Trust and Distrust under State Socialism, 1953–1991

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The Grammar of Trust and Distrust under State Socialism after Stalin. Introduction

«Everything was forever», is how Alexei Yurchak characterised the last Soviet generation’s perception of state socialism. This cohort of the population who lived in the USSR, especially in the Brezhnev years, were not the only ones who have used words like «normal», «good», «happy» and «stable» to describe daily life. The growing sense of «normality», which prevailed after Stalin’s death across different generations, social groups and individuals, was possible due to the establishment of a post-war and post-Stalinist «habitus of trust». It provided many agents with a kind of auto-pilot for navigating daily life by simultaneously being inside and outside the official public sphere, and by masterfully connecting private meanings with collective values. Barbara Misztal introduced the term «habitus of trust» in «Bourdieu’s sense of a milieu created and sustained by social learning». This term implies (1) rules of interaction; (2) rules of distancing; and (3) rules of remembering, which are all responsible for building communities, generating identities and giving political orders a sense of legitimacy. Taken together, these rules defined the grammar of trust and distrust under state socialism, which impacted the shared sense of stability and inner hybridity of a socialist personality.

This special issue aims to analyse trust and distrust at points of mutual interdependence among the subject, society and the state in the Eastern bloc in the period...
from Stalin’s death in 1953 to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Scholars have already pointed out the significance of the roles that trust and distrust played in the dynamics of international relations and Cold War conflict, as well as in the functioning of the Soviet state and in radicalising terror.⁸ We look at the shift from Stalinist violence towards a politics of trust and empathy as emotional forces and moral resources that made it possible to renegotiate a social contract among the state, society and the individual, and which also enabled the stabilisation of the Eastern bloc as a whole in the post-Stalin era.

Across a broad spectrum of academic definitions and a multitude of meanings of trust, several features stand out:
1. Trust is a feeling.⁹ People use trust to establish, negotiate and confirm emotional bonds. Trust creates a sense of intimacy, binding the trusting sides together with positive bonds of honesty, safety and psychological comfort. This deeply positive feeling reduces anxiety in risky situations. It stabilises social relationships, helping people to overcome suspicion, distrust and fear. In generating positive personal experiences of exchange, mutuality and solidarity, trust impels the individual towards self-realisation and the defence of one’s rights, and raises the value of individual honour and dignity as moral imperatives when communicating with other actors and institutions.

2. Trust is the moral expectation that a person whom you trust will act in your best interests, and that he or she will adhere to the prevailing moral values and traditions, laws and rules, socially shared ideas about honour and shame, and the codes governing formal and informal communications. Thus, trust is connected to a reliable expectation of positive outcomes in two-way communications. At the same time, it will always be linked to coping with the risk of being betrayed or disappointed.

3. Trust is the moral obligation not to disrupt other people’s expectations about promised actions. Maintaining these contractual relationships strengthens the social order and sustains an atmosphere within which the reliability, responsibility and integrity of a genuine partnership prevail. As an integral part of a moral order and a moral economy, trust and distrust deal with the moralisation of discourses, practices and emotions by influencing an individual’s «clear» or «guilty» conscience.

4. Trust means limiting our own wishes for the sake of someone whom we trust and from whom we expect trust. This is the foundation of solidarity, cooperation and reciprocity. It is also the basis for creating two-sided or mutual trust in order to defend

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shared interests as well as to respect and justify the expectations of others. In this light, trust is based on a symbiosis of rights and duties, obligations and responsibilities. From this perspective, the concepts of socialist citizenship and the socialist personality will be a crucial focus in studying trust and distrust under state socialism, and these can explain the link among the state, the society and the individual.

5. Trust and distrust are resources for individual and collective actions, decision-making and identity formation. They underpin the processes of negotiating status and inequalities, describing friends and enemies, and defining moral and immoral patterns of everyday life. Signs of class, age, gender, religion, ethnicity and nationality can be flexibly combined in defining what deserves to be seen as trustworthy and what does not.

6. Trust means an orientation to the future that is made by connecting it with the past and the present. «To show trust», as Niklas Luhmann has argued, «is to behave as though the future were certain.» In fact, the socialist culture of temporality was crucial in the legitimacy of socialist states. The cult of the «bright future» reinforced trust in the regime, as anticipation of that future motivated citizens to believe in socialism, and drove them to contribute personally to moving their society closer to the desired point in time that propaganda promised.

Trust and distrust have long been important categories in analyses of the defining features of modernity. Trust was linked with a self-declared «first-world» narrative about the triumph of «standard» modernity, which was based on values of parliamentary democracy, the market economy and the liberal subject in the USA and Western Europe. This was especially true in the production of sociological knowledge. In this formulation, «second-» and «third-» world countries were characterised as being less successfully developed in comparison to the West. As a result, for many decades the Soviet and East European socialist states were seen as societies of distrust, where violence, aggressive persuasion and coercion predominated over solidarity, participation and reciprocity. Thus, in the Cold War period, analysts projected a stark trust-distrust binary onto the ideological conflict between a «democratic West» and a «totalitarian East» by separating both worlds with an Iron Curtain. However, the rise of postcol-
nial studies in the 1970s helped to resituate the East-West binary as an artefact of the Cold War. Scholars eschewing Eurocentrism have emphasised plurality within the concept of modernity, speaking of «multiple modernities», «modernity at large» and «alternative modernities».

In Soviet studies, this has led to work that brings East and West together in new ways, exploring both points of connection and disjuncture, similarities as well as dissimilarities. Grounded in this work, this special issue bypasses the notion of the «trustworthy» or «trusting» West and the «untrustworthy», «distrusting» East to offer a fresh look at the interplay of trust and distrust that worked across the Eastern bloc to reshape socialist modernity. This was an «entangled modernity», formed in exchanges and convergences, as well as tensions and conflicts involving many historical agents and institutions, science and religion, states and ideologies.

The establishment of socialist states under Soviet observation in Eastern Europe after 1945 led to both shared experience and breaks with western modernity. First, the rise of capitalism and socialisms divided the continent ideologically into two parts, but on both sides of the continent there were urbanisation and rapid industrialisation, scientific rationalisation and secularisation, mass politics and mass mobilisation in the cultural context of modern nation- and state-building. As was the case with capitalism, ideas about a socialist way of life included notions of social justice and a welfare state. Secondly, propaganda and censorship organised party-state controlled public spheres under state socialism, but at the same time we see newly empowered consumer societies, and a strengthening of discourses about individualisation and middle-class values. Under state socialism, the New Man became a pessimist, but the reinforced social role of being a «good» citizen empowered the individual to engage with the state, ideology and the party through civic rights, responsibility and emotions. Thirdly, both western and socialist modernities greatly increased and generalised the demands for trust because of mass expectations of security, stability and prosperity.

Ute Frevert argues that for modern people, trust is an extremely important emotional experience. They «love» trust because it made them feel better and made everyday life more positive, pleasant and empathic in a complex and constantly changing world. This special issue examines the ways in which the need for trust played out in....


17 In the early 1960s, there were more urban than rural residents in the Soviet Union. See D. P. Konkler, Club Red. Vacation Travel and the Soviet Dream, Ithaca 2013, 175.


in the ever-growing anonymity, mobility and complexity that characterised modern life on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Without an understanding of a deeper grammar of trust and distrust under state socialism, we would not be able to explain the rise and fall of socialist modernity, which, as we will see, was more constructed, directed and manipulated from above in contrast to the capitalist West.

1. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Trust and Distrust

Trust and distrust are an interdisciplinary research topic *par excellence*. For decades, they have been an object of sociological, psychological and philosophical exploration. Sociologists in particular have explored trust by arguing that no society can exist without it. According to Luhmann, trust stabilises social ties, removes the feeling of danger and makes the environment less complicated or more understandable. In the paradigm of Western modernity, scholars see trust as a product of the modern world: Founded on voluntary communication, trust guarantees stability and progress, integration and cooperation. By creating a feeling that daily life is predictable and reliable, trust is a resource for reducing risk while strengthening confidence in the future.

This version of trust – described as the standard of «classic» modernity and as a key feature of Western democracies based on parliamentarianism, a system of knowledge and effective state institutions – does not explain how other forms of modernity fit into the picture. What about non-democratic societies, authoritarian states and non-liberal subjects?

The neurosciences are less interested in the West-East binary. Instead of looking at «good democracies» and «bad dictatorships», they claim that there is a universal «neurobiology of trust»: the chemical bodily reactions that impact the (un-)trustworthy qualities of an individual, and define his or her connections with reality. They brought the «autonomous», «rationally thinking» and even «liberal» agent who had been imagined in the social and political sciences back to the «body» by giving evidence of the high significance of emotional and sensorial bodily experience in decision-making and social interactions.

The neuroactive hormone oxytocin determines brain activities, and thereby enhances an individual's propensity to trust. Consequently, our understanding of trustworthiness, empathy and generosity is not possible without including the human body. But how do we take into account a variety of constantly changing temporal, economic and political contexts that offer multiple cultural frames for defining...
ing and expressing the biological? For our purposes, it is important to ask how specific historical situations influence or determine bodily reactions, provoke emotions and, in doing so, set social change in motion.

The enthusiasm of neuroscientists about the universal and materialist nature of trust and distrust contrasts with the pessimism of other disciplines’ representatives. Political and social scientists are worried about a decline in democracy and liberal values. Psychiatrists and psychologists have been preoccupied with examining personal distrust as a pathology that can lead to mental disorders. Economists have feared additional financial clashes as a consequence of an ongoing crisis of trust. Historians are able to de-radicalise contemporary discourses, and offer the historical dimensions of a contemporary crisis of trust. They have looked at the interplay of trust and distrust in multiple historical contexts as well as the symbolic fixation of these categories in time and space, language and institutions, law and everyday practices. The scholarship on the history of trust stresses the importance of language as a mirror that reveals the presence or absence of trust. This approach, rooted in the linguistic turn, marks the cognitive limits for historians: there is no reality without language. Therefore, in Frevert’s ground-breaking analysis, trust left traces primarily as the «obsession of modernity». However, I follow Geoffrey Hosking’s more universalistic claim that trust and distrust have been crucial features of all human societies. Trust and distrust were always established, mediated and reintroduced through symbolic systems. They have undergone modifications when their corresponding institutions changed. As Hosking points out, «[t]rust and distrust are part of the deep grammar of any society. The way in which we relate to each other, trust or distrust each other, determines much of our social behaviour. In order to take decisions and act in real life, we need trust in other people, in institutions, or simply in the future.»

In studying trust and distrust, historians have many methodological advantages that make it possible to create a hybrid understanding of trust and distrust that is rooted in an individual body, practised in a specific society and controlled by a concrete state. First, historians deal with a variety of scenarios and particular situations that impact the emergence of the grammar of trust and distrust in any society. Secondly, such a wide range of cultural, temporal and spatial contexts allows us to decentralise the «normative» and «universal» nature of trust as a phenomenon that is reflective, conscious and voluntary – and Western. This is especially important in the context of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. For example, the Communist Party was an institution that, from the very beginning, generated meanings, used the language and designed (and performed) rituals of trust and distrust. Looking from a top-down perspective but avoiding the widespread image of trusting relationships between the

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31 Ibid., 22.
rulers and the ruled, we can speak instead about the constructed nature of trust in the Soviet Union; it was a kind of forced trust. Thirdly, the emotional turn in history, accompanied by the sensory turn, broadens our understanding of trust and distrust as socialist citizens’ moral sentiments, feelings that were generated in the body and mediated by bodily sensations. Thus, we see how sensory experience, which is located in individual bodies, played a crucial role in connecting the self, society and the regime, and explains the individual’s readiness to take risks and to participate in the political order. In studying trust and distrust, it is important to bridge the dichotomies of universalism and social constructivism, and nature and culture.

2. Regimes of Trust and Distrust

De-Stalinisation was the political, social and moral project of renouncing the discourses and practices of the Stalinist era. It took place in the context of the leadership’s efforts to strengthen the individual’s involvement in managing the country, and its decision to do some rethinking, with a new emphasis on the well-being – both material and emotional – of the Soviet subject as an individual. After the Second World War, and especially after Stalinism ended, the Soviet state sought ways to reinforce its legitimacy and put an end to the violence, to improve the efficiency of the state apparatus and, as a result, to reconfigure its bonds with the population. The idea that the state was concerned about the welfare of the individual, and that state structures and institutions should respond sensitively to the individual’s needs, came to occupy a central place in political representations. Instead of the uncertainty, insecurity and fear that were typical of the Stalinist period, the population was promised safety, prosperity and confidence in the future. This expectation was meant to produce generalised trust in the socialist order, which now developed into a dictatorship of empathy.

As William Reddy has argued, in order to stabilise itself, any political order will establish an emotional regime, that is, a set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices and emotives that express and inculcate them; this is the necessary underpinning of any stable political regime. Since trust and distrust are integral elements of the emotional navigation systems of both individuals and society, they

should be integrated into this concept. Likewise, the concept of a «regime of trust and distrust» emphasises the management of emotional standards, control over moral values, and state agencies’ willingness to repress deviance from emotional norms. We are speaking here of the political connotations of the complex of official narratives and normative practices of expressing trust and distrust, which determined the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and secured social hierarchies and the distribution of resources via party-state institutions. Consequently, trust and distrust were institutionalised, ritualised and inscribed in social practices with the aim of creating predictable, programmed behaviour of citizens in state-organised and controlled spaces of agency.

Socialist regimes of trust and distrust were characterised by an array of shared features. A fundamental element of East European political orders was the leader cult, which transmitted ideological content through myth, and emotionally mobilised the population through rituals. Premodern «trust in God» was replaced with quasi-religious trust in the heads of state by reinventing a tradition of anthropomorphising power. As a result, the cult of the leader acquired the potential to create «trustworthy» personalised ties between the individual and the state. This could take the form of an individual’s personal visits, written appeals or presentation of gifts to national leaders. Imagining the leaders as «fathers of the nation» and the state as a family demanded not only trust, but also loyalty and subordination to patriarchal authority.

As the highest moral authority, the Communist Party became an institution for defining, objectifying and distributing trust and distrust. Trust and distrust were instrumentalised by the party as social capital for managing its personnel policy and for creating inequalities between ordinary people and «honoured» citizens, that is, those endowed with trust. This was done by awarding certificates, badges and prizes for special achievements in study and work as well as by hanging portraits of citizens who had earned trust on a «board of honour» (doska pocheta). At the same time, party-state agencies objectified social groups that «failed to earn political trust». The first to feel the consequences of social stigmatisation were the inhabitants of territories formerly occupied by the Nazi, POWs freed from German captivity, and those returning from the GULAG after the 1953 amnesty. During the post-Stalin period, public distrust was extended to hooligans, spongers (tuneiadtsy), anonymous letters (anonimshchiki), scandalmongers (kliauzniki), dissidents and members of religious sects. They were seen as «amoral», «asocial», «aberrant» citizens in need of re-education and re-socialisation in order to internalise the ideals of a «good» Soviet citizen. In short, the language of trust and distrust allowed the authorities to describe the friends and enemies of the regime, thereby outlining the sacred boundaries of a socialist community.

39 Ibid.
41 See B. LaPierre, Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw, Madison, WI 2012.
As propaganda states, socialist countries invested a great deal of time and material resources in staging representations of trust between the government and the population. It was not by chance that the theme of the Soviet exposition at the Brussels World's Fair in 1958 was «Everything for Mankind». Images of happy people were at the centre of the Soviet pavilion’s presentation of democracy in the USSR, socialist humanity and technological progress. As Frevert observed in describing the emotional register of modern societies: «Being compassionate has become something like the gold standard of humanity, a moral quest which commands high authority and asks for immediate action.» The Soviet regime’s ability to show the state’s and the party’s concern for its citizens was intended to demonstrate not only the economic but also, above all, the moral superiority of socialism as a «warm» political order that treated people more humanely than the «cold», indifferent capitalist world did, where one person exploited another, a heartless world where social relationships were governed by the pitiless laws of the market and the individual had little social protection.

Trust was at the heart of the socialist public rituals that established solidarity between the state and society. In other words, because of their cyclical nature, predictability and celebratory features, these rituals fed trust into the social order. They fostered the individual’s participation in the collective by translating ideological myths during emotionally saturated moments. Festivals, demonstrations and elections, as well as nationwide discussions of Soviet constitutions and party programmes, created a space for communication and a channel of involvement in the political order. They mobilised the population to participate in, cooperate with and invest emotionally in the regime’s ideals. They created a comfortable feeling of belonging to «big» politics, established practices for active participation in building communism and reinforced citizens’ willingness to take risks. These ritualistic actions show how important integrative emotional forces such as trust, empathy, enthusiasm and happiness – instead of or simultaneously with fear and coercion – were for building the community and producing the regime’s legitimacy.

The material welfare and social security provided by the paternalistic state were intended as the basis for increasing the population’s trust in the state. Care for the...
Soviet people, taking into account their individual desires, health and welfare alongside the management of their needs, tastes and passions within the sphere of consumption, was placed at the core of social policy. As a result, there was an expansion of the pension, free education and healthcare systems, and an affirmation of the right to work and to rest, including the right to relax in front of the television set in the evening after a day of hard work.\(^\text{48}\) The housing construction programme that began in July 1957 was presented as the state’s first large-scale programme for building trust and as an initiative that demonstrated the state’s care for the Soviet person.

Regimes of trust and distrust attempted to turn trust and distrust into moral categories by introducing moral values, orientations and norms that were aimed towards the communist future, and which were intended as inner regulators for the individual conscience.\(^\text{49}\) The moral component of trust in socialism consisted of believing not merely in a rational order, but in an overall system of expectations and ideals. To achieve these ideals, the regime created documents that presented the moral foundations for building communism. In July 1958, Walter Ulbricht announced «The Ten Commandments for the New Socialist Person» in the GDR. In 1961, the USSR saw the publication of the «Moral Code of the Builder of Communism» and the Third Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which was preceded by broad discussion throughout the country. These narratives shaped a moral grammar of Soviet society and reinforced citizens’ emotional engagement with a socialist state.

### 3. Communities of Trust and Distrust

While emotional regimes define, manage and sanction trust and distrust through state and party structures, emotional communities are less easily controlled. Their autonomy is greater, and they connect their members through shared goals, values and interests. Such communities are built on the «affective bonds between people that they recognize», and are based on the «modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore».\(^\text{50}\) One person can simultaneously be a member of several communities, flexibly crossing the ideological, professional, religious, ethnic and generational boundaries that delimit the groups to which he or she belongs. In the context of socialism, nuclear and extended families, neighbours and interest-based circles, workers’ collectives and columns of demonstrators, doctors and patients, as well as teachers and students, could form emotional communities. Whether it was a quick smoking break at work or celebrations of official holidays, a Sunday picnic on the grass or an organised tourist excursion, a shopping trip or a stroll in the park, the complex of micro-practices for constructing networks of trust shows the subject’s ability to

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move between the public and private spheres and often unite them. In these spheres, Soviet citizens generated meanings of state socialism, transferring these into social practices of self-realisation by individualising them and creating networks of relationships based on trust.

As a rule, communities of trust were social networks and circles of people joined by common interests and hobbies. They let subjects feel comfortable, express their individuality, and enjoy belonging to a group. At the same time, they were forums for exchanging knowledge ranging from helpful advice on housekeeping and gardening to less formal information such as rumours and gossip. These «circles of trust» were places for socialising, making contacts and establishing connections, which could open up channels to scarcely accessible goods and services. Communities of trust offered a space for turning friendships into voluntary, trust-based relationships in which the most intimate emotional experiences could be shared. On a fishing or hunting trip, in a beer hall (pivnaia) or bathhouse (bania), in a train compartment or on a volunteer work day (subbotnik), at the dacha or at home, a topography of the lived experience of trust developed. This was a collection of spaces where a web of interpersonal contacts and the experience of happiness was woven. This topography of trust made people feel protected and comfortable. In these niches of daily life, it was possible to attain «authentic Soviet self-realisation», which combined the propagandised ideals of collectiveness with private needs, fun, pleasure or romantic relationships.

As Anna Tikhomirova and Kirsten Bönker point out in their essays, the emergence of regimes of consumerism and established consumerist practices was an integral part of social engineering and a channel for forming a post-Stalinist subjectivity as a modern citizen, an active consumer and a self-activating individual. The dynamisation of


these roles allowed people to generate personal meanings of life under authoritarian rule and to accept Soviet power as a normal way of life. To be a modern citizen meant wearing stylish clothes, having a comfortable and nicely renovated apartment, being a part of official events, taking a seaside holiday, going to the cinema, listening to the radio and watching television, reading newspapers and literary classics, earning money and spending it at one’s discretion. Kirsten Bönker argues that in the 1960s money went from being a symbol of exploitation, inequality and capitalism to something that denoted prosperity and facilitated the practical goal of getting access to the Soviet lifestyle. Official propaganda presented one’s own apartment, well-stocked shops, scientific and technological achievements and improvements in citizens’ daily lives as the paternalistic state’s care for the socialist personality as well as a gift to the Soviet citizen given in return for his or her trust in the joint state-society project of building communism.58 When people faced a lack of money or a scarcity of consumer goods, do-it-yourself practices bridged the gap between the desire of individuals to express themselves as modern subjects and the paucity of the state’s resources for satisfying its consumers’ needs.59

Maria Pirogovskaya goes beyond the official public sphere by reconstructing invisible communities of women who created their own cuisines – instead of reproducing the Soviet cuisine propagated by state-sponsored cookbooks and magazine articles about food. These communities were bound by ties of trust as women exchanged recipes, offered food to colleagues and women friends and shared stories about successes in the kitchen, cooking for the family and for holidays. It was an alternative culture of trust based on private ties among relatives, neighbours and colleagues, which contrasted with the culture of suspicion toward the state and its food products. Such horizontal bonds of trust were central in compensating for the shortage economy by creating an economy of favours and an economy of useful, practical information to optimise housekeeping and cooking. Pirogovskaya’s examination of recipes as forming short- and long-term solidarities based on gender, taste, ritual, prestige and status gives insight into socialist sociability, consumption patterns and gender roles by going beyond the «propaganda kitchen». The cookbook became an individual document that accumulated social prestige by displaying its creator in her female roles as mother, cook and housewife. At the core of such female networks, as Pirogovskaya reveals, was the reciprocal trust based on an exchange in which hosts were givers and guests were recipients. In a broader context, the essays by Pirogovskaya and Tikhomirova contribute to a common picture of a Soviet society that was dominated by the cult of bricolage and resourcefulness (izvorotlivost’).60

Anna Tikhomirova focuses on the materiality of trust and distrust by taking as an example «western» (in this case, East German) goods from Eastern bloc countries that

were imported into the Soviet Union. These goods produced trust in the imagined socialist West (for example, the GDR) and, in doing so, helped stabilise socialist civilisation as a whole. Paying attention to the consumption of clothing and shoes from the GDR, the author reconstructs a «cultural biography» of material objects that accumulated and generated trust among women, especially those of the baby-boomer generation, who contrasted these things with «untrustworthy» (low quality) domestic – Soviet – commodities. Objects from the West strengthened the topos of «trust in the West», turning such things into fetish objects for Soviet consumers. They were items from the Eastern bloc countries – the GDR, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria – which were less expensive than goods imported from beyond the Iron Curtain and free of negative connotations in the official discourse. Shopping in a «Leipzig» store in Moscow or visiting the GDR was a personal consumer revolution that let Soviet people feel as if they were in one of the more Western countries of the Eastern bloc and less as though they were in a socialist brother-land.61 Consumption of East German clothing and shoes was an escape valve for the frustration with the domestic shortage economy and the longing for desirable, but hardly accessible, capitalist goods.

Pirogovskaya’s research and Tikhomirova’s extend reflections on the bodily and sensory dimensions of trust and distrust by providing insights into the importance of sensory memories of taste, smell and vision in making bonds of trust, in particular, among women. The workplace became central to exchanging recipes, tasting dishes made by friends and colleagues and showing off new purchases, thereby strengthening female solidarity and friendship. In mass consumption societies, as Roberta Sassatelli pointed out, the body became an «object of salvation».62 In the Soviet Union of the 1960s and the 1970s, this salvation grew out of the ideologically and morally justified mission of making a new socialist personality in order to build communism. It was also the result of the paternalistic state’s desire to offer its citizens enhanced well-being as the result of a technologically improved everyday life. As the essays by Pirogovskaya, Tikhomirova and Bönker show, the body was subordinated to power, which ultimately led to the reproduction of gender, ethnic and class inequalities.

The role of money and consumption practices in (dis)trust-building and redefining Soviet community is at the core of Kirsten Bönker’s article. At the turn of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel discussed money as a symbolic system that built up «the general trust that people have in each other».63 In fact, as Bönker argues, money practices are not only economic transactions, but are also a medium of communication, bonding people, institutions and ideas about the future.64 They present a combination of premodern (personalised) and modern (anonymous, institutionalised) forms of trust that impacted the stability of the Soviet order. Based on oral history interviews, Bönk-
er’s research shows that for individuals and families, *perestroika* was a catastrophe that marked the boundary between the stable Soviet order of the 1970s and the social upheavals of the 1990s. For ordinary people, *perestroika* demonstrated the moral degradation of a society in which the meaning of human relationships had sharply depreciated, and social status was defined not by service to society but by how much money one had. In collective experience, Soviet stability was associated with low prices in stores, being paid regularly and the shortages which everyone was familiar with but for which *blat* and patron-client ties could compensate. It was not by chance that Bönker’s interviewees perceived Soviet everyday life as human and warm, something which took place within a mutually caring and supportive community of equals that contrasted with the selfish and heartless social order of the rich and the poor in Boris Yeltsin’s Russia, where there was no «firm hand of the state» regulating social justice. Today’s nostalgia, as Bönker concludes, is a manifestation of trust in the past alongside the simultaneous expression of distrust in the present and growing uncertainty about the future.

4. The «Family Romance» of the Eastern Bloc: Bonds of Fraternity

Attitudes of trust and distrust are formed in the bosom of the family, which should be understood as a private and economic, social and political unit. The sense of belonging to a family generates the fundamental orientation whereby people distinguish between someone who is «one of us» and a person who is a dangerous stranger. According to psychologist and psychotherapist Erik Erikson’s theory of personality development, the very first stage in establishing a personality is when the conflict between trust and distrust is resolved in the first years of a child’s life.65 A fundamental sense of trust in the world arises within the nuclear family because of the parents’ love and care for their child. Above all, the emotional ties of mother and child build feelings of confidence, stability and a predictable future – essential categories for defining the daily routine of a balanced life. Consequently, trust is both an integral part of socialisation and the underpinning of individual actions.66 Since the Soviet propaganda state presented the party as a caring mother and the state leaders as protective fathers, the official connotations of trust and distrust played a crucial role in establishing a link between forming subjectivity and making a politically imagined community.67

Lynn Hunt opened up an innovative potential for applying metaphors and images of kinship to explain the functioning of modern political orders: «If kinship is the basis of most if not all organized social relations, then it is also an essential category for understanding political power. Traditionalists in European history had long pointed to the family as the first experience of power and consequently as a sure model of its working; just as the father was «naturally» the head of the family, so too the king was

66 Hosking, *Trust*, 44.
naturally the head of the body politics.» 68 The image of the family traditionally invokes feelings of closeness and solidarity, loyalty and unity. For a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social integration, inclusion and exclusion, these should be linked historically with traditional structures of trust that, at the same time, cross the semantic field of fidelity. «The family», as Michael Herzfeld pointed out, «provides an easily understood model for the loyalty and collective responsibility that citizens must feel toward the state.» 69 In symbolic terms, the Eastern bloc was presented through the metaphor of a «big family», with the Soviet Union as the «oldest, wisest brother» bound in fraternity with its «younger, less experienced brothers» – the People’s Democracies in Eastern Europe. Fraternal kinship did not mean equality among the members. The Eastern bloc was a hierarchically structured, patriarchal system of spiritual kinship, in which all familial relationships were centred on the Soviet Union as the family member who was the most authoritative, the most experienced and the most resourceful in building communism, in comparison with its satellites in Eastern Europe. The use of familial imagery in discourse and iconography was a way of creating a kind of supranational «socialist citizenship» based on solidarity and loyalty to the Soviet Union. It was an attempt to unify multiple ethnic, national and state entities in a political community imagined as a family, and, in doing so, it was also an attempt to create an emotional attachment to the transnational idea of building communism. Analyses of symbolic kinship systems shed light on a set of moral expectations and moral duties that bound socialist countries to each other. Thus, as the «older brother», the USSR bore the moral responsibility for looking after its fraternal countries, and for aiding them in resolving crises by using its experience and knowledge as well as its material, military and economic resources. Accordingly, the younger family members had legitimate moral cause to expect their «big brother» to provide aid, and to ensure safety at home if a threat were to arise. The argument of fraternal solidarity was used to legitimise Soviet intervention and suppression of popular uprisings in the GDR in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and especially in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

A variety of factors helped to reinforce the presentation of the Eastern bloc as a united, happy family. First, the intensification of political, military, economic and cultural cooperation within the framework of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (1949–1991) and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (1955–1991) solidified the relationship of mutually beneficial exchange and dependence in institutional terms. Secondly, international tourism, which became widespread from 1955, especially within the socialist bloc, helped to generate direct experience and knowledge of fraternal solidarity within the bloc as a unified Slavonic family. 70 Thirdly, the emergence of a common public sphere based on shared media, films and music created a sense of syn-

chronicity – giving the impression of living in the same rhetorical, ritual, emotional, spatial and temporal dimensions of socialism. Fourthly, familial solidarity gained an emotional foundation through the memory of Nazi crimes in occupied territories during the Second World War, the shared experience of victory over Nazi Germany and the consequent acceptance of the collective mission of ensuring peace in Europe and across the whole world under the banner of the USSR. Fifth, the construction of a common history and memory, against the background of the formation of a common discursive, ritualistic and medial space, reinforced the propaganda of the Eastern bloc’s exclusivity, strength and superiority under the rubric of Cold War competition. Consequently, these representations gave rise to general trust in socialism as the guarantor of stability, morality and peace, in contrast to a culture of suspicion of the West as the source of instability, decadence and a new nuclear war.

Letters to socialist leaders are seen as another channel for demanding trust between an individual and a leader and, in doing so, appealing to a spiritual kinship between citizens and heads of state. Historians have usually interpreted this personalised channel of interactions as an artefact of charismatic communication that reveals how multiple letter-writers justified creating emotional connections between individuals and institutions, and even for trying to connect with the abstract concept of «the state». In analysing «relatives’ letters» to Soviet leaders, Alexey Tikhomirov reflects on how seemingly opposed ideas about tradition and modernity, status and marginality, power and kinship, and the licit and illicit infused representations of «Soviet citizenship». He explores whether and how such representations changed over time. Across the Eastern bloc, the leadership in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Romania adapted the religious institution of the godparent as a way to create a bond with ordinary children in order to connect ideology with tradition on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to support the convergence of speaking Bolshevik with speaking kinship by reactivating the premodern tradition of perceiving the state as a spiritual family.

Overcoming a frequently made assertion that trust and distrust are elusive phenomena, the authors of this special issue present interdisciplinary approaches to decoding the deeper grammar of socialist societies by applying methods from oral history and anthropology, social and cultural history, ethnography and sociology. To historicise trust and distrust, and to identify their traces in a wide range of sources, the authors have studied the ideological and economic, moral and material, spatial and legislative as well as the subjective dimensions of state socialism. All the essays focus in different ways on the significance that trust and distrust developed in the functioning of the socialist self (or selves) and in forming non-liberal subjectivities. This spe-


cial issue, which connects trust and distrust with key analytical categories of gender, generation, morality and power, contributes to a history of trust and distrust that provides a further reflection on the incessant debate about what socialism was and the ways in which this experience continues to exist in post-communist space.\textsuperscript{73}


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**The Grammar of Trust and Distrust under State Socialism after Stalin.**

**Introduction**

The introduction to the special issue defines trust/distrust from an interdisciplinary perspective, treating these emotions as analytical categories and outlining their potential for historical analysis. Inspired by the \textit{emotional and sensory turns}, the guest editor examines the shift from Stalinist violence towards a politics of trust and empathy. This new politics saw these feelings as powerful emotional forces and moral resources that not only made it possible to renegotiate a social contract between the state, society and the individual, but also enabled the stabilisation of the Eastern bloc as a whole in the post-Stalin era. Differentiating between \textit{regimes} and \textit{communities of trust/distrust}, the author sheds light on the grammar of trust and distrust under state socialism, which impacted the shared sense of stability and inner hybridity of the socialist personality. By connecting trust and distrust with the key analytical categories of gender and generation, morality and power, consumption and materiality, and self and subjectivity, this special issue is a contribution to a history of trust and distrust that provides further reflection on the unceasing debate about what socialism was and what the lived experience of socialism continues to be in post-communist space.

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