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**Opinion and Attitude Formation by Russian Youths on the  
Fall of the USSR and the following 1990s**

*Formování názorů a postoje mladých Rusů k rozpadu Sovětského  
svazu a k 90. letům.*

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*Prohlašuji, že jsem svou bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a všechny prameny jsem řádně citovala. Práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.*

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*Chtěla bych tímto vyjádřit velkou vděčnost doc. Hanuši Nyklovi, který mě doprovázel po čas celého výzkumu. Zvláště pak oceňuji způsob, jakým mě podporoval na cestě k prvnímu akademickému výstupu.*

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## Abstrakt

Úkolem diplomové práce bylo nahlédnout, jakým způsobem jsou formovány názory a postoje dnešní mladé ruské generace k rozpadu SSSR a následujícím 90. letům 20. století. Historickou periodu zde rámuje neúspěšný srpnový puč v roce 1991 a přelomový rok 1999/2000, kdy tehdejší prezident B. Jelcin jmenoval za svého nástupce V. Putina.

Práce si kladla za cíl nalézt a popsat základní charakteristiky představ mladých Rusů o tomto období, současně s tím popsat způsoby, jakými jsou tyto názory formovány. Za tímto účelem bylo v rámci výzkumu sesbíráno a zanalyzováno více než 30 rozhovorů s mladými lidmi z Moskvy, Kazani a Novosibirsku.

Výsledkem analýzy se stalo sestavení několika typů obrazu rozpadu SSSR a 90. let, byla popsána role školy, rodiny i médií během utváření těchto obrazů, nahlédnuty některé historické mýty, a nakonec charakterizovány základní čtyři typy formování historických představ dotazovaných.

**Klíčová slova:** paměťová studia, kolektivní paměť, mytologizace dějin, rozpad Sovětského svazu, nostalgie, formování historických postojů, názory ruské mládeže, formování názoru.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of the research work was to discover and describe the main characteristics of young people's ideas about the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s in Russia as well as to define the specific features of opinion and attitude formation. The time frame of targeted historical period is between 1991 and 1999/2000, from the Soviet coup d'état attempt in 1991 to the time when Boris Yeltsin Russian president of that time appointed Vladimir Putin as his successor in 1999/2000.

In order to achieve this goal, more than 30 interviews with young people from Moscow, Kazan, and Novosibirsk were collected and analyzed.

As a result, several types of images of the collapse of the USSR and the 90s were formed; the role of school, family and media in the process of image formation were described, some historical myths were identified, and four types of historical opinion formations of young Russians were structured and named.

**Keywords:** memory studies, collective memory, history mythologization, Soviet Union Fall, nostalgia, historical attitude formation, Russian youth attitude, opinion formation

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## Introduction

It's been nearly 30 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The researchers have thoroughly studied the economic and political aspects of that event. Incapacity of the communist regime was proved and no longer casts any doubt. There is evidence of large-scale repressions, and the reality of life under communism is also well known: censorship, crime, corrupt practices, and commodity deficit. It seems unlikely that someone would want the revival of the USSR. However, opinion polls consistently point out to the regret among Russians over the fall of the Soviet Union. In 2018, 66% of Russians said they regretted the collapse of the USSR (according to Levada-Center data, 2018). In 2019, 48% of Russian residents agreed that it would have been better for the country to remain in the pre-Perestroika status (according to Levada-Center data, 2019).

Moreover, it's not just the representatives of the older generations that regret over the collapse of the Soviet Union and whose views could be attributed to the nostalgia for youth and stability; young people born in "the modern period" express the same views. The latest Levada-Center poll has shown that 36% of young people (which is more than a third) agree that it would have been better for the country to remain in the pre-Perestroika status. Another 36% disagreed with this statement. Most importantly, according to many historians it was Perestroika that laid the foundation for the collapse of the Soviet Union and transition from communism to planned economy and democracy and capitalism. 36% of young people view "August 1991 coup" as a tragic event, which had fatal consequences for the country and nation, while 39% were undecided (according to Levada-Center, 2015).

These numbers and a significant number of those undecided stirred interest regarding the image of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 90s, that followed Perestroika and the fall of the USSR, in the minds of young people and the reason behind their opinion formation. The *objective* of this research is to study and describe the main characteristics of views of young people regarding the collapse of the USSR and the 90s in Russia, as well as to describe the features of opinion formation in young people with regard to the recent history of Russia. This research paper is of exploratory and observational nature. During the research, we managed to distinguish groups of images and views of young people regarding the collapse of the USSR and the 90s, find out what information about that period they learned from their family members, in school, media, and what myths about the USSR, its collapse and the 90s are spread. Finally, we were able to form and describe the types of opinions about the collapse of the USSR and the 90s among young people.

The topic and research are extremely relevant and interesting, since an important stage in forming of historical memory of the 90s is happening right now: people from the generation that doesn't remember that time are becoming adults now and their opinions about the 90s don't rely on the experience of those people. The author of this paper also belongs to the same generation, which makes it even more interesting for her to explore.

The indicative timeframe of targeted historical period is between 1991 and 1999/2000, from the Soviet coup d'état attempt in 1991 to the time when Boris Yeltsin, the Russian president of that time, appointed Vladimir Putin as his successor in 1999/2000. Since that time a lot of crucial and sometimes dramatic events took place: the formation of GKChP (State Committee on the State of Emergency) and a failed coup attempt, signing of the Belovezha Accords, constitutional crisis and adopting of a new constitution of the RF in 1993, the First Chechen war, 1998 financial crisis and the beginning of the Second Chechen war in 1999.

The theoretical part of this research describes and analyzes such terms as collective memory and historical memory, since the most part of the work and interviews is related to memories, including memories of relatives who brought up the informants.

Unfortunately, there are still very few researches and data about the views of (young) Russians about the 90s. Hence, the research related to the attitudes towards the USSR and its collapse were used to form the objectives of this study and assumptions. In this regard, the research is deemed useful, since it allows to expand the scientific review of historical views of young people and learn more about what they think about the collapse of the USSR and the 90s.

It's important to keep in mind, that the subject of this research is the views of young Russians about the collapse of the USSR and the 90s, and not the historical period itself, that's why there will be no analysis of the events of the late 20th century in this research. The author of this research has formed her own views on the subject of interest by studying such works as *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* by Alexei Yurchak, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse: 1970-2000* by S. Kotkin, book entitled *It Collapsed: The Everyday History of the USSR and Russia in 1985-1999*, Yegor Gaidar's *Collapse of An Empire* and *Lenin's Tomb* by David Remnick.

## **Part 1. Literature review**

This intersectional research work lies in a field of social and humanitarian sciences. It is focused on the perception of the recent past, so the concepts of collective and historical memory are an important part of the research and its theoretical frame. The social and political context of contemporary Russia is also taken into account and described in this paper work. The following part collects, describes and analyzes the main concepts and context associated with the research.

### **1.1 The Studies of Memory in the Social and Human Sciences**

#### ***1.1.1 Collective and Historical Memory***

Memory has relatively recently become a subject in the social and human sciences. “Collective memory” plays a special role in sociological research. The problem is that the definition of “memory” is very flexible and its boundaries are quite blurred. The same phenomenon is called “historical” or “collective” or “cultural memory” by different researchers (Репина, 2003). The aim of this chapter is to describe the basic concepts used in memory research and outline their theoretical framework.

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs initiated a consistent and systematic study of collective memory and the role of social context in memory. In his book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, he says that memory has a social nature, and therefore an individual can recall an event through the social framework of memory. Halbwachs focuses on collective consciousness and writes that society has certain resources to evoke necessary memories in the mass consciousness. Halbwachs argues that collective memory is based on the experience of an individual’s memory and personal consciousness, but it is not just a collection of individual memories. It is a certain social superstructure formed on the basis of personal memories, experience, consciousness (Halbwachs, 1925). Halbwachs also introduced the concept of “collective memory” as a social construct: it is collectives and groups that, in his conception, maintain the constituting collective memory by setting and reproducing patterns of interpretation of events”. (Репина, 2003).

Later, Aleida Assmann identified two types of memory: *Ars* и *Vis*. These forms of memory are often mentioned in a literary context. Memory as *Ars* is the memory that must be repeated and transferred without change, while memory as *Vis* implies a form of memory that is distorted over time, partially forgotten, and that changes. Working with different forms of memory, Aleida Assmann criticized the general term “collective memory” for its ambiguity.

She suggested using the terms “social memory,” “political memory” or “national memory” (Assmann, 2011).

Her husband, Jan Assmann, also studied memory types. He relied on the definition of “collective memory” by Halbwachs but went on to propose dividing it into two types: communicative and cultural memory (Assmann, 2011). **Communicative memory** is formed throughout life and covers a period of approximately 80-100 years. The bearer of this type of memory shares it with his contemporaries. A loosely formalized communicative memory always relies on social interaction, direct experience, and oral storytelling. On the other hand, “**cultural memory** is a form of collective memory in that a number of people share cultural memory and in that it conveys to them a collective (i.e. cultural) identity” (Assmann, 2011). Cultural memory is reproduced and passed on in rituals, ceremonies; it shapes myths. And it does not assume that the bearer remembers and actually witnessed the events that shaped this memory. It is carried by “specialists”: priests, scientists, teachers, artists, writers, etc. (Assmann, 2011).

#### ***The concept of “symbol” in memory research***

The next step after Halbwachs in the study of memory is connected with the emergence of the term “place of memory”, introduced by the historian Pierre Nora. By “places of memory” he meant places capable of preserving or evoking collective memories. The places of memory can be not only geographical places or buildings but also books, songs and archives. It can be anything that has a “symbolic aura” and allows society to form an idea of itself and its history (Hopa, 2005). This is how the concept of “symbol” is established in memory studies.

The “**symbol**” plays a special role in the study of memory. The philosopher Jeffrey Andrew Barash suggests that collective memory has two ways. The first one is to disappear when those who remember die. The second one is to hold on and anchor when the symbol is fixed (Barash, 2010). According to Barash, the second happens when there is a “*symbolic embodiment*”:

“If imagination accompanies the activity of remembrance it is a fortiori an essential moment in the symbolic embodiment of collective memory... It is the thickness of its many stratifications that symbolic embodiment confers on collective memory a perdurability extending well beyond the lives of those who directly experience a moment in its ongoing and changing articulation” (Barash, 2016).

Barash also claims, that “collective memory is rooted in a many-layered web of interwoven shared symbolic structures that orient Spatio-temporal awareness and the conceptual logic it deploys”.

It should be noted that Barash (and others) uses the term “symbolic” when referring to specific events and phenomena. Therefore, in order to study the fall of the USSR and the 1990s and work with the “memory of that time,” it is important to discuss specific phenomena and events with responders and to move away from the general discussion of the ten-year period.

Since the concept of “collective memory” is still controversial and research on it is interdisciplinary, there is currently no single correct or exhaustive definition of “collective memory.” However, within the framework of this research, the definition formulated by Anna Sorokina as part of her dissertation on “Political Nostalgia Syndrome in Russian Students” seems most appropriate. Sorokina describes collective memory as a discrete-continuous complex of group representations and cognitive actions on the micro-, macro- and mega-level of the system of social relations. These notions and actions are aimed at the semantic reconstruction of the historical past in order to actualize it in the conditions of the emerging social and political present. (Сорокина, 2015)

The notion of “collective memory” is often closely associated with and sometimes replaced by “historical memory.” In order to describe these distinctions and commonalities, let’s turn to Anna Sorokina’s thesis work. Sorokina writes that Halbwachs distinguishes these concepts into “lived collective memory” and “written history,” which forms the basis for historical memory.

Here are some important points that Sorokina highlights when analyzing memory classification by Halbwachs:

- History is always an ordered and **discrete structure** of events, while memory **does not have a strict structure** and does not fit within a strict framework.
- History is mostly about **the past**, while collective memory is always linked to **the present** and is very dynamic.
- History is universal and **unified**, whereas collective memory is the sum of **several** collective memories.
- History may go centuries back, while collective memory does not extend beyond the group that preserves it.

Concluding the analysis of the use of the concept of “memory” in social and cultural research, it seems important to mention the concept of **individual memory**. In this research this concept is touched very briefly, but the already mentioned work of A. Repina contains several important theses about the representativeness of individual memory and its importance in the formation of opinion. For example, A. Repina says that individual memory includes *personal, social, cultural, and historical* levels. In addition to one’s own life experience, it

implies social inclusion, transformation of someone else's experience into one's own, involvement in rather remote events. "Oral family chronicles," stories of elders about the family past are of great importance for a person and for the formation of their ideas about the history and environment. Such stories form the individual memory complementing it with second-order memories in the same extent as directly experienced events (Репина, 2003).

Repina draws attention to the fact that such family chronicles are usually regarded as the basis of **family identity**, but on a personal level, these occasionally or regularly revoked family memories are verbally experienced, *appropriated; they become as an inseparable component of the individual consciousness* (Репина, 2003). The exploring of the role of family and family chronicles, and the way it shapes the historical picture of the respondents is presented in the empirical part of the study.

### ***1.1.2 Features of Collective (and Historical) Memory in Russia***

All countries and their inhabitants have their own history, experience and memory. Let's consider the characteristics that are distinguished by researchers studying the phenomenon of collective memory in Russia. The anthropologist James Wertsch in his work *Blank Spots in Collective Memory: A Case Study of Russia* describes the **mechanism (or the scheme)** according to which many collective memories of Russians are formed, through official narratives and history textbooks (Wertsch, 2008):

- Russia is a peaceful neighbor, which does not interfere in the affairs of other states;
- The enemies are attacking Russia without warning;
- Russia is nearly defeated, and foreign enemies are trying to destroy Russia as a civilization;
- Despite all the difficulties, thanks to the heroism of the citizens, it is possible to expel "foreign enemies" from Russia and thus confirm its status as a great power.

These memories serve as an element of national identity formation. Analyzing the work of Wertsch, the analyst and historian A. Kolesnikov writes that the presence of the "Other", the invader, the attacker is an important element in the historical identification of Russians "by contradiction." He attributes the choice of this form of historical identification to "the legacy of Soviet defense-militarist consciousness which served as a supporting structure of Soviet power throughout the decades of its existence" (Колесников, 2020).

The Russian researcher Ilya Morozov in his article *Historical Memory as a Political Category in Modern Russia* (2020) has formulated several characteristics of modern Russian historical memory:

- The dominance of the model of perception of Russian history as the history of the Russian state (ethnically Russian, Orthodox).
- The short duration of the geopolitical image of the enemy nations with whom there have been conflicts in the past (I. Morozov argues that at present there is no widespread dislike for the Swedes, French, Turks, Japanese, or Germans).
- Presence of post-imperial “traumatic syndrome” caused by “the loss of a world-leading great power (USSR)” and the change of geopolitical orientation of Eastern European countries.
- The tendency towards historical personification of the image of the supreme power, connecting it with a specific figure of the leader.
- Basing information policy on the sacralization of the image of the Victory and the history of World War II (the Great Patriotic War) in general.
- The emergence of historical myths due to the desire to “embellish” historical reality, to treat it as sacred and infallible; according to I. Morozov, such myths can be stable for a certain period of time, but collapse at a later time.
- Territorial imperative: the historical memory of the Russian people is less oriented towards the territorial imperative, in contrast to the political elite.

It is important to remember, that this list of characteristics is neither exhaustive, nor implicit. However, it is curious, if some of these characteristics are applicable to the responders of this research. It is also possible, that some other characteristics would be found and listed.

### ***1.1.3 The Concept of “Nostalgia”***

The concept of “nostalgia” seems also important in the study of the recent history’ perception. The term “nostalgia” was first introduced in 1688. Doctor Johannes Hofer used it to describe a mental illness among soldiers, “severe homesickness.” For two centuries, nostalgia was perceived as an illness or a form of mental disorder that was treated with medication. However, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the attitude to the term and to the phenomenon of nostalgia itself was reconsidered.

Two devastating wars that affected the whole world, followed by spontaneous migration and huge flows of refugees led to the situation where longing for a destroyed house, a city or a whole state “became widespread turning from an individual symptom into a collective

phenomenon” (Kusimova, Shmidt, 2016). The scientific and sociological study of nostalgia as a collective phenomenon begins with the work *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* by Fred Davis. Davis conceptualizes nostalgia as a process that describes not only the experiences of an individual but also the entire social group. In fact, Davis’ study of nostalgia is closely linked to the notion of collective memory (Davis, 1979). In the 20th century, nostalgia receives not only a spatial (longing for a home, a certain place) but also a temporal dimension. (Абрамов, 2012; Boym, 2002) People not only long for places they left behind but also for certain periods. Such longing for the past time is determined by the unattainability of the object of nostalgia: neither the period of life nor the historical epoch can be lived again (Kusimova, Shmidt, 2016).

The researchers Kusimova and Schmidt in their article *Nostalgic Consumption*, argue that the very idea of nostalgia carries a contradiction between “*how it was then*” and “*how it is now.*” Kusimova and Schmidt use the concept of “nostalgic myth” and define it as an idealized image of the past that emerges by negating the present. Further, they refer to the idea of Svetlana Boym, one of the leading researchers of nostalgia in modern science, about two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflexive (Boym, 2002). “Restorative” nostalgia is nostalgia based on regret for the changes that have occurred, it involves a desire to return to the past, to restore it partially or completely. (It is this type of nostalgia that Boym links to the constant search for a mythical enemy, belief in conspiracy theory, etc.). “Reflexive” nostalgia implies longing or dreaming of the past times while realizing that it is impossible to return them (Boym 2001).

#### ***1.1.4 Post-Soviet Nostalgia in Modern Russia***

The fact that nostalgia for the Soviet past in modern Russia is relevant and real is reflected in numerous ways, ranging from statistics and public opinion polls, which were briefly mentioned in the introduction to this study, to the growing popularity of Soviet symbols in marketing and advertising (Kusimova, Shmidt, 2016). Below there are several characteristics of nostalgia for the Soviet and communist past in modern Russia.

Images of the past are actively used not only in advertising of food and public places but also in the media. In the article *The Time and Space of Nostalgia* (2012), R. Abramov argues that nostalgia for the USSR is not only a fashion trend and a social and cultural phenomenon but also “an effective tool for political propaganda and winning the support of voters.” He suggests that the demand for “Soviet” products stimulated the making of documentaries and fiction films showing a “sugar-coated version of the past.” (Абрамов, 2012) Thus, we can

assume that nostalgia is to a certain extent stimulated by representatives of the current government at various levels.

Interestingly, however, later studies of nostalgia interpret longing for the past as an expression of dissatisfaction with the present (including the current political system). Kasamara and Sorokina in their article *The Image of the USSR and Modern Russia in the Perceptions of Student Youth*, show that 36% of their respondents believe that the Soviet political system is better than the present one. Only 17% of students-responders indicate that the current political system is more successful. On the basis of this data, they conclude that “for the relative majority of young Russians, the ideal of social structure is in the past”. In such a case, perhaps nostalgia for the Soviet system is not due to the fact that it was good or seems to be good. Rather, the reason is that the modern system is bad. (Kasamara, Sorokina 2014) It is also fundamentally important to take into account that this is the opinion of young people who never lived in the USSR. However, it is stated in the Sorokina and Kasamara paper, that they provided qualitative research, not quantitative, so it could not be representative, and there is a big chance that responders of the current research have different opinions and attitude.

One of Levada-Center studies on nostalgia for the USSR identified the main reasons why Russians miss the USSR. They were *the destruction of a unified economic system* (52%), *the loss of a sense of belonging to a great power* (36%), and *the growth of mutual distrust and hostility* (31%) (Левада-центр, 2017). The sociologist Karina Pipia, who conducted this and other studies of attitudes to the USSR, argues that the tendency for increased nostalgia for the USSR is becoming more and more noticeable (Пипия, 2018).

A study by Natalia Zorkaya in 2007 revealed another important reason for nostalgia and regret over the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is a firm belief that the collapse of the USSR could (and should) have been avoided:

*“For at least the last decade, the proportion of those who believed that the collapse of the Union could be avoided prevailed over the share of those who thought it to be inevitable (about 2:1). The idea that there was no use in “Gaidar's reforms”, privatization, the collapse of the USSR, the collapse of the socialist camp or perestroika and that these events could and should have been avoided is popular and stable. It “naturally” brings us back to the search for enemies of the people that fell victim to these changes. First, such enemies are found inside the country (Gorbachev, Yeltsin, mafia, criminals, cooperators, oligarchs, democrats). As the country adapts to the new social and political framework of existence, people start looking for external enemies.”* (Зоркая, 2007)

Interestingly, young people themselves explain their longing for the USSR by the fact that a unifying idea is especially important to them and that it's hard for them to grow up without ideals. They envy their grandparents, who were little octobrists and young pioneers and knew exactly what they had to do in order to build a "bright future" (Касамапа, Сорокина, 2014).

In the article *Nostalgia for the Past, What Lessons Young People Could Learn and Actually Learned* (Зоркая, 2007), Natalia Zorkaya argues that the fundamental ideas of modern youth are not too different from those of previous generations, which researchers usually unite under the notion "homo sovieticus." The term "homo sovieticus" appeared and was established as early as in the 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it signified the "new soviet man." This concept of the new man encompassed both the classical Marxist image of the victorious proletariat and the idea of a special destiny of the Russian people. However, in the 80s the meaning of the term changed and became sarcastic as it captured all the main negative traits of the Soviet citizen (Гества К., 2013). In 1989-1991, Yuri Levada with a group of sociologists created a sociogram of "a Soviet Person" on the basis of a questionnaire with more than 100 questions. The questions in this questionnaire addressed attitudes to work, family, religion, love, violence, politics, future, etc. Levada-Center continues this tradition of research to this day and publishes the results of various studies related to values, opinions and memories in the section "a Soviet Person."

In an interview for the Vedomosti newspaper, Lev Gudkov (2016), the head of the Levada Center, outlined the main traits of "homo sovieticus":

*"The Soviet person genetically belongs to the society of mobilization type. Having gone through purges, collectivization, war and mass repression, an acute ideological crisis in the post-Stalin years, a soviet person grew old by the time of the Brezhnev stagnation. Having lost the remnants of the communist faith after many attempts to reform socialism, he replaced them with archaic nationalism and external "orthodoxy," which is rather magical than evangelical. Chronic deficits, poverty, boredom, followed by anxiety over various threats to own life, or the life of their loved ones, were the reasons why this person was most concerned about physical survival."*

It appears that young people, even though they did not experience Soviet times, continue to reproduce "Soviet" values in post-Soviet Russia. Zorkaya also suggests that "the strengthening of regrets about the collapse, romanticization of everything Soviet, especially among young people, who do not know the history that well, may lead to a reassessment or rehabilitation of previously consensual or unacceptable topics in post-Soviet Russia: the justification of Stalin's

repressions, the rewriting of history, the complete devaluation of democratic transformations of the 1990s, etc.” (Зоркая, 2007).

Among other factors spurring nostalgia, sociologists point out the recent (2018) retirement-age increase (“because of the retirement reform, people began to idealize again the country where they retired early and could somehow live with this money”) as well as deteriorating relations with Ukraine (“...realized that Ukraine will not return, and if it does not, then others will not either”). According to the sociologist Zorkaya, “the collapse of the Soviet empire is still present in the mass consciousness as a collective trauma of identity, which was not comprehended, lived, or addressed at the level of society and its institutions,” and this unaddressed trauma is transmitted and reproduced in new generations.

In this chapter the main characteristics of the concept of "collective" and "historical memory" were viewed and analyzed. During the empirical part of the research mainly would be used the “collective memory” concept, that was determined by Maurice Halbwachs. It seems the most relevant when studying recent history perception. Although the definition of “historical memory” also could be used when studying opinions on the USSR in general. Furthermore, based on the studied literature, it can be argued that in this work, the interest of the study is related to "communicative memory" (according to J. Assmann), since the period of interest does not go beyond the time frame of 80-100 years. The phenomenon of nostalgia is also an important part of this research, as would be described later.

## 1.2 Theoretical Analysis of the Perception of History and Its Mythologization in Russia

The topic of historical memory and its peculiarity in Russia was already addressed. In this part of the study, has an aim to present further elaboration and analysis of how modern Russians perceive history in general and recent history in particular, how and why historical myths are formed, and what role the state has in this process. This chapter also describes recent studies about public opinion on the 1990s.

### 1.2.1 *History in the Minds of Russians*

There are two channels for dissemination and reproduction of historical perceptions: formal (through school education, mass media, propaganda, state ceremonies, political work in the army, authorities, commemoration, etc.) and informal, or interpersonal (includes network channels for obtaining alternative or additional ideas and knowledge about the past, such as family perceptions, discussions at work, common myths, etc.) (Гудков, 2007).

The second (informal) channel for reproducing ideas about the history of the past is closely linked to collective memory. In his book *The Past is a Foreign Country*, American historian David Lowenthal writes that in real everyday life a person encounters history through the stories of others (stories told by a spouse, conversations with colleagues or neighbors, etc.) and most of what is heard is stored in memory and perceived as authentic and true. Only when contradictions are found in the disparate evidence, or when the evidence is too improbable, do serious doubts arise as to its credibility. This is the only way when “preserved authentic memories” are subject to analysis and historical criticism by an individual (Lowenthal, 1985). Thus, in everyday life, an average person (the one who is not engaged professionally in history or is not accustomed to perceive information critically) often finds it difficult to separate historical facts from their own memories and retold stories.

Modern channels and practices for reproduction of historical ideas are mostly similar to the Soviet ones and are largely based on them. (Левада-центр, 2000-2020) Therefore, it is important to highlight some characteristics of the Soviet perception of history, or more precisely, the peculiarities of its teaching. In a major report *Time and History in the Minds of Russians*, sociologist Lev Gudkov makes a point that the Soviet school history textbook “in the strict sense was not a *history* textbook, but an illustration of five socio-economic formations of the historical materialism (five socio-economic formations are: the primitive type of society; slavery; feudalism; capitalism; and communism; *author’s note*), based on historic materials and aimed at cultivating the concept of strong regularity and determinism of the past as preceding the events happening in the present” (Гудков, 2010). Gudkov writes that historical education

in the Soviet school only “*embellished* the mythological structures of mass consciousness,” asserting heroic stereotypes about the leaders of the Bolshevik state.

With the beginning of Perestroika, the concept of history and historical truth in the USSR began to change: archives got opened, previously forbidden books were printed and sold. However, this did not last long, and the public sentiments quickly changed to “fatigue from criticizing the Soviet past and digging into it” (Зоркая, 2007). The post-Soviet (new Russian) mass media quickly responded to these changes in public opinion, gradually replacing critical and “complex” matters and reports with “entertainment talk shows and TV series”. Sociologist Zorkaya writes that that “short period of liberal-democratic enlightenment, which only outlined the painful nodes and points of Soviet history and Soviet society, soon exhausted its potential. There was clearly not enough time to understand and analyze the problems that people faced due to the collapse of the Soviet economic and political system” (Зоркая, 2007). The economic plight of the majority of the Russians exacerbated “the matter of historical truth,” people worn by the severity of the present proved to be unprepared to perceive and go through “the negative patterns of the past.” (Remnick, 1993).

Feeling these sentiments, “the new media cultural establishment, in conjunction and contact with the government, *initiates work* to create a positive image of the Soviet past, bringing such simple, innocent and common things as old songs, old movies and favorite characters back to life. As a result, instead of understanding its past, society calmed down with its seemingly innocent stylizations.” N. Zorkaya called this phenomenon “*an escape from history.*”

### 1.2.2 Contemporary “*Status*” of History

In the already mentioned report *Time and History in the Minds of Russians* (2007) published in *The Russian Public Opinion Herald*, Lev Gudkov (Гудков, 2010) closely analyzes and describes how the historical consciousness of Russians is organized. The main points from the report are listed below:

- more than half of Russians (from 50 to 64%) do not have a systematic understanding of history and the general flow of time (according to previous Gudkov’s quantitative researches);
- mass consciousness does not retain 5+ years old events in its “operational memory,” unless they are fixed in educational institutions, propaganda, social ceremonies, etc.;
- historical consciousness represents a set of separate pieces of information and symbols, stereotypes, myths, and patterns of interpretation;

(According to Gudkov, this is attributed to the fact that the unified Soviet system of

propaganda and totalitarian institutions that impose unity of perception and evaluation of the past on the population has partially collapsed, but another one has not emerged. Meanwhile, “there is no effective school system that can support and reproduce common value-based principles of understanding national or world history, without requiring young people to be faithful in the interpretation of facts and processes” in Russia.)

- there are no mechanisms for systematic study, analysis and reflection of history in Russia;
- approximately 70% of Russians believe that there is no objective historical truth; Gudkov blames the Soviet school and propaganda for this level of relativism (and “cynicism”) in Russian society.

Some of these points do sound quite dramatic, maybe even over-dramatic. For example a statement that “more than half of Russians do not have a systematic understanding of history” is a very strong statement, and it is not very clear from what data and sources such a serious conclusion was obtained. So it is important to keep critical approach while using this information. Although these characteristics of history perception in Russia are helpful with shaping the understanding and analysis of attitude and opinion formation of young Russians.

Gudkov describes the position and role of *mass media* in this process as conveying a mediocre and unilateral picture of the past based on the power structure of history. “Mass media neutralize, remove the value-based aspects of history, giving a cold and rather official version of the past... the dependence of mass media on the authorities turns the process of reflection on what is happening into a process of babbling and forgetting, putting the most important aspects of relevance on the sidelines and, on the contrary, preserving the most primitive and conservative myths and stereotypes of understanding events” (Гудков, 2010). According to analyst and historian A. Kolesnikov, knowledge about history has become more simplified recently, and is being replaced by “poster-level propaganda myths”; idealized rhetoric and distorted versions of the important historical events have returned to mass media. As an example, Kolesnikov cites the reemergence and restoration of the myth of German responsibility for the shooting of Polish officers in Katyn (Колесников, 2020).

Concurrently, Russian history lessons in *school* (being the main formal channel for shaping historical ideas) are interpreted as the national history of Russian (ethnically Russian, Orthodox) subjects, basing on the results of the Levada-Center’s research. Thereby, entire periods and thematic sections are omitted, the history of certain territories is not taught, and most importantly, what Gudkov notes, there is no need to know and understand the complexity of the impetus of historical personalities, their interaction, and accept the idea of multidimensionality as reality. Another peculiarity is that simultaneously there are no

alternative interpretations or channels for assessment in relation to the remote historical events (World War I, Civil war). Gudkov also writes that teaching history at school is characterized by the manner of cultivating a great legend told by the authorities, which has an extremely negative impact on the interest of **young people** in the past and “obliterates the personalized sense of history” (Гудков, 2010).

### ***1.2.3 Historical Consciousness of the Young Generation***

There are yet not many researches that are focused specifically on how young people perceive history, but several important facts have been discovered in more general research on public opinion. It is essential to note that the new generations born at the beginning of Perestroika or after the collapse of the USSR “were deprived of tools for reproduction collective memory and experience of the past,” because the teachers themselves were mostly disoriented or unable to understand the events coherently and then explain them to the students. This resulted in the fact that the teaching of recent history for new generations, in fact, was interrupted (Гудков, 2010).

Mass surveys also demonstrate that not all the knowledge of young people about the history of their country is acquired at school. For example, the main source of knowledge about the Stalinist era was not the school, and not the family, but mass media, “and for the majority of the surveyed youth (born in 1976-1989), this was mass media and ***Russian cinematography*** (apparently, first of all TV series) circa the 1990s — early 2000s.” (Зоркая, 2007).

When discussing the image of the Soviet Union, the majority of young people think of its late “Brezhnev period,” describing it as positive and peaceful (Гудков, Дубин, Зоркая, 2011). Researchers claim that this image is based on the stories of parents who grew up at that time. Moreover, surveys also show that young people far less frequently discuss the Soviet times with their grandparents. Researchers attribute this fact to the lack of a deep “family memory” of Stalinist repressions (Гудков, Дубин, Зоркая, 2011).

Students do not have a comprehensive view of the Soviet time. Researcher I.V. Glushchenko conducted a study in a form of essays about everyday life in the Soviet Union among students born in 1991. The results show that the ideas of youth about the USSR are similar to a “mosaic” consisting, first of all, of common cliches (increased educational scholarship, trade union vouchers, carpets, etc.). Among the main sources that provide young people with ideas about the USSR, Glushchenko singles out stories of relatives, television shows, and items of the Soviet time surrounding them in everyday life (Глущенко, 2012).

#### *1.2.4 Sociological data about Russian Youth' opinion on the 1990s*

As for the ideas of young Russians directly about the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 90s, due to several quantitative sociological surveys (ФОМ, 2015; Левада-центр, 2013; Левада-центр, 2015; Левада-центр, 2020), it is possible now to describe some of its characteristics:

- According to the Levada Center, 40% of young Russian people cannot meaningfully define what the 1991 August Coup is and formulate their attitude towards it. For them, sociologists say, this event becomes some kind of historical “legend”
- 36% of young Russians believe that the August Coup is "a tragic event that had disastrous consequences for the country and the people"
- According to the Public Opinion Foundation (2015), 49% of Russian youth believe that modern Russian society is more fair than it was in the 90s. And 45% believe that young people had fewer opportunities and chances to achieve success in life in the 90s than in modern Russia.
- At the same time, 40% of young people think that this period of history was a good time for their family, and 37% think that it was bad. This data shows quite a "separation" in the young part of society in their perception of the 90s. It is also worth noting that according to the FOM, young people have more “positive” ideas about the 90s than all other age groups.
- The majority (59%) of young people considers the level of safety in the 90s as low. Although according to 13%, the level of security in Russia is now the same as it was in the 90s.
- 44% of young Russians believe that Russia's “international standing” was worse in the 90s than it is now. And Boris Yeltsin, according to 56% of young people, did more harm than good for Russia.
- According to the most recent polls provided by the Levada Center (2020), 53% of young people think that the 90s brought to the country more bad than good. Among other age groups, the percentages are even higher.

This data is interesting, although it is difficult to draw detailed meaningful conclusions from it. However, it would be definitely useful for the empirical part of this diploma research work, as that it could be used to formulate research assumptions. While conducting in-depth interviews, it is interesting to learn more about what is behind that opinions of young Russians.

### ***1.2.5 The Role of the State in Shaping the Perception of History and Modern Historical Policy of Russia***

Since it is the historical policy of the state that determines the mass consciousness, it is essential to mention the role of the state in shaping the historical narrative in order to ensure full understanding of the situation in which “history finds itself” in Russia. (Колесников, 2020)

The “historical policy” of modern Russia is similar to the historical policy of the USSR that preceded it. The system of power that emerged as a result of the reorganization of the Soviet system did not change the basic attitudes of an average person. In modern Russia, the work and functions of “historical material” are determined by the geopolitical objectives, the protection of territorial integrity (or expansion of territories), as well as the need to socialize the younger generation and preserve the anthropological unity of the “national man,” the interpretation of knowledge in a unified form and spirit (Гудков, 2007).

According to political analysts, since the middle of the 2010s the Russian state historical policy and, as its part, the politics of memory have become more “aggressive and offensive.” It involves the refusal to discuss “controversial issues of history,” and is significantly different from other countries because of “the high degree of politicization and mythologization of historical events.”

Among political analysts specializing in modern Russian politics, there is an opinion that “in personalized Russian politics, the influence of the first person—President Vladimir Putin—is crucial. He is the central historian and it is him who mainly interprets history. The main source of messages on the interpretation of history, coming from the very top of the socio-political hierarchy is Putin’s participation in the ceremonies of commemoration and mythologization of history, such as, the Victory Parade, the processions of The Immortal Regiment, meetings with a historical agenda (for example, *Victory* organizing committee)” (Колесников, 2020). Besides, according to A. Kolesnikov, the historical ideas of an average Russian basically constitute the historical consciousness of the first person of the state. The role of Vladimir Putin in shaping the historical perceptions of Russians is not the subject of this study, thus it is unnecessary to delve into further analysis, though mentioning such a point and the view of an analyst seems to be relevant and necessary for further work.

### ***1.2.6 Myths and Mythologization of the Modern History of Russia***

We have already referred to the concepts of “myths in history” and “mythologization” several times. At this point, it is essential to focus on defining them and listing the distinguishing features, as well as describing some of the peculiarities of Russian historical myths.

Myths are the original, most primitive form of perception and representation of the past (Репина, 2003), as well as the most stable component of modern mass consciousness. (Зубок, 2016) With the development of societies, myth becomes replaced by historical science, but it has not completely overshadowed the previous (mythical) forms. This is attributed to the fact that “religion, literature, and art continue to play a significant role in shaping historical consciousness (Репина, 2003),” which leads to the increasing role of myths and their gain in popularity.

The historical myth is a picture of the events of the past that is simplified, inaccurate, but convenient for the mass consciousness to comprehend (Белов, 2018). This definition of the "*myth*" going to be primarily used in the research work. According to Belov, myth is, first of all, much more attractive for mass audience than the scientific model of history. And, secondly, the mythical version of events of the past is based not on abstract facts appealing to rational consciousness, but on an emotionally charged and easily visualized set of **symbols**. It allows the myth to effectively influence the mass consciousness, as well as ensures increased resistance to criticism. Belov notes that historical myth is considerably similar to quasi-religions, because it provides its bearers with faith rather than knowledge. This is why attempts to debunk the historical myth with facts and scientific means often fail to succeed.

It is worth mentioning that in his book *The Time of Change: The Researcher's Stance*, sociologist Yuri Levada, who was working on the issue of historical consciousness for many years, states that “the function of science is not to debunk legends, but to explain the public needs that led to the formation and domination of these particular products of mythological consciousness, in the analysis of conditions that lead or may lead to a reassessment of myths” (Левада, 2016). Therefore, in this study, was conducted an attempt to understand what underlies the myths about the collapse of the USSR and about the 1990s in Russia.

Speaking about the influence of myths on history and shaping of people's historical ideas, it is worth noting that according to some historians, there is a problem of shifting the focus of attention and interest from facts to opinions in the modern world. It is publicistic text and publicists that are gaining popularity, not scientific historical works (Зубок, 2016). This also contributes to the expansion and strengthening of various historical myths.

It is interesting that not only distant history, which direct witnesses are no longer alive, but also of a relatively recent one (the events that happened 20-30 years ago) is subject to mythologization. Many researchers (sociologists, political scientists, historians) write that the ideas about the history of the USSR and post-Soviet Russia are considerably mythologized or currently being mythologized (Гудков, 2010; Колесников, 2020; Левада, 2016; Малинова,

2019).

While examining a large number of studies, it was discovered that myths are divided into two groups: specific stories (“the myth of Panfilov’s 28 Guardsmen”) and general aggregated and collective images (“criminals in crimson jackets in the 1990s” or “Gaidar robbing the people”). It is necessary to note that the myths of the first group are typical of a more distant historical period, while myths of the second group characterize the recent one, for example, the period of Perestroika and the following 1990s.

Speaking about the state of mass consciousness in Russia, let’s refer once again to Lev Gudkov’s report on the history in the minds of Russians, in which he concludes that **“modern mass historical consciousness is a set of separate information and symbols, stereotypes, patterns of interpretation.** In fact, it is a bunch of single events and interpretations, myths and stereotypes of the past without any coherent interpretation and narration” (Гудков, 2010).

The position of authorities also plays a certain role in the prevalence of historical myths. We have already touched upon the issue of the state’s “historical policy,” and one of its components is the interaction with historical myths. In general terms, we can state that representatives of modern government are more interested in maintaining “positive” historical myths. In an interview with BBC, Lev Gudkov, the head of the Levada-Center, said that myths (about the war) were created simply because this was the state policy of historical memory, “and no structure, no public organizations can compete with it. There is no public discussion about this, so it does not go beyond this level of authority to other channels of reproduction of historical knowledge itself” (Гудков, 2016).

It is necessary to mention that the historical policy and attitude to “myths in history” are not concealed. For example, in 2016, Russian Minister of Education Olga Vasilyeva (2016-2018) said that she considered the teaching of history subjective and that “history cannot do without mythologization, because the people need heroes” (Интерфакс, 2016). The same year, Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinskiy (Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation from 2012 to 2018) wrote an article responding to criticism of his dissertation on the objectivity of history, that myths and legends were more important than facts and that they formed the national identity of Russians (BBC, 2016).

Russian historians and political scientists speak out against this approach, fearing a historical policy that “deliberately cultivates pride for the bleached dark pages of history and atrocity of state power.” (Жарков, Колесников, Рубцов 2017) .In their report *What Past is Needed for the Future of Russia*, V. Zharkov, A. Kolesnikov and A. Rubtsov express the idea that the authors and performers of the official (state) historical discourse legitimize the

authoritarian practices of the current political regime by the means of sacralization of state power, reducing history to the deeds of tsars, leaders and generals, and referring to the people as to “an expendable material of great history.”

### *1.2.7 Mythologization of the 1990s*

In addition to World War II (Great Patriotic War), the popular period of mythologizing the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the 1990s period. Having studied a range of sources, we have come up with two kinds of mythologization of the 1990s: *state* and *cultural*.

**The state narrative**, and the mythologization of the 1990s come primarily from the high-ranking officials. Olga Malinova, a professor of the HSE Department of Social Sciences, has examined and analyzed numerous statements made by Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev about the 1990s and has come to several conclusions (Малинова, 2019):

- The percentage of the negative statements made by Putin about the 1990s during all periods of his presidency is considerably large and ranges from 43 to 48%, while the positive ones account only for 11-18%. During the first presidential term, when Putin was Yeltsin’s proximate successor, Vladimir Putin frequently spoke about the 1990’s in a positive way. Nevertheless, after a while, “having secured his own power, he became more confident in building his political profile in contrast to the 1990’s, insisting that the freedom and democracy of the 90’s were improper, not the ones that were necessary.”
- During Vladimir Putin’s third presidential term, the number of comments in the “never again” discourse has become even more considerable than in the previous one. “The 1990s remained a useful negative example for Putin. Going back to the 1990s was not an option, it was necessary to avoid the recurrence at any cost. He often compared the 1990s with modern Ukraine.”
- The way Vladimir Putin uses the contrast of the modern time to the 90s can be divided into three types: the use of *symbolic words*, especially the frequent reference to the symbol of the modern “strong state” as opposed to the previous “weak state,” as well as to the symbol of “stability.” Malinova notes that this word was conveniently chosen at the beginning of the 2000s. Comparing with the turbulence of the transition period of the 1990s, the stability of the 2000s was perceived as an advantageous and positive characteristic. The second type is “populist” rhetoric and *demonstration of concern for people* in contrast to previous politicians from the 1990s. And the last one is the form of repeating the thesis that goes from speech to speech, from one interview to another.

“Putin resorts to using the same narrative structures, which clearly demonstrates a selective approach to the material.”

- Dmitry Medvedev also quite frequently referred to the troubled 1990s to support the idea about the positivity of the “present moment,” but was less critical: in 60% of cases Medvedev spoke about the 1990s in a positive way.

These types have been supplemented by another one in the recent years, namely, **the heroization of the Russian people**, who went through the hardships of the 1990s. In his rhetoric, V. Putin almost equates the 1990s with wartime:

“What the Russian people endured in the 1990’s can be called a *feat*.” (В. Путин, большая пресс-конференция, 2019)

“I hope that these *calamitous years*, the mid-1990s, and the most tragic year of 1995, will never happen in our history again.” (Военное совещание в Казани, 2019)

“Back [in the 90s] we could have dropped into the abyss of a large-scale civil war, forfeited state unity and sovereignty and found ourselves on the periphery of world politics. And only thanks to *the exceptional patriotism, courage, extraordinary patience and diligence of the Russian people and other peoples of Russia*, our country was pushed away from this dangerous path.” (Выступление В. Путина в международном дискуссионном клубе «Валдай», 2019)

If reliance is placed in the previously mentioned thesis of Andrey Kolesnikov, that “the historical ideas of the average Russian basically constitute the historical consciousness of the first person of the state,” it is possible that the views of Russians about the 1990s are similar to the views of V. Putin, articulated above. It would be interesting to come across identical wording in the course of interviews with young people in Moscow, Kazan and Novosibirsk. According to liberal analysts, such “negative” rhetoric and constant criticism of the recent past are opted for to emphasize their own progress, even if “these achievements to a large extent are either rooted in the same 1990s, or based on oil prosperity.” (Назаров, Родионов 2012) The incumbent government officials also tend to blame the problems of modern Russia on the 1990s. For example, during Direct Line with Vladimir Putin in 2019, Vladimir Putin said that the debts of the 1990s hindered Russia’s development (Прямая линия, 2019). Earlier in 2016, Putin claimed that “...in the mid-90s, when everyone was filled with promise and no one fulfilled anything, we simply destroyed the economy, social sphere and budget process.” (РИА-Новости, 2016).

Analyzing the current policy of memory, A. Kolesnikov names the concept of the “dashing nineties” a *collective imaginary trauma*. According to Kolesnikov, the recovery from the absolute chaos that followed “the collapse of the USSR” plays an important role in maintaining the legitimacy of modern power, including its status in the eyes of new generations:

“Presenting the 1990s as a trauma, even for those generations who cannot remember this time due to age, mind manipulators involve huge masses of people in the joint emotional stress of this trauma... The misrepresentation of the 1990s, perceiving them as a time of humiliation and collapse, penetrated deeply into the collective unconscious of the nation. Characteristics of the 1990s were preserved in the set expressions, such as, dashing, lawless. Young generations perceive the mythology of this collective imaginary trauma as a given” (Колесников, 2020). Author of the research cannot fully agree with this statement, because while interviewing different young people, there were found several personal stories, that showed that for some families 1990s were a bitter hard time and even the responders who were kids at that moment, remember these tough times themselves and talk about it very sensitively. It is hard to say if this experience of the responders and their families from 1990s could be considered as trauma or not, but it seems quite dismissive to use the word “imaginary”.

In the course of the empirical part of this study, author attempts to find out exactly how the younger generations perceive and reproduce (if they reproduce) the myths about the 90s.

Various emerging works of art and culture serve as examples of **cultural mythologization** of the 1990s. This includes not only the usual movie format (фильм «Бык», 2019), but also new manifestations, such as video sketches (actor and video blogger Anton Lapenko shoots short video sketches in the style of the 1990s; his Instagram account ([Instagram-channel](#) is followed by more than 4.5 million people) or festivals (Island of the 90s festival («[Остров 90-х](#)», held by Colta publishing house in 2015 in Gorky Park). We can attribute all these cultural manifestations to a part of the mythologization process due to the active usage of visualized symbols that sometimes evoke strong emotions, simplifications, and by display of a “popularized image of the epoch.”

When researchers study myths about the 1990s, they often imply a set of negative images and complaints primarily addressed to the country’s leaders of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2012, Vladimir Nazarov and Kirill Rodionov created an anthology *Myths about the 90s: Anatomy of a Lie*. They collected and tried to debunk the most common “myths-complaints” against the government of the New Russia, and in particular, to Yegor Gaidar. (<http://myths.gaidarfund.ru/articles/1443/>) The most famous of them are, perhaps, the myths about the despoliation of the people by the government of Gaidar (namely, the financial reform

and the loss of savings deposited in the saving books), “the 1998 crisis was deliberately arranged by Gaidar,” “Gaidar’s team intentionally chose burglarious way of privatization.” A few more similar myths are addressed to Yeltsin, who “almost drank the country away,” and Gorbachev, “who dismantled the USSR”.

This chapter presented the main characteristics of the attitude among Russians to history in general, and also the opinions of young Russians about the Soviet Union, its collapse and the following 1990s. There were some aspects of state historical policy described as well. All this is necessary in order to take into account the realities of modern Russia, when empirical research results are obtained.

## Part 2. Research design and methodology

### 2.1. Purpose and research tasks

The main purpose of this research is to define *specifics and types of the attitude, the opinion* of young Russians about the fall of the USSR and the 90s, to describe specifics of their recent history' perception and also to determine *what forms* it.

In order to achieve this purpose, it was necessary to find the answers to the following research tasks:

**Task 1. To complete groups of images and ideas about the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s.**

To accomplish this task, we attempted to describe what the responders think about this period of time, group and organize these views.

When creating groups of images, we were focused on what symbols are present in the replies of responders. We know that what is symbolic in collective memory is transmitted through the memory of events (Barash, 2016), so among other things we have asked, among other things, about specific events (e.g. Did your parents tell you about how the collapse of the Soviet Union happened or how did they found out about it?). We also looked for those events that form collective memory of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 1990s in the narratives of responders and attempted to group them.

**Task 2. To specify the characteristics of the information that respondents receive from the family, media, school and cultural institutions.**

The formation of opinion and attitudes is influenced by all these institutions (Britannica, 2020), so we attempted to identify and then group the information that the responders learn about the 90s and the collapse of the Soviet Union from the family, schools (general secondary education), the media, works of culture and art.

When working with literature, we found out that young people are more likely to learn about difficult periods in the history of the USSR (e.g. Stalin's repressions) from the media than from school or relatives (Гудков, 2010). At the same time, "family chronicles" play a huge role in shaping the collective memory of historical events. (Репина, 2003) Thus, it seemed interesting to examine the sources of ideas about the period of this research' interest.

In the course of this task, it was also interesting to study how the characteristics of transmission of information in the family change depending on the age of the responder. For instance, if he or she witnessed the 90s as a child or if he or she perceived the information as part of the "*family chronicles.*"

**Task 3. To find out what myths about the USSR, its collapse and the 90s are present in the narratives of responders.**

To carry out this task, we attempted to identify, list and analyze the mythological ideas of young people about the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 1990s. Several methods were used to determine which historical myths respondents believe in. Direct/indirect questions about the time and an association task were used. The guided interview will include a task with the cards on which the word-triggers or word-symbols that are somehow connected with the collapse of the USSR and the 90s are written. These words will include words with neutral (“Yeltsin,” “Gaidar”), positive (“freedom,” “new opportunities”) and negative (“uncertainty,” “famine,” “loss of republics”) connotation. We will ask the responders to choose the cards they associate most with the collapse of the USSR and the 90s, and then ask them why they chose them. Since myths are associated with bright images and symbols (Белов, 2018), we assumed that if there is a myth in a person’s mind associated with the name/word on the card, he or she would most likely draw it. Words were chosen on the basis of a study of myths about the 90s by the Yegor Gaidar Foundation (Назаров, Родионов, 2012), V. Kasamara and A. Sorokina’s research on the syndrome of political nostalgia (2014), Levinson’s research on public opinion in the 90s (polls were conducted in the early 1990s) as well as the author’s own observations on what images are common in the Russian information space. This task and using of cards were based on the vignette method. We assumed that the use of associative questions and their further “detwisting” would make it possible to find out which of the existing myths are present in the historical notions of Russians and to discover new ones. It is often stated that the recent history of Russia is “mythologized,” but it is rarely specified what exactly turns into myths.

As part of this task, it was interesting to see whether we encounter the ideas and expressions used by government representatives, that we described earlier in the section “Mythologization of the 90s,” in the views of young Russians (Колесников 2020, Малинова 2019).

**Task 4. To name types of attitude formation towards the collapse of the USSR and the 90s.**

The approach was based on the general narrative of the interview and did not involve special questions in the guide. To solve the problem we attempted to construct, list and name several types. Within the grounded theory used in qualitative method of research, we did not make detailed assumptions about what types we might have come across.

## 2.2 Research object, data and sample

The object of this study are young people (born in 1985 and later) from Moscow, Kazan, and Novosibirsk whose professions influence shaping of public opinion.

### 2.2.1 Defining the Parameters of “An Ideal Responder”

The sample of this study was formed on the basis of several criteria:

#### 1) Age

The initial interest of the author was to study how the collapse of the USSR and the 90s are perceived by those who did not experience this period and events at all (or were quite young). It was decided to choose two age groups:

**Group 1 (“senior”)** includes people born *before 1991* and, accordingly, before the collapse of the USSR, but who were still very young children then (did not go to school). This group includes responders born between 1985 and 1990. The year 1985 was not chosen by chance: there is an assumption that the children born earlier were already attending school in 1991. According to the socialization theory, they were on another level of socialization, perceiving information and forming ideas about the world around them not only through the family but also through interaction with classmates, teachers, etc. (Mead, 1934).

**Group 2 (“junior”)** consists of people born *after 1991*, i.e. after the collapse of the USSR, and who did not witness the collapse of the USSR at all. This group includes responders born between 1992 and 1997. The boundary of 1997 was chosen due to the fact that we are interested in young specialists who have already graduated and have at least one year of experience in their chosen profession. Thus, these are people born before 1997 inclusively.

Two similar but still different age groups of responders create different variables, which is interesting for analysis because, on the one hand, we have representatives of the same generation, but, on the other hand, perception of the same phenomenon of the interest may be different.

#### 2) Occupation

On the one hand, there was an interest to study what young people think, and on the other hand, to find out what information and ideas will be broadcast to other people. For this reason, it was decided to conduct interviews with those whose work influences the opinion formation of many members of society. So in this study, we focused on **journalists**, **teachers** and various **public figures** (e.g. theatre critics, bloggers, young politicians). According to Encyclopedia Britannica, most pervasive is the influence of the social

environment: family, friends, neighborhood, place of work, church, or **school**. Less influential, but still significant are **mass media**, interest groups and **opinion makers**. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020)

There was an attempt to focus on teachers of humanitarian subjects, journalists from differently orientated media, and public figures, focused on social, educational, political issues.

### 3) **City of residence**

In order to make the data less homogeneous, it was decided to conduct interviews in different Russian cities. We were interested in studying the opinions of young residents of Moscow, Novosibirsk, and Kazan.

**Moscow** is of interest to us because it is the capital and center of Russia, the largest, richest and one of the most “educated” cities in Russia. Often it is in Moscow that social trends are formed, which then spread to other cities and regions. Due to Russia’s focus on centralization, it is particularly important for us to include Moscow in this study.

**Kazan** is the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, where Orthodox and Islamic cultures are intertwined, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Russia (сайт города Казань, 2020). From the research point of view, it is interesting to see how the same period of time is perceived in the multinational city and the capital of the republic.

**Novosibirsk** is a major regional city and administrative center of Siberian Federal District. It is curious to see what opinions and practices exist in the regional center, which is very far from Moscow.

The three selected cities differ in their administrative status, geographical location, and economic wealth. All three, however, belong to the so-called “first Russia” (based on the concept of Natalia Zubarevich’s “four Russias”). These are cities where the educated and middle classes live (Зубаревич, 2011).

#### ***2.2.2 Interviewing and responders***

The snowball method with several entry points was used to recruit responders. The result was a collection of **35 in-depth individual interviews** with an average duration of 59 minutes. Most often the interviews took place in a cafe or in the responders’ offices, and twice the interviews took place at the responder’s home (the researcher was invited to visit).

All interviews were conducted by the author of the study. The minimal age difference between the interviewer (the author of the research) and the responders helped in conducting the interview: it relieved tension and allowed the responders to relax rather quickly, answer questions in detail and with interest, admit that they have no idea about many things.

For clarity and convenience, all information about the selection criteria and the number of responders in each of the subgroups is summarized in Table 1. All basic information about responders and interviewees can be found in Table 2.

Table 1

**Interviews**

City	Age group	Journalists		Teachers		Public figures		Totals	Age group totals
		Total number of responders	Number of responders in each age group	Total number of responders	Number of responders in each age group	Total number of responders	Number of responders in each age group		
Moscow	Group 1 (1985-1991)	7	2	6	2	1	1	14	5
	Group 2 (1992-1997)		5		4		0		9
Kazan	Group 1 (1985-1991)	4	3	4	2	5	3	13	8
	Group 2 (1992-1997)		1		2		2		5
Novo-sibirsk	Group 1 (1985-1991)	3	3	4	1	1	0	8	4
	Group 2 (1992-1997)		0		3		1		4
<b>Totals</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>14</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>35</b>	17 18

Table 2

**Description of the interviews and the responders**

city		Description (profession, sex)	Birth year /age group	Interview length	Interview location
Moscow	1	Journalist "Current time" (f)	1996/ 2	47m	Coffee shop
	2	Journalist-freelancer (f)	1989/ 1	1h06m	Coffee place
	3	Journalist/ video-operator "Russia 1" (m)	1986/ 1	1h25m	Office room at "Russia 1" HQ
	4	Journalist Sputnik (f)	1994/ 2	59m	Coffee place
	5	Journalist Sputnik (f)	1995/2	38m	Coffee place
	6	Journalist Sputnik (m)	1992/2	32m	Restaurant
	7	Journalist Sputnik (m)	1995/2	Approx.50m	Coffee place
	8	Blogger-public figure (f)	1990/1	47m	Coffee place
	9	Lyceum teacher (f)	1993/2	59m	Restaurant
	10	Teacher of Russian language and literature (m)	1992/2	1h12m	Coffee place
	11	Pre-school teacher (f)	1987/1	1h06m	Responder's apartment
	12	University teacher and corporate trainer	1988/1	48m	Coffee place
	13	Elementary Jewish-school teacher (m)	1994/2	1h35m	Coffee place
	14	School organizer-teacher (f)	1994/2	45m	Coffee shop

Kazan (Tatarstan)	15	Social science collage teacher (f)	1989/1	1h18m	Restaurant
	16	Teacher (f)	1992/2	2h7m	Responder's apartment
	17	Youth policy worker(f)	1996/2	40m	University hall
	18	University youth worker (m)	1991/1	1h5m	Foodcourt
	19	Journalist "Radio Liberty" (m)	1990/1	38m	Coffee place
	20	Journalist "INDE" (m)	1990/1	1h09m	Coffee place
	21	Journalist Radio Liberty (f)	1991/1	51m	Coffee place
	22	Journalist "INDE"(f)	1992/2	1h08m	News room
	23	Theatre public figure (f)	1990/1	1h01m	Coffee place
	24	Writing teacher and publisher (f)	1989/1	58m	Coffee place
	25	Political and public figure (m)	1994/2	50m	Food court
	26	Blogger and columnist (f)	1994/2	40m	Coffee place
	27	Producer and activist (f)	1988/1	1h02m	Coffee place
	Novosibirsk	28	Journalist and SMM specialist (m)	1990/1	39m
29		Journalist "Tayga Info" (m)	1985/1	50m	News room
30		Journalist and press-secretary(f)	1987/1	52m	Coffee shop
31		Antropology teacher (f)	1994/2	40m	Coffee place
32		Marketing and data analysis teacher (f)	1992/2	1 h10m	University hall
33		University teacher (m)	1986/1	1h11m	Coffee place
34		School teacher (f)	1993/2	46m	Coffee place
35		Political figure "United Russia" (m)	1993/2	1h04m	Office

### 2.3 Analytical strategy

This sociological research is based on qualitative method, that gives us an opportunity to conduct the in-depth interviews and to discover new, previously unknown concepts and features in the field of history perception and attitude formation of young Russians. The limitation of this method is that the results cannot be considered as representative. We are not able to transfer our results from 35 young people to the whole Russian Youth. That is why this research has an exploratory function, it's goal is to find that type of information that could not be received from questionnaire surveys (and quantitative method).

The analysis of empirical data collected during semi-formal interviews is based on elements of a grounded theory. The core of the grounded theory is in the construction of theories through methodical gathering and analysis of data (Charmaz, 2006). For the convenience of data analysis was chosen principle of selective received data coding.

### 2.4 Methodological reflection

During the data collection process, it became obvious that would not be possible to fully stick to the original plan of data collecting.

For example, it turned out to be very difficult to find and arrange interviews with bloggers. Contacts obtained through recommendations and snowball technique were most often bloggers focusing on lifestyle, beauty, etc. They did not discuss history, social problems, politics, etc. with their followers. The author of the research managed to find several bloggers

who might be of interest for this research, but they did not respond to the requests. Also, bloggers often refused to participate in interviews due to the lack of knowledge about the historical period of interest, and the researcher's attempts to explain that the interviews would be not about their knowledge but about their opinions did not always work out.

Although the author did not set out to interview only teachers of history and social studies, which is a school subject directly related to the topic of research (there was a general reference point for teachers of humanities), it is still a pity that no young school teachers of history could be interviewed in any of the cities. It is probably related to the fact that normally there is only 1 or 2 teachers of this subject in one school (for reference, there are usually 3–4 teachers of Russian), and the majority of positions can still be occupied by teachers of older generations. Another explanation could be that the author simply did not manage to reach those young teachers.

However, the successful part is, that there was a chance to talk to journalists of mass media that are often called pro-governmental (*Sputnik, Russia 1*) as well as to a young politician from *United Russia* party engaged in youth policy. Initially, it seemed that journalists working in state or pro-governmental media would not be willing to discuss such a sensitive topic, especially with a researcher from another country. What is more, it was not clear how to contact them. However, it turned out that it was quite feasible with the help of several acquaintances. Moreover, almost all the responders-employees of both *Sputnik* and *Russia 1* were quite open to being contacted. A few responders asked not to publish the whole interview and not to indicate their name. Only one of the responders (responder No. 7), a *Sputnik* journalist, refused to be recorded since “he doesn't trust voice recorders.” The interviewer documented this interview in writing.

In general, it can be said that there were no critical problems with data collection, except in Novosibirsk. It was only possible to collect few interviews because there were initially fewer entry points (the author of the research was in the city for the first time and had relatively few contacts there). In addition, the time of the trip to Novosibirsk coincided with the two-day state holiday, which led to several initial agreements being broken due to the fact that responders left the city, and there were not enough resources (contacts) or time (it was not possible to change the return ticket) to find new responders. Although if there would be a chance to continue research within the scope of thesis research, it will be possible to gather more data, for example via online interviews, but this would require additional work on the task with cards because it would have to be moved into an interactive online format.

### **Part 3. Research findings and results**

This section describes the key findings of the study. They are presented in the form of responses to four initially stated tasks. The analysis also revealed several specific features that do not correspond to the initially stated tasks and would be interesting to describe further.

The interviews took place in three different cities (geographically remote from each other, with different administrative status and ethnic composition), but interestingly, there was no fundamental difference and clear distinction between the opinions of young people. A relatively wide range of views and ideas was represented in each city. There were people with fairly well-structured historical mindset, as well as people with stereotypical and mythologized ideas in every city (in Moscow, Kazan, and Novosibirsk).

It is worth noting, however, that Kazan still has its own peculiar features regarding some topics. The first one is the perception of the concept and phenomenon of *banditry* in Kazan. Already during the interview, the author of the study learned that the issue of banditry and organized criminal groups was relevant in the Republic of Tatarstan (of which Kazan is the capital) until the middle of the 2010s. Banditry for Kazan in this context was not part of the vision of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but a visible element of reality. In the following chapters we will discuss the concept of banditry in greater detail. The second feature is the significance and specifics of the perception of the Chechen wars in Tatarstan. It is related to the struggle of the first President of Tatarstan for independence and autonomy for the Republic in the 1990s, approximately at the same time period when Chechen residents tried to gain independence and secession. Among Kazan residents, there is a particular myth concerning this issue, that we will touch upon in the next chapter.

#### **3.1 The Images of the Collapse of the USSR and the 1990s**

The task underlying this chapter is compiling and describing the key images of the mentioned period that were derived from the collected interviews. We managed to describe the way young people perceived the collapse of the USSR, and form several groups of impressions of the 1990s.

##### ***3.1.1 The Image of the Collapse of the USSR***

In formulating this task, we relied on Barash's theory about the role of symbols in collective memory, and on the fact that the symbolic is transmitted through the memory of events. That is why, we were most interested in what events our responders associated with the collapse of the USSR, what their parents or other relatives told them about the collapse, and what events they described it through.

It turned out that the older relatives hardly ever talked about how the collapse of the USSR happened, this topic was not raised within the family circle, none of the responders' parents shared how they found out that the country had collapsed. (It was interesting to hear that many responders admitted after the interview that they became curious, and would want to check it with their parents). And the vision of how the collapse of the USSR was unfolding are very vague and sometimes mythologized:

*«Несколько мужиков собрались, похихикали, расписали каждый себе доли бывшего СССР и будущие свои владения» [Interview 35, Novosibirsk]*

Specific ideas, in turn, were shared by those people whose family members, older friends or colleagues were direct participants of important events, or the responders themselves witnessed some of the events as children. For example, one responder said that on one of the days of the coup while she was walking in the Neskuchny garden with her older sister (close to the house they lived in back then), they almost ran into a column of demonstrators:

ко от которого они тогда жили, и практически наткнулась на колонну демонстрантов:

*«Когда был путч, когда стреляли, танки, все такое прочее, мы жили около Нескучного сада. Мы пошли с сестрой гулять. И, в общем, огромная толпа демонстрантов шла. Мы были маленькие. Соответственно, если мне лет пять, то ей 19. И мы гуляли, и на нас вот эта огромная толпа шла. В общем, мы отскочили в сторону. То есть она нас спрятала в кусты Нескучного сада, потому что в тот момент мы не понимали, кто это. И мы отрезаны. То есть надо перейти Ленинградский проспект, а по нему шли толпой люди. И, в общем, мы прятались. Но для нас это было такое, что, типа, мы столько играли в шпионов, и вот наше время! Правый, левый фланг идет! А нам надо было перебежать сквозь толпу, чтобы попасть домой. В общем, для старшей сестры это был прямо очень большой шок и стресс, хотя мы веселились от души. Лучший день в моей жизни...А, нет, потом еще мы домой пришли, и мне впервые дали гранат попробовать. И я помню, мы сидели, смотрели по телику, как едут танки. И меня не пустили в садик. Я сидела дома, ела гранат и думала: Господи, спасибо тебе большое за этот день, он просто охрененный! Тут танки, тут гранат! Это все интересно в этой жизни! Это просто нереально, захлебнуться можно. То есть это счастье все мне. [Interview 11, Moscow]*

(\*We are not able to check exactly on what day of the coup it happened and which demonstration it was, so we will rely on the responder's memory. But there is a possibility that the events of 1991 may be at least partially confused with the events of 1993. This is attributed to the fact that in 1991, tanks wouldn't be shown on TV, since Swan Lake ballet was shown on all channels without any interruption during those days (Лозо, 2014)).

There were other stories, especially among journalists whose senior colleagues worked on the site of important events in the 1990s. In such cases, the responders clearly expressed and formulated their ideas about the collapse of the USSR and the processes that accompanied it.

All comprehensive impressions of the collapse of the Soviet Union that we gathered, were related to August 1991 (the attempted coup), which were sometimes confused with the fall of 1993. “The shooting of the White house” is definitely a strong **symbol** (although generally inaccurate) of the collapse of the Soviet Union for the young people we interviewed.

*«Это именно восприятие, которое было по учебникам, по истории, это **символ**. Если о картине временной линейки, которую я себе представляю, то где-то между пирамидами и Илоном Маском будет **обстрел Белого дома**».* [Interview 3, Moscow]

*«Интервьюер: Как тебе кажется, какие временные рамки у 90-х? Когда они начинаются и когда заканчиваются? Информант 34: ...мне кажется, я скажу очевидные вещи – с **1993-го, с распада, и заканчивая 1999-м годом**»* [Interview 34, Novosibirsk]

In other cases, when there was no direct participation in the events or observation of them, the relatives never shared how they found out or what they were doing at that moment. Thus, following Barash’s logic, this event was not recorded in their memory as important and significant, and was not transmitted into a collective memory.

There were, however, examples of how parents, realizing that the collapse occurred, noticed it over time. And this idea, in its turn, was transmitted through family memory and chronicles, leaving an imprint on the younger generation and creating an impression of the emergence of a new country:

*«Родители говорят, что в какой-то момент, когда развалился Советский Союз и ничего не было понятно, поэтому спокойно ездили туда-сюда, на Украину. Потом – раз, и появились пограничники. Это был такой резкий момент. Мы такие: «Что, уже все? Вот так?» Это осознание того, что уже все, это другая страна, наверное, тогда пришло. Даже не другая страна, а что это **взаправду, это действительно так. Это часто папа вспоминал**».* [Interview 10, Moscow]

But in the course of collecting interviews, we came across quite a vivid memory (in the sense of symbols and associations) of the moment of the “end of the 1990s,” among those who believed that the 1990s ended in 2000, with the change of the millennium and the president:

*«Я настолько ярко помню этот Новый год от и до, потому что у всех было осознание того, что мы преодолели самое сложное время и **двигаемся к светлому будущему** – будет банально сказать, наверно, к более благоприятному будущему. Все этого очень ждали. Была такая **надежда**, что и Путин обеспечит, и что Россия выберется из этого, что было с Ельциным, не очень позитивно во многих моментах. Поэтому у людей была надежда, наверно, она и детям передалась. Если даже в шесть лет я смогла это почувствовать, наверно, это всё было вокруг, **это всё было в людях, атмосфере. Все***

были этим заряжены – надеждой, **верой в чудо**. Даже для меня шестилетней это почему-то был **новый рубеж**». [Interview 34, Novosibirsk]

«Я помню, что мы сидели – мы тогда отмечали **Новый год** у моей покойной бабушки, папиной мамы. И я помню, был включен телевизор в зале. И мы все сидели... Я помню, что он ФСБшник – эту фразу: «**Да он же ФСБшник**», эту фразу я помню». [Interview 2, Moscow]

Interestingly, the perception and impression of the 1990s is much clearer than the idea of the end of the Soviet period. Although the moment the USSR collapsed seems to be more noticeable or significant than the change of one president to another with regard to historical, political, and social processes. But the collective memory of young Russians, as it turns out, is based on other principles. And its emphasis is placed differently. It is essential, of course, to mention that by the “end” of the period in question, all our responders were already living witnesses, and some of them were already at the age when they could fully comprehend everything, while the “collapse of the USSR” is either part of the history that preceded their birth, or happened when they were not in completely conscious age (up to 5-6 years).

As for the viewpoint and *attitude to the collapse of the USSR*, the prevailing opinions stated that “it was inevitable,” “it could not have been avoided.” It should be noted that this is the opinion disputed by the anthropologist Alexey Yurchak, whose work *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, was relied on by the author of the study the most, creating their own impression of the collapse of the USSR. Yurchak claims that the collapse of the USSR was not inevitable, but became possible due to a number of coincidences that occurred simultaneously (Юрчак, 2019). In this case, it is interesting that this sense of the inevitability of the collapse of the USSR continues to live on among young people, and perhaps it is even stronger comparing to the “last generation,” which was described by Alexey Yurchak.

Obviously, ideas about the inevitability of the collapse were not the only ones. There were alternative attitudes to the collapse of the Soviet Union, each showing us some more points of view: “*I reflect upon this with sadness, I liked the idea of uniting, but it was poorly thought out,*” “*This is a tragedy of many people, the collapse of the system and shift of values,*” “*It’s bad, that something great fell apart,*” “*It’s about transformation, not disintegration. It’s almost the same, give or take, only the form is different.*”

It seems that a separate study can be devoted to each of these views. And surprisingly, the view of the anthropologist Yurchak was not mentioned by anyone.

### 3.1.2 Images of the 1990s in the Minds of Young Russians

#### Lawless and poor

Perhaps the most vivid, frequently encountered and usually mentioned in the first place image of the 1990s is the image of banditry and criminal activities. Moreover, sometimes it is a harmless “folk” banditry, with a certain amount of romanticization, describing “crimson jackets, chains” and “New Russians,” and sometimes it is an image of incredibly dark times when it was “scary to go outside.” There were people who witnessed banditry themselves (they lived in dangerous neighborhoods, some of their parents’ friends were victims of attacks, etc.), but there were also people who only perceived “banditry” as an image from movies or stories that they themselves or their family members did not experience:

*«Кто-то дал название этому периоду, «лихие 90-е». Но опять же, сколько я спрашиваю, ни у кого не было вот этого... про бандитизм, это все такое... придуманное или фольклорное, нет такого. У всех были какие-то сложные периоды, но никто не убивал, никто не это... Спокойно жили». [Interview 10, Moscow]*

*«Есть расхожий стереотип о бандитских временах, но моей семьи, слава богу, это не коснулось... для меня бандиты – это из «Бригады»» [Interview 6, Moscow]*

*«Судя по тому, что обрывочно знаю информацию, мне кажется, это действительно какое-то очень непростое и неправильное время в каком-то смысле. Действительно, близкое к военному положению, когда все перспективы очень туманные, нет никакой уверенности в том, что ты не пойдешь на улицу и тебя не ограбят, не убьют, и так далее. Заниматься бизнесом невозможно. Вся ситуация 90-х как шрам на теле нашей истории, рубец, который видно до сих пор, мне кажется». [Interview 31, Novosibirsk]*

*«Например, наш город всегда был разделен на районы, и они контролировались своими группировками. ... У нас постоянно во дворе школы были «стрелки». Меня дважды приглашали на «стрелку». То есть, среди детей такие понятия, как поставить на счетчик, такое вот – это вполне себе». [Interview 21, Kazan]*

In the framework of qualitative research, we cannot establish links between any features, but in the course of analyzing all our interviews, we had a feeling that those responders who actually faced banditry (dangerous neighborhoods, gangs in schools) are not inclined to mythologize banditry and the 1990s in general. All of them mention “banditry” as an integral part of the period, but they are not limited to this pattern. While those who have “heard of” banditry or “seen it in movies” call it the very first and most vivid image.

Another powerful impression of the 1990s, which was mentioned by our responders, is the image of “devastation,” “misery,” “poverty” and financial hardships, which the responders remember themselves or heard of from their parents. Those responders who learned about the difficult situation in the 1990s, typically recognized that their parents do not like to reminisce about this time, do not share any stories, and avoid discussing the life of the 1990s

in every way, which is understandable, because remembering and especially retelling this difficult experience can be very painful.

*«...не сказать, чтобы они [родители] сильно хотели про это рассказывать. Мне мама в какой-то момент сказала: «Ой, я что-то не хочу тебе это всё рассказывать, потому что это вообще было тяжело». Во многом это связано было с нестабильной финансово-экономической ситуацией». [Interview 31, Novosibirsk]*

### *The 1990s as a Pit, Downfall, Dullness*

Another set of dark images is related to the idea of the 1990s as a “downfall,” and this is a downfall rather in a general, not articulated sense, without specifying the economic, political, or moral state of affairs.

*«Я считаю, что 90-е – это **раздолбайство**, 90-е – это **разочарование**, но это абсолютно логично, с точки зрения того, что у нас регулярно происходит... и у нас вообще легкая **дыра** оказалась в районе 90-х» [Interview 3, Moscow]*

*«Как ни крути, в моем восприятии все-таки 1990-е это какая-то **яма**. Это может быть некоторое пике перед взлетом, может быть просто синусоидой, нижней ее точкой, но это определенно какая-то **низинка**» [Interview 13, Moscow]*

*«Серо, бедно, смутно, непонятно... Такая **серая** картинка с цветными пятнышками. И тебе непонятно, что дальше» [Interview 28, Novosibirsk]*

The continuation of this image is the feeling of young people that the way out of this failed condition has not been found yet and that “we are still disentangling the consequences.” And at this point, a **political** “motive” and contemplations of the political “legacy” of the 1990s arise:

*«В 2003 году Россия начинает показывать себя на международной арене, оклемалась от кризиса... и, скажем так, вставать с колен» [Interview 5, Moscow]*

*«Это то, что мы расхлебываем до сих пор, потому что то, что творится сейчас в нашей стране, это всё-таки отголосок во многом тех времен, даже в политической структуре... Тот же самый Владимир Владимирович, прости Господи. Сейчас нельзя плохим на диктофон, но он же и многие его приближенные тоже оттуда» [Interview 18, Kazan]*

This political motive includes, in fact, divergent views. Some people perceive the 1990s as a political “downfall,” which began to normalize in the early 2000s, and in accordance with the accession of a new president and the political establishment. And others, on the contrary, perceive the current system and state leaders as the “result” of the 1990s, which affects the present.

In the course of analysis of the listed “negative” views, two ways of forming these views became noticeable. The first one consists of difficult family stories (“parents were simple

workers, life was not easy for them”), that are characterized by the detailed description of everyday life, emotions, memories.

The second way of forming views seems to be a template, perhaps imposed. A number of representations with a very negative “covering” (such descriptions as “devastation”, “pit”) were discovered. However, later in the interview, the responder spoke about a neutral family experience or their own positive memories, and mentioned, for example, “new business opportunities,” talked positively about the collapse of the USSR, etc. It is this “contradiction” of the first association and the subsequent factual description that causes a feeling of some “imposition” of ideas.

### *The time of Opportunities and Freedom*

A set of “positive” images and impressions of the 1990s was formed, mainly, around ideas about freedom. It was a matter of both freedom in regard to the previous communist “constrained” time, and “lost freedom,” which, according to some respondents, does not exist in modern Russia. We will return to the analysis of “lost freedom” later. It is important to note that, as a matter of principle, not all the responders viewed the concept of freedom as exclusively positive. The freedom of the 1990s is perceived by some respondents as “total freedom on the verge of anarchy” and as “permissiveness.”

*«Понятно, что было свободнее, но кто сказал, что это хорошо, – свобода, вседозволенность и прочее. У меня, конечно, много вопросов к нынешнему режиму, но все-таки как-то спокойнее живет, когда ты знаешь, что тебя не застрелят, потому что ты не со своего района». [Interview 22, Kazan]*

Among other “positive” images, it is worth describing “the 1990s as the time of new opportunities,” the time when:

- “starting your own business was no longer shameful”  
*«стало не стыдно – делать свой бизнес, честно зарабатывать деньги, и не стыдно быть богатым, когда ты селф-мейд и делаешь свою карьеру сам»*  
[Interview 2, Moscow]
- “people started to take responsibility for their lives”  
*«люди в России наконец-то почувствовали какие-то возможности начали брать ответственность за свою жизнь»* [Interview 12, Moscow]

### *The Image of the “Long-lasting” 1990s*

Answering the question about the beginning and end of the 1990s, some responders named very long periods of time from the mid-1980s to 2003, 2006, 2008. There was even an opinion that the “1990s were not over yet.” The reasons for this choice of time limits were very

diverse. They were typically related to changes in the living conditions of the majority of Russians (“good 2000s”) or to the accession of a new president (“some time before Medvedev became the president”). Sometimes the end of the period was determined by one’s own adulting and changes in the sense of self in society:

*«2003 год, для меня это уже такое более сознательное, я пошла в школу в это время»*  
[Interview 5, Moscow]

Interestingly, “the beginning of the 1990s in the 1980s” was not directly associated with the initiation of Perestroika or the period of Glasnost, but respondents intuitively sensed and indicated the moment when “everything started to change,” when “something was already going wrong,” etc.

In the course of research, such answers and the description of the “long-lasting 1990s” confirmed the consistency and accuracy of choosing to focus not only on the particular moment of the collapse, but also on the nearby periods, namely the 1990s. It might have been worth trying to expand the time frame even further and try to ask questions about Perestroika. Although it could have been risky because, firstly, the interviews would have been even longer, and secondly, we might have ended up with too much unanalyzed and incomprehensible information.

### ***3.1.3 The Nostalgic Image of the 1990s***

In the process of studying and describing literature, we devoted a lot of time to the concept of “nostalgia,” assuming that we would come across nostalgia for Soviet times and unconcealed regret for the collapse of the Soviet Union. But in the course of the interviews and their further analysis, we came across another form of nostalgia, namely nostalgia for the 1990s. The phenomenon seems to be interesting and worthy of additional attention.

We can single out three types of this form of nostalgia.

***Nostalgia for freedom and tolerance.*** Respondents in different cities with different levels of clarity said that there was more freedom or “there was an opportunity to become freer” in the 1990s.

*«Тогда у людей была возможность высказывать совершенно спокойно свое мнение, чего нет сейчас, например. В 1990–е «Тату» спокойно выходили на сцену, и все было нормально. Никого не смущали геи, вообще никто не смущал. В 1990–е не было какого-то негативного отношения к тому, к чему сейчас негативное отношение. В 1990–е, мне кажется, Россия была более свободна и близка к реальной демократии, чем мы сейчас». [Interview 12, Moscow]*

*«Была возможность стать свободными, и мы ее упустили.... Да, тогда было сложнее: развал совка, отделение Прибалтики, Белоруссии и кавказских республик –*

*Грузии, Армении, Азербайджана. Но тогда было понимание, что с какими-то людьми (из власти) договариваться можно» [Interview 19, Kazan]*

At this point, it is important to add that following the nostalgia for the time/possibility of freedom, there is the regret that it was not implemented. In this case, the concept of freedom usually refers to political freedoms. Moreover, responders not always express this opinion themselves, sometimes they make reference to the feelings of parents who described the 1990s as a freer period of time when they “had great expectations”:

*«У меня папа состоял в «Мемориале», они там с мамой познакомились. И для них это было какое-то такое независимое... Действительно, они там этим горели, рисовали какие-то стенгазеты, что-то исследовали, изучали. Была какая-то надежда, что в будущем все будет круто.» [Interview 31, Novosibirsk]*

***Nostalgia for Childhood.*** The second type we came across in the course of empirical research, is associated with longing for an early period of life, which, is already experienced by young people. Moreover, there is a longing precisely for childhood, “consoles,” “playing in the yard unsupervised,” “carefreeness,” and for the adolescence that coincided with the 2000s, when a romanticization of the 1990s occurred:

*«Это старшая школа, наверное, и первые годы после школы – период до 20-ти, может быть, лет, когда вы слушаете какой-нибудь шансон, потому что все мечтают о «бэхах», которые там были – черных или хотя бы на худой конец какой-нибудь «девятке», «Жигулях». Я помню, что в 15 лет сочинил стихотворение, которое называлось «Дети 1990-х». Это 15 лет, когда ты подросток, тебя не понимают, ты весь такой конфликтный, противоречивый, считаешь, что не только тебя, а все наше поколение, мы, рожденные в 1990-х... Возможно, когда ты вырываешься на какой-то следующий уровень, то есть ты уже не школьник, ты уже такой псевдо-взрослый, и ты должен показать какой-то контраст со школьниками, которые слушают что-то современное, ты такой – я уже бывалый, я вырос в то время, в те 1990-е, те дискотеки... А сам ты ни разу в жизни не был на такой дискотеке, тебе вообще четыре года было, когда они были, но ты же сопричастен, ты родился тогда...» [Interview 13, Moscow]*

In this case, an additional aspect is the nostalgia for the safety of childhood, which was present in the 1990s and which is long gone:

*«Всегда даже в эти странные 1990-е годы все соседи знали друг друга наперечет, и ни один из новых русских из местных не обижал эту детвору, грубо говоря, не плевал там, где он ест, то есть не обижал детей тети Зины, тети Маши, тети Дуси, которые ему конфеты продавали в свое время. А в 2000-е эта разобщенность стала появляться. И уже сейчас ключи никто под ковриком не оставит.» [Interview 30, Novosibirsk]*

Interestingly, this aspect of “security” and “cordiality of neighborhood” was described earlier by other researchers, but in the context of nostalgia for the USSR, especially for the “comfortable” period of stagnation. Whereas in this study, we see that some young people extend these features even to the early post-Soviet period.

In fact, several times we came across the idea of the 1990s being a continuation of the USSR, and not a contrasted period. The period of the 1990s is associated with “the purity and sincerity of relations, just like in the USSR.” In the perception of some young people, the 1990s were still the period of the Soviet Union.

*«девяностые – это какие-то более чистые годы, какие-то более искренние, что ли. Искренние люди... Это для меня, наверное, эмоция какая-то. Их так можно выразить – именно искренней эмоцией и соответствием – что думаю, то и делаю, то и говорю, то есть искренностью в поведении людей. Это еще придаток Советского Союза, это еще к ним. А «нулевые» – это уже к нам». [Interview 17, Kazan]*

Basing on these quotations, we can once again assume that there are young people who do not seem to have noticed the collapse of the USSR and changes in the way of life. In their view, the course of life and the social organization at that moment did not change with the beginning of the 1990s.

The third type of nostalgia – *cultural* – was emphasized by the respondents themselves. During the interview, they talked about the 2018-2019 trend of the return of music and video “similar to the ones in the 1990s.” Popular musicians and media personalities created several songs that were successful and resonated with the audience (Ida Galich’s “Entrepreneur”, 14 million views; Dima Bilan’s “About White Roses”, 8.6 million views). Nostalgia for the 1990s can be observed not only in the videos themselves, but also in the comments thereto. It seems that popular performers felt the search of a certain part of the society and responded to this demand.

### ***3.1.4 “Chechnya” As the Most Vivid Image of the Period***

Another unexpected and previously unforeseen (meaning that the research assumptions were not formulated) result of this study was the relevance and vividness of the Chechen war issue. In the course of the interview, much was said about “Chechnya” as an image of the 1990s. Moreover, sometimes “Chechnya” implied both military actions on the territory of the Republic, and terrorist attacks in the central part of Russia, which occurred as a reaction to the war.

*«Чечня – это прямо 90-ые» [Interview 2, Moscow]*

*«С Чечней сразу ассоциируется» [Interview 35, Novosibirsk]*

There were people who described it as a dark, difficult period of *the past*, namely those whose friends went through this war or whose family members did not return home. But there were also those, who used the issue of Chechnya to build a connection between the 1990s and

the present, and perceived “Chechnya” as painful, terrible and *acute*, including the matter of inclusion of Chechnya’s into the Russian Federation:

*«Это на протяжении долгого времени был болезненный очень вопрос... И до сих пор остается на самом деле, но все такие: «Сделаем вид, что ничего не происходит». Но по комментариям понятно, что происходит ... есть регионы, с которыми мы все-таки ассоциируем себя. Россия большая, все это понимают. Я живу в Москве, ты живешь в Красноярске, а ты в Омске. А вот с Чечней – хрен знает. Ты вообще понимаешь, что это состав России или нет? Я, мне кажется, забываю очень часто» [Interview 9, Moscow]*

*«У меня отчим был военнослужащим. Он дважды ездил в Чечню в длительные командировки. Для меня Чечня – это было то, о чем мы дома говорим. Это очень страшно. Для меня это всегда было другое государство. ... весь ужас, который продолжает твориться в плане несвободы Чечни. Я прекрасно понимаю, почему есть отношение действующей центральной власти, есть чувство вины, понимание того, что это другая культура. Но факт того, что есть люди, которые там живут под управлением военной хунты, это ненормально.*

*...Период конца 90-х, когда были военные компании, когда были первые теракты, когда был «Норд-Ост». Для меня как для театрала, «Норд-Ост»... вы не представляете, насколько я на них всех зла. Спектакль «Норд-Ост» - это первое музыкальное произведение уровня Бродвея у нас в России. Факт того, что «Норд-Ост» был просто уничтожен... Бесспорно, погибли люди. Это очень плохо. Еще там был очень крутой спектакль, которого больше нет.*

*...Я помню, как нашла в детстве такой диск (с записью военных действий), включила его. Это большая травма на всю жизнь, потому что когда начинается вот то обращение с заложниками. Они работали с этими материалами. Мой отчим был не очень аккуратен в хранении своих материалов, а я была очень любопытным ребенком. Это не то, что нужно видеть восьмилетней девочке». [Interview 23, Kazan]*

*«Друга моего отца убили на войне Чеченской. Он поругался с женой, уехал на войну, и на следующий день его убили. Он оставил семью одну». [Interview 12, Moscow]*

If we look at all these profound responses, emotions, experiences that responders shared, we can assume that the issue of “the war in Chechnya” is not forgotten, “resolved,” “irrelevant.” It is not as popular in the public information space (if you open a search engine and type “Chechnya,” “Chechnya polls,” etc., all publications will be devoted to the current Chechen agenda, the attitude to R. Kadyrov, the relationship between V. Putin and R. Kadyrov, the murder of Chechen refugees in Europe, etc.). However, the Chechen wars can still potentially be a significant topic for study and professional discussion. At least, in this study we managed to accurately detect the presence of this topic in the minds of young people.

Concluding the description of this image of the 1990s, it is worth adding that “Chechnya” turned out to be a separately relevant and somewhat mythologized topic in Kazan. In general, an important matter, that was frequently addressed in interviews, was the issue of

the sovereignty of Tatarstan, which “stood out” in the 1990s. It was discussed by journalists, specializing in the topic, as well as by bloggers and teachers. The topic is mythologized because Kazan respondents share an opinion that the deployment of troops, as a reaction to the struggle for independence, could happen not in Chechnya, but in Tatarstan:

*«Я еще слышала историю своего брата, который как-то держал ферму курдючных баранов в Чебоксарах. Когда он ездил в Чечню, видимо, за этими баранами, с пастухом общался, который рассказывал, что в связи с непонятной политикой и настроем вообще всего народа в тот момент, чтобы отвлечь их внимание, как он говорит, был план у них или **начать военные действия в Татарстане, или в Чечне**. Плюс я знаю, что мы еще тоже в какое-то время хотели жить отдельно, но, так как Татарстан все равно находится внутри России, а Чечня где-то подальше, все-таки военные действия начались там. **Когда говорят про Чечню, я сразу представляю того пастуха, который знает истину**» [Interview 16, Kazan]*

### 3.2 What Information They Receive from Family, Media and School

One of the questions we were interested in was what information young people learn about the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s from family (“family chronicles”), schools, the media, and from the information space more generally. We asked what they remembered about our topic of interest from school classes in history, literature, and social studies; whether their families discussed the topic and which stories they recalled most often; and whether young people encountered historical materials related to the period of interest in their news feeds.

Since our research is qualitative, we cannot determine which of the institutions we are interested in affects opinion formation and how; it is the task of quantitative research. However, we can describe what kind of information young people get from different sources. Below are the key characteristics of the information that young people learn from their families, remember from school, and encounter in the media and the information space.

#### From family

We found out that little is mentioned about the collapse of the USSR in families, and almost none of our respondents had any family memory of it. The situation with family memory and its transmission in families can be structured as follows:

- In some families, almost nothing is said about the 90s, regardless of whether the time was hard for the family or not. We also met those whose parents started a business and were able to fulfil their potential at that time but still do not talk about it in detail, and children perceive this period as a “dark and troubled time.”
- Some respondents said that parents would use the image of the 90s for educational purposes:

*«Честно говоря, очень мало. Мне кажется, родители мои на контрастах только это делают. Когда я чем-то возмущаюсь – иногда могу, но и то это не часто, сказать, что у нас чего-то нет, где-то это уже продают, а у нас нет, – и мама начинает меня сразу как-то стопорить, говорит: «А ты бы пожила в девяностые. Ты бы видела – там ничего не было». Только такие, пожалуй, их фразы» [Interview 17, Kazan]*

- However, there were also those, who learned about the 90s only because they asked their parents or others about it:

*«И: Ты говорила, что после 20 лет сама начала интересоваться этой темой. А через какие источники ты узнавала о 90-х? Р: Разговаривала с родителями, с братом. Мне кажется, брат вообще кладёшь просто. Он через все прошел и воспринял это по-своему. В основном с братом...» [Interview 21, Kazan]*

When talking about older relatives (grandparents), responders mostly said that their grandparents were Soviet people and that they did not understand and still do not understand both the 90s and modern Russia:

*«...они [бабушки и дедушки] были советские обычные рабочие люди, и весь этот капитализм – это вообще не их тема»* [Interview 22, Kazan]

*«Мой дедушка до сих пор убежденный коммунист, сторонник протестантской этики. Нужно работать, семью содержать, спекулянтов не любит. Он хороший мужик. Но в этом плане он такой антибуржуазный. Поэтому для него Ельцин, 90-е – это ругательные ассоциации».* [Interview 6, Moscow]

It is worth paying attention to the fact that when speaking about older relatives, respondents describe their perception of the 90s through an economic prism (“capitalism,” “speculators”) without touching upon ideological or other institutional changes. Hence, we can assume that either grandparents living under late communism no longer recognized the ideological component of the system, or that they did not experience these changes with the collapse of the USSR and the beginning of the 90s.

When comparing the views of responders and their families on the period in question, it became obvious that it is impossible to draw a straightforward conclusion about the main images and ideas being transmitted from the family. Sometimes parents’ ideas are not in line with our responders’, sometimes family members do not want to talk about the period, and then young people complement their images with the help of other sources or do not complete them at all, and the images are rather fragmented. In general, during the interview, it has become apparent that in case young people get any input about the collapse of the USSR and the 90s from their families, it is mostly of an everyday nature: “there was no food”, “you had to wait in a line,” “told jokes about Yeltsin” and so on.

### From school

In opinion of the responders the topic of the collapse of the USSR and the 90s practically was not covered or discussed in schools. The answers that we received during the interview can be classified as follows:

- “we did not study it”

*«Мы не проходили вообще. Я помню, что моя подруга проходила [в другой школе]. Я видела у нее в учебнике Ельцина. Это было очень интересно. Мне кажется, мы в 11-м классе все еще обсуждали войну 1941 – 1945»* [Interview 24, Kazan]

- “briefly, not in detail”

*«Я четко помню, что в учебниках про 90-е и 2000-е стояло один параграф две строчки. Вся история 90-х и 2000-х. И это было всегда уже в конце года, в мае, когда и учителя говорили: «А что там, 90-е, плохо все было, произошло то-то и то-то», – ключевые моменты, по истории там ничего не было: ни хорошего, ни плохого, просто четкие цифры, когда развалилось, кто пришел, и никаких подробностей, ничего. Был один параграф очень тоненький, не всегда даже до него успевали доходить». [Interview 35, Novosibirsk]*

- **“at the level of superficial discussion”**

*«Я не уверена, что мы вообще что-то обсуждали про 90-е. мне кажется, эти обсуждения прорывались в виде лирических отступлений нашей преподавательницы» [Interview 15, Kazan]*

- **teachers expressed their value judgements**

*«И: Как тебе кажется, как учителя Советский Союз воспринимали? Р: Хорошо всегда все. ..Наше старшее поколение, будь то учителя, родители, старшие товарищи, всегда хорошо отзывалось, отзывалось и еще будет отзываться о тех годах вплоть до середины 1980-х, пока не пришел Горбачев» [Interview 18, Kazan]*

- **studied in detail**

*«Да, проходили. По крайней мере, в старших классах, во второй половине нулевых. Мы проходили 1991, 1993 год. Мы это проходили. Я даже сам в свое время удивлялся, что мы так далеко зашли. Я точно помню, что нам показывали видео, кадры с танками, стреляющими по Белому дому, с протестующими, штурм «Останкино» » [Interview 6, Moscow]*

Due to the qualitative nature of our research, we certainly cannot talk about the representativeness of the data, but the fact that only 2 responders studied recent history (the period from the collapse of the USSR and beyond) in school in sufficient detail may be a sign that not teaching “recent history” at school is a common practice, or at least it was during the period from 1997 to 2013 (the period when most of our responders were in secondary school).

According to respondents, this situation could be explained in the following ways:

- 1) Some felt that this was due to the fact that the 90s was a financially challenging period for teachers, and therefore they did not want to remember or talk about this period.

*«Может быть потому, что это период, когда люди многие стремились как-то выжить и не всегда делали что-то хорошее, и может быть не хотели вспоминать просто этот период. Если, условно, учительница всю жизнь преподавала литературу, а в 1990-е, чтобы заработать что-то, она торговала на рынке палеными шубами, наверное, этот период она не хочет вспоминать постольку поскольку». [Interview 13, Moscow]*

*«Мама моей девушки работала учителем всю свою жизнь, и для нее 90-е – это было ужасное время, могли полгода-год не платить зарплату, и они все работали, надо*

*отдать им должное. Поэтому и мои учителя все отзываются об этом времени, как о плохом времени» [Interview 35, Novosibirsk]*

- 2) Several people admitted that they generally did not have good history classes because history was taught by people whose specialization was not history (e.g. librarians) or by teachers who had other functions in school (deputy headteachers, classroom teachers), which shifted their focus from teaching.

*«Моя учительница была еще завучем, которая была постоянно занята какими-нибудь делами, типа сбора макулатуры. В общем, истории у нас фактически не было. Очень формально, просто чтобы расставить оценки. Поэтому все, что касается истории, это мимо меня прошло, откровенно говоря» [Interview 11, Moscow]*

- 3) Some respondents also believed that teachers did not know how to teach it “correctly,” were not ready to engage in process analysis, and thus it was easier for them to teach only extensively studied topics.

*«Может быть, это слишком болезненно, чтобы так это обсуждать? Возможно, это самый конец истории -это типа умненькие детки. И чтобы не вступать в какие-то дискуссии неуютные, это не изучают» [Interview 31, Novosibirsk]*

*«Мне кажется, что просто не гибкая система образования. Это же надо учебники написать, это нужно одобрить, нужно, чтобы это как-то укладывалось в общую линию, а то, не дай Бог, не так напишем. В школьную программу это банально не вписывается» [Interview 32, Novosibirsk]*

Looking at the last group of opinions, we can speculate that 10 years ago the subject of the collapse of the USSR and 90s was perceived by teachers as “political.” Possibly, it is connected with the state narrative which has been described in the literature review (Малинова, 2019; Колесников, 2019). According to the researchers, a negative image of 90s started to be used in the 2010s, which is exactly the time when our responders were in secondary school.

To see the whole picture, it would be extremely interesting to study history textbooks and analyze how the collapse of the USSR and the 90s were taught before and how this material is taught now. However, that would be beyond the scope of this research.

Finally, it should be noted that when analyzing the answers in regard to teaching history in schools, we saw a noticeable difference by age category. Namely, “junior” responders spoke with disappointment and frustration about the fact that little time was spent on studying the 90s, while “senior” responders took it rather calmly and said that it was part of their reality and there was no need to discuss this period at school.

*«Еще пепел после взрыва, кажется, не осел, поэтому это все было не так актуально» [Interview 10, Moscow]*

### Surrounding information space (media, culture)

According to the responders, the 90s fashion is returning to Russia. This concerns both the style of clothing (“people are buying secondhand Adidas tracksuits”) and music. The responders give an example of the previously mentioned Ida Galich and Anton Lapenko who successfully use the style from the 90s in their videos. Responders from Kazan told us that the city hosted exhibitions dedicated to the culture of the 90s and produced souvenirs referring to the 90s.

When we spoke about cinematography, responders would recall *Brother* and *Brother 2*, the series *Bandit Petersburg* and *Street of Broken Lights* among the movies and series they knew about the 90s. All these movies and series were filmed in 1997–2000. Based on this, we can assume that the image of the 90s was formed on the basis of romanticized crime movies shot 20 years ago. Interestingly, some responders admitted that they had never seen these movies or series or that they had only seen some episodes. However, these productions are still vivid illustrations of that period for them.

We also met a couple of people who watched various new documentaries about the 90s, meaning they studied the topic and were interested in it.

As for the media and news feeds, our respondents’ answers differ a lot. Some people think that “this topic is forgotten” and they don't encounter it at all in mass media. Some say that they come across references to the 90s only on pro-governmental channels, and this period is always described negatively. Finally, some of the responders say that they often see content about Perestroika, the 90s and the collapse of the USSR, especially when something that can serve as a reference to that period happens. For example, several respondents recall that Yuri Luzhkov, the former mayor of Moscow, recently (relative to the moment of the interview) died, and various media outlets wrote not only about his death but also “his era.” Moreover, some young people note that liberal media are characteristic of romanticizing the 90s, calling it the time of freedom, but young people themselves are skeptical about this romanticism. All responders agree that the information in the media about the collapse of the 90s is rather fragmented and is not the subject of public discussion.

### 3.3 Myths in the Perception of the History of the Collapse of the USSR and the 1990s

When working with myths, we relied on the previously given definition of historical myth as a simplified, unreliable but easy to grasp by mass consciousness picture of the past events, which has an emotional intensity and easily visualizable set of **symbols**. (Белов, 2018)

In this context, we will consider representations of responders mythologized if they are described one-sidedly (more often exceptionally gloomy), conventionally, without reference to personal experience.

Below, we will list and analyze the myths about the collapse of the USSR and the 90s which we encountered in the narratives of responders.

#### 3.3.1 Myths about “the collapse of the USSR”

Due to the fact that the collapse of the USSR, in general, was poorly established in the historical consciousness of our respondents, we did not hear a lot about it. Many responders mentioned that they had no idea how it had happened, that they would have to study the issue and google. Hence, there were few mythological ideas. However, we can distinguish two relatively formed narratives that have come across several times:

- 1) The Soviet Union collapsed because of poor communication during the ratification of the Belovezha Accords

*«Чуть ли не случайно, кто-то что-то не договорился: «Ну, ладно, подписывай» – чуть ли не из-за проблем телефонной связи. В общем, какие-то глобальные решения из-за мелких деталей» [Interview 13, Moscow]*

- 1) The Soviet Union collapsed (“был развален”) due to foreign forces

*«В 1987-1988-й уже началась подготовка к развалу... Мое мнение, что Горбачев все-таки предавал Россию, то есть действовал по установке американцев. Все шло к развалу, это были подготовительные моменты к развалу. Собственно, в 1991-м все рухнуло». [Interview 35, Novosibirsk]*

#### 3.3.2 Myths about the 1990s

The general perception of the 90s seems to be quite mythologized. We have repeatedly heard “everything was going down the tubes,” “people were scared to go outside back then,” “everything was very bad,” etc. When answering the question about their ideas and associations with the 90s, responders quite often said, “like in Monetochka’s song.”

We have to admit that the young Russian singer in her song *90* quite succinctly formulated a set of ideas about the 90s among the young generation:

*«В девяностые убивали людей  
И все бегали абсолютно голые  
Электричества не было нигде  
Только драки за джинсы с кока-колой»*

Thus, during the interview, we encountered a very vivid example of mythologizing history through culture.

Another aspect of the mythologization of the 90s is related to the idea that during this period people were only interested in making money:

*«Сейчас спала эта пена, того, что было тогда, что нужно только деньги зарабатывать, оказывается, должен быть еще какой-то смысл в этой жизни, что-то делать, не просто бабло иметь». [Interview 10, Moscow]*

The origin of this myth is quite clear: with the advent of the market economy, entrepreneurship was prospering, and, accordingly, people were earning a lot of money. But it seems important to remember that society's sentiments are always more multifaceted.

The next aspect of mythologization that we encountered was a (cautious) comparison of this period with war or a war-time situation.

*«Для того, чтобы их в полной мере понимать, их надо было прожить, и надо было ощутить на себе... Если сравнивать, с Великой Отечественной войной. Мы можем сколько угодно говорить, как тяжело, как сложно было, и сколько боли, но мы никогда, и слава Богу, что мы никогда не прочувствуем всю ту боль, весь этот груз, необратимость, которую принесла с собой война. С 90-ми такая же примерно ситуация, что их надо прожить, чтобы понять». [Interview 34, Novosibirsk]*

Perhaps it is rooted in the governmental narrative and state mythologization, which were described in the literature review. For example, in 2019, Vladimir Putin compared the 90s with wartime several times during a press conference and called what the Russian people had experienced “a heroic feat.”

### *Yeltsin as a meme*

Boris Yeltsin, or rather his anecdotal image, is an important component of the ideas about the 90s. Although for today's youth, he is more of a meme than an anecdotal character.

*«Ельцин – мемы про него видел» [Interview 25, Kazan]*

During the interview, we often heard negative opinions about Boris Yeltsin, for instance, that he was a “president-alcoholic.” Respondents also remembered his “choice of a

successor” and accused him of failures in the 90s. As we know from the literature review, Russians generally have a personalized perception of history. But, interestingly enough, there were relatively positive views of Yeltsin too, of course, partly mythologized:

*«И очень быстро его начали, по-моему, воспринимать, как носителя каких-то мемов таких, типа кинуть в кого-то ботинком, **такой был классный тролль**, который чего-то, ньюсмейкер прямо реально... мне кажется, что относительно периода, когда вообще ничего нельзя было говорить лишнего, и были очень строгие рамки, как показывалось, вообще, вся жизнь нашей страны, этот ньюсмейкер, он прямо всех воодушевлял просто, что, вообще, такое можно говорить реально, можно кинуть ботинком в кого-то? **Это же прямо круто!**» [Interview 11, Moscow]*

Often, when Yeltsin was brought up, Gorbachev was also mentioned. It is interesting how Gorbachev and Yeltsin “merged” in the historical consciousness; in one interview our respondent called them a “dream team.” However, in the course of their political activities, they have always been rivals in the struggle for power. Even though they both advocated for liberalization, Boris Yeltsin and Mikhail Gorbachev meant fundamentally different things by liberalization.

#### *About the dashing (“лихие”) 90s*

The 90s is most commonly described as “the dashing 90s.” That's what journalists, politicians, and ordinary people call the 90s most often in their everyday communication. Although, according to the philologist Anastasia Bonch-Osmolovskaya, this phrase came into use only in the mid 2000s (Бонч-Осмоловская, 2018).

Remarkably, this phrase caught on, it seems clear to everybody. During the interview, the respondents described in detail why the 90s were called dashing (their answers were very different). Even if this phrase did not come “from the people” but was introduced by political technologists (Бонч-Осмоловская, 2018) it was chosen successfully and found a response in the perception of almost all young people interviewed during the study.

#### *Perception of mythologization of the 90s by the authorities*

As part of this task, we were curious to know whether the narratives of responders will contain the mythological ideas about the 90s which are used by the authorities. The result turned out to be fascinating. We came across two groups of people: the first group perceives these myths (some examples have already been quoted above) while the second group is aware of this attempt to mythologize this period and resists.

*«...мне не нравится, что идет спекуляция на эту тему. В оправдание всего, что происходит сейчас в стране, нам любят припоминать 1990-е годы: «А вы что, хотите*

*как в 1990-е?». У нас в сознании, по моим ощущениям, они как-то мифологизировались. Всё плохое, что в сознании народа есть, оно почему-то сплелось с 1990-ми годами. И сейчас даже самое простое сказать: «Почему у нас тротуары в таком плохом состоянии в городе?». Вы, наверное, заметили. «Но это же еще ничего. Вот в 1990-е-то было! У-у-у!... Нечто демонизированное. Этим пугают детей». [Interview 30, Novosibirsk]*

In addition to these two groups, we met another person who produced “state myths” about the 90s one after another. However, it is important to take into account that this person was engaged in youth policy in the United Russia party and planned to run for deputy from the party. Thus, we can assume that state narratives catch on in cases where the listener is naturally inclined to their perception and shares the outlook of the party and the head of state. The rest of the youth who we spoke to were less receptive to the state narrative.

In the course of the research, it was discovered that some myths transform: their “name” or “form” remains, but their content changes. For example, the myth of “the Gaidar’s team robbing the people” has transformed into the idea of robbing the people through “MMM” and other financial pyramid schemes.

### **3.3.3 Myths about USSR**

Exploring the perception of the USSR was not the objective of this study; this topic was discussed with the responders in order to talk more extensively about the collapse of the USSR. However, it is still important to note that during the interview we encountered quite a few myths about the USSR. There were frequent references to the following ideas: “everything in the Soviet Union was sincere,” “the state cared about people, and there were guarantees” and “there was a friendship of nations.”

Interestingly, when working with cards, some people would pull out a card and call what was on it a Soviet reality, while others would call it a myth and a stereotype.

An example of working with the card “*friendship of nations*”:

*«Это по-настоящему братские народы, которые дружили, жили рука об руку, ни в коем случае не было никакого разграничения, дискриминации, которые сейчас проявляются так или иначе» [Interview 18, Kazan]*

*«Я бы убрала «дружбу народов», потому что это все, мне кажется, миф. Вся эта дружба посыпалась вместе с Советским Союзом. Семья моего мужа бежала из Таджикистана. Их сначала сослали при Сталине, потом их вынудили оттуда бежать, потому что «вы не таджики, мы вас порежем». Такая вот дружба получилась» [Interview 22, Kazan]*

We would also like to mention one more interesting fact. During the interview process, it became noticeable that there is a certain shift in the negative/rigid/repressive image of the USSR from the “Stalinist repressions” towards its early period and emergence, i.e. revolution. There was also an opinion that there was no censorship in the USSR, or it was not a problem, or “it was good that it was there.”

*«Цензура – тоже 50 на 50, была ли она, спорный вопрос. Она была, конечно же, цензура, но она везде есть и будет, это нормально» [Interview 33, Novosibirsk]*

It can be argued that this form of mythologization is a response to contemporary Russian policy regarding freedom of speech, and the shift of the “cruel” image of the USSR from Stalin’s repressions can be explained by the desire to “rehabilitate” Stalin, which has been increasingly common in recent years. (Левада-центр, 2019; Новая газета, 2019)

### **3.4. Types of Attitude Formation Towards “Recent History”**

Completing the analysis of a large volume of data, it seems necessary to group and name the main types of attitude formation towards the history of the 90s as well as the types of perception of recent history in general.

#### **“Conscious” Type**

People with this type of perception of history are distinguished by their ability to be aware of the mythologization of historical events. These are people who said that the state rhetoric of recent years has changed or that they notice how “the 90s are blamed for everything.” At the same time, there is no romanticization of the 90s in their narratives. People of this type who we met spoke about the “negative” features of the 90s and economic problems, reflected on the war in Chechnya, and told us the “dark” family stories. But they also talked about the “positive” aspects of the 90s.

#### **“Chaotic” Type**

Responders with this type of perception of history are distinguished by the chaotic nature of their ideas. Responders’ narratives combine a wide variety of views and often ready-made opinions, such as “Yeltsin is to blame for everything,” “new opportunities emerged in the 90s,” “it’s a pity that the Soviet Union collapsed,” “I’m for capitalism,” and so on. This type is also characterized by the inconsistency in the expression of their views and ideas. Probably, people with this type of formation of historical ideas coincide closely with the configuration of

perception of history which Lev Gudkov described in his report *Time and History in the Minds of Russians*.

#### **“Perceiving through the leader” Type**

This type of attitude formation towards history is characterized by a fairly clear reproduction of views and ideas that are formulated and expressed publicly by the highest representatives of power, which includes the mythologization of the 90s and the presentation of this period as extremely gloomy, regret about the collapse of the USSR, the idea that foreign forces contributed to the collapse of the USSR, a clear link to the beginning of the “new stage of history” with Vladimir Putin coming to power, the use of clichés such as “Russia began to rise from its knees,” “they began to reckon with us again” and so on.

#### **“Child perception” Type**

This is quite an interesting type of formation of historical ideas through the prism of one’s life. Accordingly, when it comes to the 90s, the ideas are formed through one’s childhood. A vivid example and confirmation of this is the analysis and choice of limits of the 90s with a reference point to when a person “already remembers himself/herself,” when he/she went to school, etc.

This type also encompasses people who perceive history only through personal experience: “this is not true; we did not experience this.”

## Conclusion

This research work was of exploratory nature. The purpose was to discover and describe the main characteristics of young people's ideas about the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s in Russia as well as to define the specific features of opinion and attitude formation. In order to achieve this goal, more than 30 interviews with young people from Moscow, Kazan, and Novosibirsk were collected and analyzed, and several research objectives (tasks) were formulated.

The *first objective* was to discover how the young people we interviewed viewed the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s. It was the main and the most extensive task of all. It turned out that young people had relatively clear ideas about the collapse of the USSR only if their relatives participated in significant events (for example, they worked as journalists during the August Coup of 1991) or they were young witnesses of the events (for example, they almost ran into the middle of the column of protesters). In other cases, the young people's ideas were very fragmented and mythologized. We also found out that in the families of our respondents, relatives hardly ever talked about the collapse of the USSR or how they came to know about it. Some respondents also noted that their parents in general didn't like or want to talk about the time of the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s as this time had been very difficult for them (first of all, from the financial point of view). The collapse of the USSR and the 1990s were not reflected in the "family chronicles" and family memory of many young people we spoke to. This means these events did not become an element of collective memory.

We also managed to identify several representations of the 90s that are present in the historical consciousness of our responders. First of all, many responders saw and had an attitude to the 90s as to "lawless and poor." This is not surprising since banditry is the most common symbol of the 90s in the information space (and a part of the period as well). Interestingly, a certain pattern was discovered: people who witnessed banditry (for example, those who lived in dangerous areas) perceive the 90s multidimensionally and unconventionally. They consider banditry an integral part of the period, but that is not their only idea. Conversely, those who "heard" about banditry or "saw it in movies" call it the very first and brightest association with the 90s. Due to the fact that our research is qualitative, we cannot make hypotheses about the causal relationship, but this observation can be used for quantitative research to explore this idea.

Another view, which we heard from several respondents, can be described as a "political pit." What is interesting here is that this view encompasses two opposite opinions in relation to the current Russian authorities. Some respondents referred to the situation in the 90s as a "downfall" that had started to improve with the beginning of Vladimir Putin's presidency.

Others, on the contrary, believed that “we are still facing” the consequences of the 90s since those who are now in power in Russia “are all from the 90s.” Some of our responders think that the 90s is a rather long period that started in the 80s and ended in the middle of the 2000s. Some even think that the 90s are not over yet, at least in some Russian regions.

Unexpected and interesting was the discovery of nostalgia for the 90s among young people. The nature of nostalgia was different: yearning for childhood, the feeling that they “missed something important” as well as nostalgia for the time of freedom and tolerance, which is now absent in society and public space. In fact, “freedom” was mentioned more than once in conversations about the 90s, but it did not always have a positive connotation. We came across such expressions as “misguided freedom of speech” and “who says that freedom is good.” For many of our responders, the idea of “freedom” in the 90s borders on anarchy and lawlessness.

Chechnya turned out to be a very vivid image of the 1990s. It was talked about often, at length and sometimes very emotionally. Responders shared their personal stories and experiences about the Chechen wars and subsequent terrorist attacks in central Russia. The frequency and liveliness of these discussions led us to the assumption that the Chechen wars and policy towards Chechnya in the 90s are not a forgotten or a “resolved” issue.

The *second objective* of the study was to determine what information about the collapse of the USSR and the 1990s young people received from family, school, and media. It turned out that our responders receive very little information from these common sources of ideas and views. There was not enough time for lessons on this topic in schools, and there was very little written about it in textbooks. The responders said that this may be due to the fact that teachers did not know how to tell the students about this period “correctly” or did not want to teach it because they had a hard time during this period. In the media, information about the 90s is relatively rare and seems to be fragmented (references to anniversaries or emotional words of politicians “Do you want it to be like it was in the 90s?”). According to the respondents’ impressions, there is no constant public discussion about the 90s. Some respondents acknowledge it with regret while others believe that such discussions are not necessary.

Hence, the subjects of the collapse of the USSR and the 90s remains vague, confusing and essentially unknown to young people as it is almost never discussed in families, not taught in schools and is fragmentarily represented in the media space.

An important concept of the study was the “mythologization” of history in general and the 90s in particular. While working with literature, we discovered that the 90s were mythologized in the minds of most Russians (Назаров, Родионов, 2012; Малинова, 2019; Колесников, 2020). Our *third objective* was to find out what myths about the 90s are present in

the young people's ideas and to try to understand what underlies these myths. Several groups of myths were discovered. The first one is directly related to the collapse of the USSR, which, according to the responders, collapsed accidentally or under the influence of external forces ("Americans"). The reason for the formation and strengthening of these myths in the minds of our responders may be nostalgia for the USSR and internal disagreement with its collapse. After all, those responders who shared these myths spoke with regret about the collapse of the USSR later.

Another group of myths can be summarized as a quote from the song of a young singer Monetochka, «В девяностые убивали людей, и все бегали абсолютно голые». ("In the nineties, people were getting killed, and everybody was running around absolutely naked"). She was cited by many of our responders. So, thanks to our responders, we found another form of cultural mythologization of the 90s.

We expected that we would encounter the myths about the 90s which are spread by Russian politicians (Малинова, 2019), including President Vladimir Putin. And indeed, we came across a comparison of the 90s with the wartime, which we had also found in Vladimir Putin's speeches during our analysis of sources. It is important to note, however, that such ideas were not common, and the only person who reproduced almost all the myths that are present in the rhetoric of top officials was the head of the "Young Guard of United Russia."

Overall, people whom we interviewed during the study can be divided into two groups in regard to how they perceive the myths "coming from the government": those who perceive these myths at least partially and those who are aware of an attempt to mythologize this period and resist it.

The *final (forth) objective* of the study was to develop a typology of attitude formation towards the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 90s. We managed to identify four types.

The first type is "**conscious.**" People with this type of perception of history are distinguished by the ability to recognize attempts to mythologize historical events and critical perception of the historical periods. The second type is "**chaotic.**" It is distinguished by the illogical nature of views and beliefs and the combination of incompatible ideas. The third type is "**perceiving through the leader.**" This type of formation of the attitude to history is characterized by a rather clear reproduction of mythological views and representations which are formulated and expressed publicly by the highest representatives of power. It includes the following aspects: the idea of the 90s being an exceptionally dark period, regret about the collapse of the USSR, confidence that foreign forces are responsible for the collapse of the USSR as well as the use of clichés concerning the "restoration of state power." The fourth type

is “**child perception.**” People who belong to this type form historical representations through the prism of their life, and accordingly, when it comes to the 90s, through the prism of their childhood.

These are the main characteristics of the perceptions of the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent years according to our respondents. They are likely to pass on such views and beliefs to their followers, students, and listeners.

In the course of research and writing the paper, we have formulated the main characteristics of young Russians’ historical perception of recent history. At the same time, since qualitative research is not representative, the representations and types we have encountered and listed are not exhaustive, and other researchers may obtain different results. In any case, the results we obtained open up possibilities for new research, both qualitative (we can continue to study variations in the perceptions and ways of perceiving history) and quantitative (to study and verify the links between the factors we described). In addition, many interesting data on young people’s attitudes and perceptions of the USSR were collected. Although this question was not central, we talked about it in order to make the discussion of the collapse of the USSR more meaningful. While analyzing the obtained data, we realized that the answers to the questions about the USSR could be the basis for another (small) study. It would be very interesting to continue this line of research.

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## Appendix (in Russian)

### Гайд интервью

Здравствуй, спасибо, что согласился/ась поучаствовать в моем исследовании. Оно посвящено восприятию новейшей истории России. В ходе интервью было бы интересно узнать о твоих представлениях о 90-х годах. Интервью анонимное, а все данные я буду использовать в общем виде. Я бы хотела записывать наше интервью на диктофон, могут ли я получить твое согласие на это? Спасибо!

В этом интервью я буду в основном спрашивать про твои мнение, отношение, ассоциации, немного про воспоминания, хорошо? Мне интересно отношение и восприятие, а не знания по истории ☺

Начнем?

Для начала, расскажи, пожалуйста, немного о себе. Чем ты занимаешься? Как давно ты живешь в Москве/Казани/Новосибирске? Какого ты года рождения? (*от этого сделать переход к 90м через, например «то есть 90-х ты почти не застал/а», или «то есть, например, на момент ПУТЧа тебе было 5 лет»*) Понятно, спасибо.

Если я сейчас тебе просто скажу «90-ые в России»- какие у тебя ассоциации? А как ты думаешь, откуда эти ассоциации? Образы?

*Про семью:*

- Рассказывали ли тебе твои родные что-то 90-х годах?
- Можешь вспомнить эти истории и рассказать?
- Были ли истории, которые они рассказывали чаще других? Какие?
- Как тебе кажется, какое у твоих родных отношение к этому периоду истории?

• А как ты относишься к 90м годам? Каким тебе кажется этот период истории?

• Как ты думаешь, «90-ые» - это собственно какой период времени? Интуитивно, как тебе кажется, где начало «90х» и где завершение этого периода? Почему ты так считаешь?

*Про школу*

- Теперь я хотела бы узнать, изучали ли вы в школе этот исторический период: 90ые годы, конец 20 века? А на каких предметах? (*уточнить: история, обществознание, литература, другие*)

- Если да, то как проходили уроки?
- Если нет, то почему, как считаешь?

- А как тебе кажется, твои учителя в школе, как они относились к этому периоду истории? Почему? Согласен(а) ли ты с ними?

- Можешь ли ты вспомнить обсуждение истории в целом с другими учителями или работниками школы? Если да, то какие это были обсуждения? А обсуждали ли вы отдельно 90ые годы в России?

- И последний вопрос в этом блоке, скажи, изучал (или интересовался) ли ты историей после окончания школы? (университет, собственный интерес)

#### *Про культуру и медиа*

Спасибо большое, что делишься этими воспоминаниями, теперь я бы хотела обсудить образ 90х в культуре и обществе.

- Как ты думаешь, каково общественное мнение о 90ых годах? Что заставляет тебя так думать? Согласен(а) ли ты с этим мнением?

- Как тебе кажется, история 90-х годов, это часто обсуждаемая тема?

- Если да, то где ты что-то видел/слышал(а) в последний раз? Как считаешь, правильно ли это привлекать внимание к этому периоду истории? Говорить/писать о нем?

- Если нет, как думаешь, это плохо или хорошо, что этот период истории не обсуждается часто?

- Встречаются ли в твоей новостной ленте новости об истории в целом? А о истории 90х годов?

- Знаешь ли ты какие-нибудь фильмы, сериалы, книги о 90х годах? Смотрел(а) или читал(а) ли ты их?

- Теперь будет необычный вопрос-задание. Пожалуйста, выбери из представленных карточек те, которые больше всего ассоциируются у тебя с 90-ыми годами? Попрошу тебя выбрать **хотя бы три из них, но можно и больше.**

*Карточки со словами:*

<b>СВОБОДА СЛОВА</b>	<b>БАНДИТИЗМ</b>
<b>ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ РЕФОРМЫ</b>	<b>ГОЛОД</b>
<b>БИЗНЕС</b>	<b>ОТКРЫТЫЕ ГРАНИЦЫ</b>
<b>НОВАЯ ЖУРНАЛИСТИКА</b>	<b>НЕОПРЕДЕЛЕННОСТЬ</b>
<b>ИСЧЕЗНОВЕНИЕ БУДУЩЕГО</b>	<b>ПОТЕРЯ РЕСПУБЛИК</b>
<b>СЛАБОСТЬ</b>	<b>БОГАТСТВО</b>
<b>СВОБОДА</b>	<b>ОГРАБЛЕНИЕ НАРОДА</b>
<b>НОВЫЕ ВОЗМОЖНОСТИ</b>	<b>ЕЛЬЦИН</b>
<b>ОЛИГАРХИ</b>	<b>ЗАПАДНЫЕ ГРАНТЫ</b>
<b>ГАЙДАР</b>	<b>ПРИВАТИЗАЦИЯ</b>
	<b>ГОРБАЧЕВ</b>
<b>ФИНАНСОВЫЕ ПИРАМИДЫ</b>	<b>РАССТРЕЛ БЕЛОГО ДОМА</b>
<b>ЧЕЧНЯ</b>	<b>СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО С ЗАПАДНЫМИ СТРАНАМИ</b>

Расскажи почему ты выбрал именно эту карточку (о каждой)? А почему? Какие ассоциации она вызывает? (Побудить рассуждать о каждой из вытянутых карточек, произносить вслух, чтобы для диктофона и записи были понятно, о чем речь)

Спасибо большое.

И еще пара вопросов об ассоциациях.

- Знакома ли тебе формулировка «*лихие 90-ые*»? Как ты думаешь, почему их так называют?

*Про распад СССР*

Теперь я предлагаю перейти к завершающему блоку вопросов. Я бы хотела обсудить с тобой такое заметное событие 90-х годов, как распад Советского Союза.

- Для начала, скажи, что ты думаешь о самом Советском Союзе?
  - Как думаешь, что в СССР было хорошо, успешно?
  - А как думаешь, что было неправильно или неуспешно?
- Теперь снова будет небольшое интерактивное задание с карточками. Пожалуйста, выбери из представленных карточек те, которые больше всего ассоциируются у тебя с СССР?

ДРУЖБА НАРОДОВ	ЖЕЛЕЗНЫЙ ЗАНАВЕС
УСПЕШНАЯ ЭКОНОМИКА	БЛАТ
РЕПРЕССИИ	ВЕЛИКАЯ КУЛЬТУРА
ВЕЛИКАЯ ДЕРЖАВА	БЕДНОСТЬ
НАУЧНЫЕ ДОСТИЖЕНИЯ	СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ГАРАНТИИ
ПРОТИВОСТОЯНИЕ ЗАПАДУ	ПЛАНОВАЯ ЭКОНОМИКА
СИЛЬНАЯ СТРАНА	ЦЕНЗУРА
ТАЛОНЫ НА ЕДУ	ОБЪЕДИНЕНИЕ ЛЮДЕЙ

Расскажи почему ты выбрал/а именно эту карточку (о каждой)? А почему? Какие ассоциации она вызывает? Порассуждай, пожалуйста, о каждой из вытянутых карточек. Спасибо!

- Теперь хочу спросить о том, что у тебя ассоциируется со словосочетанием «Распад Советского Союза»?
- Представь, что тебе нужно рассказать другому человеку, о том, как происходил распад СССР. Как бы ты стал/а рассказывать?
- Как ты считаешь, плохо или хорошо то, что Советский Союз распался? Почему?
- Рассказывали ли тебе когда-нибудь твои родители о том, как проходил распад СССР? Какие у них воспоминания?
- Как ты думаешь, как они относятся к распаду СССР? Почему?
- А учителя в школе или в университете рассказывали об этом событии? Может, чем они занимались в это время, как переживали этот период? Как они к нему относились? Почему? Согласен ли ты с ними?
- *Вопрос для рожденных до 1991:* Ты был/а очень маленьким/ой, когда происходил распад Советского Союза. Но возможно у тебя есть какие-то воспоминания об этом периоде? Может, непосредственно о периоде с августа по декабрь 1991? Или воспоминания более позднего времени, тех самых 90-х, которые мы уже обсуждали?

*Вопрос для преподавателей:* Ты сам/а когда-нибудь обсуждал 90ые или распад СССР со своими учениками? Что им было интересно? Что ты рассказывал?

Большое спасибо за уделенное мне и моему исследованию время! Если тебе интересно узнать результаты исследования, я с радостью ими поделюсь.

## Пример интервью. Транскрипт № 30

**Интервьюер:** Здравствуйте, спасибо, что согласились поучаствовать в моем исследовании. Оно посвящено восприятию новейшей истории России. В ходе интервью мне было бы интересно узнать о ваших представлениях о 90-х годах. Интервью анонимное, а все данные я буду использовать в общем виде. В этом интервью я буду в основном спрашивать про мнение, отношение, ассоциации, немного про воспоминания, хорошо? Мне интересно отношение и восприятие, а не знания по истории. И еще я бы хотела записывать наше интервью на диктофон, могу ли я получить ваше согласие на это?

**Респондент:** Да, конечно.

**Интервьюер:** Спасибо! Для начала, расскажите, пожалуйста, немного о себе. Чем вы занимаетесь? Как давно живете в Новосибирске? Какого вы года рождения?

Какого ты года рождения?

**Респондент:** Мне 33 года будет в апреле. По диплому я филолог, филологическое обеспечение СМИ. Так заумно звучит моя специальность. Сначала я работала в газете, затем на новосибирском городском сайте NGS, а затем работала в Новосибирском государственном университете в пресс-службе. Сейчас нахожусь в декрете. В Новосибирске я с самого начала. И главная ассоциация у меня с 1990-ми – это дефицит. Мой отчим работал на мясокомбинате. Потом он стал дальнбойщиком, а тогда был просто водителем. И тогда ему выдавали оплату колбасой, причем не просто колбасой, а всякой разнообразной деликатесной. Такой разнообразной недорогой колбасы у нас до сих пор, наверное, нет дома, как была в те времена. Холодильник был забит всяческими рульками с черносливом и всеми прочими. Всё это богатство мы ходили по соседям, которые получали заработную плату – кто-то получал, кто-то не получал, – меняли на хлеб, какие-то другие продукты. Вели натуральное хозяйство.

И помню сумасшедшие нули в ценниках, когда мама хотела себе купить сапоги, и говорила, что они стоят миллион рублей. В детстве не понимала многого, но если мама говорила, что миллион рублей, еще с таким придыханием, казалось, что это как минимум сапоги от Dolce&Gabbana.

**Интервьюер:** Вы тогда знали про Dolce&Gabbana?

**Респондент:** Нет, по нынешним меркам, переводя в современную систему ценностей. Нет, тогда никто ничего этого не знал даже в помине. Это чуть позже, скажем, в нулевые.

Мама моя работала врачом, денег ей особо не платили. Как-то на Новый год она решила принести нам мандарины. Кто-то ее, видимо, угостил. Она сложила мандарины в коробку из-под лекарств. Я хорошо помню запах этих мандаринов, которые я чистила, ела с младшей сестрой. Я 1987 года рождения. В 1990 году мне было три года. Это как раз самое зарождение человеческой памяти. Никто со мной не обсуждал, какое было время, плохое или хорошее.

**Интервьюер:** Понятно. Обсуждали ли вы 90-ые и распад СССР с семьей после, с коллегами, друзьями?

**Респондент:** С семьей, наверное, не обсуждала этого вопрос, чтобы прямо сесть и обсуждать, как плохо или хорошо мы тогда жили. А бабушка с дедушкой говорили всегда только одно: «Лишь бы войны не было».

Что касается других людей, которые периодически говорят, что «Вот, в советские времена было лучше, а в 1990-х...». Мне не нравится, что идет спекуляция на эту тему. В оправдание всего, что происходит сейчас в стране, нам любят припоминать 1990-е годы: «А вы что, хотите как в 1990-е?». У нас в сознании, по моим ощущениям, они как-то мифологизировались. Всё плохое, что в сознании народа есть, оно почему-то сплелось с 1990-ми годами. И сейчас даже самое простое

сказать: «Почему у нас тротуары в таком плохом состоянии в городе?». Вы, наверное, заметили. «Но это же еще ничего. Вот в 1990-е-то было! У-у-у!».

(00:05:19)

На самом деле, если покопаться в конструктивных воспоминаниях, то было же и хорошее, и плохое. Детство – это всё равно хорошее время, беззаботное, для меня лично. Но никто же не акцентировал внимания, что мы живем плохо. То есть никто из моих родственников никогда не сидел и не плакался: «Ой, как плохо мы живем». Смотрел по сторонам, ты ходил в куртке какого-нибудь двоюродного, троюродного, пятиродного брата. И все так ходили. Никому не приходило в голову, что можно покупать одежду каждый сезон. Эта смена формации произошла. А мне кажется, что Советский Союз неплохо подготовил к кризисному времени. Особенно люди, которые приехали из деревни, как сделать себе всё, что угодно, имея под рукой картон и палки (выражаясь фигурально)...

**Интервьюер:** Да, понятно. А есть ли – наверное, в первую очередь в семье – семейный фольклор про 1990-е? Истории, которые циркулировали и циркулируют. Вспоминаются, чаще других?

**Респондент:** Наверное, нет. Из забавного могу припомнить обмен продуктами. Если это можно расценивать как приметку 1990-х, это расцвет криминала и маргинальных слоев. Это тоже очень важная веха моей биографии, потому что я еще, кроме прочего, из неблагополучного района. И действительно в 1990-е годы у нас не было ни одного трезвого лица на улице. И эта разруха в стране, почему-то началась разруха в головах. Все резко маргинализировались, начали пить. Наркопритоны появились первые. Может быть, они были, но они вылезли из подполья. И проституточные, которые стали появляться периодически в поле нашего зрения.

Не знаю, можно ли считать это фольклором, но когда я подросла, и молодые люди говорили: «Может быть, я тебя провожу», я говорила: «Да, конечно, ты можешь меня проводить, но вообще я из того района, что я сама кого угодно могу куда угодно проводить». То есть такое своеобразное воспитание.

Не знаю, хорошо это или плохо, но увидев то, что на меня с растопыренными руками бежит какой-нибудь алкоголик, я, наверное, не испугаюсь, даже смогу какими-то словами с ним перекинуться, спросить, что случилось, как помочь. Это есть, от этого никуда не деться, потому что детство проходило в такой среде.

**Интервьюер:** Как вам кажется, 1990-е, где они начинаются, где кончаются?

**Респондент:** Начинаются вместе с моей сознательной памятью, то есть где-то, когда я была еще совсем-совсем маленькой, условно говоря. С трех лет. А заканчиваются они тем моментом, когда я, наверное, пошла в школу, то есть когда мне было лет 7.

**Интервьюер:** В каком году пошли в школу?

**Респондент:** Кажется, 1995-й, да. 1990-е годы – это самое-самое начало: 1992-й, 1993-й. Если спросить у меня: «Что такое 1990-е годы?», я скажу, что это 1992-й, 1993-й. Потом стало полегче.

**Интервьюер:** И про школу. Изучали ли вы в школе конец XX века, смену политического режима? Что-нибудь такое.

**Респондент:** Честно говоря, затрудняюсь ответить на этот вопрос, потому что это как со всеми предметами, наверное, происходило. История не стала исключением. Литература мне ближе, поэтому приведу простой пример. Мы Пушкина, Гоголя и прочих заслуженных старичков мысляем очень долго, а потом приходит Осип Мандельштам, и мы говорим: «Был еще Осип Мандельштам», кстати.

«Еще где-то далеко был Шарль Бодлер, но это вам необязательно знать, вас об этом никто в приличном обществе не спросят». Здесь было примерно то же самое.

Я помню про фараона Аменхотепа III, а про современную Россию, хотя у нас были хилые попытки ввести какую-то юридическую грамотность. Но это всё было скорее как саботаж, то есть срыв деятельности под видом ее выполнения. Именно целенаправленного изучения не было. Упоминалось вскользь: «Был Борис Ельцин».

**Интервьюер:** Это было в ходе уроков?

**Респондент:** Когда время пришло, уже в более старших классах. Маленьким детям, естественно, никто ничего не объяснял.

**Интервьюер:** Высказывали свое отношение к 1990-м, периоду?

**Респондент:** Я такого не помню. Я училась в школе с углубленным изучением французского языка. У нас все были очень тихие женщины. Такого не было. Не обсуждали совершенно точно. Да и сталинистов махровых, политиканов вообще не припомню. У нас были, что называется, с приветом, но просто потому что старые больные женщины.

**Интервьюер:** После окончания школы история фигурировала в вашей жизни, в университете?

**Респондент:** У меня было и до сих пор есть некоторое сожаление. Я считаю, что история – наверное, это предмет, в котором неплохо поразбираться. Тот, кто не учит историю, может сделать так, что она повторится. Я скорее думала об истории в контексте, когда начала путешествовать. Об отношении к истории не в нашей стране, а в других государствах. Например, как те же самые немцы обращаются с Аушвицем. Они не пытаются запрятать это в пыльный уголок сознания, а проводят экскурсии на всех языках, какие только можно, включая иврит, говорят, что «Ну, вот. Там, простите, мы были неправы. Но посмотрите, до какой степени мы были неправы, и, пожалуйста, не делайте так».

У нас есть такой момент, что, да, либо какая-то мифологизация, либо просто делать вид, что этого не было. Это уже затрагивая тему ГУЛага. Просто откреститься от этого или сказать, что это придумано, чтобы очернить великого Сталина. Причем победобесие мы будем копать до тех пор, пока это не надоест. А это – нет.

Здесь я тоже могу сказать, что поскольку мой дед ветеран Великой Отечественной войны, но он, строго говоря, был последним из призыва, в 1945 его призвали, и основная его военная стезя пришлась на войну с Японией, а это... 100 словами не рассказать, как там всё происходило.

(00:15:09)

Когда я говорю, что я убежденная пацифистка, заслуга этого моего деда ветерана. И то, что я никогда не буду кричать, что «Мы можем повторить», никогда не буду смотреть эти военные парады, никогда не буду кричать: «Ура, салют, победа!», это заслуга только моего деда, который говорит, что... 100 лет ему здоровья. Ему сейчас 94 года. И он говорит: «Я спать не могу. Я вижу войну. Это моя плата за то, что...». Грубо говоря, это та цена, которую они должны до конца жизни платить за то, что мы сейчас сидим, пьем кофе.

Что вы можете повторить, придурки на кредитных тачках? Возьмите хотя бы лопату и пройдите с ней в обнимку под дождем пару часов. Я вам даже не предлагаю сапоги не по размеру надеть.

**Интервьюер:** Без носков.

**Респондент:** С портянками, да. Но я отвлеклась, но это поясняет мой взгляд, что я начала сравнивать, и сравнение было не в лучшую сторону, что касается именно российского подхода к истории.

**Интервьюер:** То есть у вас это случилось через путешествие?

**Респондент:** Да, в более сознательном возрасте, когда я в 25 лет первый раз сама поехала, и первое мое путешествие было в Прагу, и встретила с моим другом, который как раз таки историк по образованию. Он предложил мне поехать в Аушвиц, и там меня накрыло очень сильно. Я многое для себя поняла.

**Интервьюер:** Спасибо, что делитесь такими воспоминаниями. Это очень важно.

Хотела бы спросить вас про образ 1990-х в культуре, медиа. Как вам кажется, общественное мнение о 1990-х какое?

**Респондент:** Я уже частично говорила, что демонизированное. Этим пугают детей.

**Интервьюер:** В обществе это часто обсуждаемые, часто поднимаемые темы?

**Респондент:** Сейчас, наверное, она стала всплывать чаще, как ни странно. Это по моим наблюдениям. Видимо, действительно, нужен какой-то враг. Если врага нет, мы его придумываем. Даже в своей собственной истории.

**Интервьюер:** Можете попытаться припомнить, что увидели в последний раз, какую-то новость или репортаж, или фильм про 1990-е?

**Респондент:** Что я видела из 1990-х – поскольку я пользуюсь Instagram, в XXI веке живу, что последнее видела, про то последнее и расскажу, – тренды в одежде. 1990-е именно в сознании модных блогеров – это образец дурновкусия во всём. Типа: «Что это за колхоз, что это за 1990-е?». То есть колхоз – 1990-е. Так соотносится. Какие-то леопардовые колготки, сказали, что это привет из 1990-х, и это явно имело отрицательную коннотацию.

**Интервьюер:** Спасибо большое. Хотела бы теперь поговорить про новости. Поскольку вы журналист, как вы сами узнаете новости, через какие источники информации?

**Респондент:** Есть несколько путей получения новостей. Самый первый и самый ценный – это эксклюзивные источники. Когда все знают, что ты, допустим, работаешь журналистом, тебе звонят и говорят: «У меня...»

**Интервьюер:** Я имела в виду, ваше информационное поле.

**Респондент:** Откуда я сама получаю? Интернет, конечно же. У меня есть несколько вкладок: региональных, федеральных. Нужно отдать должное, что у меня был период детокса. Когда я очень интенсивно была погружена в информационное поле, мне потом понадобилось время для того, чтобы из него выйти. Поскольку я сама обрабатываю эти новости, я была подписана на несколько пабликов, например, «ВКонтакте»...

**Интервьюер:** Можете перечислить?

**Респондент:** Сейчас наши новосибирские. Что у нас читают? NGS, тайга.инфо. Два самых распространенных. Из федеральных читаю Meduza в основном, либо какие-то такие вещи, которые попадают чисто в контекстной рекламе. Но из тех, на кого подписана – да.

Что касается пабликов, это местные наши типа «Типичный Новосибирск», «Новосибирск.Инфо», «АСТ-54», «Происшествия». В каждом городе, мне кажется, номер только на конце меняется: «Типичный Красноярск», «Типичный Новосибирск», «Типичный Урюпинск».

**Интервьюер:** А знаете ли какие-то фильмы, сериалы, книги про 1990-е?

**Респондент:** Первое, что приходит – это «Бандитский Петербург» (это же классика), «Бригада».

**Интервьюер:** А если из документальных фильмов?

**Респондент:** Наверное, напрямую это не входило в сферу моих интересов, поэтому ничего не могу сказать.

**Интервьюер:** Теперь у меня будет немножко интерактивное задание. Я перед вами сейчас разложу много карточек, которые к могут описывать или не описывать 1990-е годы. И попрошу вас выбрать те, которые откликаются более всего. Прошу выбрать хотя бы три, но можно больше, если есть отклик.

**Респондент:** Бандитизм, неопределенность, Ельцин, Горбачев (сладкая парочка), приватизация, расстрел Белого дома, исчезновение накоплений. Тут можно было, на самом деле, еще добавить «МММ», малиновые пиджаки. Финансовые пирамиды М-«МММ», международный мошенник Мавроди.

**Интервьюер:** Теперь про бандитизм. Проясните, пожалуйста.

**Респондент:** Он был ближе всего ко мне.

Произошла же резкая криминализация населения. Возможно, это было связано с тем, что люди подумали, что теперь всё можно и ничего за это не будет. И раз страны теперь нет, то можно... Приходит ощущение вседозволенности. Эти новые русские. Бандитом стало вдруг модно быть. Хотя я видела этот контингент своими глазами. В нем нет ничего симпатичного. Может, где-то воспетые в народном фольклоре бандиты, у них всё было хорошо, но у бандитов с нашего двора всё было как-то не очень. Они все сейчас сидят или уже там умерли. След их теряется в задворках истории.

**Интервьюер:** Второе – неопределенность.

**Респондент:** Да. Ничего толком не обсуждалось. Я сейчас зацепила этот пласт сознания. Всё было понятно, что ничего непонятно. Было понятно, что тот происходит, что взрослые немножко переживают, но из-за чего они переживают, толком непонятно, потому что они ничего напрямую не говорят. Но видно, что уровень жизни поменялся. Например, бабушка была инженером башенного крана – человек, который управляет башенным краном на стройке. Но она была вынуждена пойти мыть подъезды, потому что нужны были какие-то живые деньги, и это был единственный способ их достать.

(00:24:59)

Когда в один прекрасный день бабушка говорит: «Всё, я иду мыть подъезды», дедушка говорит: «Всё, я сижу с детьми». Были приняты какие-то конструктивные решения, которые, безусловно, влияли на нашу жизнь. Но поскольку я была маленькой и многое недоговаривалось, то вот неопределенность.

Горбачёв и Ельцин, скорее всего, были, сладкая парочка. Это персонажи народного фольклора лично у меня в сознании, потому что я помню эти истории.

Кстати, байки, они не семейные, но они пересказывались друг другу: «А вы слышали, что Ельцин где-то пьяный на ложках играл?», «А вы слышали, что Горбачев со своей Раисой Максимовной?..». То есть я не отдавала себе отчет, что это политики, а отдавал себе отчет, что это какие-то, ну, условно говоря, Иванушка дурачок и Баба Яга, про которых рассказывают анекдоты. В 3-4 года что с соображала? То есть не говорили, что это наши великие вожди, которые двигают нашу страну. Рассказывалось такое в духе: «А чего, за кого голосовать будем? За Зюганова? Наверное, нет, за Ельцина пойдем проголосуем», или, там, за кого-то. «Что там, мол, за этого клоуна голосовать?».

**Интервьюер:** Приватизация.

**Респондент:** Это было новое интересное слово, которое очень часто повторялось отовсюду, вместе с такими прекрасными и не менее прекрасными словами как «ваучер», «доллары», «валюта». Это больше про 2000-е, но у нас была прекрасная история по поводу того, как бабушка на половину своей пенсии купила евро. Она принесла, говорит: «Какие красивые! Как фантики нарядные». Сложила эти евро. И когда мы вышли замуж, я вышла замуж, моя сестра вышла замуж, мама поделила эти евро, и, на минуточку, там было по тысячке. Эти евро пролежали с того момента, как они появились в Евросоюзе. Бабушка оказалась очень...

**Интервьюер:** Ох, бабушка молодец.

**Респондент:** Я помню, как она ходила: «О, такие нарядные, как фантики. Большие такие».

С ваучерами было то же самое. Приватизация – это что? Все побежали и я побежал. Все приватизируют, и я приватизирую. Мне кажется, осознанности в это процессе было минимум. Но поскольку мы имеем дело с наследием Советского Союза, когда сказали: «Надо приватизировать» – ну, приватизируем.

Мне кажется, в определенный момент – по крайней мере у меня сложилось такое впечатление – люди так много потеряли, что еще одно... Мы же можем проиграть, но мы же можем и выиграть. То есть это уже как-то так всё рассматривалось. И да, это был абсолютно неосознанный процесс, это было очень красивое интересное Слово.

**Интервьюер:** Финансовые пирамиды.

**Респондент:** Финансовые пирамиды, международный мошенник Мавроди, Леня Голубков – это исключительно телевизор и исключительно первые рекламные ролики, которые я помню, как он там стоит в этих триканых и в этой растянутой маечке, говорит своей супруге, – или кто она ему была, – что «Я вложился в “МММ”». Теперь они, дескать заживут. И, видимо, придут к этому образу преуспевающего нового русского. Исключительно телевизор.

Что касается исчезновения накоплений, это, пожалуй, то, что знали даже мы, потому что были определенные... То есть что мы были людьми среднего класса, а потом в одно прекрасное утро проснулись просто нищими. У нас были миллионы, а стали просто рубли. Это тоже какое-то шоковое состояние взрослых, которое волей-неволей детям передавалось. Но мы тоже ничего толком не понимали.

(00:30:00)

**Интервьюер:** Расстрел Белого дома.

**Респондент:** У меня есть чудесная история про слона, когда мы приехали... У нас живут родственники в Смоленске, и мы собрались – я, моя мама и отчим, а мама тогда была беременна. Соответственно, мне было где-то 3 с небольшим года (четырёх еще не было). У нас с сестрой разница в пять лет. Мы приехали в Москву, и я очень хотела увидеть слона. У меня была такая мечта. И я терроризировала родителей, чтобы они показали мне слона.

Мы радостные сходим с поезда, и внезапно... Естественно, тут какие-то странные движения происходят на вокзале, люди бегают. Папа уходит, узнает, возвращается, что-то говорит маме. У мамы совершенно какой-то растерянный, испуганный вид, она совершенно ничего не понимает. Я ною со своим слонем, что «Слона мне покажите». Они говорят: «Нет, никакого слона нет. Революция». То есть я помню вот это слово революция применительно к расстрелу Белого дома. И я, соответственно, выдаю своим детским умом фразу: «А что, слон революции испугался?». То есть какая связь? И мы быстро взяли билеты, каким-то образом удалось, и тут же чуть ли ни на ближайший поезд... То есть мы планировали задержаться в Москве, планировали погулять там какое-то время, возможно, даже переночевать – не знаю таких деталей, – но мы быстро собрались

и поехали дальше к своей родне. Расстрел Белого дома у меня только такие ассоциации вызывает – революция.

Дети вообще заколдованно всё это смотрят. Я расстроилась, я редела ужасно. Но родители как-то просто очень быстро меня успокоили. И понятно. Ехать смотреть на Красную площадь- это была не лучшая идея в тот день.

**Интервьюер:** Или на здание парламента.

**Респондент:** Да.

**Интервьюер:** Спасибо большое. Еще один вопрос об ассоциациях. Вам наверняка знакома формулировка «лихие 1990-е».

**Респондент:** Да.

**Интервьюер:** Как вы думаете, почему их так называют?

**Респондент:** Почему именно лихие? Потому что в сознании русского человека эта какая-то удаль и какая-то... В хорошем смысле слово «лихой» здесь, наверное...

Наш национальный герой, он же немножко всегда Иванушка-дурачок, и всегда ему все сокровища и все богатства с неба падают. Мы любим, чтобы нам всё сразу, так лихо и здорово. И ты из грязи в князи.

Наверное, лихие 1990-е, потому что очень много людей из простых каких-то работяг стали вдруг малиновыми пиджаками. Как я это понимаю. Вот поэтому.

**Интервьюер:** Спасибо. Теперь будут вопросы про распад СССР, как составную часть 90-х. Но прежде хотелось спросить про Советский Союз. Если очень обще, как воспринимаетесь его, как относитесь к этому периоду истории?

**Респондент:** Я могу судить только сейчас со своей колокольни. Я вижу плюсы и вижу минусы. Есть моменты, которые мне нравятся, а есть моменты, которые мне не нравятся. Я за бесплатное образование и бесплатную медицину совершенно точно. Мне в ответ, конечно, могут возразить по поводу качества этой медицины. Но в ответ я могу сказать, что и сейчас в большинстве своем вопросы есть.

(00:35:22)

К тому же, из плюсов, было то, что какая-то общинность была и ощущение безопасности. Я из своих детских воспоминаний знаю, что нам никто никогда не запрещал гулять во дворе столько, сколько ты хочешь. Всегда даже в эти странные 1990-е годы все соседи знали друг друга наперечет, и ни один из новых русских из местных не обижал эту детвору, грубо говоря, не плевал там, где он ест, то есть не обижал детей тети Зины, тети Маши, тети Дуси, которые ему конфеты продавали в свое время. А в 2000-е эта разобщенность стала появляться. И уже сейчас ключи никто под ковриком не оставит.

С другой стороны, я понимаю, откуда всё это произрастает. Потому что что раньше было красть? У всех были ковры одинаковые, телевизоры, холодильники «Бирюза», стиральные машины «Малютка» и так далее. У всех всё было одинаково.

А потом, когда началась эта разница в доходах, в вопросах честности путей, которыми эти богатства добыты. Тогда и началось.

Плюс, отсутствие критического мышления и всякие попытки его подавить. Если ты вполне каким-то причинам выделяешься из толпы, у тебя могут быть проблемы, причем проблемы на самом высоком уровне.

Отношение к религии, когда люди тайком в церковь ходили, или свои исконно русские традиции от бабушки, от прабабушки. Я не сказать, что человек воцерковленный, но отношусь к этому в том числе как к части своей родовой традиции, о которой я так просто не могу откеститься. Только то есть просто взять и выбросить кусок истории, потому что партия сказала.

И к вопросу о том, как преподавали историю моей маме. Моя мама до сих пор любит вспоминать, что некоторые уроки истории у нее проходили за конспектами 55-го Съезда ВЛКСМ. То есть она говорит: «Мы просто открывали сборник тезисов и выписывали, что там Владимир Ильич и его приспешники сказали». И она говорит: «Это у нас называлось "урок истории"». Естественно, ни одну научную работу мы бы с вами не защитили, если бы не сказали: «Как сказал Ленин в своем великом и могучем исследовании».

**Интервьюер:** Да. Это правда.

**Респондент:** У меня диплом по Льву Николаевичу Толстому, и я откапывала вот эти «Толстой – зеркало русской революции». Как там бедные несчастные филологи изгалялись, чтобы из такого Льва Николаевича, почвенника и православного христианина, сделать зеркало русской революции.

**Интервьюер:** Они это делали искренне или скорее, чтобы им дали заниматься Толстым?

**Респондент:** Думаю, скорее второй вариант. Я все-таки верю в интеллигенцию. Что были они так увлечены, что, наверное, если они нормальные погруженные исследователи, погруженные в свою тему, то они там хоть черта лысого, лишь бы им не мешали.

**Интервьюер:** У меня будет к вам второе практическое задание, но про Советский Союз. Разложу количество карточек, которые могут быть связаны с Советским Союзом. Прошу вытащить минимум три, которые откликаются.

**Респондент:** Репрессии, великая держава, плановая экономика, социальные гарантии.

(00:40:03)

**Интервьюер:** Теперь попрошу вас объяснить, и подробнее поговорить про каждую из карточек. Репрессии.

**Респондент:** Это то, что касается нашей земли. У нас очень разнообразная история Великой Отечественной войны. В семье у моей покойной бабушки было три сестры и один брат. Одна из старших сестер вышла замуж за человека, который принимал участие в войне с Германией, дослужился до очень высоких чинов, и даже потом в этой Германии какое-то время провел для того, чтобы, ведя какую-то восстановительную или еще какую-то деятельность (не особо вникала в эту деятельность). Был дедушка, который служил в Манчжурии. И еще был дед Коля – царство ему небесное, – который был репрессирован. За что он был репрессирован, до конца непонятно. Потому что сказали, что ему вменяли дезертирство, если опустить общий смысл. Он шел мимо села... Он был в Праге, он занимался разминированием Лореты. И когда я была беременна, была в Праге и принимала участие в «Бессмертном полку». Там тоже случилось со мной это озарение, когда я поняла: «Боже мой, а если бы не он, если бы не эти солдаты, не было бы этого ничего». Если бы не этот условный товарищ Беяков (00:41:52), то никакой этой красоты бы не было.

Он дошел до Праги...

У нас есть семейная шутка. У меня сестра после того тоже очень любит всё это дело. Я говорю: «Господи, когда же мы до Праги доедем?». Она говорит: «Не переживай. Дядя Коля пешком дошел. Как-нибудь справимся». Это реально.

Мы знаем, что дойти до Праги пешком – это реально, не в самых комфортных условиях, но отсюда из-под Новосибирска.

Он шел мимо своей деревни. Здесь война, условно говоря, закончилась, но после нее, как я поняла, был довольно продолжительный период, когда мы еще все оставались мобилизованными. А поскольку он был из Европы, у него с собой был трофейный пистолет «ТТ». Он зашел к себе, зашел в свою избу, переночевал с матерью, поговорил со своими родственниками и ушел. На следующее утро его арестовали. Сказали, что он дезертировал, вроде бы как пришел к своим. Но мой дедушка, который кое-что смыслит, и дед Андрей, который кое-что смыслили в военном суде, они говорят: «Извините, дезертирство – это к стенке. Никто бы даже разбираться не стал. Скорее всего, он просто что-то не то увидел или не то услышал. Знал, что его повяжут, и поэтому пришел с мамой попрощаться». Вот такая грустная история. Он умер в лагерях.

Вот что доели, когда закончили войну, и как сели – мы на Родине в плену. Вот про это.

А дальше была великая держава. Великой державы пафос – это то, что из унаследовали. Великая держава у меня лично больше ассоциируется уже с более поздним периодом, когда был железный занавес, то есть когда началась гонка вооружений, когда началось искусственное раздувание того, что мы великая держава, делаем ракеты, и в области балета мы впереди планеты всей. Что это всё связано с великодержавным пафосом, который культивировался именно СМИ. Я ничего не знаю о великодержавном пафосе у жителей страны, но это продукт работы СМИ.

Что касается цензуры, у меня филологическое образование, поэтому не знать о цензуре в советские годы я не могла. Я читала биографии всех несчастных великомучеников наподобие Пастернака, и еще того, который абсурдист... Вылетела фамилия. Очень люблю его. Помню его произведения. С ним тоже была мифологизированная история, что вроде бы как его расстреляли. А, Хармс (Ювачев). Была история, что в этой психушке, была легенда, что он там в подвалах умер. Но, на самом деле, просто жене сказали, что он там, а на самом деле непонятно, где он. Потом историки это установили. Всех, так или иначе, коснулось. Здесь через мое образование, через то, что нужно было писать линию партии, комсомола, что сам об этом думаешь.

Плановая экономика – тут всё понятно, пятилетка за три года. Все эти слоганы, которые переосмысливались в 1990-2000-е годы, становились предметом народного фольклора, когда говорилось, что всех догнать и перегнать. Спасибо то, благодаря чему мы, несмотря ни на что. Именно от того, что это всё было на самом деле, становится совсем страшно. Когда начинаешь думать, как можно рассчитать, сколько коров, сколько телят должна родить корова. Там же всё было просчитано, доходило до какого-то абсурда.

Социальные гарантии. На самом деле, это то, по чему я отдаленно тоскую сейчас, потому что наше государство метнулось из крайности в крайность. Если раньше были какие-то полные социальные гарантии, полное социальное обеспечение общества, то сейчас социальных гарантий никаких. Я склонна думать, что истина где-то посередине, и что есть такие моменты, от которых нельзя прямо взять и отказаться.

У меня нет полной уверенности, что когда мой ребенок пойдет в школу, я не буду за эту школу платить, как за институт. Что не найдется какого-нибудь умного в Государственной Думе, который скажет: «А зачем нам всем бесплатное образование? Особенно женщине. Жили же как-то барышни в лохматых XVIII-XIX веках, учились играть на фортепиано. И хватит с них. Одни на фортепиано играли, а другие как родились, так сразу к подольнику встали, огороды вскапывать, натуральное хозяйство вели.

**Интервьюер:** Спасибо большое. Теперь хотела бы спросить про распад СССР. Если скажу фразу «распад Советского Союза» какие у вас ассоциации?

**Респондент:** Сейчас в моем взрослом состоянии это «Лебединое озеро», затем Ельцин, затем перестройка, и день независимости. Скажу про независимость безоценочно, потому что сейчас много спекулируется на этой теме.

**Интервьюер:** А если попробовать оценить Распад Советского Союза. Хорошо, что это случилось? Плохо, что это случилось? Оценочно.

**Респондент:** Ярких эмоций у меня это не вызывает, потому что я знаю об этом только понаслышке. И слава богу, что это произошло, нет, и горевать по этому поводу не вижу смысла. С точки зрения истории к этому всё и шло.

**Интервьюер:** Представьте, вам нужно будет рассказать другому человеку, который ничего не знает об этом, например, вашему ребенку о распаде Советского Союза, как бы стали про это рассказывать?

**Респондент:** Я бы избрала последовательный подход. Сначала он образовался как более-менее осмысленная формация. Потом там стало всё больше и больше формализма. Когда этот формализм достиг того, что осталась только одна большая форма, она лопнула. Если проводить образную ассоциацию, то это, наверное, этот змей, который себя за хвост укусил.

Занимались образованием этой формации люди глубоко идейные. А их последователи наследовали не идею, а только форму. Они не вдумывались, что делают, а механически повторяли набор кейсов из поколения в поколение. Мы живем вот так, а почему живем вот так, никто не задумывается. А как только минимально кто-то начал задумываться, всех спросили: «А почему вот так? Разве нельзя носить всем разные платья, и при этом быть счастливыми?».

**Интервьюер:** Поняла. Согласна. Спасибо вам большое.