organizations as *sluzhashchie* is utterly damning in the context of Russian history, as it employs a term of contempt in the vocabulary of Russian reformers.

91. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 253. On the corruption and criminalization of some nongovernmental organizations in Russia, see also Golenkova, "Civil Society," 14, and Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 188, 303.

92. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 74.

93. I. S. Semenenko, "Gruppy interesov v politicheskoe sisteme sovremennoi Rossii: Priblizhenie k zapadnoi modeli?" in *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii: zapadnaia paradigma i rossiiskaia real'nost'*, 44.

94. S. P. Peregudov, "Gruppy interesov i rossiiskoe gosudarstvo," in *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo v Rossii*, 49.

95. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 89.

96. A. Kolganov, "K voprosu o vlasti klanovo-korporativnykh grupp v Rossii," *Voprosy ekonomiki* 6 (2000): 117, 120. Sergei Barzilov and Aleksei Chernyshov, in "Novy nomenklaturnye klany: Real'nosti provintsial'noi politiki," *Svobodnaia mysl'* 5 (1999): 31, assert that clan structures are also dominant at the regional level in Russian politics.

97. Peregudov, "Gruppy interesov," 57, 58. See also Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 89; Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 75. Barzilov and Chernyshov, in "Novy nomenklaturnye klany," observe that at the regional level, informal organization is more important than formal organization. Those interpretations are consistent with the conclusions reached by Gill and Markwick, *Russia's Stillborn Democracy*, 224, 225.

98. I. Semenenko et al., "Politicheskaiia institutionalizatsiia rossiiskogo obshchestva: Gruppy interesov—v protsesse institutionalizatsii?" (roundtable), *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* 3 (1998): 34.

99. Semenenko, "Gruppy interesov," 43.

100. Richter, "Citizens or Professionals," 26. See also LeGendre, *Working with the Non-Profit Sector*, 5.16.

101. Henry, "The Greening," 16.

102. Khoros et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 294. The *Global Corruption Report of Transparency International* says that "corruption is not just a collection of criminal activities in Russia, it is a perverse system of governance." That report ranks Russia between Pakistan and Tanzania in the estimated level of corruption. *RFE/RL Newslines*, 30 October 2001 (e-mail newsletter).

103. A. A. Galkin and Iu. A. Krasin, *Rossii na pereput'e: avtoritarizm ili demokratiia: Varianty razvitiia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Ves' Mir, 1998), 130.

104. On the "society-centered" approaches to explaining politics that are grounded in both liberal and marxist theory, see Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4–5; and Michael McFaul, "State Power, Institutional Change, and the Politics of Privatization in Russia," *World Politics* 47, no. 2 (January 1995): 217.

105. Some scholars have characterized states that have achieved a high degree of penetration of social organizations as "totalitarian." On the distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, see Juan Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes," in *Macropolitical Theory*, vol. 3 of *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 175–411. The concept of totalitarianism has aroused considerable controversy in political science, so it has not been used in the text of this article.

106. Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

107. Ken Jowitt, "The Leninist Legacy," in *Eastern Europe in Revolution*, ed. Ivo Banac (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 209–11.

108. Starr, "The Soviet Union," 28.

109. Andrew Arato, "Social Movements and Civil Society in the Soviet Union," in *Perestroika from Below*, ed. Sedaitis and Butterfield, 203.

110. Fish, "The Emergence," 328.

111. Vainshtein, "Formirovanie grazhdanskogo," 29. Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 213, also emphasizes that in Russia at the current time, the main agents of social change are not at the grassroots level, but are elite groups closely linked with the highest echelons of state power.

112. That fact is stressed by Gill and Markwick, *Russia's Stillborn Democracy*, 237, 248, and 250. Gill and Markwick (250–52) believe that the dominance of the state and the weakness of civil society in postcommunist Russia were reinforced by the strategy of reform from above that was chosen by the top leadership under Boris Yeltsin, which called for the dominance of decision-making by the executive branch of the state. The way in which the concentration of power in the hands of executive leaders in government has discouraged the strengthening of independent social organizations is detailed by M. Steven Fish, "When More is Less: Superexecutive Power and Political Underdevelopment in Russia," in *Russia in the New Century: Stability or Disorder?* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2001), 20–23.

113. *Ibid.*, 206–07. The primary meaning of "the state" in the analysis presented in this article is, as Skocpol says, "a set of organizations through which collectivities of officials may be able to formulate distinctive strategies and policies," though as the term "state" is used here, it also encompasses the second meaning that she mentions, referring to the authoritative structures and "overall patterns of activity" of the state as an influence on political culture and social groups. Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In," 20–21.

114. Golenkova, "Al'ternativy i perspektivy," 22: "At the present time in Russia the bureaucratic apparatus, representing the state on all levels, having used the 'troubled' transitional times, carried out the 'privatization of the state,' 'having signed over to themselves' gigantic 'slices' of the former state property. . . ." See also Peregudov, "Gruppy interesov," 47. A wide variety of Western and Russian scholars have reached agreement on that conclusion. For a summary of the results of privatization in Russia, see McFaul, "State Power," 211–12.

115. The importance of the environment within which social organizations operate is suggested by the statement by Kholodkovsky et al., *Grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*, 252, that rudimentary elements of a civil society do exist in today's Russia, but those elements are located in "a largely unfavorable context." See also 150–52.

116. Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In," 27.

117. Zelikova and Fomin, "Blagotvoritel'nye organizatsii," 77.

118. Smolar, "From Opposition to Atomization," 35–36.

119. Sperling, *Organizing Women*, 177: "Likewise, the lack of an economic structure for NGOs (including direct mail, checkbooks, a reliable postal service, and so on) limits the utility of a membership-expansion strategy, and thereby alters the priorities of Russian women's organizations."