



# After Newspeak: Language Culture and Politics in Russia from Gorbachev to Putin

*Michael S. Gorham*

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In *After Newspeak*, Michael S. Gorham presents a cultural history of the politics of Russian language from Gorbachev and glasnost to Putin and the emergence of new generations of Web technologies. Gorham begins from the premise that periods of rapid and radical change both shape and are shaped by language. He documents the role and fate of the Russian language in the collapse of the USSR and the decades of reform and national reconstruction that have followed. Gorham demonstrates the inextricable linkage of language and politics in everything from dictionaries of profanity to the flood of publications on linguistic self-help, the speech patterns of the country's leaders, the blogs of its bureaucrats, and the official programs promoting the use of Russian in the so-called "near abroad."

Gorham explains why glasnost figured as such a critical rhetorical battleground in the political strife that led to the Soviet Union's collapse and shows why Russians came to deride the newfound freedom of speech of the 1990s as little more than the right to swear in public. He assesses the impact of Medvedev's role as Blogger-in-Chief and the role Putin's vulgar speech practices played in the restoration of national pride. And he investigates whether Internet communication and new media technologies have helped to consolidate a more vibrant democracy and civil society or if they serve as an additional resource for the political technologies manipulated by the Kremlin.

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