

Wilhelm von Timroth

Russian and Soviet
Sociolinguistics
and Taboo Varieties
of the Russian Language
(Argot, Jargon, Slang and "Mat")

Verlag Otto Sagner München · Berlin · Washington D.C.

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Wilhelm von Timroth - 9783954792337

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SLAVISTISCHE BEITRÄGE

BEGRÜNDET VON

ALOIS SCHMAUS

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON

JOHANNES HOLTHUSEN † · HEINRICH KUNSTMANN

PETER REHDER · JOSEF SCHRENK

REDAKTION

PETER REHDER

Band 205

VERLAG OTTO SAGNER
MÜNCHEN

WILHELM VON TIMROTH

RUSSIAN AND SOVIET SOCIOLINGUISTICS
AND TABOO VARIETIES
OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE
(Argot, Jargon, Slang and "Mat")

Revised and Enlarged Edition

Translated into English
by
Nortrud Gupta



VERLAG OTTO SAGNER · MÜNCHEN

1986



ISBN 3-87690-355-6
© Verlag Otto Sagner, München 1986
Abteilung der Firma Kubon & Sagner, München

FOREWORD

This thesis is the result of eight years' work on non-literary varieties of the Russian language. I have included only part of all the literature I analysed and the linguistic data I collected. Since I wanted to stick to essentials, a careful selection has been necessary, however difficult. No attempt has been made at lexicographical completeness.

One of my main difficulties has been to obtain linguistic material. This problem never left me during the entire period of eight years and was further complicated by the geographical distance between Munich and the Soviet Union, and by the unfavourable conditions for travel to that country. Further complications arose because certain Soviet dissertations and relevant dictionaries were not obtainable, even in the Soviet Union. In spite of these odds I managed to compile a list of the most common non-literary words, and also some less common ones, filling more than 4,000 index cards.

Researching particular Russian linguistic varieties has yielded a lot of information on the life and thoughts of the Soviet people, which no amateur or a linguist exclusively concerned with the literary language could ever have obtained.

Many people have, knowingly or unknowingly, helped me in collecting my linguistic material: Soviet labourers, skilled workers, technicians, engineers, employees, scientific workers, teachers, professors and a member of the Academy, but also school children, students, musicians, drug addicts, ex-convicts, acquaintances and friends. The task was lightened by my long experience as a translator and interpreter and the professional connections with Soviet citizens resulting from it. I am indebted to them all.

I also wish to thank my friends and acquaintances Igor Jassenjaskij, W. J., M. M. and Ljuda, to whom I greatly indebted, as well as my uncle Michael von Tilmroth (Virkby, Finland) and many more whose names cannot be mentioned here.

Especially heartfelt thanks to my FRIEND who advised me on many questions and often established the necessary contacts with linguistically interesting groups of people. From the very beginning he took a close personal interest in my work.

Prof. Dr. Josef Schrenk, who supervised my dissertation with great patience, interest and understanding, has been to me the ideal "Doktorva-

ter". (My dissertation was accepted in the winter term of 1982/83 by the Philosophical Faculty of the Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich.) I am sincerely grateful to him.

I also want to thank Frau A. Nitschke, M.A., Frau Ch. Cless, M.A., and Dr. G. Leikauf, all of whom took on the hard task of proof-reading, and Prof. Dr. P. Rehder, who kindly arranged for this dissertation to be included in the series "Slavistische Beiträge".

But all these efforts would have come to nought without the generous and untiring help of my parents, Peter and Tatjana von Timroth. They deserve my deepest gratitude.

Munich, March 1983

Wilhelm von Timroth

Foreword to the English Edition

I am grateful that my doctoral dissertation has been well received, not only among specialists but also in non-academic circles. The English version contains some minor alterations and additions based on suggestions made by reviewers and readers of the German text and on a few accidental discoveries. The bibliography has been augmented by a number of titles to which I had access or which were published only after the German manuscript had gone into print. In addition, the register now includes a list of Russian linguistic and other special terms. One reviewer noticed the absence of Flegon's dictionary, which I had not included in the bibliography because I had not directly used it as source material. This well-known work has been included here. Apart from these changes the original text has remained unaltered, although I do realize that a few of the chapters could have been further elaborated.

The first initiative for the English translation came from Mrs. Nortrud Gupta, M.A., of Bangalore, India. She not only conceived the idea, but also carried it out with a will. I am indebted to her for all she has done for me in this connection, not least of all for the great patience the translation demanded of her.

I wish again to thank Professor Peter Rehder and Professor Josef Schrenk and my publisher Otto Sagner, who arranged for the English edition to be included in the series "Slavistische Beiträge".

I am also grateful to Dr. Jeremy S. Roth and Mrs. Carol S. Garrett, who proof-read the English manuscript.

Last but not least I would like to thank Wilhelm Braunschöber of GSE Software Engineering, Ltd., Munich, for having developed a Russian sorting program which can also be implemented for other languages, and which he coordinated with my "euroscript" word processing program. Mr. Braunschöber's program greatly facilitated the compilation of the register. The text was printed out on a NEC Pinwriter P5.

Munich, November 1986

W. v. T.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Definition of Subject

Argot, jargons and slang have always been subjects of interest and research for Soviet linguists. But the research done in these fields has remained rather scanty except for the 1920s and 1930s. This state of affairs, although deplored by some scholars, is due to a number of reasons.¹ Over the last few decades Soviet linguistics has been predominantly prescriptive. This is especially apparent in the areas of lexicology and lexicography. Expressions regarded as falling outside the literary language were omitted from all dictionaries, monolingual as well as multilingual. This principle, which is the product of Soviet language policy, becomes clearly noticeable in the dictionaries published in the Soviet Union since the early 1950s. Soviet language policy has a double purpose. One is prospective and aims at modification of existing linguistic norms - this is called "Language Structuring" or "Language Planning" (языковое строительство); the other is retrospective and aims at conservation - it is called "Speech Culture" or "Language Maintenance" (культура языка/культура речи).² In both these areas the Soviet Union has been unquestionably successful. But the problem is how to influence spoken language. Even the spoken delivery of literary language, as long as it is not bound to the particular style of a book, cannot be made to conform to prescribed norms since it develops spontaneously.³ And a language policy dealing with speech forms outside the literary language would be still less effective! In this context one might mention Russian "mat" (мат), which is widely spoken throughout all social strata and whose use could not be controlled by the authorities despite intense efforts.⁴

At this point the question arises as to how and by whom the objectives of language policy are arrived at and put into practice. In the So-

¹ See e.g. F. P. Filin, "K probleme social'noj obuslovlennosti jazyka," in: *VJa*, 1966, no. 4, p. 37.

² See L. B. Nikol'skij, *Sinchronnaja sociolingvistika (Teorija i problema)*, Moskva, 1976, p. 112, and "Jazykovaja politika" in: *BSE*, 3rd ed., vol. 30, Moskva, 1978, p. 470.

³ O. A. Lapteva, "O nekodificirovannyh sferach sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka," in: *VJa*, 1966, no. 2, p. 40.

⁴ See below, pp. 96-97.

viet Union the official language policy is implemented by Government institutions, i.e. the Academy of Sciences or departments, groups of people or single individuals belonging to other science institutes. Their authority is, of course, much greater than that of any private or publicly subsidized organisations as we know them in the West. The influence of the schools, the press, radio and television, films and theatres - all of which are state-controlled in the Soviet Union - should also not be underestimated.³ Language policy is part of Soviet politics and in complete agreement with its ideology. Linguistics and the other social sciences (history, sociology, philosophy, psychology etc.) are part and parcel of the total ideological apparatus. The principle of freedom of science, research and teaching as upheld in Western democracies is scorned in the Soviet Union in theory and practice. In its place we find faithful adherence to Soviet ideology and party politics. But there are a number of linguistic areas (phonetics, phonology, aspectology, accentology, orthography and punctuation) where these considerations are unessential or play practically no role at all. On the other hand, ideological and political postulates can exert such pressures as to determine or repress scientific research or prevent the publication of data which are considered undesirable or show negative results. For example, the principles of Marr's "new linguistic doctrine" determined Soviet linguistic research for many decades, until in 1950 a series of articles by Stalin entitled "Marxism and Linguistic Problems", published in the party newspaper *Pravda*, attacked the "erroneous teachings" of Marr. Stalin's interference in the discussion of linguistic problems constituted a political act which for a full decade was to paralyse scientific investigations in the fields of language and thought and sociolinguistics.

It is no secret that Soviet authorities are, if not completely unwilling, certainly most reluctant to acknowledge any negative phenomena in their country which, although products of their present political system, offend against their ideology. These phenomena, which should, strictly speaking, not exist at all, are explained away as temporary difficulties, shortcomings or incompetences of certain institutions or individuals. A classic example is the incidence of crime in the Soviet Union. No detailed statistics are available on the subject because, according to the ideology of a socialist society - here represented by the Soviet Union - the

³ Nikol'skij (1976), p. 120.

causes for criminal offences have been overcome; for the first time in history conditions have been created where crime as a social phenomenon can cease to exist.⁶ But this statement is not corroborated by facts. And the Russian language, like any other language, reflects the positive as well as the negative aspects of its society. The result is that expressions referring to criminal or quasi-criminal activities or simply to anything lying outside the limits of accepted social norms take on special explosiveness. It is highly unsatisfactory and unconvincing if the existence of such expressions and the social phenomena to which they refer are explained away with the classic and often ironical clichés "left-overs of the past" and "pernicious influence from the West". In any case, such explanations need not be accepted or taken too seriously outside the Soviet Union and especially in the West.

Due to Soviet ideology no research is done on slang, "mat" and some types of jargon in the Soviet Union. Soviet linguists complain of the lack of research opportunities in the field of unnormed lexis, while at the same time supporting Communist ideology. This must be classified as incomprehensible, unjustified, and unrealistic. It would be easy enough to create a new discipline, "politlinguistics" (политлингвистика), which could investigate the effects of ideological dogma and political pressures on theoretical and applied linguistics and language use. Such investigations into the Russian language would doubtless be rewarding and informative in a number of ways. The dependence of Soviet linguistics on ideology and politics is particularly obvious in sociolinguistics and speech culture.

2. Objective and Plan of Thesis

This thesis presents a survey of the research done on social varieties which have been taboo in the Soviet Union for some decades. It includes the research done before and after the October Revolution. It also traces the influence of politics on sociolectology and reviews in this connection the work of a Bulgarian linguist on social dialects. Soviet research on social dialects, especially after the Revolution, is practically unknown in

⁶ G. M. Min'kovskij, A. B. Sacharov, "Prestupnost'," in: *BSE*, 3rd ed., vol. 20, Moskva, 1975, pp. 539-540.

the West: even Slavists have shown little interest in it.⁷ I will try to help close this gap.

Furthermore, an attempt will be made to clarify the confused terminology (social dialects, secret languages, argot, jargons, slang, "mat", "prostorečie", colloquial language) by contrasting each term with all the others. The old misconception that Russian criminal argot is a secret code and that colloquial language as a linguistic system belongs to literary language will be refuted.

Also, the essential features of Russian taboo dialects will be reviewed, taking into account aspects of linguistics, sociolinguistics, language policy and ideology. In some varieties of Russian the influence of English is considerable.

The larger objective of the thesis is to demonstrate that social dialects have as definite a place in (Soviet) Russian as in any other language. The social base of these dialects is in part quite substantial. The influence of Russian criminal argot on slang and the colloquial language continues unabated.

The vocabularies of taboo dialects have not been discussed in detail as this would have yielded no new results over already existing works. Word lists are best presented in the form of dictionaries which, in the case of Russian dialects, should combine word definitions with encyclopaedic information.

The words and phrases quoted as examples in this thesis have either been taken from technical literature or from my own word collection of more than 4,000 lexical units, most of which do not appear in Soviet dictionaries. Literary and scientific works were studied in detail. But as they do not always give a correct picture of the actual linguistic reality they were of little use except to supply the occasional definition for the usage of an expression. Only in four well-founded cases did I feel justified to quote "indirectly" from F. M. Dostoevskij and N. A. Nekrasov and "directly" from I. Barkov and V. Salamov.

Although Russian/German dictionaries hardly ever yielded German equivalents to Russian non-literary words and phrases, I believe that I

⁷ W. Girke, H. Jachnow, *Sowjetische Soziolinguistik. Probleme und Genese*, Kronberg Ts., 1974. They made valuable contributions towards the reception of sociologically oriented linguistics in the Soviet Union, but almost completely ignored social dialects.

have been able to gather many fitting equivalents. These shall form the basis for a Russian/German dictionary of slang and jargon yet to be compiled.

Questions of syntax have been dealt with only in passing. Due to their complexity a larger framework would be needed for detailed discussions. Such a framework would have to include recorded conversations.

A. RESEARCH ON RUSSIAN ARGOTS AND JARGONS

I. Pre-Revolutionary Research

In Russia, argot began to attract interest in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Ethnologists, geographers, historians, amateur philologists and even a few linguists tried to draw attention to this phenomenon by publishing lists of argot words in newspaper articles. Their favourite subject was the *офенское наречие* ('pedlars' dialect') or *офенский язык* ('pedlars' language'), spoken by the *офени* (hawkers and itinerant pedlars). In the second half of the century linguists began to show interest in other professional and ethnic groups, and only after the turn of the century were more thorough investigations being made into Russian thieves' cant.¹

One of the most famous Russian linguists was V. I. Dal', who examined modifications of the Russian language. In his "Contributions to Russian Dialects" he also considered artificial languages.² These included the following: the pedlars' language which was spoken in the province of Vladimir; the *кантужный язык* ('dialect of beggars and thieves') in the provinces of Rjazan' and Tver'; the *байковый язык* ('thieves' cant') or simply *музыка* ('music') common in the two capitals of Moscow and St. Petersburg; the *условный мошеннический язык* ('conventional rogues' speech') spoken by veterinaries, horse thieves and horse traders, and, with some restrictions, the *мошеннический или разбойничий язык* ('robbers' or thieves' cant') of the Volga robbers, which was already extinct at that time. Dal' also mentioned

¹ D. S. Lichačev included a comprehensive chronological index of literature on argot before 1933 in his treatise "Čerty pervobytnogo primitivizma vorovskoj reči," in: *Jazyk i myšlenie*, III-IV, Moskva-Leningrad, 1935, pp. 94-99. It also lists literary works. See also the bibliography in V. D. Bondaletov, *Uslovnye jazyki russkich remeslennikov i togovcev*. 1st instalment: *Uslovnye jazyki kak osobyj tip social'nych dialektov*, Rjazan', 1974, pp. 11-12.

² See V. Dal', "O narečijach ruskago jazyka" (S.-Peterburg, 1852), including "O jazykach iskustvennych" reprinted in: *Tolkovyj slovar' velikoruskogo jazyka*, vol. 1, Moskva, 1956 (from the 2nd edition, 1880), pp. LXXVI-LXXVIII. Some time afterwards L. Diefenbach published his "Die ofenische Sprache," in: *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der arischen, celtischen und slavischen Sprachen*, vol. 4, Berlin, 1865, pp. 328-341. (Diefenbach gives the German equivalents of examples from the pedlars' language.)

the pidgin Russian spoken by the traders in Kjachta along the Chinese/Russian border and the тарабарский язык ('nonsense language') of school children, where consonants are interchanged according to a prescribed formula. He concluded his list with the говор по херам ('cher dialect'), whose main characteristic feature is the addition of хер to every syllable.

Dal' quite obviously subsumed the most diverse languages under the term "artificial languages", which was then in common use. These languages can be subdivided according to professions, occupations, age groups and partly to territorial features. They also can be graded according to the degree of their artificiality. The тарабарский язык and the говор по херам, which represent purely mechanical encoding systems of otherwise intelligible Russian, can be contrasted with the придуманный язык ('invented language') of the pedlars. According to Dal' the creation of this language took several generations. The pedlars' language contains Russian words whose original meanings have changed, loans (from various Russian dialects and from Greek) and "new coinages", all of them subordinated to the structure and grammar of Russian.³ By условный мошеннический язык Dal' means a language spoken by a restricted number of people. In this connection it is interesting to note that Dal' avoided the term "jargon" although he did mention it as a French loan in the word list of his great work.⁴ He may have avoided the term out of a dislike of foreign words. Dal' also failed to mention the otherwise commonly used expression тайные языки ('secret languages') for artificial or conventional languages. Since he is considered one of the leading authorities in the Russian and pedlars' languages - he compiled a still unpublished pedlars'/Russian dictionary comprising about 5,000 words - these circumstances become especially significant in the discussion of the extent to which varieties of Russian were secret.⁵

Unlike Dal', V. Jagić had no personal experience of the language of the pedlars, artisans, beggars and street musicians of Russia, but depended entirely on publications on the subject which appeared before the mid-nineties. Jagić considered these languages secret because they had been modified in such a way as to ensure "secrecy of communication", including

³ See Dal' 1956 (2nd ed., 1880), vol. 1, p. LXXVII and p. 30 under "Afenja".

⁴ Dal' 1956 (2nd ed., 1880), vol. 1, under "Zargon," p. 526.

⁵ Bondaletov (1974), p. 12.

"jokes and serious matters" and "gangsters' tricks".⁶ For effective camouflage various word-formation methods were employed, such as the addition or alteration of syllables or sounds (шувеса instead of весна 'spring', шиблоко in place of яблоко 'apple'), and the enlargement of word stems (красимный in place of красивый 'beautiful', тонкимный instead of тонкий 'thin', зворить in place of звать 'to call', ждыкорить in place of ждать 'to wait'). Other word-formation methods included derivations from common Russian verb stems.⁷

Jagić did not hesitate to refer to the pedlars' language as a jargon, a term which is also used by other researchers. In an essay about the speech of workers from Kaluga, mention is made of a местный условный язык ('conventional local language') and the жаргоны калужских ремесленников ('jargons of Kalugan workers').⁸ The term "jargon" included the colloquial Yiddish of Russian Jews.⁹ By the way, Moses Mendelsohn, a friend of Lessing's, had claimed that Yiddish was "not a language but a gibberish, an impaired German, a jargon".¹⁰

Before the beginning of the 20th century linguists paid practically no attention to Russian thieves' cant, the so-called блатная музыка ('thieves' music'). In 1892 a dictionary was published containing characterizations of all the artificial languages mentioned by Dal'; it stated that thieves' cant had never been an object of scientific research.¹¹ Such research was greatly facilitated by literary works on the environments of criminals and the routine of prisoners. The bestseller "Petersburg Slums", published in 1867, contains a great number of argot words.¹² Its author observed that

⁶ See the exhaustive treatise by J. Jagić, "Die Geheimsprachen bei den Slaven," in: *Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. 133, V, 1895, Wien, 1896, p. 1.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 40-79.

⁸ V. N. Dobrovol'skij, "Nekotorye dannye uslovnogo jazyka kalužskich rabočich," in: *Izvestija ORJaS*, vol. IV, bk. 4, 1899, pp. 1086-1087.

⁹ See e.g. P. V. Sejn, "K voprosu ob uslovných jazykach," in: *Izvestija ORJaS*, vol. IV, bk. 1, 1899, p. 299.

¹⁰ Cf. S. Landmann, *Jiddisch. Das Abenteuer einer Sprache*, Wiesbaden, München, 1979, p. 106.

¹¹ See the article "Vorovskoj jazyk," in: *Enciklopedičeskij slovar'*, ed. by F. A. Brokgauz and I. A. Efron, vol. VII (13), S.-Peterburg, 1892, p. 202.

¹² V. Krestovskij, *Peterburgskija Truščoby. Kniga o sytych i golodnych*, vols. 1-4, S.-Peterburg, 1867. A new edition appeared in Moscow in 1935.

thieves and rogues used "some kind of conventional language (argot)" known as музыка or байковый язык, whose characteristic features were its "vivid imagery" and "terse brevity". It contained elements of Polish, Ukrainian, Romance, German, Tartar, Finnish and Romany. The argot spoken in Moscow was clearly distinct from that of St. Petersburg, which showed more foreign influences.¹³ A book about Siberia and forced labour contains a list of words of diverse origins: pedlars, thieves, convicts and others.¹⁴

1908 marks the first time that a linguist, namely the Polish Slavist Baudouin de Courtenay, took an interest in Russian argot. He also wrote the foreword to a dictionary of argot.¹⁵ According to him the conventional, artificial and secret languages are more or less closely connected with the блатная музыка. The conventional languages include those spoken by school boys, university students and boarding-school girls. Dialects in the true sense of the word are arrived at by dividing the Russian language horizontally according to national, territorial and ethnographical features. Such a division yields differences in pronunciation. A vertical division according to profession, social class and education reveals differences in language use and world view, which manifests itself in the language.¹⁶ The блатная музыка as a variety of Russian is a говор (a dialect) of the vertical division. It reflects certain particularities of Russian (phonetics, morphology) or, in the case of dialect speakers, the particularities of Russian regional dialects. For Baudouin, crime, like science, art and trade, is an international phenomenon which explains the existence of foreign loans and international associations of meaning. The foreign structures of some words and phrases and certain peculiarities of pronunciation are, to a limited extent, also due to this international phenomenon. Many words have ironical, humourous (black humour) or cynical connotations.

¹³ The quotations have been taken from N. [A.] Smirnov, "Slova i vyraženiya vorovskogo jazyka, vybrannyja iz romana Vs. Krestovskago - 'Peterburgskija truščoby'," in: *Izvestija ORJaS*, vol. 4, bk. 3, 1899, pp. 1065-1066.

¹⁴ See S. [V.] Maksimov, "Tjuremnyj slovar' i iskustvennye bajkovye, lamanskije i kantjužnye jazyki," in: *Sibir' i katorga*, pt. 1, S.-Peterburg, 1871, pp. 429-459.

¹⁵ I. A. Boduën-de-Kurtené, "Predislovie," in V. F. Trachtenberg, *Blatnaja muzyka («Zargon» tjur'my)*, S.-Peterburg, 1908, pp. V-XIX. In his word index Baudouin de Courtenay refers to the book by G. N. Brejtman, *Prestupnyj mir, očerki iz byta professional'nych prestupnikov*, Kiev, 1901, which is eminently readable even today. Brejtman was very concerned to explain the meanings of the jargon phrases.

¹⁶ Boduën-de-Kurtené (1908), p. XIX.

Unlike Dal' and other scientists, Baudouin maintained that the peculiar associations and loan words of Russian argot reflected the world view and thought processes of criminals the world over. He called these phenomena the "inner side" of argot. Wilhelm von Humboldt's concepts of "world view" and "inner language structure" are thus extended beyond one nation and one language to include the whole of mankind.¹⁷ New were also Baudouin de Courtenay's linguistic divisions into horizontal and vertical strata, both of which he called dialects. He himself considered these stratifications inexact. But thanks to their graphic quality and methodological advantages they have remained useful to this day.

In an earlier contribution to a dictionary, Baudouin had claimed that persons with a command of only one mother tongue were, in fact, to a moderate extent multilingual. Many people were able to adapt themselves according to wish and circumstances to colloquial, formal or literary language, to rhyme or prose, and to official or private language. The languages spoken by certain groups of craftsmen, trades and social classes, the specific languages of the sexes and age groups, and, finally, languages spoken during specific periods of life (by soldiers, exiled persons and prisoners) - all originated from one basic language. Added to these were the secret and semi-secret languages, the so-called jargons, spoken by school pupils and college students, by hawkers, guttersnipes, prostitutes and rowdies, and by swindlers, thieves and other criminals.¹⁸

D. Zelenin cited three causes for the formation of jargon expressions. Firstly, new words or names are needed for concepts which do not exist in the standard language. Secondly, some words lose their expressiveness through overuse and become monotonous. Thirdly, there are certain operations and unclean affairs which need to remain concealed from outsiders.¹⁹ Especially the last two reasons have afterwards often been given as an explanation for the existence of jargon.

Max Vasmer, author of the "Russian Etymological Dictionary", had planned to write an essay on Russian argot. But unfortunately this plan

¹⁷ Ibid., p. XIII.

¹⁸ See the article "Jazyk i jazyki," in: *Enciklopedičeskij slovar'*, ed. by F. A. Brokgauz and I. A. Efron, vol. XLI (81), S.-Peterburg, 1904, p. 533.

¹⁹ D. Zelenin, "Seminarškija slova v ruskom jazykě," in: *Russkij filologičeskij věstnik*, vol. 54, Varšava, 1905, pp. 109-111.

never materialized. The only work Vasmer actually did in this field were some unconvincing attempts to trace the etymology of the cant syllables *šu-*, *ku-* and *ši-* back to standard Russian.²⁰ These etymologies were later included in his dictionary.

In 1912 V. M. Popov published his "Dictionary of Argot and Prison Cant", a work of remarkable scope designed for practical use by the police. It contains approximately 1,700 entries, geographically and technically defined. This dictionary has often served as a source book for linguistic research.²¹ Popov explained the origin of argot with the need of criminals for secrecy. Words which had become known to the police or the general public could no longer be used by the criminals and had to be replaced by new ones. *Воровской жаргон* ('thieves' cant') had several symmetrical expressions for one Russian word, and this, too, served purposes of secrecy. The majority of prisoners being criminals, their argot had a considerable influence on the language commonly spoken in prisons.²²

Two publications on the Russian-Jewish "Klesmer" language (musicians' dialect) which appeared before the First World War were completely ignored by Soviet experts on social dialects, although this language has some lexical features in common with the modern *лабужский жаргон* ('musicians' jargon') of the Soviet Union.²³

Finally, mention must be made of W. Christiani's "On Personal Swear Words in Russian". These words, which were coined by formal (affixes) or metaphorical means, express such complex emotional shadings that the author is doubtful whether the extremely detailed definitions of the dictionaries have in all cases exhaustively expressed their ambiguity.²⁴ One

²⁰ M. Vasmer, "Rotwelsches im russischen Wortschatze," in: *Wörter und Sachen. Kulturhistorische Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Sachforschung*, vol. III, Heidelberg, 1912, pp. 198-204.

²¹ V. M. Popov, *Slovar' vorovskogo i arestantskogo jazyka*, Kiev, 1912. The dictionary was also published in O. Horbatsch (ed.), *Russische Gaunersprache I*, Frankfurt am Main, 1978 (*Specimina Philologiae Slavicae*, vol. 16). Horbatsch arranged the vocabulary according to geographical and technical aspects. See his footnote 25 on p. 17.

²² Popov (1912), pp. 5-10.

²³ S. Weissenberg, "Die 'Klesmer'-Sprache," in: *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, vol. 43, Wien, 1913, pp. 127-142, and A. Landau, "Zur russisch-jüdischen 'Klesmer'sprache," *ibid.*, pp. 143-149.

²⁴ The treatise was published in: *Archiv für Slavische Philologie*, vol. 34, Berlin, 1913, pp. 321-370. The quotations have been taken from p. 322 and p. 323.

could say the same thing about many expressions of slang, jargon and "mat".

II. Post-Revolutionary Research

1. The Sociological Period

The works on Russian argot published before the First World War and until the mid-twenties were mainly pragmatic in approach. They consisted of word lists for use by the police, pedagogical and legal literature on the subject of child negligence in which linguistic questions were also considered, and literary works describing daily life in the Soviet Union.²⁵

"Language and Society", written by Rozalija O. Sor, clearly pointed out the direction in which the authoress thought that sociolinguistics should move in the young Soviet state.²⁶ In spite of her deliberate reference to "West European concepts in sociolinguistics", the authoress leaves no doubt about her own attitude. She is convinced that social stratifications are generally matched by parallel linguistic stratifications, which means that groups or classes of people which have formed within a society speak their own social dialects. Every branch of production has its own technical terms for tools and processes which are unintelligible to workers in other branches. As methods of production and social stratifications become increasingly more complicated, social dialects become more isolated from each other. Differences between social groups are due to the type of their involvement in economy and production, and to different life styles. Wherever a group of people share the same life style, they develop a uniform group psychology. Group psychology is responsible for the formation of common metaphors and metonyms in technical terms even where members of the same production group do not speak the same mother tongue. The terms are the product of a group's self-awareness and serve to demonstrate to the rest of society their independence and autonomy. Whereas society as a whole wants to standardize its language, individual members

²⁵ See V. Tonkov, *Opyt issledovanija vorovskogo jazyka*, Kazan', 1930, pp. 85-89, and Lichačev (1935), pp. 98-99.

²⁶ See R. [O.] Sor, *Jazyk i obščestvo*, Moskva, 1926. Pp. 3 and 99-116 are of interest to sociolectologists.

of social groups want to emphasize their lexical differences. Extreme cases lead to the creation of secret or artificial languages.²⁷ Such languages are normally spoken by only a few people. In a stratified society one will also find argots, the secret languages of various groups of the lumpenproletariat (prostitutes, beggars, criminals). But the artificial nature of these languages is not the result of individual creativity. People normally pick up these languages from a collective, which is distinct from their own individuality. To achieve linguistic isolation, the pronunciation of existing standard language material is changed, and indigenous words are replaced with loans or used figuratively: e.g., колодяк (околодочный) 'police officer in charge of police station', трам (трамвай) 'tramway', бабай (старик) 'old man', чирик (четвертак) '25-copeck coin', бан (вокзал) 'railway station', венчание (суд) 'court proceedings'.²⁸ Colloquialisms which are borrowed into the dialects of professional or social groups normally undergo semantic narrowing. If, on the other hand, technical terms are borrowed by the colloquial or literary language, they undergo semantic widening. The history of languages has shown that foreign borrowings are made even when the receiving language already contains words which are completely or practically synonymous with the loans.

Sor obviously based her observations on Baudouin de Courtenay's theory of the linguistic differentiation of society and the uniformity of associations in new coinages. But to her, in accordance with Marxist ideology, these phenomena are in the final analysis caused by economic conditions.

The growing Soviet interest in thieves' cant and other argots was not accidental. The déclassé stratum of the proletariat mentioned by Sor was, after the defeat of capitalism, to be integrated into the new society and actively involved in building communism. Socially speaking, the бланые ('criminals') were closest to the working class. From the 1920s they were officially referred to as "социально-близкие" ('social neighbours').²⁹

²⁷ Sor also wrote an encyclopaedia article on conventional languages. This expression is synonymous with "secret languages" and partially synonymous with "artificial languages". See her article "Uslovnye jazyki," in: *BSE*, vol. 56, Moskva, 1936, col. 312, and her essay "Vorovskie jazyki," in: *BSE*, vol. 13, Moskva, 1929, cols. 137-138, where she repeats her opinion about rogues' language as put forward in her book.

²⁸ Sor (1926), p. 106, and Sor (1929), col. 137.

²⁹ Cf. Lichačev (1935), p. 47. See also A. Solženitsyn, *Archipelag Gulag*

In 1927 a short essay appeared in Moscow on the influence of thieves' cant on the language of school children.³⁰ This essay among others was supposed to help teachers in their fight against the inundation of the standard language with argot words. The essay showed how the school children's language was "contaminated" by thieves' cant. The *беспризорные* ('homeless'), the thieves' "young assistants", became intimately familiar with thieves' cant and therefore played a decisive part in this contamination. At school, at home, in the cinema, on market squares and in the streets, school children would come into contact with these homeless youngsters. Workers' children envied these *беспризорные* their freedom and tried to imitate them. They also imitated adults who used argot words. The incidence of this undesirable jargon was highest in schools with predominantly workers' children. The third source of contamination was realistic portrayals of everyday life in the Soviet Union by such writers as M. M. Zoščenko. Apart from these external factors the author feels there are a number of additional reasons and motives why school children use argot vocabulary. Very common words are usually "worn out" through overuse and have therefore become uninteresting. New coinages of the literary language such as *капитализм* (-изм) 'capitalism', *делегировать* (-ировать) 'to delegate' or *аполитичный* (а-) 'apolitical' are formed according to certain rules: they are polysyllabic and difficult to pronounce,³¹ and they fail to trigger off any associations in the school children's minds. Furthermore, words expressing abstract concepts have little to do with the school boys' daily life. But argot words, while they may be borrowed, are simple and rich of sound, contain an element of surprise and are easy to incorporate grammatically: e.g. *буза* 'racket', *срёма* 'to be look-out man'

1918-1956. *Opyt chudožestvennogo issledovanija*, pts. III-IV, Paris, 1974, pp. 415-433 ("Social'no-blizkie"), and pts. I-II, Paris, 1973, p. 502.

³⁰ S. A. Koperskij, "Vorovskoj žargon v srede škol'nikov (Po materialam obsledovanija jaroslavskich škol)," in: *Vestnik prosveščeniya*, Moskva, 1927, no. 1, pp. 7-12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9. The examples might amuse but not convince, in which case it would help to remember that the fight against illiteracy and for improvement of the standard of education had been a long, drawn-out affair. It would be wrong to apply today's standards of education when assessing these examples. (Zoščenko's short story "Obez'janij jazyk" illustrates the difficulties simple Soviet citizens had when using foreign words. Long unavailable, it was finally reprinted in M. Zoščenko, *Opal'nye rasskazy*, Nes-Ziona, 1981, pp. 60-63).

and *мыпа* 'bothersome trifles, nuisance'.³² Their metaphors, though crude, are uncomplicated and intelligible. Such words are suitable for emotionally charged activities such as playing or fighting. There are numerous synonyms, themselves charged with emotions, referring to such activities. Once argot words have been incorporated in the school boys' vocabulary they often undergo semantic changes and lose their specifically professional character. Furthermore, since the original meaning of a loan word is frequently unknown, it can be subjected to successive and comparatively sudden semantic shifts. Jargon words are used in a jocular and playful manner reflecting the stored-up energy and mischievousness of school children.

S. A. Koporskij counts thieves' cant among the профессиональные говоры ('professional dialects'), namely the conventional languages. It serves criminals as a means of identification in their war against a hostile environment. Their speech is brief and symbolic, full of allusions and casual remarks. The slightest resemblance between two objects or phenomena can cause transference of one concept to another: e.g., воробушки - деньги 'money', снегирь - милиционер 'militiaman'. The inflexion of cant words is rudimentary; many occur in a fixed form such as катись! 'get lost', or по-нѣс 'agreed'. Many verbs cannot form the passive or conditional: бузить 'to make a racket', зашиться 'to get nabbed'. Nouns are fixed in either the nominative or the vocative case. The syntax is quite peculiar. There are no periods or compound sentences. A single word often functions as a phrase which is grammatically difficult to analyse. This applies above all to words expressing moods or emotions:

Эмоциональность «выпирает» тогда из слов, из речи, разрушая грамматическую природу последней. Как выразитель настроений, переживаний, воровской словарь с трудом укладывается в литературные грамматические конструкции.³³

Koporskij concludes:

Если искусство должно об'единять людей, возбуждать в них настроения, переживания общественно-полезные, то блатная музыка, в противоположность искусству, возбуждает животные, дикие инстинкты, вредные для общества.³⁴

Koporskij's investigations have in my opinion had a lasting effect on social dialect research in the Soviet Union. Moreover, they are typical of

³² Koporskij (1927), p. 10.

³³ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

the linguistic situation prevalent in the country at that time. The social and psychological reasons for the spreading of thieves' cant are briefly enumerated, and the morphological, syntactical and semantic characteristics of cant are described. Most of Koporskij's statements have remained valid to this day and require no revision. It is also not by accident that other Soviet linguists have quoted or taken over some of his statements.

Seliščev, who had incorporated Koporskij's contributions into his own book "The Language of the Revolutionary Period", tried to show how the Russian vocabulary had been influenced by the events of the Revolution.³⁵ He mainly documented deviations from the literary language, among them vulgarisms and argot for which the revolutionaries, and especially the students among them, showed great partiality. Their crudeness and lack of adornment was conceived as a protest against established values. Argot words suddenly turned respectable, and Russian *war* experienced a tremendous boom.³⁶ It was generally believed that this emotionally charged, coarse language would distinguish the working youth from the intelligentsia. For this reason it was initially permitted and even encouraged. But around the mid-twenties the Party and administration began to raise objections.³⁷ The spirits which had been called had outstayed their welcome.

Seliščev grouped the *блатная музыка* (Fr. argot) with the *профессиональные языки* ('professional languages') designed for communication and "the concealment of statements" (!). Socially speaking, he interpreted linguistic changes as processes of imitation: individuals took on the speech patterns either of the group to which they belonged or of another influential group. Every social group was divided according to age. During periods of social transition, differences in interests and attitudes between the younger and the older generations became particularly noticeable and were more emphatically expressed in their speech. Deviations from norms would eventually turn into norms if shared by other groups.³⁸

Despite its many strong points, Seliščev's book was criticized for being exclusively based on written sources (*belles lettres*, technical litera-

³⁵ A. M. Seliščev, *Jazyk revoljucionnoj epochi. Iz nabljudenij nad ruskim jazykom poslednich let (1917-1926)*, 2nd ed., Moskva, 1928. See esp. pp. 68-85.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 74.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

³⁸ Seliščev bases his observations on the French sociologist E. Durkheim and the Soviet sociologist P. Sorokin. See *ibid.*, pp. 8-12.

ture, newspapers) rather than personal observations, and for lacking a critical treatment of the sources. Another criticism levelled at Seliščev was that he only took notice of the existence of literary language and rural dialects. This criticism came from no less a man than B. A. Larin, who was to develop theories on the relationship between the literary language and various urban argots, especially thieves' cant, and who would make suggestions regarding the systematic exploration of urban colloquial speech.³⁹ Already in those days he recognized the necessity of field work with previously prepared questionnaires in addition to statistical and sociological data. It was not by accident that the expression социологическая лингвистика ('sociolinguistics') came into use in the Soviet Union at that time.⁴⁰

Dialectology in those days had as its subject of enquiry only the literary language and the (regional) dialects as viewed from the aspect of the literary language. To correct this shortcoming, Larin suggested that the city argots be treated as a third linguistic phenomenon. He based his suggestion on the following arguments:

- 1) City argots are distinct from literary language on the one hand and from dialects on the other;
- 2) city argots are autonomous as regards their social backgrounds and their purely linguistic characteristics;
- 3) for the research of city argots a new theoretical premise is required which allows for the interdependence of two or more linguistic systems available to all social groups and their individual members.⁴¹

Larin was of the opinion that traditional linguistics, historical as well as theoretical, laboured under the misconception that social groups and their

³⁹ B. A. Larin, "O lingvističeskom izučenii goroda," in: *Russkaja reč'* (Sborniki), ed. by L. V. Šerba, Novaja serija, III, Leningrad, 1928, pp. 61-74. For a critique of Seliščev see *ibid.*, p. 73, note 1.

⁴⁰ See B. A. Larin, "K lingvističeskoj charakteristike goroda. (Neskol'ko predposylok)," in: *Izvestija Leningradskogo gos. ped. instituta im. Gercena*, 1928, vol. 1, p. 175. Larin mentions the expression лингвистическая социология as being synonymous with this term. Regarding the origin of социологическая лингвистика see P. Brang, "Ober die Aufgaben der sprachsoziologischen Forschung vornehmlich am Beispiel der russischen Literatursprache," in: P. Brang et al. (eds.), *Schweizer Beiträge zum VII. Internationalen Slavistenkongress in Warschau, August 1973 (Slavica Helvetica, 7)*, Luzern/Frankfurt M., 1973, p. 3, note 1.

⁴¹ Larin (1928b), p. 64.

members were monolingual; and that this misconception was being exploited by the Soviet authorities in order to control the chaotic "linguistic war" between the various "linguistic parties". To prevent any one of the linguistic parties from getting the upper hand, each social dialect was attributed to a particular collective. Balance was to be maintained between the social dialects at all costs.⁴²

Larin consistently refused to treat argots as varieties of the literary language. Assuming argot speakers to be bilingual, he considered the first or main component of their bilingualism to be not the literary language but the argot, the social dialect:

Когда мы будем располагать большим соответствующим материалом, то вторым языковым рядом городских арго может быть и окажется некий «низкий» общий разговорный язык (я бы назвал его «городским просторечием») [...] Одно ясно, этим искомым не окажется литературный язык в собственном смысле термина.⁴³

Larin defined argot as a linguistic system which served a particular social group as a primary language.⁴⁴ For argot speakers all other linguistic systems took second place. Looked at from the aspect of the literary language argot appeared not as an independent system but as a "parasitic" language; but Larin took a different view:

Арго принадлежат к смешанным языкам, особенно в виду двуязычия их носителей. Они имеют свою фонетику и морфологию, хотя и не "особую", не оригинальную. Но принципиального отличия от литературных языков (всегда тоже смешанных) тут нет, есть лишь относительное, количественное различие.⁴⁵

Larin considered it a characteristic feature of argot that it was social rather than individual and that it was systematized and standardized, which ensured its stability. He explained the well-known fact that argot has a vocabulary of its own by referring to the literary language:

Точных эквивалентов тут нет уже хотя бы потому, что арготические словечки и конструкции часто имеют такой эмоциональный и волевой заряд, какого литературные языки не имеют ни для кого, а уж менее всего для говорящих на арго.⁴⁶

Researching an argot was problematic for Larin inasmuch as argot expressions alternated with elements of the other more general linguistic

⁴² Larin (1928a), p. 179

⁴³ Drawing on L. Sainéan's *Le langage parisien au XIX-e siècle*, Paris, 1920, which deals with "bas langage", Larin speaks of the "low" colloquial language. See Larin (1928b), pp. 71, 73.

⁴⁴ Larin (1928b), p. 72.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 73

system. It was therefore not always possible to isolate the second linguistic system, which was incomplete anyway. French researchers, among them Sainéan, had drawn a line between the специальные языки ('special languages') and the argots. This was of more theoretical significance for Larrin, since special languages and argots were closely connected in daily life. The special languages were to him nothing but специальная профессиональная терминология ('specialized technical terminology') within literary or other languages. But he did consider it necessary to distinguish between argots and the mechanical processes of "masking words" as practised among school children and traders.⁴⁷

As mentioned earlier, after the mid-twenties the research of social dialects had its brief flowering in the Soviet Union. During the late twenties and early thirties attempts were made to trace the etymology of expressions which had been collected from dictionaries and word lists of the criminal police. This was a period of spade work on lexical material. The works by Pott, Kluge, Günther, Jagić, Estreicher, Sainéan, Dauzat and others were consulted.⁴⁸ Researchers also did not neglect to examine more closely the historical, economic, social and psychological causes for the existence of argot. But no mention was made of Marx, Engels or even Lenin. This does not mean that argot was being researched for its own sake. The real reason was that a large part of the urban population had adopted the active vocabulary of their "social neighbours". This linguistic adaptation had taken on such proportions that the responsible authorities could no longer condone it. Increased efforts were made to stop this negative trend. Undoubtedly, the explosive political character of the problem had at last been recognized. An uncompromising interpretation of the theory that language reflects the life and reality of its society indicated that the speech habits of the Soviet citizens would lead one to draw highly unpleasant and undesirable conclusions. It was now up to the linguists to make their contribution to solving this serious problem. The lin-

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 74

⁴⁸ A. F. Pott, *Die Zigeuner in Europa und Asien*, 2 pts., Halle, 1844/1845; F. Kluge, *Rotwelsch. Quellen und Wortschatz der Gaunersprache und der verwandten Geheimsprachen*, Straßburg, 1901; L. Günther, *Die deutsche Gaunersprache und verwandte Geheim- und Berufssprachen*, Leipzig, 1919; K. Estreicher, *Swargot więzienny*, Kraków, 1903; L. Sainéan, *L'argot ancien (1455-1850)*, Paris, 1907; A. Dauzat, *La vie du langage*, Paris, 1922.

guistic situation in the Soviet Union undoubtedly favoured studies of argots, jargons and the colloquial language.

The first Soviet monograph on Russian thieves' cant appeared in 1930 with an edition of only 500 copies. Its author, V. Tonkov, had compiled parts of the dictionaries of Trachtenberg and Popov and had evaluated newspaper and magazine articles, fiction and his own word lists.⁴⁹ He defended the well-known theory that thieves' cant was a secret and artificial language whose instability was due to the fact that words had to be frequently changed if secrecy was to be preserved. The infiltration of cant words into the colloquial language was to be negatively viewed as constituting a danger to the literary language. Thieves' cant, so Tonkov maintained, was a left-over of capitalism, not the Revolution. In Soviet reformatories preconditions were lacking for the creation of a secret language among criminals. One of the effects of the Cultural Revolution would be that all secret languages, among them thieves' cant, would die out and that cant words would disappear from the speech of the urban population. A sure way towards realizing this aim would be for all strata of society to share the responsibility for the purity of the Russian language.⁵⁰

One should not reproach Tonkov for his healthy optimism regarding language development in the Soviet Union. It is always difficult to predict the development of a language, especially when the prognosis is based on idealistic or ideological concepts which have little or nothing to do with reality. Tonkov's merit lies not in his prognoses but in his field work in homes and shelters for neglected children in Kazan' and Moscow between 1923 and 1927. The lexical material obtained in this manner was clearly presented and ordered according to subjects. Invaluable are also his literary references.

In his article "Argot and Argotisms", V. Straten gave a compressed summary of the various types of argots,⁵¹ including the old (extinct) argots of hawkers, artisans, vagabonds and beggars and the new urban ones

⁴⁹ V. Tonkov, *Opyt issledovanija vorovskogo jazyka*, Kazan', 1930.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 68, 82-83.

⁵¹ V. V. Straten, "Argo i argotizmy," in: *Trudy komissii po rusckomu jazyku*, vol. I, Leningrad, 1931, pp. 111-147. This article is practically identical with his earlier contribution "Ob argo i argotizmach," in: *Russkij jazyk v sovetskoj škole*, Moskva, 1929, 5, pp. 39-53.

which had emerged by the middle of the 19th century. Investigations into the origins of argot words revealed that they had either survived the old argots or were loans from German and Polish. Mechanical word-forming processes were uncommon in the блатная музыка, but metaphors occurred frequently. They were characterized primarily by irony and sarcasm. On the other hand the extinct argots often contained metonymical word formations. None of the argots have their own grammar, word-forming methods or phonetics, nor do they have prepositions, conjunctions or interjections of their own.⁵² Straten was sceptical about conditions for the survival of thieves' cant:

Однако, обилие старых и уже отпавших от арго слов показывает, что современный арго переживает кризис, находится в переходном состоянии. Вряд ли можно говорить о полном его отмирании, потому что, к сожалению, еще не уничтожены у нас окончательно условия, создающие "блатное" дно и язык этого дна, как неизбежное следствие изоляции от нормальной общественности. [...] Итак, внешний признак кризиса блатного языка заключается в том, что он, оторвавшись от своей естественной почвы, получил небывалую прежде широкую базу.⁵³

Straten reached this conclusion mainly on the assumption that due to its wide distribution thieves' cant had lost its secret character. Obviously, he was also trying to show that the underworld itself was going through a crisis. However, the criminal argot came through its crisis perfectly intact despite its wide distribution and the changes every language undergoes.

Nor is Straten's theory about the method by which argot loan words enter the Russian language (colloquial and literary) very convincing. He explains his "sifting" theory as follows:

Более культурная среда отнюдь не содействует проникновению арготических элементов в язык. Мы видим, таким образом, просеивание отпавших от арго и нахлынувших на нас слов через несколько сит: сначала эти слова почти целиком просеиваются в жаргон беспризорных; в языке школьников некоторые слова уже отсеиваются; еще большее отсеивание происходит в языке комсомольцев, затем рабочих, интеллигентов. И сравнительно немногие слова проходят через все эти сита, выдерживают борьбу за право полного гражданства.⁵⁴

This theory is valid only inasmuch as all the listed groups could but did not have to be involved in the borrowing of argotisms. The process of borrowing far from followed the strict order described, and the new intelligentsia was not always the last group to be involved.

⁵² Straten (1931), p. 130-131.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 140.

⁵⁴ Straten (1931), p. 146-147.

More to the point is Straten's observation that the jargons of school children and the homeless young in different regions of the Soviet Union did not greatly differ from each other because the блатная музыка, the colloquial language of the criminals, was their main source of supply. The блатная музыка itself was only insignificantly influenced by the linguistic idiosyncrasies of different groups of criminals (cardsharppers, thieves, pick-pockets, robbers). Regional peculiarities did not play the same role here as with the old argots.

Compared to Straten, who had to depend on outside sources for his investigations, other researchers enjoyed much better working conditions. They had at their disposal the index of the Институт речевой культуры (Institute for Speech Culture). Larin, who was the founder of the Institute, guided his colleagues in their investigations of the etymology of foreign loans in Russian thieves' cant and other argots.³⁵ Larin took it upon himself to offer fundamental explanations on the relationships between conventional languages (argots) and standard or national languages. In doing this he sometimes took up positions which were the exact opposites to his previous opinions. Argots were now suddenly defined as "secondary linguistic systems" derived from the standard language; they were "superimpositions". Their systems of phonetics, their morphology, syntax and to a large extent their vocabulary (including all non-inflected and a number of inflected words) agreed with those of the standard language. Only some categories of word formations, part of the argot vocabulary, and the semantics were regarded as abnormal.³⁶ It is difficult to say why Larin abandoned his old concepts. His change of mind - without any reference to previous opinions - may have been due to a new official attitude towards argot. This new attitude was the result of the growing in-

³⁵ B. A. Larin, "Zapadnoevropejskie élementy russkogo vorovskogo argo," in: *Jazyk i literatura*, vol. VII, Leningrad, 1931, pp. 113-130; M. M. Fridman, "Evrejskie élementy «blatnoj muzyki»," *ibid.*, pp. 131-138; A. P. Barannikov, "Cyganskie élementy v russkom vorovskom argo," *ibid.*, pp. 139-158; N. K. Dmitriev, "Tureckie élementy v russkom argo," *ibid.*, pp. 159-179. Two other articles by I. I. Sokolova, "O grečeskich élementach russkich argo," and by N. N. Filippova, "Rumynizmy v russkom argo," have never been published (see *ibid.*, p. 111). Similarly, a treatise announced by Larin on the jargon of beggars and itinerant bards in the Ukraine and on the role of seminarists in Kiev in introducing classical lexical material into the argots has not been published.

³⁶ Larin (1931), p. 113.

fluence of Marrism. In the mid-twenties N. Ja. Marr had established the theory that all languages were developing in the direction of one single international classless language which would be organically related to a classless economy, society and culture. In order to speed up this world-embracing process, mankind would have to resort to artificial and scientifically planned measures.⁵⁷ In 1928 Larin still quite openly rejected this thesis, which was later raised to a general dogma. The idea that the future should hold "a unanimous human race with a single world language" appeared to him naive and completely unlikely because it presumed the "disappearance of many languages with strong social and cultural bases" and the "monolingualism of culturally highly developed cosmopolitan collectives".⁵⁸

Whatever the reason for Larin's volte-face, he suggested the following subdivisions for Polish, German and French loan words in Russian thieves' cant: 1) foreign words from the Russian literary language, 2) loans from West European literary languages, 3) loans from West European argots. The last category, which was at the same time the most important one, was subdivided into: a) undamaged loans, b) semantically assimilated loans, c) semantic loans.⁵⁹ His examples will illustrate what he meant: for 1) балерима 'picklock'; for 2) мотя 'half' (Fr. moitié); for 3a) альфонс 'pimp' (Rw. Alphons; Pol. ar. alfons; Ar. Alphonse); for 3b) скокарь 'thief who sneaks in' (Rw. Skoker) - since скокарь is commonly associated with скакать ('to jump, hop') it is often spelt скакарь; for 3c) смег 'fresh washing, white linen' (Rw. Schnee). 3b and 3c are a folk etymology and a translation. If a loan word in thieves' cant undergoes a semantic shift, this shift spreads to all the words in the corresponding synonymic series: e.g. жапа 'hopeless situation', incarceration' (Rw. Kühle; cp. Rw. Hitze 'interrogation'), which is how вснотерь 'to get nabbed without hope of being released' got its meaning. Larin acknowledged that this phenomenon had already been referred to by French linguists (Dauzat, Sainéan a.o.). To avoid the creation of homonyms, the original meaning of a word is shed and the resulting lexical gap is closed with the help of loan words or se-

⁵⁷ See N. Ja. Marr, "К вопросу об едином языке," in: *Izbrannye raboty*, vol. 2, Leningrad, 1936, p. 398, and "Программа общего курса учения об языке," *ibid.*, p. 5. Both works are dated 1927.

⁵⁸ Larin (1928a), p. 181.

⁵⁹ Larin (1931), p. 118 ss.

mantic neologisms which take over the old meanings: *стрелять* ('to fire') 'to beg for alms' > < *плюнуть* ('to spit out') 'to shoot sb. dead'. Larin referred to these two regular occurrences as *смысловое вовлечение* ('semantic inclusion') and *словарное замещение метафоры* ('lexical replacement of the metaphor').⁶⁰

As regards the vocabulary of Russian thieves' cant or rogues' jargon - the two terms are treated as identical - loans from the Finno-Ugrian and Baltic languages, Rumanian and French are extremely rare. Words from modern Greek occur mainly in the pedlars' language. However, a considerable number of words were borrowed from Polish, German, Rotwelsch, Yiddish-German or ancient Hebrew, Turkish and Romany. It is often impossible to say exactly whether a particular word came into thieves' cant via German, Rotwelsch, Yiddish or Hebrew.

At about the same time E. D. Polivanov, a student of Baudouin de Courtenay's and a determined opponent of Marr's, published several articles on the effects of the Revolution on Russian and other languages in the Soviet Union.⁶¹ According to Polivanov, quality as well as quantity of the speakers, also referred to as *социальный субстрат* ('social substratum'), had changed, and this accelerated the linguistic evolution.⁶² This evolution had a direct effect on the vocabulary, which differs from phonetics and morphology insofar as it reflects social and cultural changes with greater immediacy. These changes become evident from such lexical innovations as the dying-out or new coinage of words and partial or total semantic shifts.⁶³ Before the Revolution the Russian standard or literary language was used exclusively by members of the intelligentsia, but after the Revolution many people who had previously belonged to other social groups now began to use the standard language. Contacts between standard language users and dialect speakers became generally more common so that many loans from the dialects of social groups, classes, sub-classes or

⁶⁰ Larin (1931), p. 129.

⁶¹ E. D. Polivanov, *Za marksistskoe jazykoznanie. Sbornik populjarnych lingvističeskich statej*, Moskva, 1931. Polivanov, accused of being "an epigone of Baudouin's subjective-idealist teachings", in 1938 had to pay with his life for his antagonism towards Marr. Cf. E. D. Polivanov, *Stat'i po obščemu jazykoznaniju*, Moskva, 1968, p. 22.

⁶² Idem, "Revoljucija i literaturnye jazyki Sojuza SSR," in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 75-76.

⁶³ Idem, "Gde ležat pričiny jazykovej évoljucii?," in: Polivanov (1931), p. 38, note 2.

professions entered the Russian standard language. Loans from the following professional or social dialects prevailed: 1) vocabulary of factory workers, 2) vocabulary of sailors, 3) vocabulary of the rural population, 4) thieves' cant.⁶⁴

Nor did the schoolboys' speech remain unaffected by the changes of the Revolution. But Polivanov did not think that the so-called "stylistic decline" towards thieves' cant as observed among school children had anything to do with the Revolution or the social changes it had caused. There had been signs of "linguistic hooliganism" in Russian secondary schools long before then.⁶⁵ Only the quantitative aspect of the phenomenon had changed. Cant words replaced common words without, however, superseding them in the youngsters' minds. They coexisted side by side. The хулиганские слова ('hooligan words') were preferred to the common words because they were semantically "richer". Their use was an indication of the speaker's solidarity with a particular group of people. The school children's vocabulary also reflected their general protest against certain enforcements by the teachers and parents. This protest took the form of smoking, imbibing alcoholic drinks and gambling. This development was encouraged by the civil war, which brought pupils into closer contact with life in the streets. The street arabs helped in the process. Another important factor was the speech of the lumpenproletariat, elements of which infiltrated into the school children's speech and the common colloquial and literary languages. "The close proximity of the sailors to the lumpenproletariat" in the large port of Odessa and elsewhere favoured this development. The lumpenproletariat spoke the secret, although non-standardized thieves' cant, which was closely related to the jargons of the prostitutes, cardsharps, street arabs and others. The sailors as the "avant-garde of the revolutionary enthusiasm" had decisively influenced the then prevalent "speech culture" because of their political significance during the civil war. In this manner a number of words borrowed from the jargons of sailors and the lumpenproletariat were absorbed into the standard Russian language and into different social dialects: e.g., даёшь! 'come

⁶⁴ Idem, "Revoljucija i literaturnye jazyki Sojuza SSR," in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 81-82.

⁶⁵ Idem, "O blatnom jazyke učaščichsja i o 'slavjanskom jazyke' revoljucii," in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 161 ss.

oni', 'out with...', брата 'chaps', 'mates', шагать 'to eat', шаговка 'food', 'tuck-in', брось шлёпать 'stop talking nonsense', топать 'to go, to walk'.⁶⁶

For Polivanov the port cities were the "original homes of common Russian thieves' cant".⁶⁷ In these international cities many German-Jewish cant words (beside some English ones) were said to have been borrowed by the блатная музыка: e.g., фрайер 'non-rogue, victim' (Rw. Freier: 'peasant', 'victim').⁶⁸ But these loans were acceptable to thieves' cant only as long as they remained unintelligible to most people. They did not infiltrate into the standard Russian language, which contained its own expressions.⁶⁹ According to Polivanov this was one of the methods by which the cant vocabulary was being constantly replenished. Another somewhat more common method was that of "metaphorical associations". The Russian word сопля 'snot' was given the cant meaning 'chainlet', 'watch-chain'; the word бока 'sides', 'sides of a solid' now meant 'pocket watch'. The technique of forming words was the same in thieves' cant as in "normal" languages. Polivanov adopted Sor's terminology, preferring to talk of слово-творчество ('word creation'). Being a "collective" phenomenon, it differed from the purely mechanical and "individual" method of the schoolboys' secret languages, where single syllables were either inserted into words or attached to them.

Comparing the evolution of Russian with that of Russian thieves' cant, Polivanov thought he recognised two opposing tendencies: apart from the fact that both languages are subject to changes in the course of time, Russian speakers aim at establishing a general "norm" by copying and imitating the words and system of the language, hoping that this will ensure communication between the generations; people with "shady professions", however, intentionally ignore this rule - they are guided by the "collective wish" to build up a communication system of their own by introducing changes into an established linguistic system such as Russian, a system which will result in a secret language unintelligible to certain social

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 167; see also Polivanov, "Stuk po blatu," in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 153-154.

⁶⁸ Polivanov, "Stuk po blatu," in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 152-154.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 156. Behind these statements of Polivanov's there is nothing less than the standpoint that thieves' cant serves purposes of conspiracy.

strata.⁷⁰ Such linguistic behaviour struck Polivanov as an exception to the rule because linguistic changes are normally unnoticed and unintentional.

Like Sor, Polivanov supported his observations on thieves' cant with examples. This sometimes yielded quite arbitrary etymologies which were based only on hypotheses. This suggests that Polivanov was only marginally concerned with the subject. His remarks on the language of school boys and on the role of the lumpenproletariat and sailors in the linguistic development after the October Revolution carry more conviction. His statements on the evolutionary differences between thieves' cant and the literary language are, although not original or conclusive, certainly worth noting. Polivanov was repressed by his government and later liquidated. His reply to Soviet language politicians and linguistic purists has lost none of its topicality and deserves to be quoted here:

Вообще мне представляется довольно сомнительной борьба с каким-либо языковым (в коллективной языковой психике существующим, разумеется) явлением, имеющим внеязыковую причину, если борьба эта не обращена вместе с тем на искоренение этой причины данного явления.⁷¹

2. The Period of Marr and Stalin

"Человек, который «стучит по блату», перестает быть советским человеком."

(Stalin White Sea-Baltic Canal.
Moscow 1934.)

The year 1931 was both the climax and conclusion of the sociologically oriented phase of argot research in the Soviet Union; climax because of the number and importance of the publications, conclusion because the direction originally taken could no longer be adhered to. All publications were stopped. These changes appeared abrupt to the outside observer because in the other branches of linguistics the changeover to the "new doctrine of language" was more gradual, with prior indications of impending changes. The publication stop continued until 1935, by which time a complete reorientation had taken place in linguistics.

⁷⁰ Polivanov, "Gde ležat pričiny jazykovej évoljucii?," in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 37-38.

⁷¹ Idem, "O blatnom jazyke učaščichsja i o 'slavjanskom jazyke' revoljucii," in: Polivanov (1931), p. 164.

By a cunning trick of dialectics D. S. Lichačev made use of Marr's theory of the original creation of language and its evolutionary stages to publish a report on his observations on thieves' cant which he had made among criminals during the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal.⁷² Marr claimed that in a society which was growing increasingly more complex, the sound patterns of a language helped in the effective completion of work processes. Language was a tool of magic and power. But as a means of communication it remained of secondary importance for a long time. The language of gestures was given greater importance as being a means to satisfy communicational needs in a collective which was socially still homogeneous. Lichačev now most ingeniously maintained that the evolutionary process of a language could be partially reversed, for which thieves' cant was example and proof. His constant point of reference was the original behaviour patterns of primitive hunting communities who believed in the magic power of words (taboo words) and used them as tools. It was possible to compare a successful hunt with a successful robbery, both of which did not merely depend on individual skills but also on external circumstances, luck and coincidence. Moreover, both hunters and thieves were highly superstitious.

Lichačev's concept was as new as it was extraordinary. Until today it has remained completely isolated in Soviet linguistics. His statements are better argued and presented than any others on Russian thieves' cant. His example shows extremely well that nothing can replace personal impressions and observations in a natural atmosphere and environment.⁷³ The considerable value of his work is in no way compromised by the Marxist padding, a few necessary attacks on sociological research and a quotation each by Engels, Marx and Lenin which against common conviction corroborate the reactionary roles played by the lumpenproletariat and the criminals during and after the Revolution.⁷⁴

The objective of Lichačev's treatise was to determine the features characteristic of the воровская речь ('rogues' speech'), which he claimed

⁷² See Lichačev (1935), pp. 47-48. The title can be translated as "The Original Primitivism of Thieves' Cant".

⁷³ In 1929 Lichačev was arrested and sent to the concentration camp in the Soloveckij convent. While there he published an article on the language of detainees and rogues (verbal information from A. N. Robinson) which unfortunately was unavailable to me. Nor was it included in D. S. Lichačev [Bibliografija], Moskva, 1966.

⁷⁴ Lichačev (1935), pp. 49-50.

was not a language in the true sense of the word; he felt that elements of argot became recognizable only after they had been incorporated into the standard language, and that due to lexical differences among the criminal groups, these groups had no uniform linguistic system. Therefore Lichačev preferred the term "rogues' speech".

He was categorically opposed to the "collective concept" of the conventional and secret nature of this language, a concept which had established itself around the 15th and 16th centuries. To consider rogues' speech conventional and secret merely because it could not be understood was as naive as calling foreigners немцы 'deaf' just because they had no command of the Russian language. Rogues' speech was no guarantee for secrecy. It could easily be followed because it contained a low percentage of cant words and their meanings hardly differed from those of the corresponding Russian words. Secret argots did exist but they had nothing in common with the блатная музыка. By mutual agreement all the key words of the secret argots were replaced by normal inconspicuous Russian words. This language, referred to as мажк or свет (Rw. Zink 'zinc'), was the medium for confidential talks and had a maximum lifespan of several months. The ordinary rogues' speech was as natural as that of other social groups and equally subject to the laws of linguistic evolution. Lichačev states that information on argots was hard to come by because every rogue considers every non-rogue his enemy. He speaks argot only with his own kind. Rogues switch with ease from argot to Russian and in most situations use their tactics of persistent denial which they have developed during cross-examinations. They have no scientific interest in their language. When dealing with non-rogues they often put on enigmatic airs (sometimes demonstratively so) just to show off and give the impression of "being in the know". Nothing would disgrace them more than not to understand or to misuse an argot expression. Rogues themselves explain their behaviour with the alleged secret origin of their language.⁷³ No wonder, therefore, that generations of linguists - not to mention non-linguists - have been and still are being led up the garden path.

The exchange of thoughts and opinions, in other words communication, is of minimal importance to rogues. Words function as signals. Their

⁷³ Lichačev (1935), pp. 51-53 and 62-64, furnishes convincing arguments against the secret character of thieves' cant.

nature is regarded as being pragmatic, which places them in the category of tools (Marr even speaks of production tools). Interjections and imperatives are common. They are like the yells of competitors during games and athletic meets.⁷⁶ Lichačev draws special attention to the bragging among rogues, which is part of their daily routine. Whoever can talk impressively is held in high esteem. Lichačev also emphasizes the excessive use of erotic and cynical swear words which are directed at random "into the air" or at some object. A criminal who has been verbally insulted must revenge himself by drawing blood. Wherever rogues' laws are strictly obeyed, the penalty for an insult is death.

Almost all rogues' argot words have emotive connotations and expressive functions. They are not meant to affect the mind but rather the emotions. In this respect there is a difference between the *воровская речь* and professional jargons which have nominating functions. Rogues are serious about their use of argot words. Only non-rogues use them in an arbitrary or jocular way. A rogue's active argot vocabulary comprises no more than 200 words; his passive vocabulary is, of course, much larger.

Despite their semantic autonomy the vast majority of argot words cannot be used as freely and universally as Russian words because, as a rule, they refer to special factors in the rogues' daily life. The almost total absence of abstract concepts is counterbalanced by an abundance of concrete and particular terms ("quasi-synonyms"). There is a strong tendency to replace general or abstract concepts with particular or concrete ones. This applies also to numerals, which are expressed in terms of card values or monetary units, or simply as objects. Nevertheless, the semantics of argot words are completely diffuse and "non-stabilized". The meanings of words become apparent only from the context or the concrete situation in which they are used: e.g., *навернуть малину* 'to organize secret quarters, a secret flat'; *навернуть скачек* 'to commit a robbery'; *навернуть бабочек* 'to get hold of money'; *навернуть фрайера* 'to deceive somebody'). The generalized meaning of the verb *навернуть* as derived from the above phrases would be 'to do, to execute something'. The logical

⁷⁶ Lichačev (1935), p. 57, refers to V. Lebedev, "Slovar' vorovskogo jazyka," in: *Vestnik policii*, 1909, no. 22, who makes a comparison of this kind in his introduction to his word list. See V. Kozlovskij, *Sobranie russkich vorovskich slovarej*, vol. I, New York, 1983, p. 197.

meaning has been replaced by an emotional one – a phenomenon for which Lichačev suggested the term "emotional polysemy". This polysemy produces in some cases a complete absence of meaning (asemy). For a while the word *же* was very popular among rogues. It had no meaning of its own, but used in a concrete situation it could take on practically any meaning: *девчонка на же* 'a good girl', *это дело же* 'the affair has gone wrong', *ты кто – же?* 'are you one of us (a rogue)?', *топай же* 'get to work' (stealing). *Же* thus stood for different parts of speech.⁷⁷

Semantically speaking, nouns are the most stable and verbs the least stable word classes. This semantic instability is connected with an increase in "word formation" and linguistic "improvisation" within the limits of certain "collective concepts". In the case of theft the common concept is change of location: *бегать по тихой* > *ходить по тихой* 'theft with doors open', *бегать по домухе* > *рыскать по домухе* 'burglary of a residence'. Provided the basic image is adhered to there are infinite possibilities for new coinages.⁷⁸ This increase in word formation is due to a lack of "semantic roots", which makes repeated semantic changes possible. For *майдам* Lichačev quotes ten different meanings over a period of a hundred years.⁷⁹ New coinages can survive only if they have been personally invented or at least sanctioned by the *головка*, the 'leaders of the rogues', whose authority and power is unlimited. Another peculiarity of the *воровская речь* is that parts of the body are regarded as mechanisms. But objects or even people such as policemen are given animals' names; they become "animalized".

The inflexion of cant words is poorly developed, which Lichačev puts down to their signalling function. Some words are not declined at all: e.g. *швай* 'party', *хай* 'racket'. Others occur either only in the singular – *труба!* *дуга!* 'unfavourable situation' or only in the plural – *сухари!* *пирог!* 'favourable situation'. Some verbs can only form the second person singular imperative – *вались!* 'be quiet!' – or only the third person singular present tense – *светит не светит, а пойду* 'whether it works or not, I am off'. The "auxiliary verbs" *дать*, *взять*, *брать*, *делать*, *держать* are popular in such collocations as *дать толкача* instead of *толкнуть* 'to push' or

⁷⁷ Lichačev (1935), p. 73

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

сделать кражу instead of украсть 'to steal'. Idiomatic expressions occur as indivisible syntactical units whose individual components have no meanings of their own: *когти рвать* 'beat it', *правила качать* 'to settle the accounts with somebody according to rogues' rules', *горбачего лепить* 'to deceive'. Many phrases are constructed after a fixed pattern. Lots of them contain the preposition *на*: *на этом* 'two of (us, them)', *на ремню* 'attempted murder by strangulation' and others.⁸⁰ All these features taken together result in a simplified morphology and syntax with a tendency to amorphism. It is common practice to omit either the predicate or the subject. Rogues can visualize a situation on the basis of mere hints. Word combinations turn into clichés; phrases are often left incomplete. They are replaced by gestures signifying taboo words or concepts such as theft, armed robbery, revolver and prostitution.⁸¹

Under normal circumstances linguists would have had a stimulating time describing and analysing Russian thieves' cant, especially if they had been permitted to incorporate the results of German, French, English and American research of argot, cant and slang, and the technical literature on ethnography, medicine and psychology. But that was out of the question. Marrism prevailed by order of the higher authorities and prevented any deviant doctrines from developing.

From Marr's doctrine Lichačev had picked out the stages of linguistic evolution and their possible reversibility (signalling function of words, language of gestures) and used them as pretexts for statements on Russian rogues' speech. Similarly, V. M. Zirmunskij, a Germanic philologist, investigated "the linguistic differentiation in a bourgeois society according to social classes" and the "fundamental restructuring of the ideology of the national language" through the Revolution. In order to be able to make general statements on the subject of social dialects.⁸² Meanwhile it had become obvious in the Soviet Union that the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and especially Stalin had extraordinary significance for linguistics. This enabled Zirmunskij to quote these men at length. Being a

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 81-85.

⁸¹ Ibid., 87.

⁸² V. M. Zirmunskij, *Nacional'nyj jazyk i social'nye dialekty*, Leningrad, 1936. See especially the chapters "Social'nye dialekty epochi kapitalizma" and "Professional'naja leksika, žargonny, argo," pp. 72-167.

specialist in Germanic languages, he drew his data mainly from German and English but also from Romance languages and to a much smaller degree from Russian. His reserve towards Russian linguistic data is understandable since his book was written and published during the time of the purges. Some of his conclusions on argot ("thieves cant") in capitalist countries might have had less than pleasant consequences had they referred directly to Russian thieves' cant.

Zirmunskij divided language into two groups: the language of the ruling classes - *общий язык* ('common language'), referred to as national or literary language - and social dialects which included rural dialects, *мещанское просторечие* ('prostorečie of the petty bourgeoisie') and the dialectally coloured colloquial language of the workers. The dialects were grouped according to regions, and their use restricted to private matters, conversations within the family and with neighbours, villagers and work colleagues. The national language did this too, but was also the written language and covered the public affairs of the society. But although the national language was spoken by the ruling classes, it could not be accepted as the common language because of its inability to overcome the limitations of its own class. On the other hand, while the rural dialects lacked the vocabulary for subjects dealing with science, technology, art, literature, politics and social affairs, they contained an enormous number of specific terms for agricultural processes. More general terms were practically non-existent. Emotive connotations and expressive function also characterized the rural dialects. The quasi-dialects of well-to-do-farmers wishing to incorporate national language norms into their dialectal speech then began to drive wedges into the various "undiluted" rural dialects (which were extinct in capitalist countries). If looked at as a social dialect, the workers' colloquial language contained different elements: dialectal (provincial) expressions, professional expressions and argotisms of the *déclassé*. In their new environment argotisms carried a new ideological weight:

При этом наиболее стойкие из арготизмов, вошедших в язык рабочих, очень характерны в идеологическом отношении и способствуют переоценке языковыми средствами социальных ценностей, принятых господствующими классами и стандартизованных в их языке и мировоззрении.⁸³

⁸³ Zirmunskij (1936), p. 100.

To explain what he meant, Zirmunskij wisely quoted examples from the German language: "polenta" (sic), "Bullen", "Schupos" instead of "Polizei" ['police']; "Kies" and "Moos" for "Geld" ['money']; and "stempeln" for "to be unemployed". His comment in this context is worth noting:

Такие жаргонные переосмысления должны рассматриваться как проявление классовой борьбы, которая ведется средствами языка, разоблачающими официальную фразу господствующего социального мировоззрения.⁸⁴

Within a class dialect there is the phenomenon of профессиональная лексика ('professional' or 'technical terminology') such as those of hunters, fishermen, miners and industrial workers. During the socialist revolution increasing numbers of professional terms of the industrial labourers penetrated into the national language. This affected the national language in two ways: it became more democratic and its ideological content changed. Some professional terminologies now included words referring to a "wider area of professional life" although the standard language already contained words for these phenomena. Only the initiated understand these words (e.g. "doctor" for "cook" among sailors). They form the basis for professional jargons (social jargons).⁸⁵ Similar observations can be made among groups not engaged in production, such as soldiers, school children and especially university students. In these jargons new words are formed according to standard language patterns, but the jargon words normally connote irony and parody. It is basically "a kind of social amusement or word game serving the principles of emotional expressiveness".⁸⁶

Argot takes a special place among the jargons. It is the language of the déclassé (beggars, vagabonds, rogues) and of other social groups which are in contact with the former (hawkers, artisans and others). For these people argot is like a tool in their professional pursuits; it also helps in their self-defence and resistance against society.⁸⁷ Argot differs from other jargons mainly on account of its professional function. As a secret language it represents a signal by which the déclassé recognize each other. Like the other jargons it is a parasite of the mother tongue of argot speakers and represents their second linguistic or rather their second lexical system.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 101.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Zirmunskij felt that the protest against society which is implicit in the argot of the déclassé was less important than the workers' linguistic class war, which was, after all, being fought with ideologically reinterpreted argotisms:

Мировоззрение деклассированного представляет более или менее осознанную критику определенных сторон существующих общественных отношений. Правда, эта критика носит партизанский, анархический характер, она не продиктована складывающейся революционной идеологией поднимающегося общественного класса, которому принадлежит будущее. Ирония и юмор, насмешка и презрение к существующему порождаются не столько положительным социальным идеалом, сколько нигилистическим отрицанием всех общезначимых социальных ценностей, анархическим бунтарством и циническим аморализмом. Тем не менее метафорические сдвиги и переосмысления, характерные для семантики арго, раскрывают своеобразную идеологию, основанную на враждебности к социальным идеалам и общественной морали господствующего класса, закрепленным в национальном языке.⁸⁸

The linguistic mixture consisting of urban "prostorečie" and argot [thieves' cant] is called "slang" in English. In French it is known as "argot". The incorporation of argot [thieves' cant] into slang marks the end of argot as a professional language. Zirmunskij describes the "new" argot as follows:

Новое арго приближается к типу жаргона, но имеет более широкую социальную базу, чем старые профессионально-корпоративные жаргоны. Арготическая лексика, утратив свой профессиональный и секретный характер, служит средством эмоциональной экспрессии, образного, эфемеристического, иронического словоупотребления в сфере повседневного бытового общения.⁸⁹

Of all Soviet linguists, Zirmunskij has probably had the most lasting influence on Soviet sociolectology. Most of his statements, once cleansed of their Marrist ideology, have remained valid to this day. This holds true especially for the terminology he introduced for such concepts as "technical vocabulary", "jargon", "argot", and "slang", which he based on definitions given by Western linguists. His success is of course not exclusively due to a lucky coincidence, but rather to the fact that he confined himself to reporting on linguistic habits in feudal and capitalist societies. Strictly speaking, he merely sifted and evaluated Western research data and their significance from the point of view of the prevailing ideology of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. By ignoring the real linguistic situation in the rising socialist state he became still less vulnerable. But it would be

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 162-163.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

wrong to think that the "new doctrine" did not influence Zirmunskij's theories.⁹⁰ Marrism, although even at that time not free of public criticism, was undoubtedly the determining linguistic doctrine.⁹¹ For obvious reasons Zirmunskij could not and would not ignore it. The national languages in capitalist countries were to him social dialects – an attitude which fully concurred with Marr's concept of linguistic differentiation between social classes. After all, only socialism can create the necessary conditions for a truly common national language; and it also levels out any linguistic differences between country and town.

In this hypothesis Marr's concept of a world language has merely been reduced to national dimensions. In 1930 at the XVth Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Stalin gave Marr's doctrine the necessary political clout by repeatedly referring to it in his statement of accounts as a "fusion of national cultures into one common culture with one common language, once socialism has conquered the world."⁹²

Considering the prevailing atmosphere on the "linguistic front", it is hardly surprising that in a fundamental work of Zirmunskij's calibre Polivanov was not mentioned at all. Nor was Lichačev referred to. The reason for this omission might simply have been the author's unawareness of the as yet little known work of the English specialist, who was also a proof-reader and subsequently a literary scholar. Or it might have been too late (or too risky?) to include Lichačev in his book, which was based on a series of lectures dating from 1931–34.⁹³

A treatise on the Russian aeroplane pilot language published under the guidance of B. A. Larin in the same year as Zirmunskij's outstanding book remained comparatively free of ideological and Marrist influences.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Girke, Jachnow (1974), pp. 28–30, 51, count Zirmunskij among the followers of Marxist sociological teachings in Soviet linguistics. This attitude appears unjustified to me as it completely ignores some of Zirmunskij's fundamental statements, dictated by Marrism.

⁹¹ See V. B. Aptekar', *N. Ja. Marr i novoe učenie o jazyke*, Moskva, 1934, p. 153, who criticises Marr for confusing the two concepts of "social class" and "social group".

⁹² I. V. Stalin, "Političeskij otčet Central'nogo komiteta XVI s-ezdu VKP(b)," in: *Sočinenja*, vol. 12, Moskva, 1953, pp. 369–370.

⁹³ Horbatsch (1978), p. 14, note 17, is mistaken in his assumption that all the Russian argotisms quoted by Zirmunskij have been taken from Lichačev's essay. The lexical material was supplied by Larin and his colleagues and others. Lichačev does not at all appear in Zirmunskij's book.

⁹⁴ L. V. Uspenskij, "Materialy po jazyku russkich letčikov," in: *Jazyk i*

Under the generic term of профессиональные диалекты ('professional dialects') the following languages are enumerated: the languages of hunters, sailors and urban déclassé on the one hand, and the new специальные языки ('special languages') from the areas of chemistry, metallurgy, transport etc. on the other. Special languages vary considerably in content. Some consist of only "a handful of special terms", others are "much more self-contained and complex".⁹⁵ Their heterogeneity depends on the age of the professional dialects, the social standing of the profession, the degree of isolation of one profession from the others, the training conditions for specialists, their contacts with foreign colleagues and last but not least the psychological attitudes of employees and persons outside the professions towards their work.⁹⁶ In extreme cases some employees (such as those of the Moscow metro, the radio operators in the Arctic, female typists etc.) may over a certain period of time create their own языковые спец-системки ('special little linguistic systems'). Special languages combine written expressions with the professional argot - the просторечье, so to speak - which is only used orally. The core of the Russian pilot language is composed of borrowed French argotisms and technical terms. The French influence is explained by the fact that during the first quarter of this century French flying schools played the leading role in the training of pilots. The rest of the pilot language consists of words from the sailors' language, thieves' cant, "exotically coined metaphors" and the unavoidable Russian жарг. Pilots come from the most diverse social and professional backgrounds, and every one of them contributes something new to their language. If one differentiates between argotisms on the one hand and technical terms on the other, two opposing tendencies become apparent: argotisms tend to change into technical terms and technical terms by means of affixation into argotisms. Precise but impractical (too long) technical terms are shortened and compressed.

The scientists working with Larin had originally planned to compile a volume on professional dialects. But this plan was never realized. A large amount of data collected in field work on the language of workers also

мыслие, VI-VII, Moskva-Leningrad, 1936, pp. 161-217. A list of words can be found on pp. 198-217.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

remained unpublished.⁹⁷ 1936 thus turned out to be the crucial year for Soviet sociolectology and sociolinguistics in general, for from then on and for many years to come no publications would be made. All research had practically come to a stand-still.

A survey of the period between the Revolution and the year 1936 reveals that Larin gave the strongest impulses towards the research of Russian non-literary languages. Although after 1931 he no longer published any work of his own, his influence was felt everywhere, as evidenced by the publications of Zirmunskij and Uspenskij. Other linguists changed over to the Marrist camp (Sor) or suffered suppression (Polivanov). At a time when efforts were made at unifying the Russian language and raising language planning to a multinational level, questions on sociolectology had to take second place. Besides, the socialist system could offer no satisfactory explanations for the existence of jargons, argots and slang, which - according to Zirmunskij's interpretation - served purposes of protest and class war. These contradictions in the long run proved insurmountable, for even the most brilliant dialectician and a society free of class antagonisms would at least have had to admit indirectly the existence of antagonisms. But this was against the interests of the authorities, who ruled that "language should function as a driving belt within a social superstructure", as Marr put it in accordance with Lenin.⁹⁸ And in a highly official publication dedicated to the XVIIth Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, an illustrious collective of authors expressed the following opinion:

Блатные слова отделяют лагерника от всей страны, делают его человеком отдельной нации, отдельной социальной группировки. Человек, который «стучит по блату», перестает быть советским человеком.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 192-193, and Zirmunskij (1936), p. 97.

⁹⁸ See N. Ja. Marr, "Jazyk i myslenie," in: *Izbrannye raboty*, vol. 3, Moskva-Leningrad, 1934, p. 91. Lenin believed it was the unions' duty to ensure a cooperation between the avant-garde (Party) and the masses. In this context he spoke of the "transmissions" from the Party to the people.

⁹⁹ *Belomorsko-Baltiiskij kanal imeni Stalina. Istorija stroitel'stva pod redakciej M. Gor'kogo, L. Averbacha, S. Firina, Moskva, 1934, p. 356.* The collective authorship was also shared by V. Inber, Vs. Ivanov, V. Kataev, A. Tichonov, A. Tolstoj, V. Sklovskij, M. Zoschenko and others.

This uniquely radical statement requires no further comment. It vividly illustrates the prevailing attitude in the Soviet Union towards thieves' cant. The consequences for research are not difficult to guess at.¹⁰⁰

3. The Stalin Period

In the summer of 1950 Stalin created a general stir by publishing in the Party newspaper *Pravda* a series of articles on questions of Marxism and linguistics. These articles, after a brief public discussion, dealt the death blow to Marrism as the current doctrine of Soviet linguistics.¹⁰¹ It would be a complete misinterpretation of facts if Marrism were to be seen as independent of Stalinism. The exact opposite was the case: Marrism was part and parcel of Stalinism. This is corroborated by the frequent references to Stalin in linguistic treatises after the early thirties. If Soviet linguistics is looked at in its right historical perspective, the Stalin period begins with the early thirties. Until 1950 Stalin, being a non-linguist, had modestly kept in the background. But now he suddenly appeared in the public limelight as a "genius among linguists" who claimed to have been unaware of the mischief the Marrists had created. After the summer of 1950 language in a class society no longer depended on social classes, nor was it a category of the social superstructure. It served everybody, no matter what his social background or status, equally as a means of communication. The national language was no longer a class language but only and always an *общепародный язык* ('language of all the people'). The social stratification of the language of all the people was now reduced to the existence of "class dialects", "jargons" and "salon" languages which had been created by the aristocracy and the upper middle class for their own purposes. Certain expressions and phrases of these jargons stood out on

¹⁰⁰ In this context the article "Zargon," in: *Literaturnaja Enciklopedija*, vol. 4, Moskva, 1930, col. 157, is of interest. Mention is made here of the word "Tjuremnyj fol'klor", which is, however, absent from vol. 11, Moskva, 1939, where it should have been listed. In the same volume the essay "Tjuremnaja poezija", referred to under "Vorovskaja poezija" (vol. 2, Moskva, 1929, p. 310), is also absent.

¹⁰¹ The articles which had appeared separately on 20 June, 4 July and 2 August 1950 were combined in the treatise by I. Stalin, *Marksizm i voprosy jazykoznanja*, Moskva, 1950.

account of their "affectedness and politeness and were free of such 'crude' expressions as occurred in the national language". Stalin called these jargons *ответвления от общенародного языка* ('divergences from the language of all the people'). For the above-mentioned reasons they were condemned to "vegetate" without developing into independent languages which could have suppressed or replaced the national language.¹⁰²

With Marrism superseded, the situation did not essentially change for Soviet sociolectology. The complete research stop was not lifted but rather more firmly cemented. Marr's postulate for the development of a world language after the victory of socialism as defined at the VXth Party Congress in 1930 not only retained its validity but was laid down in even greater detail: uniform "zonal languages" were to evolve from the many national languages, and they would combine to form one common international language. The international language would absorb the "best elements of the national and zonal languages".¹⁰³ The existence of jargons (not as Stalin had defined them), slang and *prostorečje* was simply denied, for they had no right to exist in the Soviet society. They stood in the way of creating and perfecting a common language on national and international levels. The government could show no interest in researching them.

4. The Period After Stalin and Today

After the XXth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956 the "destalinization" of Soviet linguistics started with a fundamental article which appeared in the well-known magazine *Вопросы языкознания* ("Questions of Linguistics").¹⁰⁴ In early 1957 St. Stojkov's article on Bulgarian social dialects appeared in the same magazine. The article had already been published in Bulgarian in 1947. Its Russian version was now to settle accounts with Stalinism and serve as a linguistic guinea pig.¹⁰⁵ It

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 10-12, 37.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 45, 46.

¹⁰⁴ See the article "O nekotorych aktual'nykh zadachach sovremennogo so-vetskogo jazykoznanija," in: *VJa*, 1956, no. 4, pp. 3-13.

¹⁰⁵ St. Stojkov, "Social'nye dialekty (Na materiale bolgarskogo jazyka)," in: *VJa*, 1957, no. 1, pp. 78-84. Cf. St. Stojkov, "Bălgarskite socialni govori," in: *Ezik i literatura*, vol. II, 1947, bk. 5, pp. 1-14.

was excellently suited for this purpose because Stojkov was, to put it mildly, deeply indebted to Zirmunskij for his concept of social dialects. The author divides social dialects into professional dialects and jargons. The latter represent lexical deviations (Stalin called them "divergences") from the *общенародный язык*. They evolve within social groups which aim at linguistic isolation. This is why jargons cannot have any "socially useful function". They represent "distorted and corrupted language". Jargons include: a) secret dialects of rogues and itinerant artisans; b) group dialects (class dialects), i.e. slang of secondary school pupils and university students, soldiers, sportsmen and others; c) the class dialects of the old aristocracy (in Germany, France, Russia and elsewhere, not, however, in Bulgaria). Once jargon words start infiltrating the *prostorečie* or colloquial language, these become "overloaded and corrupt". Stojkov ventured the following prognosis: in the course of time secret dialects will disappear, and professional dialects will become increasingly more isolated, while group dialects will change and be spoken by growing numbers of people.

Stojkov's article was designed to present Stalin's postulates in their proper context, to provide arguments against them and indirectly to draw attention to the research results of the twenties and thirties which were to serve as a basis for future work.¹⁰⁶ It is easy to see why the leading Soviet sociolinguists - those who were still alive - felt no longer inclined to become involved again in a research subject which was completely controlled by politics.

¹⁰⁶ Girke and Jachnow (1974), p. 70, give a negative and incorrect review of the article. While referring to the expressions *общенародный язык* and *классовые жаргоны* they claim that Stojkov is "trading in Stalin's ideology". The first expression stands for the same thing that Zirmunskij (1936) meant by *общий язык* ('common language'), namely a language spoken equally by all social strata. This concept was given a somewhat more vivid expression by Stalin's *общенародный*. As regards the second expression Girke and Jachnow seem to suggest that Stojkov had taken over Stalin's concept of class jargons. But according to Stojkov, class jargons were only one of three different kinds of jargons and not, as Stalin claimed, jargon in general. He even states that a few Bulgarian expressions are not enough to speak of a jargon of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. The term "class jargon" as used by Stojkov is certainly open to discussion. At any rate, due to these unjustified remarks, Zirmunskij has now also become an object of criticism, probably unintentionally, for the two German linguists who were otherwise basically in agreement with his work.

Another attempt at activating Soviet research of argots and jargons was started in 1963 with renewed criticism of Stalins' dogmas.¹⁰⁷ Next, in accordance with the practice which had proved effective some years earlier, Lichačev's treatise, written in 1938 but banned from publication for 25 years, was now finally printed.¹⁰⁸ This gesture was intended to encourage the discussion of topical questions within Marxist linguistics. Some of these questions were: What is the difference between argot words and ordinary words? When are argot words used or what is their social function? What are the objective causes for the existence of argot words?

Lichačev had already provided answers to all these questions. He had pointed out the specifically emotive connotations and the almost ubiquitous humorous or comical elements of argotisms by which argot speakers - and non-argot speakers - easily recognize the words. The comical element of argotisms normally arises from the external circumstances of their coinage. Therefore it would be more correctly called "comical element in potentia" as it becomes lost with a change of circumstances.¹⁰⁹ Comical effects can be achieved with witticisms, archaic words, provincial expressions, foreign words and plays on syllables (among pedlars). Plays on syllables create the impression of a foreign language. In effect any word which is new compared to its more common synonym can be turned into an argotism.¹¹⁰ Since argotisms are closely tied up with the social milieu of their coinage, their emotive connotations cannot be readily appreciated by members of other social groups:

Цель арго - высмеять враждебную стихию. Вот почему всякое арготическое слово для представителя чужой социальной среды кажется циничным, вульгарным, свидетельствующим о какой-то черствости, неподатливости, косности психии, безжалостности, неуступчивости, а для самого арготирующего, наряду с остроумием, хлесткостью, имеет еще оттенок приподнятости и даже героичности.¹¹¹

Although argotisms have a strong tendency to spread, their use remains confined to a closed circle of speakers, however large their numbers. The

¹⁰⁷ See V. V. Vinogradov, "O preodolenii posledstvij kul'ta ličnosti v sovetskoi jazykoznanii," in: *Izvestija Akademii nauk SSSR. Serija literatury i jazyka*, vol XXII, 4th instalment, 1963, pp. 273-288.

¹⁰⁸ D. S. Lichačev, "Argotičeskie slova professional'noj reči," in: *Razvitie grammatiki v leksike sovremennogo russkogo jazyka*, Moskva, 1964, pp. 311-359.

¹⁰⁹ Lichačev (1964), pp. 336-337.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 339, 342.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 346.

smaller the circle, the more lively the reception of argotisms and the easier their coinage and distribution. Invested with the ulterior motive of a shared attitude, they display a mocking and critical view of reality.¹¹² Reality is kept at a distance; energy and stamina are preserved. In some cases this attitude arises from a wish for self-protection or even for escape. Alcoholics, for example, have funny expressions for pubs, beverages and intoxication to show they are not addicts and are perfectly in control of themselves. (The expression *портвейнгеноссе* 'portwine comrade' taken from the political register raises a laugh when playfully confused with German "Parteigenosse" 'party comrade'). In other cases argotisms are used to play down errors or dangerous situations.¹¹³

As important as psychological reasons might be, Lichačev considered argots fundamentally the products of socio-economic factors. This is demonstrated by the similarity of argots in different countries. Argotisms occur in the *профессиональная речь* ('professional speech') wherever chance elements break the routine of work and the normal work processes, where faults or shortcomings occur and the "social environment is sufficiently intimate". Technical language (terminology) differs from argot mainly in that no special, close social contact is necessary between the speakers.¹¹⁴ Every profession has its own technical terminology, not, however, its own argot words. But argotisms as well as technical terms may be current in the same social group. Their share in the various argots differs. Argot speakers, being bilingual throughout, consciously make their choice of argotisms or ordinary words dependent on situations and interlocutors.¹¹⁵

Lichačev had stated that argots most commonly arise in times of economic changes, during crises which characterize capitalism. New phenomena are initially referred to with argot expressions which in the course of time turn into "nominative technical terms" deprived of their emotive content.¹¹⁶ Dangerous professions are also susceptible to argots. The greater the risk involved, the more numerous the argot expressions for death and the process of dying. The coining of an argot word is most

¹¹² Ibid., p. 343.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 347 (I heard the expression *портвейнгеноссе* in 1981 in Leningrad. In Pskov they say *вермахт* 'Wehrmacht' [German army] instead of *вермут* 'Wermut' [vermouth].)

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 348-349, 352.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 333.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 356.

easily and concretely explained in the context of production. But to explain the existence of the *бытовое* argo ('everyday argot'), where "ideological considerations" come into play, is far more difficult.¹¹⁷

We must mention that Lichačev was obliged to acknowledge Marxism and the Communist ideology. Two examples will show how courageously, cunningly and cynically he went about this task. He wrote: "Арго есть явление вторичного языкового ряда над обычной речью, явление надстроечного порядка."¹¹⁸ He plays on words in such a way that the Marxist dogma of language as part of the superstructure appears as a big joke. The word *надстроечный* порядок ("category of superstructure") can only be understood as Marxist "superstructure". In the given context, however, "superstructure" is used in its literal meaning of the second linguistic order. Strictly speaking, this results in a superstructure above the "superstructure". No less charming is the following statement:

[...] профессии с развитым чувством классовой солидарности почти не арготируют. Арго, таким образом, в полной мере может быть охарактеризовано как следствие анархии капиталистического хозяйства и как его выражение, как идеология анархического lumpenпролетариата. Анархия капиталистического производства, кризисы и огромные вторжения стихии, случайности в связи с противоречивостью капиталистического хозяйства создают наиболее благоприятные условия для образования многочисленных групп арготирующих.¹¹⁹

These sentences are in total agreement with Soviet ideology. But their full meaning becomes clear only in the context of a quotation by F. Engels about coincidences in a capitalist society. Apparently wishing to corroborate and confirm his own statement, Lichačev let this quotation follow immediately after:

[...] thus we find that [among the most highly developed nations of our time] the stated aims are enormously disproportionate to the achieved results, that unforeseen results decide the day and uncontrolled forces are mightier by far than those which were intentionally set in motion. ¹²⁰

Anybody can see that conditions referred to by Engels prevailed in the Socialist Soviet Union in 1938 as well as in 1964 and that Lichačev intentionally led his own statement ad absurdum.¹²¹ His argot examples were

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 354. "Everyday argot" stands for "slang".

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 333. See also p. 324.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 356.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 357. The quotation is from "Dialectics of nature," e.g. in: K. Marx, F. Engels, *Werke*, vol. 20, Berlin, 1962, p. 323.

¹²¹ Article 1 of the Constitution of the USSR dated 5-12-1936 says: Союз Советских Социалистических Республик есть социалистическое государ-

largely taken from Soviet reality. His observations were equally valid for Russian argotisms:

Арготическое слово сигнализирует неудачу, порыв, неорганизованность, аргот в профессии возможно только при хищническом отношении к хозяйствованию, к производственному процессу [...].¹²²

All he was really interested in was to show what work or production processes are responsible for the creation of argotisms. Lichačev also pointed out that apart from argotisms and technical terms, professional languages comprised a third lexical layer. Words belonging to this layer were – unlike argot words – persistently also used for communication with outsiders, displacing their more colloquial synonyms. Fishermen say рыба идёт instead of рыба плывёт, woodcutters say дерево идёт instead of дерево падает. Such expressions are employed to demonstrate that their speakers know their jobs and have a professional attitude towards them.¹²³

Lichačev dealt at length with the question of the secret character of argot. Most Russian and Soviet linguists were convinced that argots were secret languages. Nor did Lichačev repudiate the existence of secret languages within castes, secret societies and other groups. But by drawing on French and English research, he furnished proof that Russian professional argots (of traders and craftsmen etc.) were by no means secret. The widespread opinion regarding the secret character of argots was nothing but a legend which could be traced back to sensationally dressed-up revelations about secret languages. Lichačev claimed that in almost all cases, preconceived ideas had been at work which were far removed from actual facts. He brought the following arguments against the secret character of Russian argots in the 19th century: 1) all social groups (pedlars, bargemen, fishermen, singing beggars, itinerant tailors and others) who speak argot allegedly for reasons of secrecy were referred to as criminals; 2) argotisms were used for naming such harmless objects as food, drinks, parts of the body etc.; 3) because of the small number of argotisms, conversations of any duration became impossible without recourse to Russian words; 4) argot expressions covered only a limited range of phenomena; 5) argotisms

ство рабочих и крестьян. This date is considered the key date for the victory of socialism in the USSR, for by then essential aspects of socialism had been established.

¹²² Lichačev (1964), p. 358.

¹²³ Ibid.

were used by children and were known to isolated strata of the population, e.g. landowners; 6) argotisms easily changed milieus; 7) argots consisted largely (about two thirds, according to Lichačev) of the same lexical material; 8) using language in order to keep something secret did not mean that the language used was secret and artificial; 9) the humorous and jocular aspects of argots and 10) scientific observations of linguistic evolution refuted the legend of the secrecy of argots.¹²⁴

Lichačev's criticism did not go as far as Dauzat's, who maintained that argots developed and renewed themselves just like ordinary languages and that popular argot (*l'argot populaire*) was the language which was truly progressive, a continuation of the colloquial language. Pursuing Dauzat's argument further, Lichačev logically concluded that argot would be the language of the future, and that rogues, being the main and most persistent argot speakers, would represent the "avant-garde of civilization".¹²⁵ Attributing argots to certain social groups - the *déclassé* or people "on the periphery of society", such as the proletariat or lumpenproletariat - was unsatisfactory to Lichačev because it was "sociological formalism". It was a mere labelling which failed to uncover the causes for the existence of argots.¹²⁶

After careful consideration Lichačev's treatise on argot was selected for discussion, as it offered several advantages. It was free from Marxist influence, it satisfied the demands of Soviet ideology, and it could, at least formally, be interpreted within the boundaries of this ideology. Furthermore, thanks to the considerable time gap which lay between the writing and printing of the treatise, there was ample opportunity for positive or negative criticisms. Author and publisher alike could not be made directly responsible for its content, and a chance was offered either

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 312-329, 335, 336 incl. note 65.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 329. Dauzat, who refuted the secret character of the argots, was harshly criticized by someone who had first-hand experience of rogues and their argot. M. de Santerre offers a fine eyewitness account of the behaviour patterns, activities and mentality of incarcerated professional criminals in the Soviet Union. See his studies *Sovetskie poslevoennye konclageri i ich obitateli*. Institut po izučeniju SSSR. Issledovanija i materialy, serija II, no. 77, München, 1960, and *Ihr Name ist Legion. Zwölf Jahre unter Berufsverbrechern in der Sowjetunion*, München, 1962. The first title contains a *fenya* glossary on pp. 98-112.

¹²⁶ Larin had also objected to attributing certain argots to certain social groups.

to revert to former positions within Soviet sociolectology or to reconsider them critically. A handy, comfortable and riskless way had been found to link up with the research of the twenties and thirties.

In the course of the destalinization of sociolinguistics (the postulate of the common language and the expression *общепародный язык* survived in spite of everything) Zirmunskij took the floor again.¹²⁷ However, unable to serve up fresh ideas, he held on to his old concept of sociolinguistic stratification in a class society. But he no longer unambiguously attributed social dialects to corresponding social classes, which he now treated as social levels or layers. Piled on top of each other, these layers formed a pyramid with an open top. Its broad base was composed of local dialects, its centre of semi-dialects, and the upper social stratum, which was more or less strongly unified, consisted of the colloquial form of literary language. The pyramid remained open because a unified written form of the literary language was an unrealizable ideal.

As in the thirties, the actual linguistic situation in the Soviet Union, that is to say in socialism, stayed outside his considerations. Argots and jargons were ignored, as before, as not belonging among the social dialects. To his understanding they represented a sociolinguistic problem which was fundamentally different from that of social dialects: argots and jargons were systems of words and phrases serving particular professional or social groups, and as such they were parasites of language classified as dialect.¹²⁸

This attitude could naturally not serve as a starting point for a revival of research into argots and jargons, which, according to Zirmunski's own statement, had been discontinued in the early thirties out of concern for the "purity of the Russian language".¹²⁹

¹²⁷ The term *общепародный язык* as used by Stalin is in complete agreement with the expression *общепародное социалистическое государство*, which characterizes the type of state organization realized in the USSR.

¹²⁸ See V. M. Zirmunskij, "Problemy social'noj dialektologii," in: *Izvestija Akademii nauk SSSR. Serija literatury i jazyka*, vol. XXIII, 2nd instalment., 1964, pp. 99-112; idem, "Problema social'noj differenciacii jazykov," in: *Jazyk i obščestvo*, Moskva, 1968, pp. 22-38; idem, "Marksizm i social'naja lingvistika," in: *Voprosy social'noj lingvistiki*, Leningrad, 1969, pp. 5-25 (see esp. pp. 8-10, 16, 20-21).

¹²⁹ Zirmunskij (1969), p. 10. The article "O jazyke" by M. Gor'kij published in 1933 is also of some importance; in it the author pleads for the purity of the Russian language. It can be found in Gor'kij,

As one began to remember the former successes of social dialectology, E. D. Polivanov was rehabilitated in 1964.¹³⁰ In this connection L. I. Skvorcov deserves to be mentioned. As a representative of the new generation of Soviet sociolinguists, he took up the long-neglected research of jargons. He chose the works by Larin, Polivanov, Lichačev, Zirmunskij and M. N. Peterson as his starting point.¹³¹ Of central interest was to him the *молодёжный жаргон* ('youth jargon') and its relationship to *просторечие* and the literary language, and also questions of language policy.

Skvorcov sees jargon or rather youth jargon not as a "closed system of speech of a normally antagonistic group", for such a system would "lack a linguistic foundation" in the Soviet Union. He sees it rather as a *жаргонно окрашенная, жаргоннообразная, жаргонизированная лексика* ('a vocabulary coloured by jargon, a jargon-like, jargonized vocabulary') to which the terms *жаргонизированное просторечие* ('jargonised *prostorečie*') or simply *сленг* ('slang') also apply.¹³²

Youth jargon or youth slang consists of a *производственное лексическое ядро* ('lexical core connected with production') and an *обмебтовой словарь* ('common colloquial vocabulary'). Its "production-conditioned core" consists of words and phrases directly connected with the production, work or profession of young people. The "common everyday vocabulary" refers to life in general, daily existence and human relations. It includes expressive and evaluating phrases and forms of address as well as emotive and evaluating vocabulary such as professionalisms, dialectal expressions, foreign loans and jargons. Loans from the socially stigmatized *на-*

O literature. Literaturno-kritičeskie stat'i, Moskva, 1953, pp. 568-663.

¹³⁰ See *Materialy konferencii "Aktual'nye voprosy sovremennogo jazykoznanija i lingvističeskoe nasledie E. D. Polivanova"*. Vol. I: *Tezisy dokladov i soobščenij mežvuzovskoj lingvističeskoj konferencii 9-15 sentjabrja 1964 g.*, Samarkand, 1964. There: L. I. Skvorcov, "O značenii E. D. Polivanova v oblasti social'noj dialektologii," pp. 27-29.

¹³¹ M. N. Peterson's "Jazyk, kak social'noe javlenie," in: *Učenyje zapiski Instituta jazyka i literatury RANION*, vol. I (Lingvističeskaja sekcija), Moskva, 1927, pp. 5-21, reviews French sociolinguistic works. But for the research of argots and jargons his contribution is not so important.

¹³² L. I. Skvorcov, "Ob ocenkach jazyka molodeži (žargon i jazykovaja politika)," in: *Voprosy kul'tury reči*, 5th instalment, Moskva, 1964, pp. 45-70; idem, *Vzaimodejstvie literaturnogo jazyka i social'nych dialektov*. (Avtoreferat kandidatskoj dissertacii.) Moskva, 1966.

бужско-стиляжий жаргон ('jargon of musicians and of youthful imitators of Western fashions, music, and life-styles') and the sports jargon take a special place because they normally find an indirect way into the youth jargon, i.e. via the интержаргон ('interjargon'). Interjargon contains the colloquial vocabularies of different jargons and is the expressive style of colloquial speech. It draws its vocabulary mainly from argotisms (cant words) which undergo semantic widening in the new environment. This neutralizes their connotative meanings, e.g. хеэра 'gang of rogues' > хеэра 'clique'. Compared to literary standards argotisms are highly expressive, but compared to thieves' cant their expressiveness has become weak or completely neutralized.

Youth slang is the connecting link between literary language and those areas of speech which fall outside the literary language, such as argots and jargons. It can be regarded as a socio-stylistic variation of speech or as a социально-речевой стиль ('social style of speech') which borders on the lowest stratum of the ordinary colloquial vocabulary. Youth slang thus belongs to the speech hierarchy which falls outside the literary language.¹³³

Skvorcov observed that youth jargon was mainly spoken by school pupils, college students and young workers and male employees living mostly in cities, suburbs and workers' colonies. Despite the existence of поджаргоны ('subjargons'), the youth jargon can be regarded as being uniform since the linguistic differences between the various groups are negligible. Leading among the youth jargons is the students' jargon, due to its comprehensive and complex vocabulary and also because its potential speakers are former workers, kolchese farmers, conscripts, school boys and the like. Jargon (slang) according to Skvorcov represents a problem particular to a specific generation and occurs mainly in the speech of young people. It is one of the expressive styles of Russian speech, but it is also a product of the "cultural immaturity" of its speakers. It shows traces of influences from the bourgeois ideology which is foreign to the Soviet world view. Antisocial elements which occur in jargons can be traced exclusively to antisocial groups such as loafers, rowdies and young hooligans.¹³⁴

¹³³ Skvorcov (1966), pp. 7-8.

¹³⁴ See Skvorcov (1964), p. 62 ss. Cf. W. Girke, H. Jachnow, J. Schrenk, "Soziolinguistik in der Sowjetunion. Eine referierte Bibliographie," in: *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, vol. 2, no. 7, 1972, p. 151. It says there: "As long as it means attributing

N. A. Nilsson had worked out a theory according to which student slang was a variation of general slang and some of its vocabulary had become absorbed in the colloquial language of the urban population. In reply to this theory Skvorcov established a correlation between antisocial elements contained in jargon and certain groups of people. He also reinterpreted Nilsson's theory as meaning that "jargon word formation was generally a characteristic feature of the culture of Soviet youth."¹³⁵ This extensive interpretation is at least interesting; it is, after all, indirectly confirmed by Skvorcov's personal opinion that jargon is the answer to a need for a practicable, lively and graphic language.¹³⁶ K. I. Čukovskij, the well-known author of children's books, explains that jargons survive as counterweights to the "euphemistic, sweetly hypocritical, sanctimonious and patronizing speech which is cultivated at school". The children try to save themselves from this unbearably hackneyed speech, which admits of no feelings, by seeking refuge in "unbridled vulgarities".¹³⁷ There is no reason to doubt this state of affairs. Even a cursory glance through Soviet textbooks confirms Čukovskij's and Skvorcov's observations. Trying to treat the phenomenon of jargon as a purely moral question, Čukovskij declares: "To achieve purity of language one must first fight for the purity of human thoughts and emotions."¹³⁸ To Skvorcov, on the other hand, jargon is a social phenomenon. These two points of view are not mutually exclusive; they raise the old question of priorities. If Marx's epigram "Man's mind does not determine his being, his social being determines his mind" is to be accepted as valid, then there is little hope of success for Čukovskij's postulate.

However that may be, Skvorcov maintains that the vulgarization of language has extralingual causes. He resolutely defends the opinion that

jargons to antisocial groups it is not possible to localize jargons in the Soviet Union." This seems to be an accidental misinterpretation of Skvorcov's text. It might even be a Freudian slip since the misinterpretation is in closer agreement with the actual linguistic situation than Skvorcov's official attitude.

¹³⁵ See N. A. Nilsson, "Soviet Student Slang," in *Scando-Slavica*, vol. 6, Copenhagen, 1960, p. 114, and Skvorcov (1964), p. 62.

¹³⁶ Skvorcov (1964), p. 66.

¹³⁷ K. I. Čukovskij, "Nečto o labude," in: *Literaturnaja gazeta*, August 12, 1961, p. 4. The article deals with the language used by V. Aksenov in his novel *Zvězdnyj bilet*.

¹³⁸ Čukovskij (1961), *ibid.*

in the Soviet Union "the social basis for the jargons of antisocial groups is becoming constantly narrower and is being reduced to nothing". Unlike the jargonisms of colloquial speech, the vulgar, socially marked and ideologically clearly defined expressions constituting the professional core of jargons have practically no chance of being used outside these jargons.¹³⁹

Skvorcov's case shows how contradictory the opinions of Soviet sociolinguists can be even nowadays. Until the mid-sixties he had been convinced that the unremitting forty-years war against jargonisms had been unproductive - that is to say generally unsuccessful. But a short time later, in the early seventies, he reported that authors, teachers, social organisations and above all the Comsomol were successful in their fight against jargonisms which were either vulgar or ideologically negative.¹⁴⁰ However, in actual fact his articles and those by other authors in no way resemble news of victory from the "jargon front". Judging by the requests they contain for steps to be taken against jargon and vulgar expressions (meaning "mat") it appears that a growing number of Soviet citizens are making use of these linguistic varieties. If Skvorcov's claim about the successful fight against undesirable linguistic phenomena corresponded to facts, the Soviet Union would have made considerable headway in solving their jargon problem.

Skvorcov's method of argumentation resembles that of the 1920s. He speaks, for instance, of the truly evil consequences of youth jargon, which he claims dehydrates, pollutes and vulgarizes the spoken language and enforces its own norms, saturating the spoken language with dubious jokes and strangulating living thought processes.¹⁴¹ He maintains with pathetic insistence that jargon expressions are emotionally and expressively "of poor quality, extraordinarily monotonous and lacking in depth", that they easily turn into clichés, and that positive or negative criticisms resemble the mathematical signs plus and minus.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Skvorcov (1964), p. 69. Judging by an encyclopaedia entry over ten years before, the social basis for the existence of antisocial jargons should have disappeared long ago: "В СССР уничтожение эксплуататорских классов и резкое снижение преступности привели к ликвидации социальной базы существования воровских жаргонов." See "Vorovskie žargony," in: *BSE*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, Moskva, 1951, p. 101.

¹⁴⁰ L. I. Skvorcov, "Professional'nye jazyki, žargony i kul'tura reči," in: *Russkaja reč'*, 1972, no. 1, p. 58.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59, and Skvorcov, "O kul'ture reči molodeži," in: *Russkaja reč'*, 1980, no. 5, p. 50.

¹⁴² Skvorcov (1972), p. 57.

Statements of this nature raise the question why young Soviet citizens continue speaking jargon in spite of everything. Earlier on, Skvorcov had interpreted jargons as a protest against hackneyed speech. In his new interpretation the clichés which had formerly been tolerated, desired or dictated by the authorities are replaced by clichés no longer tolerated or desired but prohibited by the authorities. He did, however, stick to his concept of jargons as a speech style. He even developed this concept further, wishing to fit jargons suitably into the hierarchial order of Russian styles, i.e. to integrate them:

Речь идет [...] не о проникновении отдельных элементов жаргона в обычную речь, не о количественном их росте в тот или иной период, а о новом качестве жаргона как своеобразного стиля речи в новую эпоху развития национального языка.¹⁴³

Skvorcov tries to give the impression that the new quality has been achieved independently of quantitative changes, but this contradicts the basic law of dialectics concerning the transition of quantitative into qualitative changes. For obvious reasons this heretical contradiction could not have been his intention. One is therefore forced to the conclusion that jargon had become a speech style due to quantitative changes and the speech style in turn is now subjected to quantitative changes (in the sense of distribution).

Skvorcov's propositions largely tally with the results of an analysis of jargon nouns carried out by L. T. Lošmanova. The authoress considers it highly unlikely that "jargonized lexical units" can become literary units. She maintains that a word can become part of the literary language only once it has been included in a Russian/Russian dictionary. It is not surprising that only a few "jargonized" words satisfy this requirement because their denotations of persons, objects, abstract concepts, actions and situations in the Soviet Union are closely interlinked with negative connotations whose scale of values moves from disapproval and disdain to deprecation and utter contempt. These lexical units are confined to everyday oral communication in a socially or agewise homogeneous environment or in a relaxed and intimate atmosphere. As long as their "spontaneous and unconscious use" is considered "especially dangerous" in the Soviet Union - this formulation resembles the regulations laid down in the

¹⁴³ L. I. Skvorcov, *Teoretičeskie osnovy kul'tury reči*, Moskva, 1980, p. 164

Soviet penal codes – the practice of omitting such words from lexicographical and other published works will continue unchanged.¹⁴⁴

It is difficult to devise universally applicable criteria according to which the jargon vocabulary could be divided into groups. Lošmanova divides nouns into two groups: слова-характеристики ('characterizing nouns') and слова-оценки ('evaluating nouns'). It is impossible to determine the social milieus and age groups of speakers using those characterizing words which have become integrated in colloquial speech and просторечие and which are listed in dictionaries (e.g. копеш 'mate', 'buddy'; трён 'chatter'). The other group of words is made up of three types of lexical units: 1) those which are well-known to young people (e.g. маг 'tape recorder', обшара 'hostel'); 2) rare words (e.g. лабух 'musician', башли 'dough' ['money']) and 3) occasional coinages and reinterpretations (e.g. бизик 'speculator', түгрики 'lolly'). Forms of address make up a special group among the characterizing words. They can be subdivided into general usage words, просторечие, colloquial and dialectal speech, foreign words and loans from argots and jargons (бродяга 'tramp', детка 'dear child', мужик 'guy', чувак 'guy', 'type', джентльмен 'gentleman', леди 'lady').¹⁴⁵ Evaluating words are grouped into those referring to persons, articles, features, actions and complete statements (дерьмо 'shit', мура 'tin', 'rubbish'), those evaluating persons only (псих 'nut', цаца 'doll'), and those suited for the evaluation of objects, actions or situations, without, however, referring to actual qualities (железный мужик 'macho guy', мировой мужик 'great guy', законный парень 'smashing fellow', законная выпивка 'smashing drinks'). Evaluating nouns not only express positive or negative values as claimed by Skvorcov; they retain something of the nominal meanings of their stems.¹⁴⁶ Since they are frequently used they turn into clichés rather quickly, thereby losing their vitality. Old evaluating words function like new ones when their expressiveness has been revived by the addition of an extra syllable or modifier or by a combination with another word: e.g. фрукт 'rascal' > изрядный фрукт 'out-and-out rascal', модерн

¹⁴⁴ L. T. Lošmanova, *Zargonizirovannaja leksika v bytovoј reči molodeži 50-60-ch godov*. (Avtoreferat kandidatskoј dissertacii.) Leningrad, 1975, pp. 6-7, 19.

¹⁴⁵ At one time young people used the words "gentleman" and "lady" as a slack form of address. They had no polite connotation.

¹⁴⁶ Lošmanova (1975), p. 18. The translation can only render the sense of the words.

'modern' > супермодерн 'supermodern' and молодец 'good guy' > молодчага 'super guy'.

The foregoing shows that present day jargon research is not a separate discipline in Soviet linguistics but merely part of the культура речи ('speech culture'). Even where jargon is treated as a spelling problem the discipline concerned is "speech maintenance".¹⁴⁷

Much less problematic for Soviet researchers is the history of linguistic phenomena outside the literary language, e.g. the languages of Russian artisans and pedlars. These are extinct languages with occasional left-overs to be found here and there. They were also ignored for a long time, and only after Stalin's death was their research taken up - with the exception of a study of S. I. Kotkov. In the fifties, sixties and seventies V. D. Bondaletov conducted an on-the-spot survey; thanks to him detailed information is available on these languages today.¹⁴⁸

Bondaletov's investigations led him to the conclusion that conventional professional languages are distinct from other professional languages and the jargons. He divided social dialects into:

- 1) real "professional" languages (lexical systems) of fishermen, hunters, potters, wool carders, shoemakers and representatives of other crafts and professions;
- 2) group or status jargons of school children, university students, sportsmen, soldiers, sailors and others, especially young people's collectives;
- 3) conventional professional languages (argots) of itinerant hawkers, and their social neighbours;
- 4) conventional languages (argots) of the déclassé (thieves' cant) and a few more.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ See L. I. Skvorcov, "Orfografija prostorečnych i žargonnych slov," in: *Nerešennye voprosy russkogo pravopisanija*, Moskva, 1974, pp. 133-153. (It should be noted that Skvorcov quotes only jargon words).

¹⁴⁸ V. D. Bondaletov, *Uslovno-professional'nye jazyki russkich remeslenikov i trgovcev*. (Avtoreferat doktorskoj dissertacii.) Leningrad, 1966; idem, *Uslovnye jazyki russkich remeslennikov i trgovcev*. 1st instalment: *Uslovnye jazyki kak osobyj tip social'nych dialektov*, Rjazan' 1974. This monograph contains a Pedlars'/Russian dictionary on pp. 83-110. Unfortunately I had no access to S. I. Kotkov's contribution, "Uslovnyj jazyk orlovskich šornikov," in: *Materialy i issledovanija po russkoj dialektologii*, vol. III, AN SSSR, Moskva, 1949.

¹⁴⁹ See Bondaletov (1974), p. 59, and Bondaletov (1966), pp. 9-10.

Conventional professional languages take up an intermediate position between artificial semiotic systems (secret codes; Esperanto, Novial and others) and the natural languages. Bondaletov sees their main function in "conspirational (esoteric) communication" which helps secure certain advantages in business dealings. Nevertheless, for several reasons he considers it wrong to equate conventional professional languages with the argots of the *déclassé*. The vocabulary of the artisans' language, for example, which includes all areas of life, is peaceful in character. Its connotation is neutral, and semantic word formations (metaphors, metonyms) are rare, but the mechanical procedures of masking words occur comparatively more frequently.¹⁵⁰ The differences between the vocabularies, phonetics and word formations of the various argots is on an average 40 to 50 %. But the similarities between the argots are not based on professional or regional factors. They are as a rule due to a common history. Bondaletov suspects that the pedlars' language was the common lexical fund for all the various argots. He maintains that all East Slavonic conventional professional languages have one common source: that of the proto-pedlars' argot. Apart from this original stock of words there are comparatively large numbers of loans (foreign words) from a total of twenty different languages. Some argots contain up to 70% loan words.¹⁵¹

Despite the lexicographical spade work done by Dal', V. I. Černyšev¹⁵² and Bondaletov, no concise dictionary of the pedlars' language has so far appeared in the Soviet Union. This is typical of the present situation in Soviet sociolectology. F. P. Filin, a former Marrist, curiously enough remarked: "It is a pity to see how argot research has been undeservedly neglected here, not counting a few enthusiasts".¹⁵³ It shows that government institutions continue ignoring this research area. Since the conventional professional languages (argots) are as good as extinct they constitute no problem for language policy any more. But it is a problem how to survey and describe the indefatigable jargons, slang and thieves' cant. The fact that argot dictionaries are compiled only for official use, such as

¹⁵⁰ Bondaletov (1974), pp. 45-50, where the main differences between thieves' cant and conventional argots are discussed.

¹⁵¹ Bondaletov (1966), pp. 17-18, 21-22.

¹⁵² V. I. Černyšev had a word collection of the pedlars' language comprising more than 10,000 index cards. See Brang (1973), p. 16.

¹⁵³ See V. I. Filin's foreword in Bondaletov (1974), p. 4.

by the criminal police etc., shows how seriously the situation is being viewed. The dictionaries are not available to the public or even to scholars except by special permit. In 1968 K. Koscinskij asked if there was such a thing as a jargon problem. This question must be answered in the affirmative, then as now.¹⁵⁴

Max Vasmer's "Russian Etymological Dictionary" excellently demonstrates to what extent linguistic purists will go in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet edition, which was translated into Russian and supplemented, one would search in vain for such entries as *блядь* 'prostitute', *ебать* 'to fuck', *пизда* 'vagina' and *хуй* 'male organ'. They were simply omitted because they offended against the "law of purity" which had been passed by the functionaries of language. The same thing happened with Dal's famous dictionary. After Baudouin de Courtenay had included "four-letter words" in the 3rd and 4th editions of the dictionary, these editions were not considered fit to serve as models for the new Soviet editions although they had been amended, brought up to date and arranged according to the more practical alphabetical system. The second, much less up-to-date edition was given preference.¹⁵⁵ This decision, considered a preventive and educational act, was made easy for those who represented Soviet language maintenance. The foreword to the fourth (Baudouin's) edition contains statements which, had they not been written before the October Revolution, would have had to be understood as being anti-Soviet or against Soviet language maintenance and lexicographical practice. The eager language maintenance men had no choice but to prevent the "heretical" foreword from being printed. Part of it has been quoted here to illustrate how modern Baudouin's view was and still is:

[...] научная точность каждого толкового [...] словаря, со стороны самого материала, состоит прежде всего в отражении, по мере возможности, действительной жизни и действительных воззрений данного народа. Если жизнь является диком и безотрадном, составитель или же редактор словаря должен примириться с этим печальным фактом, и он не имеет права прибегать к прикрасам и замалчиваниям. Если воззрения хотя бы только известной части народа жестоки и нелепы, они такими же должны быть зарегистрированы лексикографом. [...]

Та же полная лексикографическая объективность требует внесения в серьезный словарь «живого языка» так называемых «неприличных слов»,

¹⁵⁴ K. Koscinskij, "Сушествует ли проблема жаргона? (Несколько мыслей по поводу)," in: *Voprosy literatury*, Moskva, 1968, 5, pp. 181-191.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

«сквернословий», «ругательств», «мерзостей площадного жаргона» и т.д.

Лексикограф не имеет права урезать и кастрировать «живой язык». Раз известные слова существуют в умах громадного большинства народа и беспрестанно выливаются наружу, лексикограф обязан занести их в словарь, хотя бы против этого возставали и притворно негодовали все лицемеры и тартюфы, не только являющиеся обыкновенно большими любителями сальностей по секрету, но тоже весьма охотно прибегающие ко всякого рода «ругательствам» и «сквернословиям». [...]

Затем, как же исключать из словаря живого великорусского языка слова самые живые, слова, которые приходится слышать постоянно, слова, страдательного воспринимания которых нельзя почти избежать?

[...] Мы не в праве переделывать русский язык, мы не вправе скрывать из него то, что в нем действительно есть и что в нем бьется интенсивною жизнью.¹⁵⁶

If one considers the "four-letter words" in the context of the so-called democratization of the Russian language since the October Revolution, one realizes that this process has indeed taken place in the spoken language and has affected all strata of the population to an unprecedented degree. At a time when the theory of linguistic perfection had no meaning in connection with the Russian language, Larin defined the evolution of a literary language as follows:

Историческая эволюция любого литературного языка может быть представлена как ряд последовательных "снижений", варваризаций, — но лучше сказать — как ряд концентрических развертываний.¹⁵⁷

On the whole, Soviet language policy has not been particularly successful in fighting undesirable linguistic phenomena in certain spoken varieties. Neither the institutionalized prescriptive lexicography, which for decades concentrated exclusively on the literary language, nor the "eager beaver" language maintenance men representing the discipline культура речи have managed to eradicate certain linguistic varieties. Here is a quotation taken from V. G. Belinskij, who is highly regarded in the Soviet Union as a journalist and literary critic:

Создать язык невозможно, ибо его творит народ, филологи только открывают его законы и приводят их в систему, а писатели только творят на нем сообразно с сими законами.¹⁵⁸

The quotation expresses that there are limits to the planning of a language. These limits become obvious in spoken varieties, including Russian

¹⁵⁶ V. Dal', *Tolkovyj slovar' živogo velikoruskago jazyka*. 4th rev. and substantially enl. ed. by Prof. I. A. Boduén-de-Kurtené, vol. 1, S.-Peterburg-Moskva, 1912, pp. IX-XI.

¹⁵⁷ Larin (1928b), p. 62.

¹⁵⁸ The source could not be established.

jargons, slang and *mat*. Soviet linguists do not doubt that extralingual factors – of a social, psychological and ideological nature – are responsible for the existence of social language varieties.¹⁵⁹ Looked at in this light, the fight against jargons is like a fight with windmills or, to use a different simile, like shadow boxing which has long turned into a mere convention and frozen into a ritual. Rigorous purism has led the Russian literary language, fully exposed as it is to the censors' clutches, further and further away from the spoken language, with which it is no longer naturally interrelated. The epithet *жизной* with which Dal' described the linguist material compiled by him, justifiably no longer appears in the titles of Soviet dictionaries of the Russian language. By merely declaring jargons, slang, *о́мья* and "mat" taboo, the authorities will in the long run not prevent these varieties from being researched primarily in the West, even though conditions for such research are far from favourable. This development has already begun, and has very recently led to the publication of several dictionaries, books and articles.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ E. G. Borisova also realized the problem. See her "Sovremennyj molodežnyj žargon," in: *Russkaja reč'*, 1980, no. 5, p. 54.

¹⁶⁰ The following can here be mentioned: A. and T. Fesenko, *Russkij jazyk pri sovetach*, N'ju Jork, 1955, pp. 77-99 ("'Blatnye élementy' sovetskogo jazyka"); A. Plegon, *Za predelami russkich slovarej*. (Dopolnitel'nye slova i značenija s citatami Lenina, Čruščeva, Stalina, Barkova, Puškina, Lermontova, Esenina, Majakovskogo, Solženicy-na, Voznesenskogo i dr.), London, 1973; H. Vieth, "Sprache von Schülern und Studenten in der UdSSR in der Zeit nach 1945," in: *Hamburger Beiträge für Russischlehrer*, vol. 14, Hamburg, 1979, pp. 159-207; W. Oschlies, *Lenins Erben aufs Maul geschaut. Jugendjargon in Osteuropa*, Köln, Wien, 1981; K. Koscinskij, "Étimologičeskie étjudy," in: *Russian Linguistics*, vol. 3, 1977, pp. 235-239; idem, "Nenormativnaja leksika i slovarej (K postanovke voprosa)," in: *Russian Linguistics*, vol. 4, 1980, pp. 363-395; idem, "Slovar' russkoj nenormativnoj leksiki (kratkij prospekt)," in: *Russian Linguistics*, vol. 5, 1980, pp. 133-150; idem, "Slovar' russkoj nenormativnoj leksiki," in: *Strana i mir*, 12, 1984, pp. 61-68 (we are looking forward to the publication of this dictionary); A. Skačinskij, *Slovar' blatnogo žargona v SSSR*, N'ju Jork, 1982; B. Ben-Jakov, *Slovar' Argo GULaga*, Frankfurt, 1982; V. Kozlovskij, *Sobranie russkich vorovskich slovarej v četyrech tomach*, comp. and ed. by Vladimir Kozlovskij, vols. 1-4, New York, 1983; and I. P. Vorivoda, *Sbornik žargonnych slov i vyraženij, upotrebljaemych v ustnoj i pis'mennoj reči prestupnyh élementov*, Alma-Ata, 1971 (a Japanese reprint of the Soviet edition). The study by F. R. Patton, *Means of Conveying Expressivity in Russian Slang*, Ann Arbor, Mich., London, 1981, is extremely useful. The handy *Wörterbuch der modernen russischen Umgangssprache. Russisch-Deutsch*, München, 1985, by Soja Koester and E. Rom, also deserves mention.

B. DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS AND PROBLEMS OF TERMINOLOGY

I. General Remarks

When discussing scientific subjects, specialists normally use technical terms or technical expressions. If the technical terms are standardized they facilitate communication and help avoid misunderstandings. This is the case, for instance, with the internationally agreed anatomical nomenclature.¹ But the situation in linguistics is different. Languages are so varied and complex and the attitudes of linguists and state institutions so contradictory that it has been impossible to develop a common terminology. Repeated attempts to define such concepts as "language", "sentence" or "word" show how difficult it is to find a common terminology. They also give an indication of the ambition of linguists to develop an autonomous or even original terminology. If the originality consists in nothing else but attaching new labels to old concepts, one wonders how useful this is. As a rule, different terms attach to different concepts, and questions of terminology and of definitions of concepts should, admittedly, not be ignored; but it would amount to overestimation if new insights or greater scientific exactitude were expected from their solution. In connection with this topical subject K. R. Popper states:

The view that the precision of science and of scientific language depends upon the precision of its terms is certainly very plausible, but it is none the less, I believe, a mere prejudice. The precision of a language depends, rather, just upon the fact that it takes care not to burden its terms with the task of being precise.²

An attempt has been made here to trace the usage of the current terminology and to delimit social and other varieties of the Russian language.

¹ I refer here only to the *Parisian Nomina anatomica (PNA)*, 1955.

² K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 2: *The High Tide of Prophecy. Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath*, London, 1980, p. 19.

II. Varieties of Russian

1. Social Dialects

The technical terms employed in the field of sociolectology lack system and clarity. This is as much due to historical factors as to the inconsistency of researchers. When new terms were introduced, the archaic and outdated ones could not be discarded, with the result that the word "language" now carries all kinds of meanings. Bondaletov gave a vivid example of the rather complex situation as regards terminology. According to him the Russian language includes the following social dialects: professional languages (lexical systems), jargons of social groups and classes, conventional professional languages (argots), and the conventional languages (argots) of the déclassé (cant).³ While the term "dialect" already refers to a linguistic subgroup, it also serves as a general term for professional and conventional languages. The following formula illustrates the situation in a slightly simplified form: language \longrightarrow dialects \longrightarrow languages. This chain shows "language" as having three different meanings: "language"; "lexical system"; and "argot", which is apparently less than "language" but more than a mere "lexical system". This question of terminology is easier to explain than to solve. "Argot", "jargon", "professional language" and "conventional language" were used long before the expression "social dialect" came into use. If linguists had been consistent, they would have spoken from the beginning of a "school-boys' dialect", a "students' dialect", a "hunters' dialect", a "sailors' dialect", a "rogues' dialect" and so on.

The term "dialect" is no doubt burdened by its established usage in the sense of regional variety or group of varieties. Only since the ninth edition of S. I. Ozegov's dictionary has диалект been defined as местное или социальное наречие, говор. Up to then all monolingual dictionaries had only given the meaning местное наречие, говор.⁴ But linguistic dictionaries had all along offered more detailed definitions, such as:

Разновидность (вариант) данного языка, употребляемая более или менее ограниченным числом людей, связанных тесной территориальной, профес-

³ Cf. above p. 54.

⁴ S. I. Ozegov, *Slovar' russkogo jazyka*, 9th ed., Moskva, 1972, p. 151.

сиональной или социальной общностью и находящихся в постоянном и непосредственном языковом контакте.⁵

This definition indicates that there are regional, social and professional dialects. The professional dialects, among them the производственные диалекты (workshop slang), are subordinated to the social dialects. In order to avoid the term "slang", terminological ambiguities are put up with.

The terms "regional dialects" and "social dialects" are at least as vague as Baudouin's "horizontal and vertical layers of language". This division does not at all mean that social dialects do not vary according to regions and that there are no social variations of regional dialects. It merely means that either the social or the regional factor is dominant in a dialect. One need only think of the now extinct pedlars' language in the province of Vladimir or the jargon of speculators, which, having evolved in the large Soviet cities, remains confined there. One could say that the speculators' jargon is an urban (regional) dialect spoken by a particular social group - whatever that may be - or that it is a social dialect spoken in certain urban regions. There are arguments for and against either definition. One thing is certain, that by selecting one of the two terms the unity of the social and regional components of the jargon is linguistically disturbed and invariably has to be reestablished in the mind. At first sight the differences within the speculators' jargon appear to be of a regional nature, for example certain peculiarities of the pronunciation.⁶ But on closer examination lexical peculiarities become apparent. The jargon under discussion shows traces of Finnish influence in Leningrad which are absent elsewhere, e.g. in its Moscow version. This is due to the Finnish tourists in Leningrad - a social phenomenon caused by Leningrad's proximity to the Finnish border, i.e. by a regional factor, and also to the political decision to allow Finnish tourists to visit Leningrad. This indicates that the term "social dialect" can make no claim to precision, which is entirely in Popper's sense.

⁵ O. S. Achmanova, *Slovar' lingvističeskich terminov*, Moskva, 1966, p. 131. Cf. D. E. Rozental', M. A. Telenkova, *Slovar'-spravočnik lingvističeskich terminov. Posobie dlja učitelej*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl., Moskva, 1976, pp. 94-95.

⁶ See e.g. L. A. Verbickaja, *Russkaja orfoépija (K probleme éksperimental'no-fonetičeskogo issledovanija osobennostej sovremennoj proiznositel'noj normy)*, Leningrad, 1976, pp. 71-118, where the peculiarities of the pronunciation in Leningrad are discussed.

2. Social Speech Styles

The concept of "social speech styles" was recently introduced to refer to sociolinguistic variations. It is supposed to replace the "completely unjustified" term "social dialect". The champions of this innovation claim that sociolinguistic variations have neither their own phonetic systems nor distinct grammatical structures, but that they are based on the ordinary language and are therefore closest to ordinary styles.⁷ This suggestion is argued from wrong premisses (Larin conceded that argots have "their own" phonetics and morphologies, which are, however, not "special"; other Soviet linguists merely pointed to the special vocabularies of the argots; but the concept of "social dialects" was never defined as indicated). Yet it does not altogether lack topical interest. The stylistic functions of social speech varieties cannot be denied.

The point of departure for this reconsideration is Lichačev's observation that argot words are to some degree used consciously as a stylistic speech device.⁸ Jargons are accordingly classified as either social styles of speech or social and stylistic varieties of speech (Skvorcov), or as "special styles of prostorečie".

The most important arguments against the suggested technical term are: 1) that social dialects, as described, contain a regional component, 2) that they are spoken by particular groups of people, and 3) that part of their vocabulary is semi-technical. As a result, the concept of style would have to be broadened to include these aspects. Besides, the expression "speech style" has too strong a connotation of conscious linguistic composition whereas social dialects are known for their automatic and spontaneous utterances.

I am of the opinion that the term "social speech style" carries no recognizable advantages. The primary component, namely the social one, is merely pushed into the background. And the subject under discussion does not change with the new label. Formally, however, the dialect becomes a style of the Russian language and could easily be included in stylistics or a new discipline to be called "sociostylistics". This would be a simple and

⁷ *Obščee jazykoznanie. Formy suščestvovanija, funkcii, istorija jazyka.* Moskva, 1970, p. 496.

⁸ Lichačev (1964), pp. 333, 338, note 68.

elegant way of disposing of the unwanted "social dialects" – if not in actual fact, at least in respect to terminology.

The suggested classification of jargons as peculiar styles of *prostorečie* is not well thought out. In one place it says: "Обычно языковой базой жаргона является просторечный стиль";⁹ in another: "Всякий жаргон существует как правило, на базе разговорного языка данной страны";¹⁰ or again: "Наряду с устными стилями литературного языка существуют нелитературные стили обиходно-разговорной речи, так называемое просторечие".¹¹ According to these statements a jargon is either a style of a style or a collective style, i.e. a substyle, or again a style of a language – the colloquial language. The founders of this theory must have realized themselves that a jargon is by no means always tied of the *prostorečie*.

3. Artificial Languages

a) Conventional Languages (Argots)

Условный язык ('conventional language') is still a current term in Soviet sociolectology, but outside the Soviet Union it is almost completely forgotten. In this treatise the term "conventional language" (meaning here a language based on tacitly agreed conventions) is suggested as an adequate English equivalent of the Russian *условный язык*; this clarification seems necessary because up to now "secret language" has served as the English equivalent. The latter rendering is misleading and therefore unsatisfactory. The Russian term which corresponds exactly to the English "secret language" is *тайный язык* or *потайной язык*. Translations from Russian have caused misunderstandings because there was only one English equivalent for two different Russian terms.¹² The expression *условный язык*

⁹ See *Общее языкознание* (1970), pp. 494.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 487

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 527.

¹² The editors and translators of the book *Общее языкознание. Формы существования, функции, история языка*, Moskva, 1970, have rendered *условный язык* every time as "secret language". *Тайный язык* has also been translated as "secret language". The German or English reader can therefore not discern which Russian term has been used on each occasion in the Russian original. In the absence of a precise rendering these weaknesses could have been compensated for by addition of the Russian expression in brackets. See *Allgemeine Sprachwis-*

is a calque from the Latin "lingua conventionalis" (also "langage de convention").¹³

During the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century the term "conventional languages" was meant to convey that the linguistic systems referred to were the opposites of the so-called "natural languages", which according to a widespread opinion had evolved spontaneously. The generic term "artificial languages" further underlined the assumed contrast. Conscious deliberation was involved in creating artificial languages, as was the question of their practicality, though the two factors were not equally important. According to these criteria, Baudouin de Courtenay placed the conventional languages of "certain closed circles and communities" between pidgin Russian and the world auxiliary languages. Pidgin Russian and conventional languages belonged to the category of "semi-consciously" created languages while the world auxiliary languages were consciously and "artificially" constructed.¹⁴ These terms were being used rather loosely in those days. They served stylistic variety more than anything else. But since the auxiliary languages came into existence the term "artificial" in reference to languages has been employed in the strict sense of the word. Nowadays "artificial languages" are Esperanto, Volapük, Ido, Novial and others. A dictionary of information technology defines искусственный язык as follows: "Язык, созданный искусственным путем для достижения определенных практических целей."¹⁵ But the technical term "conventional languages" has survived in its original meaning although there is no denying the fact that even "natural languages" are based on "convention". The rules of the convention are normally adhered to in the interest of a problem-free communication between speakers of the same language. There are very strict rules in the Soviet Union regarding the use of literary language. There are even prohibitions

senschaft. Vol. 1: Existenzformen, Funktionen und Geschichte der Sprache, München/Salzburg, 1973, e.g. pp. 401-402.

¹³ Cf. F. Ch. B. Avé-Lallemant, *Das deutsche Gaunerthum in seiner social-politischen, literarischen und linguistischen Ausbildung zu seinem heutigen Bestande*, 3rd pt., Leipzig, 1862, p. 12.

¹⁴ See I. A. Boduën de Kurtené, *Izbrannye trudy po obščemu jazykoznaniju*, vol. 2, Moskva, 1963, pp. 140, 152.

¹⁵ G. S. Zdanova, E. S. Kolobrodova, V. A. Poluškin, A. I. Černyj, *Slovar' terminov po informatike na rusском i anglijskom jazykach*, Moskva, 1971, p. 49.

against the use of certain phrases. In view of this situation the Russian literary or newspaper language (*Pravda, Izvestija*) could without reservation be classified as artificial, and the question arises as to whether the term "conventional language" serves any purpose at all. To my mind it has outlived itself by creating a specific contrast between the Russian literary language and other linguistic systems which does not in fact exist. It may have its uses as an historical term but fails to describe today's linguistic situation. It would best be done without.

b) Secret Languages

Soviet linguists cannot agree on the usage and definition of the term "secret language" or on which languages are to be considered secret. The definition is the least problematic aspect. In a recently published encyclopaedia of languages it is defined as follows:

Тайный язык, условный язык, – социальный диалект обособленной (ранее – профессиональной) группы, создаваемый с целью замкнутого общения в пределах данной группы.¹⁶

This entry expresses that a "conventional language" is synonymous with a "secret language", which is actively and consciously constructed. Although both terms refer to the same concept they are not synonymous. The first term emphasizes the "secret" aspect of the language, the second the "conventional" one. The *SSRLJa* defines "conventional" as follows: "Специально выработанный или принятый в какой-либо профессиональной среде; искусственный. О языке".¹⁷ Equating "conventional" with "secret" clearly contravenes common linguistic usage. Nor would it be justified to equate "conventional language" with "secret language". "Conventional language" is the broader concept of the two. A conventional language can be given the status of a secret language, and secrecy would be merely one of its features. Bondaletov displays the same attitude and tends towards the view "that the main function of these 'languages' was that of confidential

¹⁶ See M. V. Arapov, "Тайный язык," in: *Russkij jazyk. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 1979, p. 346. Cf. the essays "Тайные языки," in: Achmanova (1966), p. 534 (under "Язык"), and in: Rozentel', Telenkova (1976), p. 480.

¹⁷ *SSRIJa*, vol. 16, Moskva, 1964, col. 910, cl. 6.

(esoteric) communication".¹⁸ He assumed that the process of partial *pacce-кpeчивание* ('unveiling') of the conventional languages had set in as early as the first half of the 19th century, and that the process was well under way by the end of that century and was completed after the October Revolution.¹⁹ This shows that the conventional languages, even after losing their element of conspiracy, continued being conventional languages.

For the above reason as well as for reasons of practicality (standardization of terminology) it is inadvisable to treat "secret language" and "conventional language" as synonyms. Both "secret language" and "conventional language" (as used by Soviet linguists) are terms employed mainly in connection with historical linguistic systems. The use of the expression "secret language" is in any case highly questionable. Even those in favour of the term admit that "the life of these languages [...] follows natural laws which cannot consciously be controlled".²⁰

Thieves' cant takes a special place among the so-called conventional or secret languages. Although socialism has allegedly created the required conditions for this "sociolinguistic category" to become extinct, thieves' cant is still very much alive in the Soviet Union (see section "Argot and Jargon").

4. Argot and Jargon

To Soviet linguists the term *appo* means three different things. It can refer to the extinct languages ("conventional languages, secret languages") of hawkers and itinerant craftsmen or to the languages of certain social groups (sailors, soldiers, hunters, actors, musicians, school boys, students, young people etc.). In these two contexts "argot" is specifically qualified, as in *apпо офеней*, *apпо портных* or *школьное apпо*, *военное apпо*. But it can also refer to the languages of *déclassé* groups (beggars, vagabonds etc.) and of criminals. In the latter case it is synonymous with cant and used without any qualifying attributes. *Воровское apпо* (rogues' argot) is either a tautology or it refers to one of the argots mentioned in the

¹⁸ Bondaletov (1974), pp. 56-57.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

second case. But Russian *apro* never stands for "slack colloquial language" like the French *argot* or the English general slang.

The uncertainty in terminology is aggravated by *жаргон* being partially synonymous with *apro* and able to replace it in its three different meanings. Extinct *argots* are now only rarely referred to as *jargons*. But the collocations *школьный жаргон*, *студенческий жаргон*, *жаргон моряков* (school boys' jargon, students' jargon, sailors' jargon) and others of this group are preferred to those containing the word *apro*. Soviet sociolinguists have long been trying to turn *apro* into a technical term, i.e. to reserve it for the meaning "cant", but so far language usage and the practise of Soviet criminal authorities have proved stronger. All the dictionaries compiled by them contain the word *жаргон*, either combined with *воровской* or with *преступников* ('of criminals'). *Апро*, which along with *жаргон* first appeared in Russian dictionaries during the 1860s, has remained a rarely used foreign word.

Apart from functioning synonymously with *apro*, *жаргон* is used to refer to mixed languages which have evolved in border areas and port cities. *Жаргон* frequently stands for *социальный диалект*. In colloquial use, not as a strictly technical term, *жаргон* means "vulgar incorrect speech". This pejorative connotation of *жаргон* varies according to context. Finally, the term can also be used in the place of *сленг* (e.g. *молодёжный жаргон* instead of *молодёжный сленг*).

If one should try to find a common definition for the many meanings of *argot* and *jargon*, one would have to be content with this: *argot* or *jargon* is a linguistic variety characteristic of certain social groups. Rozen-tal' and Telenkova gave a more detailed definition in their dictionary:

Арго (франц. *argot* - жаргон). Язык отдельных социальных групп, сообществ, искусственно создаваемый с целью языкового обособления (иногда «потайной» язык), отличающийся главным образом наличием слов непонятных людям непосвященным.²¹

The characteristic of "unintelligibility for the uninitiated" applies equally to many technical and scientific languages, and it used to apply to the French spoken by the Russian upper classes in the first half of the 19th

²¹ Rozen-tal', Telenkova (1976), pp. 28-29 and 104 (under "Zargon"). Equating French *argot* with Russian *жаргон* tantamount to reasoning in circles, as under the heading "Zargon" reference is made to the article "Argo" with the remark that *жаргон* is synonymous with *apro*, adding, however, pejorative connotation.

century. Familiarity with a language is necessary for its intelligibility even if it is only a language within a language.

As a language maintenance man for the last twenty years, Skvorcov has decisively influenced jargon research in the Soviet Union. He attaches different meanings to the two terms "argot" and "jargon". He interprets argot as follows:

социальная разновидность речи, характеризующаяся узкопрофессиональной или своеобразно освоенной (в смысловом и словообразовательном отношении) общеупотребительной лексикой, нередко с элементами условности, искусственности и «тайности». Арго является принадлежностью относительно замкнутых социальных групп и сообществ. Основная функция арго – быть средством их обособления, отделения от остальной части общества. В строго терминологическом смысле арго – это речь низов общества, деклассированных групп и уголовного мира: нищих, воров, картежных шулеров и т.п.²²

The two above-cited quotations show that opinions on argot vary not fundamentally but by degrees, even though argot is considered "language" in one case and "speech" in the other. "Language" must here be understood in the ordinary sense and not as Saussure's "langue".

Skvorcov reckons that the following definition of "jargon" should be generally acceptable:

Социальная разновидность речи, характеризующаяся профессиональной (нередко экспрессивно переосмысленной) лексикой и фразеологией общенародного языка. Жаргон является принадлежностью относительно открытых социальных групп людей, объединенных общностью интересов, привычек, занятий, социального положения и т.п. [...] В отличие от арго, жаргон в своем оформлении в целом отталкивается от общелитературного языка, являясь как бы социальным диалектом определенной возрастной общности людей или «профессиональной» корпорации.²³

It is not our intention to criticize Skvorcov's definition at all costs, especially in view of the well-known difficulty of delimiting one such language variety against another, similar one. It would even appear that the more detailed a definition, the less exact it turns out to be. For example, how exactly are the concepts of "conventionality", "artificiality", "secrecy" or even "comparatively closed group" and "comparatively open group" (which in case of doubt could stand for the same thing) to be understood? Where is the beginning, where the end of artificiality and secrecy? Can speech varieties be graded according to degrees of secrecy like the files

²² L. I. Skvorcov, Article "Argo," in: *Russkij jazyk. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 1979, p. 23.

²³ Skvorcov, Article "Zargon," in: *Russkij jazyk. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 1979, p. 82.

of the authorities? What use is the historical concept of профессиональная корпорация ('professional group') when one discusses prevailing linguistic situations in today's socialism, where such categories are supposed to be non-existent? How is the statement "argots belong to comparatively closed groups and communities" to be understood in comparison with "argot is the speech of socially or professionally isolated groups and communities"? Both these statements were made by the same author.²⁴ Is there not an essential difference between a group being professionally or socially isolated and a social group isolating itself only linguistically from society?

It may pay to give a brief review of the value which Skvorcov attached to his own definitions. For example, he displayed a certain flexibility in his attitude towards the mistaken opinion that argot is a secret language. In 1966 he came to the "final" conclusion that argots evolve naturally and spontaneously according to the normal laws of language.²⁵ In 1972 he expressed a diametrically opposite opinion, namely that argots serve to "hide or mask the criminal nature of certain plans and actions."²⁶ And in 1980 he discovered, no doubt under Bondaletov's influence, an elegant dialectical solution to the problem, according to which argot vocabularies contain "elements of conventionality, artificiality and «secrecy»".²⁷

On the basis of my own observations, reflections and countless interviews, and in view of D. S. Lichačev's opinion (see pp. 53-54), I wish to emphasize at this point that Russian argot - nowadays referred to as *феня* - is not a secret language, does not aim at conspiracy and does not contain any elements which could justifiably be described as "artificial", "conventional" or "secret".²⁸ That is, unless such official collocations as *братская помощь* ("brotherly help"), which circumscribes military actions in socialist states, should also be interpreted as artificial and conventional phrases serving secret communication. In respect to "brotherly help", this attitude would not be entirely unjustified, for great effort and deliberation were required to coin the term. Argot speakers are neither prepared for nor capable of such intellectual exertions.

²⁴ Skvorcov, article "Argo," in *BSĖ*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, Moskva, 1970, p. 181.

²⁵ Skvorcov (1966), p. 13.

²⁶ Skvorcov (1972), pp. 48-49.

²⁷ Skvorcov (1979), p. 23.

²⁸ Also the latest Soviet research seems to reflect this opinion - again in view of D. S. Lichačev. See also A. D. Svejcer, *Social'naja differenciacija anglijskogo jazyka v SSA*, Moskva, 1983, pp. 174-175.

One must come to the conclusion that the label "secret language" is attached to Russian thieves' cant mainly for psychological reasons. Aside from the fact that most linguists are not personally familiar with this variety, their misjudgment is entirely due to human vanity. Linguists as a rule come from backgrounds which are totally different from those of criminals. It is a matter of pride and satisfaction to linguists to gain access to criminals and other anti-social elements, to be accepted by them and to communicate in a language which their own people do not understand. They are flattered to be in possession of information which is hard to obtain and usually kept a tight secret. Their misconception is encouraged by the fact that few people concern themselves with this linguistic variety and, having no knowledge of it, naturally do not count among the "initiated".

Over the last few decades Soviet researchers have not been able to agree on the terminology for social language varieties. It is high time to standardize linguistic terms. Ideally, they ought to be simple, practical and systematic. But it is no easy matter to slash this Gordian knot or even to undo it a little. Perhaps it can be unravelled a little or made somewhat transparent. In this the West can make its contribution.

One can start off by adopting the terminology suggested by Zirmunskij in 1936 and later amended by Bondaletov. Linguists have often used the terms, frequently in a slightly altered form. It is important that the partial synonymy of "argot" and "jargon" be further reduced and the attributes "secret", "conventional" and "artificial" - none of which apply to either argot or jargon - be completely discarded. It is inadvisable to use the French word "argot" for Russian thieves' cant. The French term is hardly known to non-specialists while the Russian воровской (блатной) жаргон has successfully asserted itself. The argot term for modern Russian argot is феня, which long ago replaced the old expressions блат, музыка, and блатная музыка. They correspond to German "Rotwelsch", English "cant", Spanish "germania", Portugese "galao", Italian "fourbeque", and French "argot" and "langue verte". Although normally determined to preserve their autonomy, in this case Soviet linguists and competent institutions are strangely reluctant to recognize the Russian expression феня. Феня alone is an indication of the fact that even today Russian has its own cant and does not lag behind the languages of other great European cultures. On the contrary, the word феня and the phrase ботать по-фене

'to speak cant' have become popular only since the October Revolution and are known to most Soviet citizens.²⁹

I suggest that the extinct varieties spoken by beggars and itinerant artisans be referred to as *apro* and the varieties spoken by school boys, students, sailors, soldiers, musicians, drug addicts, criminals (thieves, cardsharps and others), prisoners, speculators and other groups be called *жаргон*. For Russian thieves' cant the expression *феня* should be used along with the international term *apro*.

Opinions differ on what is meant by *жаргонизмы* ('jargonisms') and *арготизмы* ('argotisms'). Some people, among them Skvorcov, say they are lexical units occurring outside argots and jargons and functioning as loans in the colloquial or literary language. Others, like Rozental', say they refer to any lexical units of argots or jargons regardless whether they are used inside or outside the argots or jargons. In my opinion Skvorcov's definition appears to put too much emphasis on language maintenance and style. Phrases from argots and jargons are tolerated merely for reasons of style, provided they remain within the limits set by the Soviet language maintenance people. They are considered to be practically the same as Anglicisms, Germanisms, Romanisms and other "isms". These narrow definitions can also not be accepted for purely practical reasons, for "argotisms" and "jargonisms" are extremely handy terms. This attitude concurs with the current French definition of "argotisme": "Mot, tournure argotique".³⁰

At this point I shall give a brief outline of the meanings of the loan words "Argot" and "Jargon" in German. In accordance with their agreed definition, *apro* and *жаргон* are covered by the term "special languages", which is equivalent to the rarely used expression *специальные языки*. Specialists of German normally avoid the term "Argot" when referring to German special languages. However, it can have any of the following meanings: 1) language of French beggars and rogues; 2) language of certain social or professional groups; 3) careless colloquial French language (French slang). The term "Jargon" has only two meanings in German:

²⁹ The word *феня* - воровской жаргон was first registered by Potapov, *Slovar' žargona prestupnikov. Blatnaja muzyka*, Moskva, 1927, p. 172. It seems to have been derived from *офеня* 'pedlar'.

³⁰ *La Grande Larousse de la langue française en six volumes*, vol. 1, Paris, 1971, p. 239.

1) colloquial language within certain social groups, specialists' or professional groups, and 2) careless speech, slang. There is also no agreement among German lexicographers on the definition of "Argotismus". It is either an "argot expression which has become incorporated into the colloquial language" (in the sense of special language) or it is "a phrase [idiom, turn of phrase] which originated in argot and is now current in the [French] standard language."³¹ "Jargonismus" is not listed in French or German dictionaries.

This brief comparison shows that there is only partial agreement between Russian жаргон, жаргонизм, аргю and арготизм and the corresponding German (also French and English) expressions, and that they cannot be translated or used without a special explanation.

5. Prostorečie

The practice of marking certain words, expressions, phrases, word formations, inflexions and pronunciations as просторечие or просторечное was first introduced by D. N. Ušakov in his dictionary and later taken over by Soviet lexicographers. Here are some examples of this linguistic category: канут 'end', 'death', на карачках 'on all fours', делать на фуфу 'to botch up something', замочить 'to water', сообразить на троих 'three people buy a strong alcoholic beverage and consume the same', ихний 'their', евонный 'his', полуклиника instead of поликлиника 'polyclinic', местов instead of мест 'of places' (Gen. Pl.); ор в кинe instead of в кино 'at the cinema', без пальта instead of без пальто 'without a coat', пoльты, пoльт etc. instead of пальто (Nom., Gen. etc. Pl.), хочут 'they want', instead of хотят, хoдют instead of хoдят and процент instead of процент. This list, which could be added to indefinitely, proves that просторечие comprises the most diverse linguistic phenomena. Its expressions and forms are characterized by a certain simplicity, lack of restraint, crudeness and - as compared to literary norms - varying degrees of incorrectness. Lexicographers lack uniform and unambiguous criteria by which to determine whether a particular

³¹ See the entries "Argot", "Argotismus" and "Jargon" in: *Duden. Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache in sechs Bänden*, vol. 1, p. 187, vol. 3, p. 1379, and in: *Brockhaus-Wahrig, Deutsches Wörterbuch in sechs Bänden*, vol. 1, p. 313 and vol. 3, p. 812.

word is to be classified as *prostorečie*, colloquial or jargon. Even the lexicographers' finely attuned feeling for language cannot help here. In one of the four most important Soviet dictionaries of the Russian language the expression *на фуфу* is unmarked (M 1961), which means it has been classified as normal (neutral, middle) linguistic style, in another it is marked colloquial (B 1964) and in two cases it is classed as *prostorečie* (U 1940, O 1981). The borderline between *prostorečie* and the colloquial style is obviously vague, and the example of *на фуфу* illustrates the fact that the time factor does not always make a difference.

Apart from the problem of attributing linguistic units to *prostorečie* or the colloquial style, linguists and philologists do not agree on whether *prostorečie* is part of the literary language or not. Normally it is considered "an intermediate phenomenon on the border line between literary and non-literary language".³² S. I. Ožegov has defined *просторечие* as follows:

Слова и грамматические формы массовой городской разговорной речи, используемые в литературном языке как стилистическое средство для придания речи шутливого, пренебрежительного, иронического, грубоватого и т.п. оттенка.³³

Ožegov understands *prostorečie* as a stylistic device borrowed from the urban colloquial language and used in the literary language, without, however, being part of it. He defines *prostorečie* only in relation to the literary language. Together with common dialectal expressions, jargon words, occasional coinages, neologisms, words from normal speech and some typical variations of word formations, *prostorečie* forms the vocabulary of the urban colloquial language without being a separate stylistic category. Ožegov explains:

В естественном разговоре ненормированного типа обиходная лексика не несет никакой стилистической нагрузки, не считая того, что многие лексемы или обороты могут служить формой выражения той или иной экспрессии.³⁴

F. P. Filin considered the controversy over *prostorečie* a misunderstanding. He suggested solving the problem by differentiating between two

³² O. A. Lapteva, *Russkij razgovornyj sintaksis*, Moskva, 1976, p. 78, combines all the prevailing opinions.

³³ S. I. Ožegov, *Slovar' russkogo jazyka*, 7th ed., Moskva, 1968, p. 614. An explanation of the definition is to be found on p. 7.

³⁴ Idem, "Лексика," in: *Leksikologija. Leksikografija. Kul'tura reči*, Moskva, 1974, p. 65. Further information on *prostorečie* can be found on pp. 64, 66, 288-290.

types of *prostorečie*: the литературное просторечие ('literary *prostorečie*'), which is a stylistic device of the literary language; and the *внелитературное просторечие* ('non-literary *prostorečie*'), which is spoken by people who are not sufficiently proficient in the literary language.²⁵ Seen in this light the following from among the above examples would belong to the non-literary *prostorečie*: полуклиника, местов, в кине, без пальта, поль-ты, польт, хочут, ходят, ихний, евонный and процент. These forms are not particularly noticeable when used by a speaker of *prostorečie*. But spoken by a literary speaker they become conspicuous and are interpreted as mistakes and signs of неграмотность ('lack of education') on the part of the speaker. This conclusion is not always correct because such forms as местов instead of мест, доцент instead of доцент, портфель instead of портфель, пальцами instead of пальцами may be used by persons who, although familiar with the correct forms, occasionally use the wrong ones in fun, high spirits, irony or mockery.²⁶

Distinguishing between "right" and "wrong" forms with regard to the literary language is perfectly sensible and justified. Although only a diminutive part of the "wrong" forms are listed in normative dictionaries - popular etymologies such as полусад instead of палисад, палисадник 'palisade', гульвар instead of бульварь 'boulevard', кастря instead of кастрля 'casserole', пивоны instead of пионы 'peonies', скупилянт instead of спекулянт 'speculator', фулган and фулиган instead of хулиган 'hooligan' or аблакат instead of адвокат 'advocate' are completely absent - they are nevertheless alive, sometimes so much so that they can become the new norms. In English such deviations from the norm are collected

²⁵ F. P. Filin, "O strukture sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka," in: *VJa*, 1973, no. 2, pp. 7-8; Filin, "Prostorečie" and "Prostorečnaja leksika," in: *Russkij jazyk. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 1979, p. 239. (Ožegov had already divided "prostorečie" into two categories without, however, suggesting separate terms for them. See Ožegov [1974], p. 290.) In his article "K probleme social'noj obuslovlennosti jazyka," in: *VJa*, 1966, no. 4, p. 37, Filin describes *prostorečie* merely as "non-normative, stylistically inferior language" within the literary language.

²⁶ A harmless yet interesting joke, based on the social implications of word stress, may illustrate the point: Какая разница между доцентом и доцентом? Доцент в 60 процентах случаев носит документы в портфеле, а доцент в 60 процентах случаев носит документы в портфеле.

under the heading *Vulgar English (vulgarisms), Popular English or Sub-standard English*.³⁷

According to Filin, expressions in the dictionaries marked *литературное просторечие* form an integral part of the literary language. They represent a collection of expressive and stylistically inferior devices which an educated person may use in certain situations. Their use is neither socially nor regionally restricted; the *внелитературное просторечие* is normally only unrestricted in its regional distribution. It is closely related to the semi-dialects.³⁸

O. A. Lapteva goes one step further. She treats *просторечие* as a vague and unsystematic linguistic category which contains dialectal leftovers. It has no norms of its own, is not widely distributed and is characteristic of speakers with a "low standard of education". It differs from the colloquial language mainly in vocabulary and phonetics, less so in syntax. Lapteva replaces *внелитературное просторечие* with the expression *локальные особенности устно-разговорной разновидности* ('local peculiarities of an oral colloquial variety'). She does not use the expression *литературное просторечие* at all, which means that this category - according to her terminology the *устно-разговорная разновидность литературного языка* ('oral colloquial variety of the literary language') - is entirely contained in the colloquial language.³⁹ It also means that the dictionary abbreviations *прост.* or *простореч.* are reserved exclusively for the *просторечие* as defined by Lapteva. As a consequence in the majority of cases *разг.* (*разговорное* 'colloquial') replaces *прост.* This practice, which is that of

³⁷ E. Leisi, *Das heutige Englisch. Wesenszüge und Probleme*, 6th ed., Heidelberg, 1974, pp. 159-160.

³⁸ Filin (1973), pp. 7-8.

³⁹ Lapteva (1976), pp. 76-81. The equation of *внелитературное просторечие* with the *локальные особенности устно-разговорной разновидности литературного языка* is not convincing. Forms such as *в кинe, местов* and *ихний* are widely used and form part of the *просторечие*, as Lapteva herself indicated. It should be mentioned here that *просторечие* has so far not been researched at all: a direct consequence of the normative approach of Soviet language policy. Cf. Filin (1973), p. 6. A new stimulus for *просторечие* and colloquial language research is the collection of articles *Gorodskoe просторечие. Проблемы изучения*. Moskva, 1984. These studies deal with *просторечие*'s phonetic, morphological, syntactical, lexical, and semantic features. The normative aspect is not given its usual prominent place.

many lexicographers, does not contradict Filin's definition of literary *prostorečie*,⁴⁰ but is, rather, in agreement with it.

This solution to the *prostorečie* controversy has obvious advantages. Firstly, it overcomes an arbitrary stylistic barrier which cannot be justified by either language usage or feeling for language. Colloquial expressions can at last be recognized for what they really are. My observations have been that native speakers (i.e. speakers of the Russian literary language) associate the current word *prostorečie* with primitiveness, lack of education, faultiness, incorrectness, dialectal influences, simplicity, unpretentiousness, spontaneity and the like. This agrees largely with Lapteva's observations about *prostorečie* (and Filin's about the non-literary *prostorečie*). Secondly, the load on the concept of "literary" is reduced: the paradox of the phrase *литературное просторечие* is dissolved. (If we were to retain Filin's definition of *prostorečie*, we could (or would have to) talk about *литературные* and *внелитературные жаргонизмы* – a suggestion which makes little sense to me and renders little sense to Filin's definition). The ambiguous term *prostorečie* has been turned into the unambiguous term *prostorečie*, which stands for the comparatively unambiguous concept of *prostorečie*.

It is a problem how to translate *просторечие* into English. I. Ja. Pavlovskij merely adopted Dal's definition which, translated into English from the German, runs as follows: "Language of the common people, unpretentious, simple language."⁴¹ A. V. Isačenko used the expression "language of the people", by which he meant "natural, unadulterated language mainly spoken by the rural population but also by certain classes of urban people."⁴²

One should be warned not to use the translations "sloppy" or "slack colloquial language", as these convey the impression that Russian *prostorečie* corresponds to English slang. In the British edition of the *Большая*

⁴⁰ In Soviet Russian/German dictionaries expressions belonging to *prostorečie* have been marked *разг.* (colloquial).

⁴¹ Dal's (1956) definition of *prostorečie* is *простой, простонародный говор, язык*. Cf. I. Ja. Pavlovskij, *Russko-deutscher slovar'*, 3rd, rev. and enl. ed., vol. 2, Riga, 1911, p. 1321.

⁴² See A. V. Isačenko, *Die russische Sprache der Gegenwart. Formenlehre*, 3rd ed., München, 1975, pp. 32-33.

Советская Энциклопедия, the entry *Просторечие* was correctly rendered as "popular language".⁴³

6. Colloquial Language

For more than ten years now the Russian colloquial language has been intensively researched. The results show that the dictionaries' stylistic category *разговорное* on the one hand and the linguistic terms *разговорная речь* ('colloquial speech') and *разговорный язык* ('colloquial language') on the other mean two different things. *Разговорное* refers to a stylistic level (lexical level) within the codified literary language which is immediately below the average (neutral, middle) style. Words and expressions marked *разг.*, such as *отчитать* 'give someone a piece of one's mind', *глазник* 'eye doctor', *очкарик* 'four eyes', and *бить баклуши* 'to twiddle one's thumbs', belong to the codified literary language. In the upward direction, the neutral style gives over to the high style; the codified literary language is thus divided into the high, neutral and colloquial styles. To simplify stylistic markings, it has been suggested that *разговорный стиль* be replaced by *сниженный стиль*, thereby distinguishing between the following stylistic levels: *высокий (книжный) стиль - нейтральный (средний) стиль - сниженный (разговорный) стиль*.⁴⁴

The lexical units marked *разговорное* in dictionaries represent only a part of the colloquial vocabulary. They refer to daily, often repeated processes and phenomena, and they connote values. In informal conversations they can be used alongside expressions of jargon, slang and "mat", the neutral or elevated styles or even *просторечие*. All these units belong to different stylistic levels and different lexical systems or varieties.

The *разговорная речь*, on the other hand, far from being only a style of speech, serves as a universal means of communication. Conversations in the family, among friends and acquaintances, at work and hospital, in offices, shops, streets, trains etc. can be conducted on any subject from

⁴³ V. D. Bondaletov, "Просторечие," in *BSE*, 3rd ed., vol. 21, Москва, 1975, p. 115, and "Popular Language," in: *Great Soviet Encyclopedia. A Translation of the Third Edition*, vol. 21, New York, London, 1978, p. 211.

⁴⁴ See *Russkaj razgovornaja reč'*, Москва, 1973, pp. 24-25.

politics to sports, the arts, sciences, technology etc. Colloquial language can cope adequately with any subject. Even specialized technical facts can be described with the help of colloquial language and a few special terms.

The colloquial language has standards of its own which are no less strictly observed than those of the codified literary language. The following are examples from the field of phonetics: тогда [тада, таа] советскому [саэцкуу] себе [с'нэ, с'э]. And here are others which fall under the heading of morphology: the vocatives Пап! Мам! Сам! Сомь! Тамь! or the forms два шампанских, три пива, четыре салата. In a test asking for an expression which best described the rubber suction device to clear blocked drain pipes, the following typically colloquial coinages were presented: груша, прочивалка, пробиввалка, пробивка, прокачка, откачка, продувака, продувалка, качалка, резинка, насосик, тыркала and simply для раковин.⁴⁵ Its official name вантуз is known almost only to salespersons in hardware shops. Constructions such as дай мне чем писать, чем вытереть, чем смочить, чем смазать ('give me something to write with, to wipe out with, to wet with, to apply with') occur regularly. (The object needed for a particular purpose is not concretely mentioned.) Sentences such as Испортился есть нельзя совсем творог-то в холодильнике; Потом обратно шли пять раз упала; Итальяночки молоденькие приходили три к нам в гости; and С красненькими собачку пожалуйста бантиком дайте clearly show the autonomy of colloquial syntax and word order.⁴⁶

The codified literary language and the colloquial language represent two separate systems. The colloquial language is not a functional style of the codified literary language (научный стиль, официально-деловой стиль, публицистический стиль, литературно-художественный стиль), but a separate system with its own specific inventory of units which function according to specific laws. Unlike the functional styles, the colloquial language is polyfunctional. It is the opposite not of any one individual style but of the whole of the codified literary language.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 445-446.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 333, 335, 389 and 391.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 20-23. On pp. 5-40 Lapteva (1976) gives a detailed discussion of the question whether the colloquial language should be considered a style. She, too, comes to the conclusion that despite certain features which styles have in common with the colloquial language, the latter is a "more complicated and multifaceted phenomenon" (p. 40).

It follows logically that the Russian colloquial language should be referred to as разговорный язык and not разговорная речь, as has been the habit so far. But it would be logically inconsistent if the разговорный язык were retained inside the literary language⁴⁸, because the literary language has been defined as обработанная форма общенародного языка ('a cultivated form of the common popular language'). The few above-mentioned examples from the colloquial language already show that the colloquial language should be classified as a необработанная форма ('uncultivated form') of Russian which - as has been stressed repeatedly - is created spontaneously during the act of communication. I therefore suggest that the colloquial language be treated as separate from the literary language.

7. Slang

Researchers of slang openly admit that "slang", like many other words which refer to complex phenomena, cannot be precisely defined.⁴⁹ *The Oxford English Dictionary* has the following entry under "slang":

Language of a highly colloquial type, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense.⁵⁰

Webster's New World Dictionary offers this definition:

Highly informal language that is outside of conventional or standard usage and consists of both coined words and phrases and of new or extended meanings attached to established terms: slang develops from the attempt to find fresh and vigorous, colorful, pungent or humorous expressions, and generally either passes into disuse or comes to have more formal status.⁵¹

The concept of slang includes wit, irony, protest, contempt, vulgarity, intentional offence against established norms and the like. Another important aspect is the human tendency to play with words. This causes new

⁴⁸ *Russkaja razgovornaja reč'* (1973), p. 24.

⁴⁹ E. Partridge, "Slang," in: *Collier's Encyclopedia*, vol. 21, New York, London, 1977, pp. 70-72. Partridge gives an exhaustive survey of slang in *Slang To-day and Yesterday*, 4th edition, London, 1971. Further recommended reading is: H. Wentworth, S. B. Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 2nd Supplemented Edition, New York, 1975.

⁵⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 9, Oxford, 1970, p. 171.

⁵¹ *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2nd College Edition, Toronto, 1976, p. 1337.

slang expressions to be constantly created. Some of these features apply equally to jargons, but, as Zirmunskij said, slang has a "much broader social basis" and is not narrowly confined to one particular group. Others are of the opinion that general slang can definitely be defined in social terms, namely as the specific vocabulary of young people in larger urban areas.⁵² This opinion is reflected in the phrase *молодёжный сленг*.

In the Soviet Union the guardians of the language go one step further by trying to reduce slang to youth slang. This becomes evident from the application of *молодёжный сленг* and *молодежный жаргон* to what the Germans call "Jugendsprache" because *жаргон* and *сленг* are avoided in reference to a slack and casual mode of speech. In this way an age limit has been set which, one must admit, is in no way related to facts. M. M. Kopylenko claimed that the agespan of slang-speaking youngsters extends from 14 to 25 years.⁵³ But even if the term "youth" were to include everybody below the age of 28 years - this being the age limit up to which Soviet citizens are allowed to join Comsomol or the Communist Youth Association - it would still not correspond to the actual linguistic situation. To do justice to reality even the 30-to-50-year-olds and above would have to be counted among the "youth". Adults long past their Comsomol age can often be heard saying something like *бабки* 'dough' (money), *заткнуться* 'shut up', *рыло* 'gob', *выступать* 'to make a din', 'look for a fight', 'put on a show', *кабак* 'restaurant' or *полковник* '3-star cognac'.⁵⁴

There is no denying the fact that slang phrases can be short-lived and are restricted to only a specific period of time and generation. There is equally no denying the fact that youth slang does exist in the Soviet Union. But the expression *молодежный сленг* is too broadly defined to make sense. This is no accident. On the one hand official authorities wish to treat slang, at least terminologically speaking, as a passing phase, as a sort of children's disease which will heal by itself. On the other hand,

⁵² E. Leisi, *Praxis der englischen Semantik*, Heidelberg, 1973, p. 228. Vocational slang as opposed to general slang means the language of particular professional groups (students, soldiers, consumers of drugs, sailors etc.) Vocational slang is here equivalent to Russian *жаргон*. The term *сленг* is only used occasionally in Russian.

⁵³ M. M. Kopylenko, "O semantičeskoj prirode molodežnogo žargona," in: *Social'no-lingvističeskie issledovanija*, ed. L. P. Krysin and D. N. Smelev, Moskva, 1976, p. 79.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-86, giving many additional examples.

Soviet linguists like to use the phrase *молодежный сленг* as a cover word which enables them to publish research dealing with slang or jargons.

If the Russian language were to be visualized as a model of vertical layers, slang would be slotted between colloquial language and jargons, among which *феня*, camp jargon and of late also drug addicts' jargon play a special role. Along with some other jargons they are the main source of supply for slang. M. Wandruszka gives the following description:

Offshoots of these rampant special languages constantly infiltrate into the general colloquial language, are propagated by the mass media, and gain literary recognition. In English all this is summed up in the term "slang" and in French in "argot", but the German language, strangely enough, has no word of its own yet.⁵⁵

If one were to disregard the fact that the Soviet mass media do not as a rule resort to jargon and slang expressions, Wandruszka's observation would also apply to the Russian language. Meanwhile there are lexicographers in the Soviet Union who dislike the term "slang" so much that they reject it altogether. All the words and phrases marked slang in English dictionaries have been distributed among the Russian categories *разговорное*, *просторечие*, *вульгаризм*, *жаргонизм*, *профессионализм*, *диалектизм*, *неологизм* and others in the *Большой русско-английский словарь*. The reason for this unusual lexicographical procedure is the alleged vagueness of the term "slang", which occurs only in English lexicology and lexicography, not in French, German, Russian or any other highly developed language.⁵⁶ These arguments are not only unsound but point to a certain one-sidedness on the part of the lexicographers who quote them. For some time now dictionaries of Danish, Italian, Yiddish and Swedish slang have been available. Suffice it to point out here that the absence of the term *сленг* in Soviet lexicology and lexicography does not mean that Russian is free of words and phrases which would deserve the designation. The existence of Russian slang is sufficiently documented with expressions such as: *Лукчовка* 'Moscow' (derived from Lenin's nickname *Лукич*); *Гуталин*, *Гуталинчик* 'Stalin'; *Лялёк* 'Breshnev'; *черножопые* 'black arses' (negroes, Caucasians, inhabitants of Central Asia); *звери* 'animals' and *чурки* 'blockheads'

⁵⁵ M. Wandruszka, *Die Mehrsprachigkeit des Menschen*, München, 1981, p. 27.

⁵⁶ See I. R. Gal'perin, gen. ed., *Bol'soj anglo-russkij slovar'*, vol. 1, Moskva, p. 15. In his article "O termine «sleng»," in: *VJa*, 1956, no. 6, pp. 107-114, Gal'perin laid the foundation for his anti-slang concept.

(Caucasians, people of Kazakhstan and Central Asia); кайф, кейф 'pleasure', 'drug-induced high'; Совдепия 'Soviet Union'; совдепия 'Soviet society', 'official' (delegates, public prosecutors, high party members); мент, лягавый, мусор 'corper'; стукач, барабанщик 'informer', 'gossip'; поддавать, кирять 'to drink, to booze'; бормотуха, краска 'cheap red wine'; сидеть в отказе 'to be refused an exit permit'; фирмач 'foreigner'; алкаш, алконавт 'alcoholic'; чувак 'type'; шмотки 'rags', трупопровод 'corpse disposal', 'drain for the dear departed', андроповка 'andropovka'.³⁷

While Soviet scientists do not seriously deny the existence of a Russian slang, they are nevertheless concerned to keep the term сленг (also spelled слэнг) out of Soviet lexicography and lexicology. The situation is rather a paradox in that the loan word *apro* has been accepted as a technical term in preference to the Russian *феня*, which is not treated as a technical term. And the clumsy expression *жаргонизированная лексика* is preferred to the concise and generally known loan word *сленг*. A possible explanation for this choice is that in each case the neutral, i.e. emotionally and expressively limper phrase has been consciously favoured over the strongly emotive term. But it is more likely that the term *сленг* "has not taken root in Soviet linguistics" because of ideological implications.³⁸ Even Zirmunskij had ignored the term when dealing with the Russian language.

To avoid the ideal word *сленг*, the language maintenance man Skvortsov went so far as to coin the phrase *жаргонизированная лексика*. Apart from being semantically unsatisfactory, this term, taken in its exact meaning, violates the norms of the Russian Academy grammar. The verb

³⁷ The body of a Soviet premier lies in state in the Moscow Trade Union Hall before being conducted to its final resting place in the Kremlin wall. The funeral processions of three Soviet premiers within a short time of each other have given rise to the marvellous pun *трупопровод*. The following words are involved: *провод* 'conduit', *труба* 'pipe', *трубопровод* 'plumbing', *проводы* 'leave-taking', and *труп* 'corpse, body'. It is difficult to provide a translation as brilliantly pithy as the resulting pun. 'Corpse disposal' is short but not comprehensive; 'drain for the dear departed' approaches the spirit but not the brevity.

After Andropov came to power (November 1982), a cheap vodka with no brand-name but only "Vodka" on an unattractive label appeared on the market. Andropov was already dead when this vodka was withdrawn in the spring of 1985. It is still known as "андроповка".

³⁸ *Obszce jazykoznanie* (1970), p. 478.

жаргонизировать - a formation from the noun жаргон with the addition of the suffix -изирова- expresses that something is being changed into jargon.⁹⁹ The use of this coinage is only justified where a word is turned into a jargon word (e.g. through some morphological means): выпивать becomes выпивом 'alcoholic drinks' or 'the imbibing of alcoholic drinks', закусывать becomes закусом 'snack' or 'the consumption of a snack'. The same cannot be said of рубать > рубом as рубать is already a jargon word. Original jargon words cannot be described as "jargonized" lexical units unless the semantics of the suffix -изирова- are ignored. Besides, to "jargonize" normal lexical units would be to act against the Soviet postulate that there is no longer a social basis for jargon.

Rejecting the term сленг and using such alternatives as молодежный сленг, молодежный жаргон, жаргонизированная лексика, and жаргонообразная лексика shows that Soviet linguists have so far been unable to give an adequate description of the "objective reality" of the language situation or to create the terminology required for dealing with current problems. Ideological coercion does not permit certain linguistic phenomena to be viewed objectively, for many of the slang phrases depict Soviet reality in quite an unfavourable light. Slang expressions are often suggestive puns in the form of a single word. The joke of the word членовоз 'car designed for the transport of functionaries' lies in the ambiguity of член, which means 'member' (penis) and also 'party member'. 'Member' (penis) is immediately associated with хуй 'prick', and this in turn with its obscene and very popular meaning 'arse hole'.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Russkaja grammatika*, vol. 1, Moskva, 1980, pars. 804, 805.

8. "Mat"



А по-шёл ты на хуй!

"Язык этот уже спокон веку отыскан
и принят во всей Руси."

(Ф.М. Достоевский 1821-1881)

It is now more than a hundred years ago that on a Sunday in St. Petersburg F. M. Dostoevskij became the witness of a brief conversation between six drunken factory workers. The content of their conversation being completely trite, the great writer would normally have shown no interest in publishing what he had accidentally overheard. But a closer examination of Dostoevskij's article reveals a most entertaining account of a conversation among factory workers, scarcely a page in length and apparently consisting of only one noun repeated in six different variations of intonation and connotation. The writer wisely refrained from mentioning the word itself as it might have offended the sensibilities of his readers, especially the ladies. His description of his fleeting encounter with the workers, which had so deeply impressed him, was not meant ironically:

Я вдруг убедился, что можно выразить все мысли, ощущения и даже целые глубокие рассуждения одним лишь названием этого существительного, до крайности к тому же немногосложного.⁶⁰

Dostoevskij had, of course, exaggerated when he claimed that the conversation in question had consisted of only one word: хуй. In actual fact it must have consisted of six repartees: (1) Хуйня! 'shit'; (2) Ни хуя! 'rubbish'; (3) to (1) Хуй 'arse hole'; (2) to (3) На хуй! 'damp down'; (4) referring to that meant by (1) Ни хуя себе! 'unbelievable'; (6) to (4) Какого хуя! 'What's that supposed to be?'. The fifth person present did not participate in the conversation.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Ф. М. Достоевский, *Дневник писателя. 1873*. "Маленькие картинки 2," in: *Полное собрание сочинений в тридцати томах*, vol. 21, Leningrad, 1980, pp. 108-109. In addition see "Учителю," in: *ibid.*, pp. 113-117.

⁶¹ This translation merely conveys the general sense of the conversation.

What Dostoevskij referred to as a popular language throughout the whole of Russia today carries the name of "mat" (мат). It is pointless consulting Soviet dictionaries for a satisfactory explanation of the word. In one of the older editions of Ožegov's dictionary this definition is given: "Неприлично-гнусная брань с упоминанием слова мать."⁶² This definition covers only such phrases as: Еб твою мать! 'bloody shit', 'devil take it', 'damn', 'who the hell knows', etc.; Еби твою мать! 'blast', 'I'll be damned', 'what the bloody hell' and others; Ебёна мать! 'damnation', 'for Christ's sake', and Убирайся к ебене матери! 'bugger off'. In more recent editions of the same dictionary мат is defined as неприличная брань ('foul abuse').⁶³ This definition includes swear words such as: жополиз 'arse lick-er', жопа с ушами 'arse with ears', 'морон', пизда 'cunt', говно 'shit' and many others. The large Academy dictionary defines "mat" as "матерная брань; сквернословие"⁶⁴ ('mother's abuse, foul language'). The word is not listed at all in Dal's dictionary. Instead we find there an expression which is still known today: матерщина - пахабство, мерзкая брань, and the verbs матюгать(ся), сквернословить, ругаться; бранить(ся) по матерну as well as other expressions from this word family.⁶⁵

The last two definitions of "mat", the old pre-revolutionary one given by Dal' and the new academic one, come closest to today's meaning of "mat". "Mat" is the totality of all the figurative uses of the words ебать 'fuck' (futuere), пизда 'cunt' (vagina) and хуй 'prick' (penis). "Mat" also includes the non-sexual meanings of sexual phrases derived from еть (ети) 'fuck', ебать, пизда and хуй such as съебать 'to beat it', 'to clear out', отъебаться 'to leave alone', объебать 'to play a dirty trick', ёбнутый 'blockhead', ебальник 'mug', пиздить, дать пизды, дать пиздюлей 'to beat up', пиздануть 'to give a blow', пиздеть 'to talk rot', пиздѣж 'claptrap', 'twaddle', пиздец 'great', 'it's a dead loss', пиздецовый 'fantastic', хуёвый 'lousy', 'stinking', до хуя 'any amount', мне это по хуй

⁶² S. I. Ožegov, *Slovar' russkogo jazyka*, 4th ed., Moskva, 1960, p. 333.

⁶³ Ožegov (1972), p. 313 and Ožegov (1981), p. 302.

⁶⁴ *SSRLJa*, vol. 6, 1957, col. 689 (4. Mat). Only in this dictionary has the word "mat" not been categorized for style. In all other dictionaries where it is listed (O, M) it has been placed in the category of prostorečie. This is another example of the random distribution of categories, for "mat" is a common term which refers to a particular variety of Russian and is stylistically neutral.

⁶⁵ See the heading "Mat" in: Dal' (1912-1914), vol. 2, 1914, cols. 802-803.

'I couldn't care less', пошёл ты на хуй 'go fuck yourself', я на него хуй положил or забил 'I don't give a damn about him' and many more.⁶⁶ Expressions containing the word мать, from which this variety derives its euphemistic name, are rare. Like abuses and swear words they make up only a small part of this variety. The sexual references of "mat" expressions are on the whole merely formal. They are arrived at through the signifier, i.e. the outer form. Certain euphemistic variations of "mat" phrases even lack the direct formal association, for example ёлки зелёные, ёлки-палки and едри твою мать instead of ёб твою мать, к едрене фене instead of к ебене матери, and муйня, фуйня instead of хуйня. The similarity of sound structures or merely the likeness of two sounds are sufficient to reestablish the association.

Apart from "mat" expressions with fixed meanings (e.g. спиздить 'to pinch', объебать 'to screw' [in the sense of 'to trick'], на хуй 'what for') there are other expressions whose meanings vary only according to the situation in which they are spoken, such as the homonyms пиздец 'great' and пиздец 'it's a dead loss' or the synonyms захуячить and захуярить, which have a wealth of different meanings (cf. chap. D, section 2b).

"Mat" expressions are colloquially referred to as матерные слова or матюги. I suggest that parallel to argotisms, jargonisms and slangisms the term матизмы ("matisms") be introduced for "mat" expressions. Scatological

⁶⁶ The extremely popular "mat" expression пошёл ты на хуй! - whose euphemistic counterpart in indirect speech is я его послал подальше has even been set to music (see musical notes at the beginning of this chapter). This tune is known to all Soviet musicians and is played when, for example, a band is tired of playing the musical requests of an audience.

In the poem Лука Мудишев our words are used almost exclusively in their direct meaning. In the edition which I have at my disposal ([I. Barkov], *Luka Mudišev*, 2nd ed., Москва, 1969 [edited by the Flegon Press, London]), there is one exception. The passage reads: "Судьбою не балуем,/ И про него сказал бы я:/ Судьба снабдила его хуем,/ Не дав в придачу ни хуя." (The reference is to the hero Luka Mudišev, whom Nature has equipped with a male organ of immense size and strength.) Ivan Barkov (ca. 1732-1768) was a translator of Greek classics and a creator of obscene verses. These verses circulated in Russia only in copies, as they still do in the Soviet Union. *Luka Mudišev* and an obscene parody of Griboedov's *Gore of uma* have been falsely attributed to him (Cf. W. H. Hopkins, *The Development of "Pornographic" Literature in Eighteenth- and in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia*. Dissertation. Ann Arbor, Mich., London, 1977.) His name is now largely forgotten, a fate which he does not deserve.

expressions - no matter whether their meanings are scatological or not - do not belong to "mat".⁶⁷ (It is interesting to note that matisms are best rendered in German with scatological and in English and French with sexual phrases.)

⁶⁷ Cf. F. Dreizin, T. Priestly, "A Systematic Approach to Russian Obscene Language," in: *Russian Linguistics*, vol. 6, 1982, pp. 233-249. These researchers count such obscene expressions as говно 'shit', говноед 'shiteater', бздеть 'to fart softly' and пердеть 'to give a loud fart' among "mat". Even блядь 'prostitute', which next to its nominating function is also a swear word, interjection or merely filler in феня, is regarded as belonging to "mat". This attitude takes no account of the usage of the word "mat" and is therefore unacceptable. I would like to mention here the interesting study by B. A. Uspenskij, "Mifologičeskij aspekt russkoj èkspressivnoj frazeologii." (Stat'ja pervaja), *Studia Slavica Hungarica*, XXIX, 1983, pp. 33-69, in which the etymological and mythological aspects of "mat" are represented in a detailed and highly original way.

C. TABOO VARIETIES OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

I. Summary of Linguistic Taboo Varieties

It is a fact that all research on argots and jargons were suspended under Stalin after the mid-thirties. This measure was apparently taken to preserve the purity of the Russian language, but in actual fact it was done for reasons of language policy (ideology). Social dialects have been treated as taboo varieties ever since, unless they are extinct or of a harmless variety. This delicate subject is only rarely touched upon, and, if so, under cover of such labels as youth slang (youth jargon), prostorečie, spelling, etymology or speech culture.¹

There is hardly any doubt that some language varieties, such as those of school boys, students, drug addicts and criminals, exist in most European countries, while others are confined to particular social systems or countries. The jargon of stock brokers is probably only found in capitalist countries, and that of baseball players and their fans would mainly be an American variety.

Does the Russian language of today contain undesirable linguistic varieties? To answer this question it might be useful to consult a scheme of social language varieties prepared by V. P. Timofeev in the Soviet Union. Under the heading *антисоциальные неизолированные сообщества* ('anti-social, non-isolated communities') he subsumes nine different *коллективы* ('collectives'): *воры* 'thieves', *картёжники* 'card players', *нищие* 'beggars', *спекулянты* 'speculators', *валютчики* 'currency black-marketeers', *мошенники* 'tricksters', *хулиганы* 'rowdies', *халтурщики* 'illegal labourers' or 'persons

¹ It should be kept in mind here that even in the West hardly anybody takes an interest in these linguistic varieties. Such research is normally undertaken by some outsiders in linguistics (lexicography). For the German-speaking areas some older names are F. Ch. B. Avé-Lallement, F. Kluge and L. Günther, and more recently there are S. A. Wolf (thieves' cant), H. Küpper (colloquial language), E. Bornemann (sexual colloquial language) and P. Wehle (thieves' cant in Vienna). For slang and cant research in England E. Partridge's name is well-known. Most of the Russian and Soviet researchers of jargon and argot have been authorities in the fields of linguistics and literature. This shows how seriously the research of social linguistic varieties was once taken in the Soviet Union.

with side incomes', and *сектанты* 'members of sects'. The *преступные изолированные сообщества* ('criminal isolated societies') represent a second group, which includes the *сообщества обычного режима* ('societies [prisoners] of the normal penal system'), *наркоманы* 'drug addicts' and *рецидивисты* 'those who relapse into crime'; all these are applicable to both sexes.²

Timofeev's division of Russian jargons into two groups is unsatisfactory. Currency black-marketeers, speculators and rowdies are not merely anti-social groups; their conduct is directed against society and punishable under the criminal law of the various Soviet republics. Penalties can include incarceration (cf. arts. 88, 154, 206 *UK RSFSR*), i.e. isolation from society. According to Soviet law and official norms these people are considered criminals as soon as their business transactions exceed certain sums or numbers of articles or generally offend against accepted standards of behaviour.

There is, for instance, a category of speculators who specialize in buying clothes, shoes and other articles of daily use from foreigners and also negotiate minor currency transactions. Colloquially as well as officially, these people are called *фарцовщики*. Besides them there are the *антиквары*, *антикварщики* 'antique dealers', *иконщики* 'icon dealers', *ювелиры* 'jewellers', *книжники* 'book dealers' and *пластиночники* 'record dealers'. Goods in short supply become objects of speculation and offer ample opportunity for illegal deals.³ Speculators and negotiators involved in larger deals are called *деловые*. Their language is a mixture of colloquial language, slang and jargon with only minor variations between groups. Any differences are usually of an individual nature (idelect).

In his unfinished *Словарь русской ненормативной лексики* the late K. Koscinskij intends to allot to the *фарцовщики* their own argot.⁴ This requires an explanation. As a rule the *фарцовщики* do their particular jobs for a maximum of two years. During this period they keep in close touch with speculators and currency smugglers, who buy up their goods and foreign exchange. If their hard work is successful they start blackmarketeer-

² V. P. Timofeev, "Sociolingvističeskie faktory v razvitii sovremen-nogo russkogo jazyka," in: *Očerki po sociolingvistike*, Sadrinsk, 1971, pp. 14-16.

³ Art. 154, *UK RSFSR* offers the following definition for *спекуляция*: "скупка и перепродажа товаров или иных предметов с целью наживы".

⁴ See K. Koscinskij, "Slovar' russskoj nenormativnoj leksiki (kratkij prospekt)," in: *Russian Linguistics*, vol. 5, 1980, p. 142.

ing with goods and foreign exchange on a larger scale. This improves their social position. But if they are unsuccessful during this time they retire from their work as *фарцовщики* and try to obtain regular jobs. Most blackmarketeers start their careers as *фарцовщики*, and even after achieving professional success they do not radically change their language.⁵

It is incorrect to attribute one and the same jargon to all *халтурщики* 'Illegal labourers' because the activities which earn them their side incomes are too varied: musicians, drivers, locksmiths, technical draughtsmen, roofers, decorators, garage builders etc. Members of these groups will, with varying frequency, resort to the jargons of their specialization, no matter whether they have a side income or not. The few phrases related to side-earnings either belong wholly to the jargons of the corresponding professional groups or they are common knowledge and part of slang or the colloquial language.⁶

Nor does a specific jargon of the so-called *хулиганы* ('hooligans') exist. Hooliganism consists in "conduct which constitutes a serious breach of public norms and an obvious contempt of society".⁷ This is the official legal wording, which is also used in the definitions of the normative dictionaries of the Russian language. There are so many ways of turning into a *хулиган* that it is impossible to tell in every case in what respect a *хулиган* is different from a law-abiding Soviet citizen. An otherwise respectable Soviet citizen can become a *хулиган* when intoxicated or sometimes even when sober. It would be a most unusual situation if some comparatively unspecified conduct could cause a separate jargon to develop. We should of course note that while there is uncertainty regarding a *хулиган*'s characteristics, this does not mean that in a concrete case Soviet citizens cannot spot a *хулиган* with considerable certainty.

⁵ The etymology of *фарцовщик* is described in L. I. Skvorcov, "Otkuda slovo farcovka?" in: *Voprosy kul'tury reči*, 5th instalment, 1964, pp. 156-160.

⁶ The definition of *халтура* as offered in Soviet dictionaries, *побочный легкий заработок сверх основного* (O 1981) ("additional light earnings in addition to regular work"), is no longer accurate. The epithet "light" is unjustified, as working conditions can be tough and the money not easily earned. *Халтура* refers to any side income earned during or after regular working hours or on weekends. The etymology of the word has been traced by L. Ja. Borovoj, *Put' slova. Očerki i razyskanija*, Moskva, 1974, pp. 227-230.

⁷ Art. 206 *UK RSFSR*.

Having had no access to beggars or sectarians in the Soviet Union, I am in no position to say whether these people speak their own brands of jargon or not. It appears that Koscinskij has compiled a special vocabulary for sectarians.⁸

As regards "isolated criminal communities", drug addicts are not isolated from their societies. Most of them are completely free. Timofeev is right only in his observation that the inmates of labour corrective institutions - the government expression for labour camps (officially: "colonies") and jails - do take drugs and that addicts do speak their own jargon. His suggestion that relapsed criminals and "prisoner groups serving common sentences" speak a separate jargon has no basis in fact. A thief or a currency black-marketeer serving his second or third term would naturally have acquired a fluent command of camp jargon. Similarly a murderer with a longer sentence would become fluent in camp jargon already during his incarceration and certainly by the end of it without necessarily having to relapse. The choice of the phrase *обычный режим* already suggests that Timofeev is not familiar with the details of the Soviet penal system. There are four degrees of severity of penalty: *общий режим* ('ordinary conditions'), *усиленный* ('intensified') режим, *строгий* ('strict') режим, and *особый* ('special') режим. In camp jargon these are simply referred to as *общак*, *усилок*, *строгач* and *особняк*. The fancy expression *обычный режим* does not appear anywhere - not in the legal literature, the official language or the colloquial language.

Timofeev's concept is in complete harmony with the prevailing doctrine that jargons are the products of anti-social groups and collectives. But this is a crude oversimplification and a falsification of the true state of affairs. Jargons are also spoken by communities and collectives which enjoy the support of the Party and the Soviet society as a whole. There is, for example, the Soviet military: the air force, the navy and the army with their various types of weapons. There is also the Committee of State Security (KGB) and the militia with the criminal police attached to it. Everybody working there speaks jargon.⁹ Judging by the data supplied by

⁸ See Koscinskij (1980), p. 141.

⁹ Girke and Jachnow (1974), p. 78, note, are extremely critical of Timofeev's "system of social differentiation and integration of the Russian language". They write: "By the way, Soviet sociolinguists have themselves very distinct and subjective prestige ideas regarding speakers of group languages. For example, in his system of linguistic

Soviet citizens who for diverse reasons have access to these groups of people, one thing seems certain: members of the KGB, the militia and criminal police are familiar with *феня* and are generally active speakers of it. This is indirectly corroborated by a passage in the *Памятка* ('comment') to a dictionary of thieves' cant which says:

Следует помнить, что употребление жаргона преступников, без особой на то необходимости, засоряет русский язык. Не так важно уметь самому говорить на жаргоне, как важно хорошо понимать разговор, который ведут между собой с его помощью преступники.¹⁰

Феня obviously serves not only criminals as a means of communication. Even KGB members and the militia are actively creative in it. For example, members of the KGB have coined the nickname *Солженицкер* for the Nobel laureate *Солженицын* to suggest that he is of Jewish descent. Certain acronyms are in common use with the militia, such as *бомж* or *бомжик* (без определенного местожительства) 'without a fixed residence', 'non-resident') and *боз* (без определенных занятий 'without regular occupation', 'somebody without regular work'), including the derivations *бозик* and *бозище*. Camp administrators use the abbreviation *сутодача* 'daily ra-

varieties of modern Russian Timofeev labels sectarians, casual labourers and drug addicts (to whom he attributes specific argots) as "anti-social, non-isolated" or "criminal isolated groups" without investigating their socio-psychological existential motivations or giving a sociological justification for this labelling." To my mind the term "prestige ideas" as here employed is unjustified. These are simply undesirable varieties of Russian which the authorities have failed to control. The so-called "socio-psychological existential motivation" is of secondary importance. Of primary importance is the question whether the jargons listed by Timofeev actually exist. The question can only be answered empirically. With regard to some of Timofeev's jargons (argots) the answer has to be in the negative. There is no need to defend the labels used, as they are standard in Soviet jurisprudence and sociology. It would be unfair to expect a Soviet sociolinguist to use labels which are current in the West. All that can be expected is a correct usage of Soviet terms (we have already drawn attention to the incorrect use of concepts such as "anti-social", "isolated" etc.). It is also obvious that Girke and Jachnow did not correctly understand the expressions *халтурщик* and *наркоман*. The criticism these two German linguists raise is partly due to faulty premisses.

¹⁰ *Slovar' vorovskogo žargona (925 words) (posobie dlja operativnykh i sledstvennykh rabotnikov milicii)*, Kiev, 1964, in: V. Calidze, *Ugolovnaja Rossija*, N'ju Jork, 1977, p. 347. The subject here discussed is not new. Koporiskij (1927), p. 9, tackled it directly and supplied the information that thieves' cant is not only spoken among colleagues but also with the family at home.

tion' instead of *суточная дача*. Карманники 'pick-pockets', домушники 'burglars', медвежатники 'safe-crackers', 'robbers' and other specialists speak their own brand of *феня* which includes their particular technical terms.

Although *феня* and the camp or jail jargon are similar in nature, the two varieties are not identical. The camp and jail jargon develops and flourishes in prison. Discharged convicts spread it to the outside world, where it becomes accessible to a wider circle of people, mainly by way of oral transmission rather than publications. The existence of *феня* is independent of camps and prisons but it is spoken there, too, by the professional criminals. In the labour camps there are far fewer professional criminals than other convicts; still the influence of *феня* on camp and jail jargon is considerable.¹¹

Mat and every expression referring to the genital and anal zones or to the sex life of Soviet citizens are completely taboo in the Soviet Union. Even during the sociological period of linguistics this taboo was not lifted. It also restricted the lexical material selected for official dictionaries of argot.¹²

1. Reasons for the Taboo

While one can outline the reasons for the taboo of certain language varieties in the Soviet Union, it is unnecessary to go into details or compile complete lists of the taboo varieties. The jargons, *феня* and slang contain lexical units which refer to negative phenomena in Soviet society, or rather the *новая историческая общность* ('the new historical community').

¹¹ Of fairly recent date are the dictionaries by M. Galler and H. E. Marquess, *Soviet Prison Camp Speech. A Survivor's Glossary*. Supplemented by terms from the Works of A. I. Solzhenitsyn, Madison, Wisc., 1972; M. Galler, *Soviet Prison Camp Speech. A Survivor's Glossary. Supplement*, Hayward, Cal., 1977; V. V. Carpovich, *Solzhenitsyn's Peculiar Vocabulary. Russian-English Glossary. Trudnye slova u Solzhenitsyna. Russko-anglijskij tolkovyj slovar'*, New York, 1976.

¹² Even a dissertation written by a lady in Moscow in the early seventies, which was never published because the topic was taboo, does not indicate any difference in the puristic attitude of Soviet authorities regarding this vocabulary. There are only a few references to this vocabulary to be found in the specialized literature. Polivanov is the only one to mention some expressions. See his article "Stuk po blatu" in: Polivanov (1931), pp. 155, 159-160.

They more or less drastically contradict the official version of reality as presented by the mass media. At the same time they offer insights into the life styles, attitudes and values of certain groups, communities or large sections of the population. They allow, so to speak, a glimpse behind the curtains of the "new historical community". Moreover, the loan words contained in jargons and slang are an indication of the outside influences to which Soviet citizens are exposed. They, much more than the standard language, reflect the influences from other countries in the spheres of culture, economy, technology or merely fashion. For in most speech situations the use of such loan words can neither be monitored nor prohibited by official institutions.

Another important reason for the taboo on jargons is the fact that in the Soviet Union, a country with a highly developed socialist structure, jargons are either specific for that country or have specifically Soviet characteristics. For instance, the jargon of speculators and black-marketeters came into existence only in the early sixties, after the country had opened its frontiers to Western tourists. It had no predecessors in pre-revolutionary Russia. Its existence disproves the theory that socialism creates the preconditions for the birth of a common language or a language for the entire population. Even the socialist system of society and economy can be responsible for the creation of new language varieties. This exceedingly interesting turn of events had not been anticipated or taken into account by Soviet linguists.

Linguists responsible for language maintenance show great concern about the so-called purity of the Russian language. They obviously have little confidence in the capacity for self-purification of Russian or, to put it differently, in the Soviet citizens' ambition to keep their language pure. Efforts in that direction have had little success so far. This was predicted sixty years ago:

Пуризм бессилен в своей наступательности и наступателен вследствие своего бессилия. Это бессилие лишает его и трагичности: чаще всего, даже во внешней мощи насилия, пуризм просто жалок. Он ведет законную борьбу во имя законных целей, но в громадном большинстве случаев он ведет ее дурно: грубо, иногда насильственно и неблагородно, демагогично и, прежде всего, невежественно.¹³

¹³ A. G. Gornfel'd, *Novye slovečki i starye slova*, Peterburg, 1922, p. 8.

One thing is certain: expressions which are rejected by the people have no hope of becoming part of the Russian vocabulary. The argots of hawkers and artisans clearly demonstrate that linguistic varieties die out once the preconditions for their existence disappear.

Not taking into account the words and phrases directly opposing the ideology or ideal of socialist or communist societies, there are lexical units which on the face of it are free from ideology. These are colloquialisms relating to matters of sex, faeces, and anal functions, or belonging to "mat".

A. S. Puškin's and N. A. Nekrasov's works will help to illustrate the situation. It is a well-known fact that Puškin was an admirer of the fair sex and on occasion not averse to using an apt expression which he - much to the displeasure of tsarist and Soviet censors - sometimes also put down in writing. Official prudishness in the Soviet Union still does not permit the uncensored publication of Puškin's complete works. Some "indecent" poems written by the greatest of Russian poets are omitted altogether, and some verses and letters have been reproduced with gaps in different places; to fill them appropriately, the reader has to resort to his imagination. The task is made easier in the latest Nekrasov edition, where the gaps are filled with as many dashes as the omitted words have letters. For example, the word forms *блядей*, *ебле*, *хрен*, *ёб*, *отсосал*, *еби* and *пёрнет* and the phrase *вынимаешь хрен*¹⁴ are eliminated in this edition.

It is impossible to tell with any certainty what causes the hostile attitude of Soviet censors to obscene words. Is it a public testimony to a sense of shame? Is the view into Russian and Soviet bedrooms to be blocked and the sex life of the Soviet citizens to be kept as much as possible in the dark? Is the ideal Soviet person supposed to use only medical expressions for certain physical functions and parts of the body? Is it the crass contradiction between theory and practice in the use of obscene words? Or is it the opinion that the Russian language reflects too much cynicism towards sexual matters? Or, indeed, are these popular expressions considered bourgeois left-overs, as M. Gorkij said of *мат*?¹⁵ Is

¹⁴ See N. A. Nekrasov's poems "Pesn' Vasen'ke" and "Poslanie k Longinovu" in: *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij i pisem v pjadnadcati tomach*, vol. 1, Leningrad, 1981, pp. 426-430. (Ебля means 'fucking', хрен 'prick', отсосать 'fellate', пёрнуть 'to fart'.)

¹⁵ See the article "Beseda," in: *O literature. Literaturno-kritičeskie stat'i*, Moskva, 1953, p. 747.

the taboo on colloquial sex talk connected with the fact that human sexuality is not being researched in the Soviet Union and the sexual instruction of young people is practically non-existent? Possibly the sum of all these reasons makes Soviet censors prevent the publication of obscene words even in scientific treatises. The old pre-revolutionary term *нецензурные слова* ('uncensored words') still persists. This uncompromising attitude can at any rate not be due to religious considerations.

2. Distribution

No official statistics or data are available on the number of speakers of existing taboo varieties, and even if they were they would have to be treated with some reserve. But to show that taboo varieties do not lead a phantom existence one need only get an approximate idea of their distribution.

Mat is the most common variety in the Russian language. Practically everybody in the Soviet Union understands it. It is spoken in all strata of society, by all age groups and equally by men and women.¹⁶ It must be mentioned here that although "mat" is not restricted to certain groups its incidence in some groups or communities is higher than in others. The criminals deserve special mention in this context. Their use of "mat" is obscene and cynical in the extreme. It is equally popular among boozers, which fact had been pointed out by Dostoevskij.¹⁷ Even the intelligentsia, thinking it the "stylish" thing to do, have for several years now been making conscious use of this language variety. *Матерщинники* ('mat speakers') actually existed among the intelligentsia long ago; but their numbers

¹⁶ M. Gor'kij, *ibid.*, p. 746, quotes in his article "Beseda" from a village school master's letter: "Наше село может славиться "матом". Женщины между собой употребляют массу грязных слов, которые можно услышать только во время самых диких драк. Беря пример с родителей, загрязнили речь "матом" шести-семилетние дети." - The following joke will illustrate the multilingualism of Soviet citizens: Каждый советский человек владеет тремя языками: родным, русским и матом. This is really a joke for linguists and translators. I was told it repeatedly during the many years I worked as an interpreter. It was always preceded by the question of how many languages I knew.

¹⁷ F. M. Dostoevskij, *Dnevnik pisatelja. 1873*. "Malen'kie kartinki 2," in: *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v tridcati tomach*, vol. 21, Leningrad, 1980, p. 108.

have now merely increased. This is not a recent development. It set in after the October Revolution, when the old intelligentsia gave way to the new Soviet one, whose origins were increasingly found among farmers and workers. But today's intelligentsia no longer come from the working classes because their parents were already members of the new intelligentsia. However, linguistic habits persist. For a short while after the Revolution a mixture of jargonisms, slang and "mat" was allowed as "proletarian language" but later looked down upon. Meanwhile the quality of the mixture has changed, but the mixture has survived and spread. It is not, like jargon, restricted to any particular groups, but is freely spoken everywhere.

The prisoners' jargon (jail and camp jargon) is much less widely distributed than "mat". But its influence on the colloquial language must not be underestimated. A few data may illustrate the possible extent of this influence. In France there are 56 prisoners per 100,000 population, in Italy 64, in the Federal Republic of Germany 69, in Great Britain approximately 82, in Austria 120.¹⁸ A. Zinoviev, philosopher, logician, sociologist and brilliant connoisseur of Soviet society, estimates the figure of Soviet people in detention to be between 4 and 5 million.¹⁹ If we take the lower estimate and relate it to the total population of 267 million (in 1981), we arrive at a figure of 1498 prisoners per 100,000 population. This means that every 67th Soviet citizen is in detention. Compared with Austria, which tops Western Europe, the number of prisoners in the USSR is pro rata twelve times as much, and it is about twenty-two times as much as in the Federal Republic of Germany. This is a surprising but not unrealistic figure which does not even take into account the fluctuations among detainees. If to this figure are added all those persons who are familiar with prisoners' jargon due to their professional or private contacts, we arrive at an impressively broad and solid base for the prisoners' jargon.²⁰

¹⁸ See the article "Hartes Lager," in: *Der Spiegel*, no. 13, 29 March 1982, p. 158.

¹⁹ A. Zinov'ev, *Kommunizm kak real'nost'*, Lausanne, 1981, p. 164. The present number of detainees is considerably smaller than under Stalin. In those days the number of people in detention was never less than 15 million.

²⁰ One should assess the number of Russians among the detainees. At the same time account must be taken of the fact that in the colonies and prisons of the RSFSR, where most of these institutions are situated, the lingua franca is Russian.

Ex-detainees keep stressing the influence of блатная феня on the language of prisoners and jail personnel. V. Salamov, a Soviet writer who spent a total of 25 years in prison, wrote the following:

Без этих блатных словечек остался ни один человек мужского или женского пола, заключенный или вольный, – побывавший на Колыме. Слова эти – отравка, яд, влезавший в душу человека, и именно с овладения блатным диалектом и начинается сближение фраера с блатным миром.²¹

One reason for the growing distribution of this social variety during the fifties was the release of a great number of prisoners after Stalin's death, among them many criminals. The criminals, political prisoners and other detainees passed on jail jargon and thieves' cant to sections of the population with little or no knowledge of these jargons. This process of mediation continues to this day, although on a reduced scale since the number of prisoners has gone down by two thirds.

Estimates are available on the number of detainees, not, however, on the number of drug addicts.²² But there are indirect indications that drug-induced offences have gone up. This assumption is confirmed by the new penal code of the RSFSR dating from the year 1979. It contains six clauses – the old one had only three – dealing with various forms of drug-connected crime. The inclusion of new clauses in the penal code of the RSFSR along with increase in the severity of penalties for old offences is a sure sign of increased drug offences.²³ The drug addicts' jargon itself and certain expressions which have infiltrated from it into slang also speak for this assumption. On the basis of additional information gained in personal talk with drug addicts, and in view of the increasingly severe customs checks connected with drug crime detection, I have come to the conclusion that the drug problem is at least as acute in the Soviet Union as in the Federal Republic of Germany.

It can hardly be denied that there exists a connection between the numbers of speakers of a certain linguistic variety and its infiltration

²¹ V. Salamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1982, pp. 221-222.

²² Only in Azerbaijan are data available from a previous insider of the Soviet system. In 1950 there were 4,000, in 1961 already 12,000 and in 1970 22,000 drug addicts. See I. Zemcov, *Partija ili mafija? Razvorovannaja respublika*, Paris, 1976, pp. 42-43. In 1969 the population of Azerbaijan was 5 million. The figures supplied by Zemcov are not applicable to the whole of the Soviet Union.

²³ See arts. 224, 225 and 226 UK RSFSR of 1970 and the arts. 224, 224¹, 224², 225, 226¹ and 226² UK RSFSR of 1979.

into slang or the colloquial language. Exact data on this phenomenon can only be obtained through comprehensive surveys and investigations. The reciprocity of quantitative versus qualitative characteristics of a language variety, i.e. prestige versus popularity, should also be researched.

3. Usage

According to Soviet linguists a native speaker of the Russian literary language prefers the colloquial language to the standardized literary language provided three paralinguistic situational prerequisites are fulfilled: 1) the speech act is unprepared, 2) the speech act is free of constraints, and 3) the speaker is directly involved in the speech act. These factors determine the occurrence of colloquial language. In addition to these determinants there are other essential factors which make up the communication act. They have a bearing on the structure, not the choice of the colloquial language. These factors can be divided into interlocutors (their sex, age, relationship) and the speech situation (such as locality, presence of strangers, frequency of situation etc.).²⁴

What are the preconditions for one of the Russian taboo varieties to be spoken? Is it feasible to establish certain if/then relationships between situational factors and the use of taboo varieties? Before we answer these questions, it may help to give some concrete examples of the usage of these varieties. It is assumed here that familiarity with "mat", slang or any of the jargons is not necessarily coupled with a knowledge of the standardized literary language, colloquial language or *prostorečie*. It is further assumed that all Soviet citizens who know Russian also know "mat" and that a Russian speaker can be a speaker of slang and/or one or several jargons. In what situations are taboo varieties spoken?

Drug-addicted Russians speak their type of jargon in the following situations: when consuming drugs with their own kind, when talking about their own or other addicts' drug consumption and when making a deal with a pedlar. Drugs are normally taken in groups of two or more close ac-

²⁴ See E. A. Zemskaja, M. V. Kitajgorodskaja, E. N. Sirjaev. *Russkaja razgovornaja reč'*. *Obščie voprosy. Slovoobrazovanie. Sintaksis*, Moskva, 1981, pp. 13-19; cf. *Russkaja razgovornaja reč'* (1973), pp. 9-17.

quaintances. But quick contact can be made with a stranger if the "stuff" is urgently needed. In any of these cases the subject of discussion is predetermined and dictates the use of the language. There are no alternatives to the brevity, conciseness and emotional content of the drug addicts' jargon. Medical expressions do not serve the purpose. They are too sterile and complicated. The linguistic needs of drug addicts are much better catered for by expressions such as *машина*, *баян* 'pump' [syringe], *сидеть на игле* 'to hang by the needle', *ширево* 'stuff' [to be injected], *ширяться*, *шмыгаться*, *мазаться* 'to press' [injecting drugs], *колёса*, *калики* 'tablets', *закинуть*, *закинуться* 'to insert' [swallowing tablets], *план*, *дурь*, *масть* 'shit' [hashish], *трава* 'grass' [marijuana], *забить косяк*, *замацовать косяк* 'to make a joint' [to fill a *папироса* with a mixture of tobacco and hashish] and *Азия* 'Asian' and *Кавказ* 'Caucasian' [hashish from Central Asia or the Caucasus].

The jargon of professional cardsharper includes anything to do with playing cards, such as prepared or unprepared cards, cardsharper's tricks, suitable victims, premises etc. Cardsharper normally work with one or more partners. When in the presence of their victims-to-be they make sure not to use expressions which deviate from those commonly used among straight cardplayers, as otherwise they might arouse the suspicion of their trusting victims and thereby compromise themselves. Cardsharper require a higher degree of intimacy among themselves than drug addicts before they make use of their jargon, for cardsharper discuss their professional experiences with each other, i.e. how they cheated or intend to cheat at cards. A cardsharper will take care not to confide in acquaintances or friends whom he does not trust implicitly. After all, cardsharpering is a crime punishable under the law, and also carries other risks.²⁵

Few jargons come so close to being a terminology as the cardsharper's jargon. Practically all its words and expressions refer directly to the card game: *шпилить* 'to play', *игровой* 'player', *катран* 'place where card games are being organized', *фрайер* 'victim', *исполнить фрайера* 'to fleece a victim', *стирки* 'cards', *кованая* or *коцаная колода* 'marked pack of cards', *маяк* 'mark' [of cards], *сидеть на маяке* 'to signal card values by means of

²⁵ Professional cardplayers or those who earn a side income by playing cards are as a rule cardsharper. When discovered, they must be prepared not so much for legal prosecution as for the personal revenge of their victims, which can be considerably more unpleasant.

stealthy gestures with hand or fingers', *протяжка* 'draft' [shuffling cards in such a way that their sequence remains unchanged] and others.²⁶ Because of its technical vocabulary, the use of this jargon is very restricted.

The drug addicts' jargon can be used more generally as some of its terms refer to states of intoxication which can equally well apply to general states of health, e.g. *кайф* 'drug induced high' and 'pleasure'²⁷ or *торчать* 'to be high' [under the influence of drugs] and *торчать на ком-чём* 'to be keen on somebody/something'. For this very reason the two expressions mentioned have become absorbed into slang.

The musicians' jargon offers even more scope for conversations going far beyond its narrow field of specialization. It includes terms for money (*башли*, *филки* 'dough'), sums of money (*сольник* 'one rouble', *рэ мажор* 'two roubles', *ля мажор* 'three roubles' etc. ascending in the circle of fifths according to the number of sharp-signs for the various keys, *баклажан* '25-rouble note'), parts of the body (*бемоль* 'beak' [big nose], *шахна* 'cunt', *солоб* 'prick'), natural human activities (*берлять* 'to eat', *кирять* 'to booze', *кимарить* 'to sleep', *кочумать* 'to be silent', *сурлять* 'to piss', *вирзать* 'to shit', *кестить* 'to fornicate'), or such expressions as *тачило* 'car', *бодун* 'drinker', *кесть* 'whore', *форшлагн* 'don't swear', *без форшлагов* 'without mat' and *облажаться* 'to play badly' or 'to make a mess of something'.

These examples show that some jargons, apart from functioning as an emotive terminology (specialists' language), serve their speakers as a colloquial language. Jargons also function as group badges.²⁸ By speaking a particular jargon people demonstrate their solidarity with that particular group. Knowing *феня* is a precondition for gangsters to become full members of their community. If they display a virtuoso's command of the variety, they are treated with special respect. There are obvious parallels between the use of jargons and special terminologies. But the special terminologies have predominantly the nominating function. Technical terms

²⁶ In A. Allan and E. Sprung, *Korrigiertes Glück. Falschspiel in Praxis und Theorie*, Wien, 1954, pp. 143-148, there is a descriptive glossary of the expressions used most frequently by crooked gamblers.

²⁷ The word *кайф* is a new loan from Usbek. *Кейф* belongs to the literary language and can be heard in Moscow.

²⁸ See H. Bausinger, *Dialekte. Sprachbarrieren. Sondersprachen*. 2nd vol. for the TV series "German for Germans," enlarged ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1979, pp. 118-131.

are not concerned with daily life. They refer to one or several related technical subjects, and their function as a group badge is of secondary importance. It is noteworthy that specialists, when conversing with non-specialists, sometimes make a point of displaying their specialized linguistic knowledge. This constitutes an abuse of technical terminology in order to put on show the knowledge, intellectual abilities and general superiority of the speaker. In this regard jargon speakers are more considerate. When they realize that an interlocutor does not understand jargon, they do without it, provided, of course, they know some other variety of Russian. Generally speaking, jargons are pragmatic varieties which operate from the wit, playfulness and emotions rather, than the cold intellect of their speakers.

It appears that taboo jargons are centred on either objects or persons, both of which are closely interdependent. The persons involved can be colleagues by specialization (gangsters, speculators, cardsharps etc.), colleagues by profession (e.g. musicians), fellow sufferers (prisoners, drug addicts, soldiers etc.) or people with whom close and trusting relationships are entertained although they may not belong to the jargon-speaking circle. This trust does not develop automatically through bonds of family or friendship. A 20-year-old drug addict or *фарцовщик* takes care not to use jargon expressions in front of his parents. His parents would undoubtedly react unfavourably to such expressions. Towards fellow students he would practise the same restraint as with his parents.

Neither does a lack of constraints on the speech-act alone warrant the use of slang. Conversations among family, friends, acquaintances or even officials can be conducted in an unconstrained atmosphere but without the use of slang. Decisive is the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors. Prerequisites for the use of slang are special trust and shared attitudes. Like-minded persons require only a brief acquaintance or sometimes no more than a few minutes. It all depends on their mutual appraisal. If they get the impression that slang would be appreciated or that the other persons enjoy speaking slang, then there is nothing to stop this variety from being spoken. Persons hostile to slang could inhibit this development. If the interlocutors belong to the same age groups this may encourage their preference for slang. But the sexes of the persons involved in the conversation do not affect the use of jargon or slang unless words are used which refer to human sexual activities or the processes of

products of excretion and which are considered rude. Such rude words would be: *ебать, ебаться* 'to fuck', *трахнуть, трахаться* 'to screw', *срать* 'to shit', *ссать* 'to piddle', *бздеть* 'to give a soft fart', *пердеть* 'to give a loud fart', *говно* 'shit' and others including their derivatives. If the interlocutors belong to both sexes they have to be sufficiently intimate to allow these words to be used.

"Mat", too, is strongly sex-oriented. Both men and women refrain from resorting to this vigorous variety when in the company of the other sex. The precondition for the use of "mat" normally is that the potential "mat" speakers know each other. In the presence of strangers they try to do without "mat" unless they want to provoke or are in a state of great excitement. The same applies when a "mat" speaker knows that his interlocutor dislikes the variety. If male and female speakers know each other well they do not mind speaking "mat" in front of each other, provided, of course, nobody else present objects.

The frequency with which "mat" phrases are spoken varies from one individual to another. Some use them all the time without concrete justification, others resort to them in moments of anger or astonishment, and still others practically never utter them or, if so, very rarely. Unlike the jargons and technical terminologies, "mat" is not determined by subjects or groups of people.²⁹ It is a general linguistic variety which is easily integrated into any other Russian variety and almost universally applicable.

Intellectuals make considerably less use of "mat" than workers, and women refrain more than men. Intellectuals use "mat" with deliberation, workers rather more automatically and unconsciously. Some Soviet citizens have integrated "mat" into their speech to such an extent that they are unable to suppress it, no matter whether they are in the company of strangers or persons of the opposite sex. Even in situations unfavourable to "mat", where formalities count, restraint is not always practised.

Once a Turkmenian Soviet soldier was taken prisoner in Afghanistan. Questioned about his service in the Soviet army he replied by using two "mat" expressions without meaning to offend (his knowledge of Russian

²⁹ W. Porzig, *Das Wunder der Sprache*, 6th ed., München, 1975, pp. 218-219. Porzig's distinction between object-related terminology and person-related special languages can be at most defended on grounds of methodology. Earlier on Larin had rejected a division of language varieties according to these criteria.

was only rudimentary), but rather to characterize the tension between Russians and other nationalities. The interpreter, who knew only a little Russian, found himself in a dilemma. He requested the soldier to repeat what he had said. The soldier, smiling embarrassedly, repeated one of the "mat" expressions.³⁰ Had this same soldier been interviewed by Soviet television, he would never have dreamt of using such strong expressions.

In the final analysis it depends on the speaker's idiosyncrasies, his momentary psychological condition and his basic attitude to "mat", whether he will use "mat" or not, whatever the external situation. This means that the "mat" threshold varies with every "mat" speaker. Some have hardly any threshold at all. To them "mat" is the actual colloquial language. Other speakers' thresholds are so high that they are hardly ever crossed. Apart from individual "mat" thresholds one could determine the thresholds for single "mat" expressions, because "mat" speakers disagree on how indecent a certain expression is. It has thus been shown that there is no absolute if/then relationship between situational factors and the use of "mat". The maximum one could do is to establish an "if ... then probably" relationship. The same applies to slang.

Let us now revert to the three factors which supposedly determine the speech act and create colloquial language. The first two criteria, "unpreparedness" and "direct participation" of the interlocutors in the speech act, are valid for the use of colloquial language, but also jargons, slang and "mat". (The fact that these varieties can also be used in writing is not taken into account here. In the written form, such as a letter, the formulation might well be prepared and the "direct" interlocutor is absent.) If the "lack of constraints" on the speech act is the most decisive criterion for the use of colloquial language, this also holds true for slang, "mat" or the jargons. Soviet linguists claim that if the three aforementioned prerequisites are fulfilled, speakers of the literary language have to switch to the colloquial language; but why not to other varieties of Russian? It is incorrect to establish a theorem saying colloquial language is what speakers of the literary language resort to in an unconstrained atmosphere without adding the qualifying clause: "unless use is made of elements of slang, argot, 'mat' or one or several jargons". The

³⁰ The interview was broadcast in the "ZDF-Magazin" Television programme at the beginning of 1982.

theorem ignores the fact that everybody is "multilingual" within his own mother tongue. It presents a vulgar simplification of the linguistic reality.³¹

II. Volume of Vocabulary

The vocabularies of Russian taboo varieties vary in volume. They may comprise only a few words or a thousand and more. The size of a particular variety's vocabulary depends on three factors: the scope of the subject to be expressed, the objects, processes, conditions, and situations to be named and the need of the speakers for communication. Speculators in icons, for example, use the following jargonisms: доска 'icon', айка 'icon' < Е. 'icon', семнашка, восемнашка, девятнашка 'icon of the 17th, 18th or 19th century', новье 'icon of the 19th or 20th century', самодел 'forged icon artificially made to look old'. These make up seven to ten words relating to icons. Доска has been borrowed from the terminology of art experts and art historians, and новье and самодел can also be used with regard to other objects d'art or jewellery. Other varieties, such as the drug addicts' and the musicians' jargons, comprise 200-300 words. The specific vocabularies of speculators, blackmarketeers and фарцовщики are of a similar size. Феня takes a special place with an estimated 1,000 - 1,500 words and phrases, not counting archaisms, and has a considerable influence on other Russian varieties. The vocabulary of slang is still larger, containing up to several thousand words. But the lexical composition of "mat" is absolutely unique. It is derived from only four word-stems and their combinations with other words. A few dozen Matisms have fixed meanings and an indeterminate number have meanings which vary with the contexts in which they occur. All these varieties are not isolated from each other but rather pervade each other.

³¹ Cf. e.g. Wandruszka (1981), p. 24 ss.

1. Active and Passive Vocabulary

It is a well-known fact that a person's passive vocabulary far exceeds his active one. Similarly, in the case of jargons there is a numerical difference between passively known and actively used lexical material. It appears that the number of jargonisms which a speaker makes active use of is directly dependent on the total volume of the particular jargon. The more restricted a jargon vocabulary, the greater the likelihood of all its units being actively used by its speakers. Because of a jargon speaker's close involvement with the activities and interests which are central to a jargon, there tends to be only a slight difference between his active and passive vocabularies. The drug addicts' jargon, which is not very extensive, is a case in point.

As Dostoevskij assured us, *mat* has always been the common heritage of the Russian people, unlike some other widely known jargons whose application and comprehension are restricted. Nowadays "mat" is part of every Soviet citizen's passive and most citizens' active vocabulary. It is also remarkable that matisms do not become old or obsolete while the wear and tear on slang is comparatively high. Many slang expressions are actively used for only a couple of years, some survive for decades, others become part of the colloquial or even literary language.

2. Frequency

No special explanation is needed for the fact that the frequencies of "mat", slang and jargon expressions vary from one speaker to the next. A number of "mat" and slang expressions occur with such regularity that they should be counted among the basic vocabulary of the modern Russian language. Among these are the slang phrases *стучать* 'to denounce', *стучак* 'informer', and *мент* 'copper', as well as the obscene words *ебать* 'to fuck', *хуй* 'prick' and *пизда* 'cunt'. From among the "mat" expressions the following should definitely be included: *ёб твою мать!* 'damn it', 'to hell with it' and *пошёл ты на хуй!* 'go fuck yourself'. These and other phrases should be dealt with in modern language teaching and included in the frequency lists.

D. EXPANDING THE VOCABULARY

I. Borrowing

V. Kiparsky once aptly observed that the Russian language continues being thoroughly Slavonic despite the fact that since 1700 it has unscrupulously been borrowing words from foreign languages.¹ Different languages have influenced it to varying degrees. During and after the reign of Peter I the main linguistic influences came from Holland, Germany and France. The influence from England was comparatively negligible. The блатная музыка mainly contained words from Polish, German, "Rotwelsch", Yiddish, Romany and Turkish. Dutch and English made no contributions to this variety. But nowadays it is mainly English, that is to say American English, from which the Russian language receives new lexical material. In that respect Russian is no different from German or French.

1. Loan Words

Jargons and slang have in the recent past mainly borrowed loan words directly. Loan coinages, i.e. loan translations, loan adaptations and loan creations, are very rare in these varieties. This may be due to language economy. A handy and adept loan coinage requires a considerable mental effort.

a) English

The strong influence of the English language on Russian jargons and slang is documented by a large number of loans. This is explained by the fact that more and more Soviet school children and students study English. The "golden" West, which many of the younger generation wish to emulate, is embodied by the USA, and the USA is English speaking. No other Western country can compete with the USA in this respect, to say nothing of the socialist countries.

¹ V. Kiparsky, *Russische historische Grammatik*, vol. 3: *Entwicklung des Wortschatzes*, Heidelberg, 1975, p. 18.

The Russian jargons contain varying numbers of English loans. **Оеня** has none so far, for lack of the necessary foreign contacts. Besides, Soviet gangsters have little education and their knowledge of English is limited. The drug addicts' jargon contains practically no American English loans, which is surprising considering that the corresponding German and French jargons are strongly influenced by the American drug addicts' jargon. I could only register one word, **стойм** 'a powerful high' derived from American slang 'stoned' [to be high on drugs]. The situation regarding the Soviet drug addicts' jargon suggests that the Soviet drug market is largely self-sufficient.² Soviet addicts have a jargon tradition of their own.

The jargon of speculators and currency black-marketeters has many English loans. It began to evolve in the early sixties, after the country had opened its borders to Western tourists, most of them Americans. Some of these loans are: **баксы** 'dollars' < Am. slang 'bucks', **гринь** 'dollars' < green 'money', **шұзы** 'shoes', **блэк** 'negro', 'black man', **френч** 'Frenchman', **стэйтс** 'American' < 'States', **трузера** 'trousers', **клоуз** 'Western clothes' < 'clothes', **воч** 'watch' and **чеймч** 'change'.

Round about the same time or slightly earlier the English influence on the musicians' jargon set in: **джазмен** 'jazz player', and **сакс** 'saxophone' < Am. slang 'sax'. This is, however, not very noticeable in this variety.

Slang, too, has a number of English loans which are normally only used by English-speaking Soviet citizens. They are: **герла** 'girl', **гудовый** 'good', **гудовая герла** 'nice girl', **флэт** 'flat' and others. The word **диск** 'disc' [record] is likely to replace the Russian **пластинка** 'record'. Another competitor is the English loan **рекорд** 'record'. **Диск** has almost become a colloquial word. It is sometimes difficult to find the border line between Russian jargonisms and slang expressions. Loans from other languages have usually penetrated into the Russian jargons.

b) German

German words are no longer often borrowed by the Russian varieties. The word **бундес** means 'West German citizens'; capitalized it means 'Federal Republic of Germany'. **Шильдик** is the 'little label with technical data and

² As far as I know hashish is smuggled from Afghanistan, Iran and to a modest degree from Greece.

type descriptions attached to the electronic equipment of the entertainment industry'. These words occur mainly in the speculators' vocabulary but they are also used by hobbyists. *Щаб* 'German' is a slang word which may have been taken over from the Russian literary language. It is also found in Polish slang with the same meaning.

c) Yiddish

The Yiddish part of *феня* is still considerable. Russian slang, on the other hand, contains only a few Yiddish words, e.g. *дрек* 'shit', 'rubbish' [expressing an evaluation of people or objects], *шнобель* 'beak', 'aquiline nose' < *Schnobel* ['beak'] and *ноу* 'penis'.

d) Italian

Italian has never had much of an influence on the Russian language. Nevertheless, there are two loans which are mainly used by the *фарцовщики* and other people negotiating business with the Italians: *путана* 'prostitute' < Ital. *puttana* and the contemptuous *алёр* 'Italian' < *allora* 'so', 'well'.

e) French

Russian slang contains an equally modest number of phrases of French origin. These can be quite amusing: *такова сэ ля ви* 'such is life' < *c'est la vie* and *а пурквэ бы и не на?* 'why not, really?' < *pourquoi pas?*

f) Finnish

Finnish has had an especially strong influence on the Russian language in Leningrad, due to the many tourists who come flocking to the city at weekends. After repeated contacts with Fins, Soviet citizens would naturally know a smattering of Finnish. They are above all the *фарцовщики*, employees of *Intourist* and the personnel of the hotels for foreigners. The former will often be heard saying: *юкс* 'rouble' < *yksi* 'one', *пайта* 'shirt' < *paita* 'shirt', *равинтола* 'restaurant' < *ravintola* 'restaurant', *аутопойка* 'driver of a Finnish tourist bus' < *auto* 'car' + *poika* 'boy', *кайки* 'that's all', 'finished' < *kaikki* 'everything'. Soviet children use the term *пуркуми*

'chewing gum' < purukumi 'chewing gum' when begging chewing gums from Finnish tourists. The phrase Сейчас мы тебя оформим на вистойсту 'you'll get an order for 15 days' detention from us' < vlistolsta 'fifteen' serves KGB men in foreigners' hotels when intimidating undesirable Soviet guests.

g) Other Languages

There are a few Georgian loans in Russian slang, e.g. кацо 'Georgian' < kazo! 'good God', 'what on earth', ара 'Georgians' Pl. < ara 'no' or the hybrid form поцашвили 'penis' < Yiddish poz 'Penis' + ashvili, a frequent ending of Georgian names).³ Табош 'profit' < табыш 'profit' and the argot word намыс 'rogues' honour' < намыс 'honour' are of Tatar origin. The word тугрики 'money' < тугрик 'Tugrik' [currency unit in Mongolia] is of Mongolian origin and is now mostly used only by school children. Mention should also be made of фурка 'Western foreign currency' < fyrk 'coin', 'money'. This word originated from Swedish slang (spoken in Finland) and now belongs to the jargon of speculators in Leningrad.

2. Assimilation of Loan Words

The tendency towards complete assimilation of loan words is as pronounced in the Soviet social varieties as it is in the colloquial and literary languages. It affects word stresses and the phonetic, morphological and semantic assimilation. It also influences word formation in that new words are derived from loans.

a) Phonetic and Stress Changes

The phonetic peculiarities of other languages cannot always be accurately rendered with Russian phonemes and script. Some changes in the pronunciation of foreign loans are usually unavoidable even if the speakers pronouncing the loan words are familiar with the donor language. English-speaking Russians generally say [ин] in дринкануть 'to drink up', [и°] in

³ "Shvili" means 'son' in Georgian. The vowel -a- serves to join the two words together.

герла 'girl' and [с] in клоуз 'clothes'. The spelling alternatives to шүзня 'shoes' < шүзы or шузы are шезня and шызня, which indicates that the [ш] is followed by a sound resembling [ы] and not too different from [y]. One often hears а[ф]топойка 'driver' instead of а[y]топойка. According to a long established pattern, 'auto' has been transformed into авто-. The Russian language has virtually no words ending in -тс.⁴ But стэйтс 'American' [man] is an exception. The derivations стэйтсовка 'American woman' and стэйтсовский 'American' [adj.] are atypical Russian words. Soviet citizens with no knowledge of English prefer the spelling стэйцовка, стэйцовский or even стецово because -эйц or -ейц is un-Russian, the suffix -ец, however, familiar. This adaptation is due to the consonant combination тс being usually pronounced as [ц] in the colloquial language; only careful articulation brings out the [тс].

These examples demonstrate that the phonemes of a foreign language are not easily identifiable unless the listeners have particular knowledge of that language. The resulting lack of confidence doubtless furthers the formation of folk etymologies. In the early seventies the expression нонсовый 'pop-artу' became popular in the Soviet Union. A popular etymological alternative to нонсовый was нунсовый (derived from нун 'navel'). This type of subsequent explanation of etymologically untransparent words is, however, rare in slang.

As loan words are being assimilated into the receiving language, their stress often shifts. In the Finnish language, for example, the first syllable normally carries the stress. Regardless of this, the stresses on the words равинтола 'restaurant' and пурукуми 'chewing gum' have shifted to the third syllables.

b) Morphological and Semantic Changes

Loan words are generally integrated morphemically. The paradigms and grammatical, lexical and semantic categories of loan words are usually the same in the receiving language as they were in the donor language. This is referred to as morphological assimilation.⁵ Potentially all borrowed verbs

⁴ See *Obratnyj slovar' russkogo jazyka*, Moskva, 1974.

⁵ Cf. *Lexikologie. (Die russische Sprache der Gegenwart. Vol. 4)*, Leipzig, 1978, pp. 141-142.

and nouns can be inflected. To my knowledge there are no undeclinable nouns ending in *e*, *-и*, *-о* and *-у*. But many forms are not used because speakers prefer simple sentence patterns. The word *даун* is preferably used in combinations with *в*: *я в дауне* 'I am down'. Morphological and semantic changes of loan words are particularly noticeable in the jargons of the *фарцовщики* and other speculators as well as in slang.

aa) Change of number

A change of number is rare in loan words. In Engl. 'states' > *стэйтс* 'American', pl. *стэйтс*, the number has changed from plural to singular. An example of the opposite process from singular to plural is Engl. 'green' > *грин* 'dollars'. *Грин*, like *бакс* 'dollars' < Engl. 'bucks', occurs in Russian only in the plural.

bb) Change of word class

Linguistic borrowing rarely involves changes in the class of words. But Fin. 'yksi' 'one' > *юкс* 'rouble' changed from a numeral to a noun. The Engl. adjective 'down' became a noun meaning 'a depressed state of mind'. Italians are known to have a weakness for interspersing their speech with the particle 'allora', which means 'well, ... now'. By dropping the final 'a' and changing the phonetics, the particle 'allora' was changed into the noun *алёр* 'Italian'.

cc) Change of case

The borrowing of *бундес* represents a special case. It is the first part to the German word "Bundesrepublik" and is, strictly speaking, a noun in the genitive case. When borrowed from German it became a noun without an ending, whose stem ended with a hard consonant. The genitive form "Bundes" thus shifted to the nominative case and is now the motivating stem for derivations.

dd) Semantic changes

Semantic changes are normally accompanied by morphological ones, which is evident from the above examples. Some words when borrowed undergo semantic narrowing, such as the English word "down", which has great a number of meanings in English, but in Russian slang stands only for 'depressed frame of mind', 'low spirits'. The genitive noun "Bundes" has, however, undergone semantic widening. Бундес is a jargonism for the Federal Republic of Germany. The same word without capitalization has three meanings: 'a West German person', 'a group of West Germans' and 'a lot of German goods'.

II. Word Formation

1. Word Formation in Argot, the Jargons and Slang

Words of Russian argot, jargons and slang are formed according to the same rules as those of the literary language. Loan words are equally subjected to this process as long as it causes no morphological or semantic problems. The following word-formation processes in no way deviate from those of the literary language. 1) Use of suffixes: френч 'Frenchman' - френчовка 'French woman' - френчовский 'French' [adj.], блэк 'negro' - блэчка 'negress' - блэкловый 'black', фуфлo 'inferior quality goods' - фуфляничать 'to propose shady deals', юкс 'rouble' - юксовый 'rouble'. 2) Use of prefixes: фарцевать - 'to work as a фарцовщик' - нафарцевать полтинник 'to earn 50 roubles through deals with foreigners', башлять - забашлять 'to pay'. 3) Use of affixes: факать 'to fuck' - факаться 'to fuck', закинуть - закинуться 'to toss in' [pills]. 4) Turning adjectives and participles into nouns: игровoй 'player', жёлтое 'codein', чёрное 'opium', белая 'vodka', варёные 'Germans from the German Democratic Republic', играющий 'player'. 5) Composition: кайфолом 'spoil-sport', югослёпы 'Yugoslavs'. 6) Abbreviations: ЦУ [цэ-у] - ценные указания 'valuable tips', МРП [эм-эр-пэ] - мировой революционный процесс 'worldwide revolutionary process', СВ [эс-вэ] - Софья Васильевна = Советская власть 'Soviet power', фикбрак - фиктивный

* This jargon abbreviation is used by the Central Committee.

брак 'fictitious marriage'. These processes can also be combined, in the same manner as in the literary language.

a) Common Types of Word Formation

The types of word formation are also much the same as in the literary language. Some of them which are only scantily productive in the literary language have a high rate of productivity in the colloquial language and also in the jargons and slang. The most common suffixes among them are:

-ак общак 'hostel' or 'penal camp' < общежитие or лагерь общего режима, трипак 'clap' < триппер;

-як веняк 'vein' < вена, блатяк 'criminal' < блат;

-ач фирмач 'foreigner from the West' < фирма, сухач 'white wine' < сухое вино;

-аг(а) общага 'hostel' < общежитие;

-яг(а) доходяга 'somebody about to kick the bucket'; 'emaciated, weak person' < доходить;

-ух(а) гнилуха 'cunning fellow' < гниль, бормотуха 'cheap, inferior port wine' < бормотать;

-л(о, а) фарцло 'Fartsovshchik' < фарц, фарцовщик, катало or катала 'player' < катать, лепила or лепило 'doctor', 'medical assistant' [in camps], 'counterfeiter' < лепить;

-няк кидняк 'deceit' < кидать, отходняк 'unpleasant sensations after a drug-induced high', 'reward for procuring a deal', 'to buy a round of drinks on entering or leaving a job' < отход;

-ану- рингануть 'to ring up' < Engl. 'to ring', дринкануть 'to drink' < дринкать.

By condensing the compound noun общежитие > общак, общага or combining words like сухое вино > сухач or сушняк, строгий выговор > строгачб 'severe reprimand' and лагерь усиленного режима > усилок, frequently used and comparatively long expressions are turned into short and handy words which save time and energy.

b) Special Types of Word Formation

There are a few suffixes in jargons and slang which are either non-productive or non-existent in the literary and colloquial languages, or they

are not used with certain meanings. For example, the suffix -б to my knowledge occurs only in the musicians' jargon word солоб, which is derived from 'solo' and means 'penis', the association being 'soloist'. The suffix -б(а) is used in the literary language only for the derivation of female nouns from verbs, e.g. жаловаться > жалоба.

The suffix -овк(а) is employed to mark the nationality of a female person. Nouns formed with the help of this suffix have been derived from corresponding male nouns: бундесовка 'female citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany' < бундес 'male citizen of the FRG', стэйтсовка 'American woman' < стэйтс 'American', френчовка 'French woman' < френч 'Frenchman'. The formation жидовка 'Jewess' (жид 'Jew', 'Yid') served as a model.

In the literary language the suffix -ук or -юк is employed to form male diminutives: Саша > Сашук, Митя > Митюк. But the nouns лажук 'bad musician', 'bad, unreliable person' < лажа; говнюк 'louse' < говно and блатюк 'criminal' < блат are swear words. In these cases the suffix -ук (-юк) has a pejorative function.

The suffix or suffixoid -ман is used in the literary language to refer to persons who suffer from some kind of exaggerated or pathological inclinations: библиоман 'book maniac', балетоман 'ballet maniac', эротоман 'sex maniac' and others. In the loan words боцман, лоцман, мицман, штурман and шпильман, it corresponds to Dutch '-man', Engl. '-man' or German '-mann'. It has this meaning in вральман 'liar' and нэпман 'NEP man' [private entrepreneur during the NEP period 1921-28], where -ман functions as an independent suffix. The same meaning is retained in the cant word жульман 'thief' < жулик 'experienced thief'. The suffix is independent in кичман 'clink' < кича 'clink', кусман 'piece' [of bread, cheese etc.] < кусок 'piece' and наличман 'cash money' < наличные 'cash'. The suffix really has the effect of personifying objects. The German noun 'Mann' is used in similar combinations, such as 'Flattermann' ('roast chicken' or 'football which flies an unsteady course'). Russian slang speakers hardly see -ман as meaning 'man' but merely as emphasizing the concreteness of the object referred to. It should be mentioned in this context that the suffix -ш(а) serves to form the female variant of нэпман, i.e. нэпманша 'NEP lady'. The other words with -ман have no female variants.

Up to a point the development of the suffixoid -мен (Engl. 'man') has been parallel to that of -ман. In the beginning -мен was an integral part of English loan words and did not function as a separate word-building

component in Russian. But the musicians' jargon now includes the word лажмен 'inferior musician', where this suffix is used as such a component. The authors of the new Academy grammar claim completely erroneously that such words as рекордсмен, спортсмен, яхтсмен, бизнесмен, конгрессмен, кроссмен and полисмен contain a separate suffix -смен. Their claim that полисмен was arrived at by combining полиция with -смен, dropping the final consonant -c|j| of the motivating word and exchanging the phoneme |c| for |c|, approaches the absurd.⁷ All these words were absorbed by the Russian language as complete units and not in parts. This is corroborated by the pronunciation and spelling of these words in English. Also джентльмен and the new loans джазмен and бармен refute the hypothesis of the Academy grammarians. Besides, the example of лажмен shows that -мен is productive as a suffix in Russian. The lack of an interfix in the word even suggests that -мен is a semantically autonomous word rather than a suffix. In Russian slang мен has indeed been used as a word by itself. In Leningrad I heard the phrase центровые мены 'profliteers meeting at the Centre' [of town]. Ordinarily these people are referred to as центровой and центряк.

The slang word кайфоломка 'female spoil-sport' is an exception. It has been derived from кайфолом through the addition of the suffix -к(а). While in the regional expression шутолом 'rascal' and the two prostorečie words чертолом 'lout', 'crude fellow' and костолом 'brawler', 'tough', the otherwise rather unproductive -лом has been used to refer to persons, the corresponding female forms *шутоломка, *чертоломка, *костоломка have not been reported although they are theoretically possible.

Another isolated formation is мудозвон, parallel to пустозвон 'babbling'. It was formed from мудо 'scrotum' and the suffix -звон and stands for 'gas bag', 'twaddler'.

The term сперматозавр 'spermatosaurus', i.e. 'ramrod' should be attributed to slang. It is an isolated formation making jocular use of -завр. The suffix -навт is also jocularly used in алконавт 'alconaut' ('alcoholic'). Strangely enough this suffix can also function as an independent noun, навт, having the same meaning as алконавт. A similarly funny effect is achieved with -атор in алкатор 'alkator' [alcoholic] and -оид in алколорид 'alcoloid' [alcoholic].

⁷ *Russkja grammatika*, vol. I (1980), para. 367. The theory was already posited in the *Grammatika sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka*,

The suffix -он is highly productive. It is used by chemists all over the world for the labelling of artificial fibres (капрон, нитрон, перлон, nylon).⁹ But the usage in slang is with humorous intent. Nouns are formed either from verbs or from other nouns: закусывать - закусон 'snack', рубать - рубон 'food', выпивать - выпивон 'drinking', 'drinks', вырубать 'to switch off' - вырубон 'blackout' [temporary loss of memory], выебать - выебон 'fuck', сифилис - сифон 'syphilis'. In soldiers' jargon салабон 'conscript in his first year of service' has probably been formed from салага 'newcomer', 'greenhorn' with a change of phonemes from [r] to [l].

Slang and the jargons do not contain any prefixes, interfixes or postfixes which are in any way special or deviating from literary use. The international prefixes анти-, архи-, интер-, транс- and ультра-, or the Russian ones низ- (нис-), су- or вне-, practically never occur in these varieties or in феня.

It is difficult to fit the formations плант, политикант, and романт into a system. They were arrived at by the addition of -т to the standard language word план 'plan' and the cant words политикан 'political prisoner' and роман 'story'. The resulting words which end in -т are synonymous with those ending in -ан. In the case of план the -т might have been added to avoid homonymy between план 'plan' and план 'hashish'. The standard language план was changed into the cant word плант. The changes политикан > политикант and роман > романт may have been motivated by playfulness or boastfulness. But they are not to be confused with the established word-formation process of affixing new syllables because to my knowledge the -т occurs only in the three aforementioned words and is attached to nouns ending in -ан. The suffix -ан has been transformed into a new suffix: -ант. План, политикант and романт can be considered variations of prostorečie within феня. It seems as if all three words contained the suffix -ант. Finally the -т could have been added later to facilitate pronunciation. In this case we would be dealing with an epithesis.

Moskva, 1970, para. 208.

⁹ Regarding the usage of this suffix in the literary language see *Slovoobrazovanie sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka. (Russkij jazyk i sovetskoe obščestvo. Sociologo-lingvističeskoe issledovanie, ed. by M. V. Панов, bk. 2), Moskva, 1968, pp. 226-229.*

2. Word-Formation Processes in "Mat"

"Mat" words are arrived at by the same processes as literary words. The process of "fusion" – called *сращение* in Russian and often considered a lexical-syntactical process – is uncommon in either "mat", slang or the jargons.⁹ The reason is obvious since "this word-forming method is a gradually evolving process and cannot satisfy the constant need of the speakers for new means of expression (words)".¹⁰ The following are the most common word-forming processes in "mat": use of suffixes (*пиздеть* 'to talk rubbish'), use of prefixes (*объебать* 'to cheat'), use of final affixes (*ебаться* 'to struggle with something', 'to take great pains'), turning participles and adjectives into nouns (*охуевший* 'somebody who has flipped out', *ебанутый* 'moron'), composition (*долбоёб* 'blockhead'), abbreviations (*ОБЦУ* – *общая взъёбка с ценными указаниями* 'general vulgar reprimand with valuable instructions', *ЕВА* – *ебал весь актив* 'all active members can go fuck themselves' – criminals use this as a tattooing motif) as well as combinations of these processes such as the simultaneous use of prefixes and suffixes (*объебаловка* 'cheating') or composition and double suffixes (*мозгоебательство* 'getting on one's nerves').

a) Word-Formation Models in "Mat"

The possibilities of coining new "mat" words are limited since only four motivating word-stems exist from which derivations are possible: *ёб* (male preterite stem of *ебь* 'to fuck', *еба-ть*, *пиз-да* and *хуй*). This limitation is to some extent counterbalanced by the special semantics of the stem. At this point it should be mentioned that the preterite stem *ёб*, which is at the same time the root morpheme, has been used as a suffixoid to form new words, such as in the "mat" expression *долбоёб* 'imbecile' (*долб[ить] + о + ёб*).¹¹

⁹ The intended reference is such literary words as *умалишенный*, *сегоднѣ*, *вышеупомянутый* and others.

¹⁰ See e.g. *Lexikologie* (1978), pp. 150-151.

¹¹ The vowel change from *е* – *о* in *ебь* (*ебѣ*) 'to fuck' – *ёб* 'fucked' is regular. The other preterite forms are *еблѣ*, *еблѣ*, *еблѣ*. The forms of the present tense are *ебѣ*, *ебѣшь* ... *ебѣт*.

b) Semantic Particularities in the Formation of "Mat" Words

All the matisms хуяк, хуёвый, хуёвина, охуе́ть, охуи́тельный and нахуя́чить have been directly or indirectly derived from the root morpheme хуй. If we compare the meanings of the words хуяк (an interjection accompanying the 'quick and simple execution or completion of an action'), хуёвый 'very bad', хуёвина 'any object' or 'nonsense', охуе́ть 'to be made to behave in a way which provokes the criticism of others' or 'to be put in a state of extreme surprise or amazement', охуи́тельный 'extremely good', нахуя́чить 'to heap up, load or put on something a large or excessive amount of material or matter - earth, stones, potatoes, soup etc.', we will find that the root morpheme хуй has no basic meaning common to all these words. This changeable morpheme has no semantic core which is common to all its derivatives. It is a morpheme without semantic content since it accommodates extremely heterogeneous meanings. The zero sememe obtains its meanings (semen) from the context and above all from situational factors. The adverbial "mat" phrases по хуй 'no matter', на хуй, на хуя 'what for' and до хуя 'a great deal' illustrate this peculiarity.

The verb хуячить, which was derived from хуяк (change of phoneme from [к] to [ч] and suffixation with -и(ть)), means 'to do'. According to context and situation its meaning becomes more concrete. In the sentence Он за ним хуячил, it means 'to walk behind', 'to follow'. In целый день они хуячили its meaning is 'to work'. With the addition of the prefix за-, the motivating verb undergoes various modifications: Он захуячил его палкой по голове ('to hit', 'to beat'); Он захуячил книгу в окно ('to throw out'); Она захуячила свитер на верхнюю полку ('to throw'); куда захуячить письмо? ('stick something somewhere'); Они захуячили жалобу к начальнику ('to misdirect' [to send to the wrong address]); Захуячили поезд на четырнадцатый путь ('to shunt') or Вижу, идет Нелли по тротуару. Я как за ней захуячил ('to follow after'). In the above sentences the "mat" verb захуячить would correspond to the following standard language verbs: ударить, выбросить, бросить, засунуть, заслать, загнать and пойти. Common to them all is the implied 'change of position'. When expressing the semantics of пойти it connotes the 'beginning of an action'. This connotation is contained in the prefix за-. But although the meaning of the verb -хуячить is modified by context and situation it cannot be given a fixed definition.

For instance *захуячить книгу в чемодан* can mean that the book was thrown, slipped or stuffed into the suitcase.

When comparing the above-mentioned standard language prefixed verbs with the prefixed "mat" verb *захуячить*, one realizes that the prefix *за-* in *захуячить* is a 'collective prefix' containing the prefixes *вы-*, *за-*, and *по-*, which also connote 'change of position'.

These semantic peculiarities of *mat* have caused some linguists to speak of "pro-units".¹² "Mat" units replacing nouns (pro-nouns) or verbs (pro-verbs) adopt whatever meaning is possible or likely in the standard language context in which they are placed (cf. the example with the *matism* *захуячить*). This theory can only be accepted if the following is taken into consideration: *matisms* which function as pro-units are less clearly defined and therefore richer in semantic content. The con-situation endows the "mat" words with the relevant meaning which no single literary or colloquial word, no slang or jargon is equipped to convey. These *matisms* describe processes which are difficult if not impossible to express by other linguistic means. They can replace one, two or several words or certain semantic components of these words, or they can characterize complete situations. For example, the sentence already quoted, *поезд захуячили на четырнадцатый путь*, can imply the following situation: the train was shunted to line 14 because all the other lines were occupied by goods trains; the passengers were thus forced to drag their luggage across the tracks and platforms of goods trains to the main hall. The literary sentence, *поезд загнали на четырнадцатый путь*, gives much weaker expression to the chaos in the station hall and the annoyance of the passengers. The emotive connotation of the "mat" verb far exceeds that of *поставить* or *загнать*.

The meaning of the word stem *пизд-а*, although not clearly defined, is not as vague as that of *хуй*. The "mat" word *пиздеу* can mean either 'highest appreciation' or 'enthusiasm', or refer to a situation where 'it's all over, finished, gone wrong'. These two meanings of *пиздеу* (as also of *охуеть*) are relatively fixed; they are semantic opposites. The "mat" verb *пиздить* 'to pinch' was formed after the model of several other verbs

¹² See Dreizin, Priestley (1982), pp. 234, 248. The allegation that "mat" stems form verbs with the help of the most common prefixes is a fairy-tale. Many of the *matisms* coined by the two authors are artificial and unusual.

meaning 'to steal': стащить, стянуть, стырить, слямзить, смикитить, сбоидить, свистнуть, стибрить, сшибануть and others. The most recently coined verb among these synonyms is скоммуниздить. In the case of these verbs it is interesting to note that derivation takes place in the opposite direction. The imperfective partners of these verbs are obtained by omitting the prefix *c-*, which results in слямзить > лямзить, спиздить > пиздить. The derivation *коммуниздить from скоммуниздить has not yet established itself. In the case of отпиздить 'to give a hiding' < пиздить 'to beat' the derivation has occurred in the normal direction.

The meanings of the words derived from the roots *ёб* and *еба-* are comparatively stable. But the root meanings themselves are variable and determined by the affixes, contexts and situations in which they are used. For example: обебать 'to cheat' < обмануть, приебаться 'to pester, nag, pick a fight' < привязаться, прицепиться, заебаться 'to work oneself to the bone' < заработаться, замотаться. *Ёбнуть* stands for both 'to beat' and 'to steal'. *Ебальник* refers to the face, *ебало* more to the 'mouth'. The roots *ёб* and *еба-* have no semantic cores either.

The four "mat" stems have thus turned out to be root morphemes with zero sememes. According to the processes and models of Russian word formation, "mat" words and phrases derived from these stems are assigned to various word classes. Their semantic content depends on affixes, context and paralingual situations which, in the end, invest them with fairly unambiguous meanings.

III. Semantic Derivations

1. Randomness of Semantic Derivations

E. D. Polivanov was not completely unjustified in using the term *слова-творчество* (word creation) to refer to the process of semantic derivation in cant. The possibilities of associating objects, people, processes, qualities or situations with one another are limitless. Although metonymical and especially metaphorical derivations are common in taboo varieties of Russian, it is, in a concrete case, impossible to predict even approximately what words are going to be used in connection with familiar or new facts. But where conventional word-formation processes of the sort

found in grammatical descriptions are involved, one can assess fairly accurately what processes or models will be used in a concrete case. For example, the following prognosis could be made with reasonable confidence: the landing of a spaceship on the moon would be described as *прилуниться* or *совершить посадку на Луну* 'to land on the moon', and *привенериться* would be 'to land on Venus', as parallel formation to *приземлиться* 'to land' and *приводниться* 'to land on water'.

It is well-known that slang speakers prefer to use metaphors for money, girls, sexual relations, death, fear, police, drugs and music - subjects which engage the emotions in a special way.¹³ Metaphors are also used in new fields of human endeavour such as the drug scene or the *фарцовка*. The *фарцовщик* (*фарц* and *фарцло* are derivations) with their laborious task of buying goods and currency from foreigners are also referred to as *утюги* 'clothes irons' and *мажоры* 'the merry ones', 'the funny ones'. The corresponding verbs referring to the work of these 'self-employed' people are *фарцевать*, *утюжить* and *мажорить*. The image of the clothes iron is due to the *фарцовщик* tirelessly patrolling up and down some section of the main street - such as the Nevsky Prospect in Leningrad - in search of foreigners ready to sell. This untiring up and down has earned them the witticism of the word *утюг* 'clothes iron'. The household appliance moves in a similar manner to the *фарцовщик*. Their activities being against the law, although the authorities often close their eyes to them, the *фарцовщики* are anxious to create a relaxed atmosphere so that foreigners will feel inclined to sell their goods. This has earned them the name *мажоры*.

The *фарцовщики* in turn have their own words for foreigners. Their vocabulary, which is also known to outsiders, includes such words as *пшек* 'Pole' and *пшечка* 'Polish woman', imitating the large number of sibilants in the Polish language which is noticeable even to Russian ears.¹⁴ *Алёры* for Italians came about in a similar manner. East Germans are called *варёные* 'somebody with whom no deal can be made'. This word is derived from the

¹³ Leisi (1973), pp. 177-178.

¹⁴ The Polish tongue-twister "Nie pieprz Pietrze wieprza pieprzem, bo przepieprzysz wieprza pieprzem" ('Don't pepper the boar with pepper, Peter, for you could overpepper the boar') describes the linguistic situation as it appears to non-Poles. (Dr. A. v. Weiss, Munich, brought this tongue-twister to my attention.) The Polish curse "psia-krew" ('damnit') possibly also contributed to this formation.

slang verb наварить 'to make a profit'; навар 'profit' is itself a metaphor. A typical phrase containing this word would be на нём ничего не наваришь 'you can't get anything out of him'. These examples illustrate the close connection which can exist between word formation and semantic derivation.

2. "Ideological Charges" of Semantic Derivations

Many words coined by means of semantic derivation are, as Soviet linguists put it, "ideologically charged". In a small volume recently published, this statement appeared:

Наиболее непосредственное и полное языковое отражение идеологии наблюдается, как известно, в словарном составе (лексико-фразеологической системе) языка. Наряду с нейтральными единицами этой системы (например, наименованиями многих материальных объектов) существуют такие слова, которые имеют ярко выраженную идеологическую окраску (прежде всего, конечно, социально-экономические и политические термины).¹⁵

In the thirties Zirmunskij had already expressed exactly the same opinion. This postulate has been voiced by Soviet linguists time and again but it has never been illustrated, not even during the sixties and seventies, with the help of Russian lexical material. For the sake of completeness, this small gap shall here be closed with a few examples.

Варёный 'citizen of the GDR' carries a mild "ideological charge" only noticeable to those (Soviet citizens and foreigners) who are familiar with Russian slang to the extent of knowing the slang words наварить and навар. They should also be acquainted with the habits of foreigners; namely, they should know that no profitable deals are possible with citizens of the GDR. The term остовка 'East currency', 'currencies of socialist countries or any other worthless currencies' is also "negatively charged" - the "ideological charge" in slang, феня and the jargons is always negative. These are two rather harmless examples, because they come from the jargon of an anti-social group.

¹⁵ *Jazyk i ideologija. Kritika idealističeskich koncepcii funkcionirovanija i razvitija jazyka*, ed. by Ju. A. Zluktenko, Kiev, 1981, pp. 175, 229. See especially the para. "Social'nye aspekty afro-amerikanskogo slenga" (pp. 229-238).

The matter is more serious when "negatively charged" slang expressions become accessible to larger sections of the population. The "anti-foreigners" attitude in the Federal Republic of Germany has increased of late. There are nasty Turkish jokes in circulation and foreigners are given nicknames which are far from flattering, e.g. "spaghetti", "spaghetti-eaters", "Kanaken" etc. All these terms have a definite ideological slant. They reflect the attitude of part of the German people towards foreigners.

This type of expression is no rarity in the Soviet Union. In spite of their being slang words they are widely known. There are a considerable number of negroes studying in the Soviet Union, and they have an especially hard time. They are called *чума́зы* 'dirty fellows', *сапоги́* 'boots' (in association with the black colour of Soviet boots), *негативы́* or *негативчи́ки* 'negatives' (a colour association), *чернота́* 'black rabble' or *черножопы́е* 'black arses'. Italians are called *макарони́ки* 'macaronis', 'macaroni-eaters' and *италья́хи* or *италья́шки* 'dagos'. Germans of all age groups living in the Soviet Union are the *фаши́сты* 'fascists'.

The ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union have a similarly hard lot. Members of the mongoloid race have the nicknames *узкогла́зы* 'slit eyes', *узкоплёночные́* 'narrow films' or *шну́рки* 'shoe laces'. Collective terms for national minorities (Caucasians, people from Central Asia, Kazakhstan etc.) are *звери́* 'beasts', borrowed from *фе́ня*, or *зверки́* 'little beasts', *чу́рки* 'nitwits' or *черножопы́е* 'black arses'. People from Central Asia are also called *чучме́ки* and *калби́ты*.¹⁶ *Носоро́ги* 'rhinoceroses' is used for Caucasians who are leading a carefree life on the shores of the Black Sea. The Georgians are called *кацо́*, which word they use to address each other, and *ара́*, which was originally an adverb. Finally, here is a fairly unpleasant name for the Russians in the North Caucasus (Kabardino-Balkar ASSR¹): *сви́ньи* 'pigs'.

The above shows that in the polyglot state of the Soviet Union certain antipathies exist among the nationalities. The terms here recorded

¹⁶ According to M. Kulmagambetov, Munich, *калбит* (Pl. *калбиты́*) was coined by Russians living in Central Asia and is derived from the Turkic word forms *кал!* 'stay!' and *бит* 'louse' ['stay, you louse!']. Kulmagambetov is of the opinion that these forms have the same meaning as 'louse-ridden people', i.e. 'people who everywhere leave their lice behind'. I could not positively identify the etymology of *чучме́ки*. It seems, however, to be a borrowing from one of the Turkic languages spoken in Central Asia.

seem to refute the claim of Soviet authorities that all the nationalities cooperate harmoniously with one another. This contradiction makes up the "ideological charge" of the lexical units.¹⁷

¹⁷ Who would have thought that during the government of the former head of the KGB Andropov the capital of the Soviet Union would be called Андрополь 'Andropolis', and that Brezhnev's former chauffeur Chernenko would be handed the nickname Кучер 'Coachman' as Secretary-General of the Party? The current Secretary-General Gorbachev, who comes from the locality of Минеральные Воды (Mineral Springs) in the Northern Caucasus, gets off relatively lightly. He is referred to as the минеральный секретарь.

E. PHONETICS AND INTONATION

Феня is the only variety where phonetics and intonation deviate in some respects from those of the literary and colloquial languages. That, at least, is the conclusion one reaches after considering the sparse information available on the subject. Baudouin de Courtenay made a sweeping statement regarding the "foreign peculiarities of pronunciation".¹ A Soviet university textbook of recent date contains this pithy sentence: "Распространено искаженное произношение слов (например, мягкое произношение шипящих)".² This is corroborated by a similar observation in the documentary reports by the ex-convict V. Salamov: "Сэр Виллиамс ответил, смягчая гласные после шипящих, как выговаривают все блатари: - В жизни разные положения могут быть, когда закон не должен применяться."³ The pronunciation of the words in question would consequently have been like this: ж[и]зни, полож[е]ния, and долж[ь]м instead of ж[ш]зни, полож[э°]ния and долж[ъ]м.⁴ Unfortunately I had no occasion to verify this observation. But there is no doubt that in all Russian non-literary varieties vowels and consonants are often reduced even to the extent of their complete ellipsis, as has been mentioned with reference to the colloquial language.⁵

It is hardly sufficient to observe that criminals "distort" their pronunciation. The блатные have their own norms of pronunciation which are as important to know as the феня vocabulary. Anybody who lacks this proficiency is treated as a stranger and not accepted. Under normal circumstances criminals do not pronounce their words in a different way from non-criminals or slang-speakers. But this may change as soon as two criminals enter into a verbal duel to establish a hierarchy. The verbal duel resembles a cock-fight, a ritual whose rules must be strictly observed. The duellists have to exchange rhyming repartees (verses) in a prescribed order. Whoever fails to match his opponent's repartee with a repartee of his own loses the duel. The other criminals present follow

¹ Boduén-de-Kurtené (1908), p. XIII.

² V. I. Koduchov, *Общее языкознание*, Москва, 1974, p. 177.

³ Salamov (1982), p. 219.

⁴ The dot above the vowel on the right [э°] indicates a change of the vowel before soft consonants.

⁵ See *Russkaj razgovornaja reč'* (1973), pp. 40-128.

such verbal wrestling matches with the greatest of interest. The winner of the match is said to have "polished off" his opponent. In *феня* this is referred to as *оттянуть кого* 'to take someone apart verbally'. When making accusations (in *феня* this is called *тянуть кого*, 'to reproach s.b.') criminals modify their pronunciation. A similar change of pronunciation occurs when criminals talk about their personal experiences and exploits, which are part fiction, part truth. Such accounts can go on for hours. They are called *травить баламду* 'to concoct stories'. The modified pronunciation and intonation are also used to test newcomers to the prison camp and find out whom one is dealing with. Newly arrived convicts are greeted with the common phrase *привет, ребята!* 'hi, mates!', which is pronounced as [приэ рья]. Unless they are able to reply in a similar vein, their position in the camp will be a difficult one.

Valid statements on peculiarities of *феня* phonetics and intonation can only be made if extensive recordings are available for evaluation. Although this is not the case, a few features shall be discussed here.

The word *сука* is pronounced [су:кѧ] with a long drawn-out [c]. In *оттянуть* the closing vowel [т:] is also much longer than in ordinary speech. This feature applies to other consonants too. Stressed vowels are usually drawn out, often almost sung. There are considerable variations in the pitch of stressed vowels. There is a steep rise and fall in intonation, comparable to a quick up and down slide. In situations such as described above the resulting intonation is almost like a howl.

It needs to be pointed out that the peculiarities here discussed are not accidental. They occur regularly in certain situations and represent norms which require strict adherence. However, it is not possible to present a systematic description of *феня* phonetics and intonation without the necessary field research.

F. STRESS

The stress systems of jargons, slang and "mat" in no way differ from that of the literary language. Only certain jargon and slang expressions which are arrived at by metaphorical and metonymical derivation and slang are differently stressed than the original words. This stress difference serves as a semantic marker and at the same time draws attention to the fact that words bearing an unusual stress may belong to a different linguistic variety.

For example, the literary word гребень 'comb' is thus differentiated from the cant word гребень 'passive homosexual'. Instead of the standard stress роман 'novel' the феня word is stressed роман and means 'story': It is the same as in роман 'literary work', formerly used by seminarists and priests.¹

The stress of фирма is not yet completely stabilized. Many Soviet citizens stress its first syllable (фирма), in which case it means 'foreign goods' or more generally 'superior quality goods' referring mainly to clothes. The corresponding adjective is фирменный 'foreign'. Comparatively few Soviet people, unless they are фарцовщики, other profiteers or representatives of the younger generation, stress the last syllable of фирма. Stressed in this way it stands for 'goods from the West' (USA, FRG, France, Britain, Sweden etc.). Its adjective is фирмовый 'from the West'. Фирма can also mean 'foreigner from the West'. Only people unfamiliar with slang or the jargons of the above groups sometimes refer to a foreigner as фирма.

In the literary language the suffix -ман refers to persons (лоцман, шпильман, вральман, нэпман) and never carries the stress. But when used outside the literary language it is always stressed regardless of its meaning: жильман, кичман, кусман, наличман. Only зусман 'cold' does not have the stress on its last syllable. The suffix -ман₁ is thus not differentiated from the suffix -ман₂ by means of stress. The two merely represent stress variations like the two parallel forms шүзы 'shoes' and шүзы 'shoes'.

¹ See Zelenin (1905), p. 117.

Prepositions in the jargons and slang are normally proclitic. But there are two cases of "mat" words with autonomous meanings becoming enclitic. These are the two matisms на хуй 'what for' and по хуй 'don't care a damn', where the stress has been shifted to the preposition.

Mention should be made here of adjectives derived from nouns with the suffix -ов(ый). This suffix normally attracts the stress even when the motivating stem is monosyllabic, e.g. блэк - блэковый 'black', вайтовый 'white', гудовый 'good', джинсы - джинсовый 'jeansy', стэйтс - стэйтсовый 'statesy' [American], турмаа 'Fins', 'Finnish goods' - турмовый 'Finnish' or the adjective-turned-noun мксовый 'rouble', which has been derived from мкс 'rouble'. Башли - башлёвый 'money', фирма - фирмовый 'foreign' and хуй - хуёвый 'lousy', 'stinking' should also be listed here. This stress pattern, which deviates from the literary norm, is very productive outside the literary language.²

² Cf. *Russkaja grammatika* (1980), vol. I, para. 629, where this stress pattern for adjectives derived from monosyllabic noun stems is described as "unproductive".

G. CONCLUSION

A first attempt has been made in this treatise to present an exhaustive and critical review of the research done on argots and jargons in the Soviet Union. A review of the literature shows that the research on social dialects was favoured by the events of the Revolution and reached a high in the 1920s and 1930s. The importance of B. A. Larin's and especially D. S. Lichačev's work for this research area has up to now been sadly underestimated. Sociolectology has been at the mercy of politics as has no other branch of linguistics. After a set-back due to Stalin and Marr it experienced a brief recovery in the sixties, but never regained its former position.

Since language has the quality of reflecting non-linguistic phenomena, argot, jargons and slang have become taboo in the Soviet Union. These Russian varieties, especially slang, enable Soviet citizens to react to events and temporary or lasting situations faster, more directly, with more wit and precision, but also more ironically and even sarcastically than is possible in the somewhat unwieldy literary language. They connote moods and attitudes not contained in the literary language. In some ways these varieties reflect life in the Soviet Union more accurately than the literary language or officialese can do.

The distribution of argot, jargon and slang has been discussed as well as the situations which call for the use of these varieties. The claim that speakers of the literary language (or members of the intelligentsia) must resort to the colloquial language when speaking in an unconstrained atmosphere has been proved wrong. Russian argot (феня), the jargons and slang are far from leading a phantom existence. On the contrary, they have great vitality and considerable distribution. Their social basis is firmly established and in some cases very large. This is one of the reasons why Soviet linguists are unsuccessful in their fight against these varieties. Argot, jargons and slang are not only spoken by the the so-called "déclassé" strata of society but also by people in power and other groups. The boundaries between the language varieties are not clearly demarcated on account of the "multilingualism" of their speakers. The theory that Russian criminal argot is a secret language continues to be

uncritically voiced time and again. But it is not borne out by practical investigations and can be explained psychologically.

In addition to the above varieties, "mat" (мат) has been subjected to a closer examination. This old and very specific Russian variety, which even Dostoevskij mentions in his works, is very much alive and constantly spoken by all nationalities belonging to the Soviet Union. The statement that Russian is the lingua franca of the peoples of the Soviet Union is equally valid for "mat".

The influence of other languages on the taboo varieties of Russian has been discussed as well as the special features of borrowing. English (American) has a dominant position among the languages of the West. Word-formation processes in these varieties have been described, some of which are unproductive in the literary and colloquial languages because certain suffixes or compounding elements either do not exist there or have different meanings.

"Mat" word-formation processes have been treated separately as they are exceptional from the semantic point of view. Their most striking feature is the formation of so-called pro-units, which have either been derived from four different stems (ёб, еба-, пизд-, хуй) or obtained through composition. "Mat" enjoys great popularity because of the ease with which new words can be formed, its semantic peculiarities and its emotive content.

The term "ideological charge" as employed by Soviet linguists has been clarified with the help of Russian slang phrases. Questions of phonetics, intonation and stress have been touched on. New observations were able to be made on situation-bound changes in the pronunciation and intonation of Russian criminal argot.

Questions of terminology and translation processes have also not been neglected. The terminology as used in Soviet sociolectology has been reviewed and suggestions have been made for its application. The terms "slang", "fеня" and "mat" have been firmly established, "prostorečie" (просторечие) modified in accordance with use, and "colloquial language" separated from "literary language". The long-overdue term "matism" (матизм) has been introduced to refer to lexical units of "mat", and the expression условный язык has been rendered as "conventional language".

This treatise surveys taboo varieties of the Russian language and discusses their most essential features where these have not yet been de-

scribed in the relevant literature (see chapter A). In order to deal with the taboo varieties adequately, they had to be discussed from different angles, namely from the standpoint of psychology, sociology, history, ideology, law, politics, language policy and linguistics.

The results are the fruit of more than eight years (1975-82) of field work inside and outside the Soviet Union. From over 4,000 units collected and noted down, 500 have been used in this treatise. They have been selected according to the degree of their popularity and frequency. Less popular expressions have been dealt with only if they were linguistically of interest.

H. APPENDIX (Translations of passages quoted in Russian)

P. 15.

The words and speech overflow with emotions, whereby the grammatical nature of the speech is destroyed. The cant vocabulary as an expression of moods and feelings hardly fits into the grammatical structure of the literary language. [Koporskiĭ (1927), p.8]

If art is to unite the people and awaken in them socially positive moods and feelings, then thieves's cant, unlike art, awakens beastly and wild instincts which are harmful to society. [Koporskiĭ (1927), pp. 11-12]

P. 18.

Once we have sufficient data at our disposal we may find that some 'low' general colloquial dialect - which I would term 'popular urban parlance' - takes second place among the city argots [...]. One thing is clear, however; this unknown quantity is not going to be a literary language in the true sense of the word. [Larin (1928b), pp. 71, 73]

Argots belong to the mixed languages, especially in view of the bilingualism of their speakers. They possess their own phonetics and morphology, though these are not 'special' or original. Argots do not basically differ from literary languages, which are themselves mixed; there is merely a comparative and quantitative difference. [Larin (1928b), p. 71]

Exact equivalents are not available for the simple reason that argot words and phrases cannot be conveyed through any literary language, least of all to argot speakers. [Larin (1928b), p. 73]

P. 21.

However, the abundance of old words and of words fallen off from argot shows that modern argot is going through a crisis, a phase of transition. One can hardly speak of its complete extinction because, unfortunately, conditions for the survival of the criminal dregs of society and their language - an unavoidable consequence of the isolation from normal life - have not yet been completely eradicated. An external indication of the crisis through which thieves' cant is passing is its unprecedented wide base after being uprooted from its natural soil. [Straten (1931), p. 140]

The educated classes in no way encourage the penetration of argot elements into their language. We can thus observe how words which have originated from argot and now inundate us are sifted through several

sieves. They are first sifted almost without exception into the jargon of the homeless young. As they reach the language of school children some words are discarded; even more are dropped from the languages of the consomols, the workers and the intelligentsia. Comparatively few words penetrate through all the sieves and win the battle for the right to full citizenship. [Straten (1931), p. 146-147]

P. 27.

Generally speaking, to fight against some sort of linguistic phenomenon arising from outside the language - and which, let us assume, exists in the collective linguistic psyche - strikes me as rather doubtful as long as this fight is not accompanied by the removal of that which caused the phenomenon in question. [Polivanov (1931), p. 164]

"He who speaks thieves' cant ceases to be a Soviet citizen." (Belomorsko-Baltijskij kanal im. Stalina. Moskva, 1934) [Ibid., p. 356]

P. 33.

The most stable of argotisms which infiltrated the language of the workers are ideologically highly characteristic. They make it possible that the social values adopted by the ruling classes and standardized in their language and world view are changed by means of language. [Zirmunskij (1936), p. 100]

P. 34.

Such new interpretations by a jargon should be seen as the manifestations of a class war which is being fought with linguistic means that unmask the official phrasing of the prevailing social world view. [Zirmunskij (1936), p. 101]

P. 35.

The general outlook of the déclassé represents a more or less conscious criticism of certain aspects of the prevailing social conditions. This criticism is, admittedly, of a partisan and anarchist nature and not a product of the slowly emerging revolutionary ideology of the rising social class to which the future belongs. Irony and humour, mockery and contempt of everything are not so much created by a positive socialist ideal as by the nihilistic negation of all generally significant social values, by the rebellion of anarchists and by the amorality of cynics. Nevertheless, the metaphorical shifts and reinterpretations characteristic of argot semantics reveal a distinctive ideology based on hostility towards social ideals and the public morals of the ruling class as anchored in the national language. [Zirmunskij (1936), pp. 162-163]

The new argot has close similarities to jargon, with, however, a wider social base than the old professional and class jargons. After losing its professional and secret character the argot vocabulary now serves emotive communication and figurative, euphemistic and ironical usages in daily life. [Zirmunskij (1936), p. 153]

P. 38.

Argot words isolate camp inmates from the rest of the world and turn them into persons of a separate nation, a separate social group. He who speaks thieves' cant ceases to be a Soviet citizen. [*Belomorsko-Baltijskij kanal im. Stalina*. Moskva 1934, p. 356]

P. 42.

The aim of argot is to make fun of the hostile environment. That is why to a representative of another social milieu every argot word appears cynical and vulgar and is proof of some kind of callousness, stubbornness, psychological sluggishness, and lack of compassion and flexibility. But for the argot speaker himself it has not only wit and acumen but also a touch of elevation and heroism. [Lichačev (1964), p. 346]

P. 44.

Argot is a phenomenon of the second linguistic order above the common speech, a phenomenon of the category of superstructure. [Lichačev (1964), p. 333]

[...] professions with a highly developed class solidarity hardly ever speak argot. Consequently argots can be characterized as the result and expression of an anarchy in a capitalistic economy, as the ideology of an anarchical lumpenproletariat. Anarchy of the capitalist production, crises and large-scale invasions by unorganized forces and coincidences connected with the contradictions inherent in a capitalist economy - all these represent most favourable preconditions for the creation of numerous groups of argot speakers. [Lichačev (1964), p. 356]

P. 44, n. 121.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics consists of workers and farmers. [Art. 1 of the Constitution of 1936]

P. 45

An argot word signalizes failure, interruption, lack of organization. Argot is possible only in a profession where the attitude towards economy and production is one of rapaciousness. [Lichačev (1964), p. 358]

P. 51, n. 139.

In the USSR the elimination of the exploiting classes and the ruthless suppression of crime have led to the removal of the social base for the existence of criminal jargons. ["Vorovskie žargony," in: *BSE*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, Moskva, 1951, p. 101]

P. 52.

It is not a question of the penetration of separate jargon elements into the normal speech, or of their quantitative growth over this or that period of time, but a question of a new quality of jargon as a distinctive style of speech during the new era of the evolution of a national language. [Skvorcov, *Teoretičeskie osnovy kul'tury reči* (1980), p. 164]

Pp. 56-57.

[...] the scientific precision of every defining dictionary, from the point of view of its content, consists above all in the reflection of the actual life and actual attitudes of a certain people as far as that is possible. If life appears untamed and miserable, the lexicographer or the editor of the dictionary has to come to terms with this sad fact, and he is not entitled to embellish or omit anything. Even if only part of the people have cruel and absurd attitudes, these must be entered as such by the lexicographer. [...]

The very same lexicographical objectivity demands that a serious dictionary of the 'living language' include the so-called 'four-letter words', 'foul language', 'swear words', the 'abominations of the street jargon' etc. The lexicographer has no right to cut up and castrate the 'living language'. Once certain words exist in the minds of a large number of people and keep popping up, the lexicographer is obliged to include them in his dictionary even if every hypocrite and Tartuffe were to rebel against it and pretend indignation - they who are normally secret lovers of obscenities and often use all kinds of 'swear words' and 'foul language' themselves. [...]

How can one then exclude from a dictionary of the living great-Russian language the most living words of all, words that are heard all the time, words one cannot help being exposed to?

[...] We have no right to alter the Russian language, no right to conceal that which actually lives and beats with a strong pulse. [V. Dal', *Tolkovyj slovar' živogo velikoruskago jazyka*. 4th rev. and substantially enl. ed. by Prof. I. A. Boduën-de-Kurtené, vol. 1, S.-Peterburg, 1912, pp. IX-XI]

P. 57.

The history of any living language can be visualized as a series of consecutive 'sinkings' and barbarizations or rather as a series of concentric developments. [Larin (1928b), p. 62]

It is impossible to create a language, because it is made by the people. Philologists merely uncover its laws and build them into a system, and writers create in the language according to these laws. [V. G. Belinskij]

Pp. 60-61.

Variety of a language spoken by a comparatively limited number of people who live in a closed regional, professional or social community and who are in constant and immediate linguistic contact. [Achmanova (1966), p. 131]

P. 63.

The speech style of *prostorečie* normally forms the linguistic basis of a jargon. [*Obščee jazykoznanie* (1970), p. 494]

Every jargon exists as a rule on the basis of the colloquial language of a country. [*Obščee jazykoznanie* (1970), p. 487]

Next to the oral styles of the literary language there are the non-literary styles of the colloquial speech, the so-called *prostorečie*. [*Obščee jazykoznanie* (1970), p. 527]

P. 64.

A language which has been artificially constructed to achieve certain practical results. [Zdanova et al. (1971), p. 49]

P. 65.

Secret language, conventional language - a social dialect of an isolated (formerly professional) group which has been created with the intention of closed intercourse within the group. [Arapov, article "Tajnyj jazyk" in: *Russkij jazyk. Enciklopedija*, Moskva, 1979, p. 346]

Specially constructed or common in a certain professional environment; artificial. Of a language. [*SSRLJa*, vol. 16, Moskva, 1964, col. 910, no. 6]

P. 67.

Argot (French argot - jargon). Language of single social groups and communities which has been artificially created with the objective of linguistic isolation (sometimes secret language). It is characterized by the presence of words intelligible only to the initiated. [Rozental', Telenkova (1976), pp. 28-29]

P. 68.

A social speech variety characterized by a highly specialized or individually assimilated (with regard to semantics and word formation), generally used vocabulary often containing elements of convention, artificiality and 'secrecy'. Argot belongs to comparatively closed social groups and communities. The main function of argot is to isolate these groups and cut them off from other people. Argot in the strict sense of the word is the speech of the lower strata of society, of the déclassé groups and the underworld: beggars, thieves, cardsharps etc. [Skvorcov (1979), p. 23]

A social speech variety characterized by a professional - often expressively redefined - vocabulary and standard phraseology of the people. Jargons belong to comparatively open social groups which were formed on the basis of common interests and habits, occupations and social situations. Unlike argot, the structure of jargon is entirely based on the common literary language. It is, so to speak, the social dialect of a certain age group or 'professional' status. [Skvorcov (1979), p. 82]

P. 73.

Words and grammatical forms of an urban colloquial language spoken by the masses. They are used in the literary language as a stylistic device to give to the spoken word a joking, contemptuous, ironical or somewhat crude note. [Ozegov (1968), S. 614]

In a natural conversation of the unnormed type the everyday vocabulary carries no stylistic slant, even if many lexemes and phrases can be used as forms of expression of this or that style. [Ozegov (1974), p. 65]

P. 74, n. 36.

What is the difference between a teacher and a teacher? A teacher carries his documents in a briefcase sixty per cent of the time, and a teacher carries his documents in a briefcase sixty per cent of the time.

P. 84.

"This language, which is popular throughout Russia, has been spoken from time immemorial." [F. M. Dostoevskij, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v tridcati tomach*, vol. 21, Leningrad, 1980, p. 108]

I suddenly became convinced that it is possible to give expression to all one's thoughts and feelings and even one's deepest deliberations by simply uttering this noun, which is moreover uncomplicated in the extreme. [F. M. Dostoevskij, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij v tridcati tomach*, vol. 21, Leningrad, 1980, pp. 108-109]

P. 85.

Indecent, repulsive pejorative expression with the mention of the word "mother".

P. 89, n. 3.

Article 154 of the RSFSR Criminal Code defines "speculation" as "purchase and resale of wares and other objects for profit-making purposes." [UK RSFSR]

P. 92.

One must keep in mind that speaking thieves' cant without there being any need for it contaminates the Russian language. It is not so important to speak the jargon as to have a good understanding of the conversations which criminals conduct among themselves with its help. [*Slovar' vorovskogo žargona*, Kiev, 1964, in: Čalidze (1977), p. 347]

P. 94.

Purism is powerless in its aggression and aggressive because of its lack of power. This powerlessness robs it of tragedy: even in its external use of force this purism is mostly only pitiable. It conducts a lawful fight to lawful ends, but in the vast majority of cases conducts it badly: roughly, sometimes violently and unfairly, demagogically and above all ignorantly. [Gornfel'd (1922), p. 8]

P. 96, n. 16.

"Our village could become famous on account of its 'mat'. When talking among themselves the women use lots of dirty words such as one normally only hears during the most savage quarrels. Following their parents' example the six- and seven-year-olds have already dirtied their speech with 'mat'." [Gor'kij (1953), p. 746]

Every Soviet person can speak three languages: his mother tongue, Russian and "mat".

P. 98.

Not a single man or woman who has been to Kolyma as a free person or a prisoner has escaped these criminal words. These words are a bane, a poison which penetrates into the souls of the people. His familiarity with the criminal dialect moves the non-criminal closer to the criminal world. [Salamov (1982), pp. 221-222]

P. 123.

It is common knowledge that the most direct and entirely linguistic reflection of any ideology is found in the vocabulary - lexical/phrasological system - of a language. Apart from the neutral units of this system - e.g. naming of material objects - there are such words which have a clearly defined ideological slant, above all the socio-economic and political expressions. [*Język i ideologija* (1981), p. 229]

P. 126.

The distorted pronunciation of words is very common, e.g. the soft pronunciation of sibilants. [Koduchov (1974), p. 177]

Sir Williams, softening the vowels after sibilants, as is the fashion with cant speakers, answered: 'There are situations in life when the law must not be applied.' [Salamov (1982), p. 219]

A B B R E V I A T I O N S

Ar.	Argot (thieves' cant)
B	<i>Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo jazyka</i> . AN SSSR. Institut russkogo jazyka. Vols. 1-17. Moskva-Leningrad, 1950-1965
<i>BSE</i>	<i>Bol'saja Sovetskaja Enciklopedija</i>
M	<i>Slovar' russkogo jazyka</i> . AN SSSR. Institut jazykoznanija. Vols. 1-4. Moskva, 1957-1961
O	S. I. Ozegov. <i>Slovar' russkogo jazyka</i>
ORJaS	Otdelenie russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoj Akademii nauk. S.-Peterburg
RANIION	Rossijskaja asociacija naučno-issledovatel'skich institutov obščestvennyh nauk
Rw.	Rotwelsch (German thieves' cant)
<i>SSRLJa</i>	Cf. B
U	D. N. Ušakov. <i>Tolkovyj slovar' russkogo jazyka</i> . Vols. 1-4. Moskva, 1934-1940
<i>UK RSFSR</i>	<i>Ugolovnyj kodeks RSFSR 1979 g.</i> (Criminal Code of the RSFSR)
<i>VJa</i>	<i>Voprosy jazykoznanija</i>

* Familiar and commonly used abbreviations are not included.

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REGISTER

The first part of the register consists of words and phrases which occur in the text. The syllables carrying the stress have either been underlined or marked by means of two dots above the "e" (ē) (with one exception). Variations in stress or spelling have been indicated. Some of the nouns and verbs have not been listed in their uninflected forms (Nom. Sg., Nom. Sg. Masc., Inf.) but in their common or most popular forms (e.g. свeтит, звeри). The second part of the register contains word-formation elements which have either been merely referred to or dealt with in detail in the book. The third part contains linguistic and other special terminology which appears in the text in Cyrillic lettering. Words, particles and terms have been listed alphabetically.

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2. Word-Formation Elements

a) Prefixes

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b) Suffixes, Suffixoids and Word-Formation Components

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c) Syllables and Sounds

aa) Russian

-имн- 8	хер 7	-ыкори- 8
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bb) Rotwelsch

ku- 11	si- 11	su- 11
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