Cosmonaut Gossip

Socialist Masculinity as Private-Public Performance in the Kamanin Diaries

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ABSTRACT

The diaries of Nikolai P. Kamanin, a well-placed official in the early Soviet space program in charge of cosmonaut selection and chaperoning, have been an important source for historians since their publication in the 1990s. This article reevaluates the diary entries from 1961 to 1965, using the framework of gossip. The diaries' salacious tales of infidelity, drinking, and other violations of communist morality provide cultural historians with as much insightful material as the parallel technological entries have done for historians of science and space engineering. The cosmonaut gossip that Kamanin records comprised a mix of knowledge production and moralizing that built and reinforced his self-fashioning among the Soviet elite. Furthermore, reading the diaries (a private text) through the lens of gossip (a public act) helps us see how socialist masculinity was forged in part through the specific hybridized private-public performances required of elite men.

KEYWORDS: cosmonauts, diaries, gossip, masculinity, Soviet Union, space program

One of the most important men of the Soviet Cold War loved to gossip. Lieutenant General Nikolai P. Kamanin was the deputy chief of the Air Force's General Staff, tasked with selecting, training, and chaperoning the first cohort of cosmonauts in the early 1960s.¹ In his diary entry for 24 March 1962, he recorded the following scandalous tale:

Yesterday, [Commander K.A.] Vershinin signed the proposal to dismiss Captain Mars Rafikov from the cosmonaut program, and to reassign him to the position of a senior pilot in the fighter division. The same document contained an official reprimand for Captain Anikeev. They both went AWOL on March 12–13 and gallivanted around the restaurants of Moscow. Moreover, Rafikov

is at odds with his wife, and there is constant talk of a divorce. In May of last year, during a vacation in Sochi, he was with another woman. When his wife expressed her dismay with his behavior and began chastising him, he beat her up. These incidents merited a negative response from the Party and the military. Before signing the document, the Commander in Chief reported the behavior of [cosmonaut trainees] Titov, Rafikov, and Anikeev to the minister. The minister agreed with the proposal of dismissing Rafikov, and said, "This is to be a serious warning to all the cosmonauts."²

At Kamanin's recommendation, the space program leadership indeed expelled cosmonaut trainee Mars Rafikov in March 1962 for infidelity and domestic abuse.³ This story was not Kamanin's only foray into the personal lives of his charges; his diaries are filled with anecdotes that reveal private details about—and cast judgment on—the lives, marriages, vices, habits, and behaviors of the first cohort of cosmonauts and trainees in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Kamanin's diaries provide a unique glimpse of masculinized self-fashioning among the Soviet elite, particularly at a time when the scientific and technological sectors enjoyed both public favor and substantial government investment.

Historians of the Soviet space program are very familiar with these diaries, and those who have read them before will certainly agree that they are entertaining texts with long segments devoted to narrating (and largely disapproving of) the personal lives of the young cosmonauts in Kamanin's care as chaperone.⁴ It might be tempting to dismiss these segments of the diaries. Indeed, Erica Fraser, in writing about them in a book chapter on cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, noted some of the personal details but ultimately decided to sideline them in order to focus on the cosmonauts' publicity trips abroad.⁵ But we contend that these sizeable passages in the diaries are particular sites of meaning that can be analyzed through the lens of gossip, and that the personal anecdotes Kamanin tells help historians understand how he navigated and performed his masculinized authority. We are collaborating on this investigation in order to bring a fresh reading to these texts. Erica Fraser is a historian of Soviet gender and culture, while Kateryna Tonkykh is a writer interested in textual analysis. This article contributes to emerging historical work on masculinity and gossip by showing how socialism's hybrid spaces of private/public help us reimagine masculinity and selfhood. Kamanin's use of gossip narrated and formed his identity as a man of the space age and the Stalinist successor class: his understandings of overt and covert communication were shaped under Stalinism, but his diary gossip also established new parameters of respectability for the post-Stalin socialist man.

Nikolai Petrovich Kamanin was born in 1908 and was a lifelong serviceman in the Soviet military. As a pilot, he was awarded the rare Hero of the Soviet Union title in 1934, one of the first Soviet citizens to receive the new honor, for his role in rescuing a vessel trapped in Arctic ice.⁶ His aviation career thus anointed, after serving in the Air Force during World War II, he was tapped to play a key role in cosmonaut selection, training, and mentorship. According to Vladimir Shatalov, who replaced Kamanin in the position upon his retirement in 1971, "I guess our government was embarrassed and afraid that if we announced that the assistant chief of the Air Force was supervis-

ing cosmonaut training, then everyone abroad would think that this was necessarily linked to military programs. So Kamanin was publicly called the 'cosmonauts' mentor.'"⁷ His early career fame helped cement his image as a public figure, a feature that further complicates his more private role as a protector of the space program's deepest secrets, including even the first cosmonauts' identities.⁸ Kamanin kept a diary from 1960 to 1974, dates that correspond to the beginning of his tenure as deputy chief of the Air Force and end three years after his 1971 retirement. Kamanin died in 1982.

Historians' knowledge of the chain of events and decisions that led to the diaries' publication remains incomplete. Partial entries were published in the Soviet press in the late 1980s, although it is not clear who authorized their release or whether the texts were edited. What we now estimate to be the complete versions were published in full by a Russian magazine for cosmonautics starting in 1994.⁹ The eminent Soviet space historian Asif A. Siddiqi has verified that Kamanin's son played a main role in publishing the diaries, presumably with the motivation of contributing this heretofore unknown perspective on the early cosmonaut training program to the rush of materials newly (and in some cases temporarily, it would turn out) declassified from post-Soviet Russian archives.¹⁰ After this piecemeal release, the diaries were published in book form in two volumes, the first in 1995 and the second in 1997. The publication of Kamanin's diaries has indeed provided historians of the Soviet space program with an exciting and revealing new source to enrich our archival evidence.¹¹

Kamanin's diaries should be read as part of the post-Stalin conversations in government and society about private life and proper behavior for citizens. The Communist Party issued a formal edict on communist morality at the Twenty-Second Party Congress in October 1961, after having debated doing so for many years. As Deborah A. Field has written, the code's twelve tenets included "moral purity, simplicity, and modesty in social and personal life; mutual respect in the family; [and] concern for the upbringing of children."¹² Led by Yuri Gagarin, whose flight in April that year cemented his global fame as the first man in space, cosmonauts became key public endorsers of the Party's moral expectations. That Kamanin's diaries spend so much time measuring cosmonaut behavior against those expectations should not surprise us in this context. Kamanin clearly saw himself as an arbiter of communist morality and, for the majority of the cosmonauts until Valentina Tereshkova's flight in 1963, of socialist masculinity. The sites of transgression he notes for his cosmonaut charges chart a familiar puritan terrain, particularly regarding infidelity and drinking.

As a Stalinist, moreover, Kamanin would have expected that his diaries transcended traditional norms of privacy.¹³ Although the Western diary might be understood as a closed text narrated for and by the self, the Stalin-era diarist, as has been well documented by Jochen Hellbeck and others, "[strove] to inscribe their life into a larger narrative of the revolutionary cause."¹⁴ In keeping a diary, Kamanin wrote himself into a much longer tradition of life-writing in Soviet culture. As Hellbeck has argued of Stalin-era diaries, "To belong to the collective and be aligned with history was a condition predicated on work and struggle, complete with lapses, failings, and renewed commitments."¹⁵ Especially under Stalin, one was required to reflect on, and then argue for, one's suitability for Party membership through writing an autobiography. Such a document could also be used against a person on trial.¹⁶ A related genre

of life-writing in Soviet history involved peasants of the 1920s and 1930s “inscribing themselves into the new society,” as Natalia Kozlova has written, and aiming to make sense of the revolution in their own lives and communities in the process.¹⁷ But Kamanin’s diaries are a world away from the self-critical texts of the 1930s by the worker Stepan Podlubnyi and others that Hellbeck and Kozlova have analyzed. Kamanin does not seem interested in personal transformation nor even in the revolutionary collective.

Rather, we have selected the framework of “gossip” to best explain Kamanin’s entries as a whole, and we argue that doing so expands our understanding of how socialist masculinity was performed and maintained by those in power. Scholars of gossip in linguistics, sociology, and communications studies have argued against assuming that gossip as a form of speech is inherently negative, harmful, or malicious in intent. Although belief systems in all parts of the world have been known to discourage gossip as morally wrong, as Robert F. Goodman has written in his pioneering collection on the subject, “any social activity as widespread as gossip must be fulfilling certain important personal and social functions.”¹⁸ In his study of everyday life in late Stalinism, Timothy Johnston characterizes rumor as a way to convey information without “entertainment or scandal,” while gossip, on the other hand, is the “transmission of often verified information about a third party for the purpose of passing comment on it”—a definition that we certainly see in Kamanin’s entries.¹⁹ The definition of “gossip” changes according to the practitioner or, indeed, the scholar. In synthesizing several definitions used by gossip scholars, we are defining it—and Kamanin’s practice of it—by three main points: it transgresses the acceptable rules for ego-documents such as memoirs or autobiographies in that it delineates and polices an invented moral code; it produces community knowledge with greater accuracy than what had previously been made public; and it airs secretive or taboo (and serious) subjects under the guise of idle chatter. In doing so, Kamanin produces meaning about cosmonaut behavior and more broadly, about socialist life, that becomes far more subversive than we might have assumed possible from this privileged Stalinist author.

Gossip theorists have often read this particular form of communication as a powerful weapon that marginalized peoples wield in society. Feminist scholars like Lorraine Code have argued that gossip provides an avenue for informal communication among those in a variety of oppressed groups whose public speech is curtailed.²⁰ The etymology of the term itself is rooted in the descriptor for a medieval European woman’s female friends.²¹ Gender historians in particular have demonstrated how communities of women have used gossip as a form of covert communication among themselves.²² Historians of colonized and enslaved peoples have analyzed gossip and rumor as “fugitive speech,” drawing on the pioneering work of James C. Scott in naming the storytelling tools of the oppressed as weapons with which class-based marginality and imperialism were quietly but powerfully resisted.²³

Kamanin, as part of a command structure that included the most powerful men in the country, does not fit this definition, and we are mindful that attempting to argue that he does risks doing violence to the marginalized in history who have built and relied on such communications to survive. However, one of the contributions of the history of masculinity has been to shine a spotlight on how privileged male ac-

tors experienced, and in many cases forged, the gender regimes under which they prospered. Historians of masculinities in Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet successor states have shown that the gender orders in this part of the world can help us understand the unique relationship between the state and the people, broadly construed. One cannot understand Soviet masculinities without investigating the particular ways in which men encountered state power, one of the defining characteristics that separated Soviet from Euro-American masculinities in the twentieth century.²⁴ In that sense, as Fraser has argued elsewhere, the ego-documents of powerful Soviet men who fashioned themselves as marginalized or indeed fully powerless provide gender historians with crucial glimpses into the ways masculinity is constructed, performed, and maintained.²⁵ Few studies have been conducted of masculinity and gossip, although those that exist have been important in helping us understand how masculinity intersects with communication, knowledge, and the enforcement of men's morality.²⁶

Furthermore, gossip and diary writing are not natural partners, not least because gossip demands an audience. In this respect, Kamanin's identity as a socialist subject helps us bridge that gap: the Soviet diary was never private. Kamanin's imagined audience served as a circle of like-minded and captive listeners, consuming and presumably recirculating the tales they heard. (Are we not doing so ourselves in this very text?) In her study of gossip at elite Victorian men's clubs, Amy Milne-Smith has shown that "by telling stories, clubmen helped solidify the identity of the elite London man, both within their own community and in society at large. Gossip demonstrated you had access to certain information."²⁷ Kamanin's diary entries, at various moments, show us a man confident in his authority who delights in punishing his misbehaving charges; a man uncertain in his authority when his advice goes unheeded; and a man disheartened by his supposed lack of authority when the moral failings of the post-Stalin era infect his narrative. We argue that reading Kamanin's diaries (a private text) as gossip (a public act) opens new avenues for understanding the peculiarities of socialist masculinity: it was built and maintained in part through the specific hybridized private-public performances in which elite men engaged.²⁸

In the following sections, we focus on two main themes about which Kamanin gossiped in the diaries: the state of cosmonaut marriages, and cosmonauts' excessive drinking. A third thread runs through much of Kamanin's commentary: the trainees' overall moral suitability for space flight. We are focusing on the years from 1960, when the diaries begin, to 1965, by which time the first cohort of six cosmonauts had flown in space and most ensuing behavioral infractions had been resolved.²⁹

Troubling Marriages

Kamanin's published diaries begin in 1960, and up until the launch of the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin on 12 April 1961, the entries are largely devoted to the technical trials, failures, and eventual successes of that mission. Kamanin recorded at length the different stages of the rocket testing that would lead to a successful launch of the first human into space. The entries for the first few months of 1961 are heavily laden with

tension and anxiety. The team of engineers and pilots was under extreme pressure due to the importance of the mission—the “space race” competition with the Americans for the first successful launch of a person into space. Kamanin carefully mentioned this competition only once in the diary: the Americans estimated their first launch to be completed by 28 April. Therefore, time became of the essence. Simply put, the Soviet cosmonaut program had to beat that date, whatever the cost. Kamanin wrote about feverish production, equipment that was not even tested in the factory setting let alone space-mimicking conditions, and the resulting fallout such as poorly sealed fluid ducts, faulty wiring, and even a catastrophic failure to launch, with an explosion that killed seventy-four people on 5 January 1961.

In this first volume of the diaries, Kamanin also introduced the first official cosmonaut graduates, documenting their successful completion of the examination. One of those six cosmonauts was destined to be the first man in space. As he introduced them, Kamanin almost immediately deployed a theme that would become a hallmark of his diaries overall: the corrupting influence of meddling cosmonaut wives and the fraught state of many cosmonaut marriages overall. “All of the six cosmonauts are great guys. There is nothing to say about [Yuri] Gagarin, [Gherman] Titov or [Grigori] Neliubov³⁰—they do not deviate from the cosmonaut code of virtues,” he wrote.³¹ “[Andriian] Nikolaev is the calmest out of the six. [Valerii] Bykovskii is rather less composed than the others, capable of audacious behavior and saying things he should not. [Pavel] Popovich is a bit of a mystery—he appears to be a stoic man, but he behaves rather softly towards his quarrelsome wife.”³² Kamanin clearly disapproved of this submission. “They have a five-year-old daughter,” he continued, “and his wife is a pilot of the Serpukhovskii aviation club. Maybe his behavior could be explained by a rare generosity of his soul, or maybe, this could be the key to his mystery. Popovich could be one of the lead cosmonauts out of the six, but his family troubles are dragging him down.”³³

After musing over how he finally selected Yuri Gagarin as the face of the first flight, to take place on 12 April 1961, Kamanin’s description of the event was quite emotional.³⁴ He wrote of the anxiety of everyone watching, and the complete elation once Gagarin had landed safely. He concluded the day’s entry with, “The day of April 12, 1961, will never be forgotten by mankind, and Gagarin’s name will forever be etched into the annals of history and will become one of the greatest.” But scandals began brewing around the cosmonauts almost from the very beginning. As soon as the space mission was accomplished, Gagarin and the word “cosmonaut” overall were elevated to celebrity status almost overnight. Just as the first part of the diary for 1961 was filled with technical data, signifying Kamanin’s status as a career aviation man and a veteran pilot, the second half of 1961 clearly exhibits evidence of a change in his status: he became the Soviet equivalent of a celebrity handler.

From May to October of that year, the cosmonauts with Kamanin embarked on a grand tour to celebrate their achievement, visiting many countries including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, England, Iceland, Cuba, Brazil, Canada, Hungary, and France, as well as making several stops around the Soviet Union. Kamanin did not take notes during this eventful time, claiming in later entries that he was too busy to properly document everything. He did find time to gossip about scandalous events,

though, beginning in September 1961, when the cosmonauts and their handler arrived in Crimea. The most famous episode of drinking and infidelity revealed in Kamanin's diaries took place on this trip and has since been widely covered by historians of the space program: Gagarin's leap from a hotel balcony in Crimea in October 1961 to avoid his wife finding him in another woman's room. He suffered a severe head injury as a result, upsetting Kamanin's tour plans for months and resulting in bureaucratic acrobatics to keep the truth from Soviet journalists and the public.³⁵ Other entries featuring Kamanin's gossip about cosmonaut marriage trouble are less well known. On 14 September, for example, the month before Gagarin's injury, Kamanin noted the beginning of the alcoholic revelry on the part of Gagarin and Titov, as well as the noticeable tension between Gagarin and his wife, Valentina Ivanovna. (We have opted to quote long passages from the diaries in full in order to preserve the storytelling flavor of Kamanin's text and invite the reader to join us in the general's gossip circle):

We were coming back to "Foros" dacha [after touring Sevastopol] by two cars and a bus. On the way to the Diorama, Gagarin shared a car with Valentina Ivanovna, [Kamanin's wife] Maria Mikhailovna, and me. After visiting the Diorama, without saying a word, Gagarin transferred to the bus. Valentina Ivanovna was hurt, as it was tactless, to say the least. Driving through the Golden Valley by a restaurant, the bus stopped. Gagarin, Masalov, and Akhmerov disembarked and headed for the restaurant. Wanting to prevent malicious alcohol consumption, I followed. They quickly downed a glass of wine and went back out. I told Yuri that Valentina was calling him. He approached the car and asked her, "Well, what do you want?" She pleaded with him to get into the car. Gagarin declined, and Valya [Valentina Ivanovna] did not want to board the bus. Gagarin angrily slammed the door and got on the bus. Valya began to cry. Maria Mikhailovna and I were very uncomfortable.³⁶

Kamanin gossiped about many cosmonaut marriages, but he seemed particularly disdainful of Valentina Ivanovna Gagarina. The tone and connotation of his reflections suggest that Kamanin considered her to be of inferior background, too simple, dull, or unsophisticated to be a cosmonaut's wife. In December 1961, he wrote:

I don't want to be a prophet, but I think that in time [Gagarin] will drink, and drink heavily. Right now he is at the peak of his fame, and he handles enormous physical and emotional burdens, knowing that his every step is being watched. In a year or two, the circumstances will noticeably change, and he will feel the creeping dissatisfaction. This is already prevalent in his marital life—he does not respect his wife and sometimes puts her down, and she lacks tact, a proper upbringing, and other positive qualities in order to influence him.³⁷

The next day Kamanin reported another faux pas committed by Valentina Ivanovna, this time on their publicity tour in Afghanistan. Once again, he was very disapproving of her.

Something similar happened last night at the “Karga” restaurant, when Premier Daoud and the entire upper echelon of Afghan society was forced to stand and wait for the “queen.” Before taking a seat at the table, Valentina Ivanovna went to the restroom and spent an indecently long time there. In Yuri’s presence, I told her yesterday that it was a very grievous mistake, and such mishaps are unacceptable. Yura [Gagarin] said that he was also ashamed for her. Valentina Ivanovna understood her mistake, but said that she didn’t think that others would not sit at the table without her.³⁸

Kamanin’s gossip about the failings of the women married to male cosmonauts speaks to many issues, including sexism and a desire to protect the men’s images. It also shows his impatience with women in his orbit who might have struggled to bridge the private-public divide: they were expected to move from extreme secrecy about their husbands’ training (if they knew about it at all) to accompanying them on publicity tours and dining with foreign leaders all within a matter of months. Kamanin seemed to think so little of Titov’s wife, Tamara Vasilievna, that he did not even mention her until February 1962, over a year into his diary writing.³⁹

But one wife gained nothing but sympathy from Kamanin—Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space and the sixth person from the Soviet Union, whose flight took place in June 1963. It has been well documented by other historians that Tereshkova served as a useful propaganda tool for the cosmonaut program in the global Cold War, as the Soviet Union could boast to the United States about its gender equality, while also serving domestic needs at home: the space program leadership that certainly must have included Kamanin decided that Tereshkova’s persona as a woman of science was insufficient if she remained unmarried. She was thus paired up with another of the first cosmonauts, Andriian Nikolaev, and given a very public wedding soon after her flight. Their daughter was born the following spring.⁴⁰ In late 1964, Kamanin wrote in great detail about the state of Tereshkova and Nikolaev’s marriage, as he saw it, after writing very little about it for most of that year. Its foundering seemed to interest him, as it did when the male cosmonauts’ marriages faltered. In December 1964, he wrote:

Andriian Nikolaev called. When I asked him, “How are things? How is Valya [Tereshkova]’s health?” he answered, “Everything is great, everything is fine.” But I knew that things were far from fine—the cosmonauts are drinking a lot, Valya Tereshkova is seriously ill, and her marriage to Andriian was a mistake.

I noticed Valya’s poor condition over three months ago. To all my questions regarding her health she answered that the worst is behind her, the birth and the [Caesarian] surgery were to blame, but she will get better soon. Time passed and there was no noticeable improvement. The reasons for her nervous agitation, her illness and her impatience became evident on November 21. That day, around seven in the evening, she came into my and Maria’s room [at a resort] and shocked us with a request—she asked for permission to leave for Moscow by herself the next day. The reason for the hasty departure? Divorce from Nikolaev. To our pleading not to rush into any decisions regarding such

a serious matter, she answered very frankly that this was not her first time considering it, and that she firmly decided that she will not live with Andriian. She had made him out to be an idol and fell madly in love, but he turned out to be very different. He is a bad father to Alenka [and] drinks a lot.⁴¹

Puncturing the public relations bubble of this marriage, even in Kamanin's own diary, was almost a subversive act in the world of celebrity cosmonauts in the 1960s.

Kamanin implicitly contrasted his own strong marriage with what he saw as the cosmonauts' much weaker bonds, writing with a clear sense of superiority. Of course, we only have his own report regarding the state of his marriage, but we can deduce several points from the text. He wrote frequently and always fondly about his wife of over three decades, Maria Mikhailovna—or Musya, as he affectionately called her. During his travels abroad with the cosmonauts, he often lamented how much he missed her and wished to be back home. His warm feelings for his wife are apparent in the entries from 1964, when Maria Mikhailovna underwent hernia surgery and had a difficult recovery. He was frantic with worry. In another case, though, an episode in Kamanin's private life in 1963 illuminates how he overtly contrasted his own morality with that of the cosmonaut men. At the beginning of that year, a young woman showed up claiming to be Kamanin's biological daughter. He reflected frankly on his past over several entries and could not come up with any liaison that could explain the existence of a child of that age, nor any past paramour who matched the surname the young woman gave. Of the only woman who came close, Kamanin wrote on 1 January, "We were friends, but we never even got to kissing."⁴² Moreover, he wrote that the impostor did not have any evidence to support her claim. Maria Mikhailovna was predictably unimpressed with the possibility of Kamanin's extramarital activities, which deeply upset Kamanin. "Why are you always such a saint?" he recorded his wife saying. "Everything happens to everyone else, but you are without sin?" This passage offers rare evidence of Kamanin's reflection, through his narration of Maria Mikhailovna's words, on his own morality. But he quickly seemed to decide that this brush with gossip in his own life was unwarranted, his own morality perfectly intact: "Musya has known me for 32 years, we have had a good and harmonious life," he wrote, "but the first chance she gets she begins to doubt me."⁴³ Quite frequently throughout his diary, Kamanin praised his wife for her good qualities. While holding himself up as a moral paragon, he also conveyed his rules for proper conduct through his wife. The cosmonauts' wives, except perhaps Tereshkova as a younger version of Maria Mikhailovna, could never live up to these expectations.

Kamanin's marital gossip was also clearly influenced by his sense of belonging to a greater generation than the cosmonauts—more productive, courageous, battle-scarred and, of course, moral. Importantly, historians of postwar society have recently begun to use fatherhood as a category of analysis at this particular Soviet moment when many families could not build father-child bonds due to the high number of war deaths.⁴⁴ Yet in this case, we see much more of gossip theorists' sense of othering in Kamanin's talk about the younger cosmonaut generation than we do any sort of facsimile of father-son relationships. As Patricia Meyer Spacks has written, gossip "locates its subjects temporarily at a firm distance."⁴⁵ Kamanin's diary voice of disapproval was

linked to broader generational conflict and anxiety in postwar Soviet society which, as Fraser has argued, had a great deal to do with his identity as a decorated military commander in charge of younger men who had missed the war—and who thus could never fully access the masculinized authority that service bestowed.⁴⁶

That judgment of the cosmonauts' generation also comes through, if opaquely, in Kamanin's refusal to discuss his son Lev in his diary, despite the fact that Kamanin and Maria Mikhailovna appeared to be raising Lev's daughter, Olya. (As noted earlier in this article, Lev Nikolaevich would later prove instrumental in the diaries' publication.) Kamanin wrote about his granddaughter frequently and with great tenderness, commenting on her achievements as she grew up. Here, it is significant to look not only at Kamanin's gossip topics like marital trouble but also at what remained unsaid, even in his supposedly private pages. Kamanin never elaborated on the reason that Olya was in her grandparents' care, and to be sure, it would not have been an unusual arrangement in Soviet society; grandparents generally played a significant role due to women's labor, inadequate child care, and single-parent families resulting from war deaths. But Kamanin only mentioned Lev a handful of times, and Olya's mother just twice in passing. A possible generational chasm in his personal life did not inspire the same impulse to gossip, which helps us understand Kamanin's diaries as a hybrid private-public space. His crafting of his own masculinity as a loving grandfather differed from his identity as a moral arbiter for the cosmonauts in his charge. Kamanin's gossip about the cosmonauts' marriage trouble also provides further evidence that presenting as happily married was important for public figures in this era. Tereshkova's status as twenty-six years old and still unmarried required public correction, while other press reports made much of Gagarin's status as a family man. Kamanin's gossip here offered a way to reinforce that moral code of family stability in the wake of the war's disastrous demographic consequences.⁴⁷

Kamanin's focus in many of his entries on the ill health of the cosmonauts' marriages accomplished three main goals of gossip. First, it announced the subjects' transgression of Kamanin's moral code, which was influenced by the Twenty-Second Party Congress edict in October 1961 but not reliant on it, since many of Kamanin's entries preceded it. He nonetheless had appointed himself arbiter of morality for his young charges. Second, it produced knowledge heretofore unknown, granting the knower and transmitter a particular level of privilege. Third, it aired taboos not regularly discussed in Soviet society, especially regarding sex and divorce.

Drinking

The second major theme that Kamanin gossiped about involved excessive alcohol consumption. His frequent entries disapproving of the cosmonauts' drinking habits have deeper roots in Russian history and culture, and indeed exhibit patterns common in other societies as well. Kamanin's judgment of his charges' indulgence is reminiscent of class-based temperance movements of the early twentieth century. As Kate Tranchel has written, "Russia did not have a 'drink problem' until lower-class drinking caught the attention of the upper classes in the late nineteenth century."⁴⁸ Kamanin's

tales of cosmonaut drinking often cast either the cosmonauts themselves or the service people around them as having a lower status than Kamanin. In September 1961, he wrote:

On 26 September, I discovered that Titov's bodyguard, Robert Akhmerov, drinks, encourages Gherman [Titov] to drink, and acts as his wingman.⁴⁹ I had a serious talk with Titov and Gagarin, warning them that they are on a slippery path, and expressed my intention to immediately send Akhmerov back to Moscow. They owned up to their mistakes, and begged me not to punish Akhmerov. Gherman assured me that he alone is responsible for his actions. I believed them. Akhmerov kept his word and improved his behavior, but Masalov, Seriapin, Loginov, and the others continued drunken binges and were a bad influence on Gagarin and Titov.⁵⁰

Kamanin often shared details of Titov's tendency to drink and drive, which was tied up in disapproval that a man of Titov's fame and stature should drive himself anywhere at all. On 27 January 1962, he wrote:

On December 30, even before his departure for Indonesia, Titov visited the apartment of the journalist Bulushev, where he drank and made his chauffeur take part as well. They reached Chkalovskaia [aerodome] without incident, and later the chauffeur with Titov's permission left for his daughter's place. At two a.m. he was pulled over by a policeman and had his license confiscated due to him driving under the influence. Pomerantsev, born in 1918, is a very professional driver, a family man, and a member of the Party, and he hasn't had any complaints brought against him prior to this. Undoubtedly, Titov is the main culprit of this incident, and he himself admits it.⁵¹

A month later, Titov's behavior had apparently gotten worse:

Yesterday I was forced to have a serious talk with Gherman regarding his behavior. On February 15, after a speech for the old Bolsheviks and at the Great Party School, he visited a painter, Yar-Kravchenko and stayed there all night. Yar-Kravchenko is an egregious drunkard. Gherman said that he had a chance to see it for himself, and that he will not be visiting him again. Lately, Titov makes a lot of promises but often does not keep them. The same day, sometime between noon and one, he was driving his car by himself to Moscow around the Bear Lakes.⁵² He was trying to pass a bus, but in doing so, collided with it and damaged the right side of the car. This is the third automotive incident Titov has had in the last six months. Titov turned out to be more difficult, hard-headed and capricious than I thought of him before his space flight. We will have to deal with it at the next party meeting.⁵³

In discussing Tereshkova's marriage, Kamanin blamed her husband Nikolaev's drinking for his poor treatment of her.

A few other drunken binges by Gagarin, Nikolaev and others came to light as well. On November 22 I assembled all the cosmonauts, vacationing at Sochi, and ordered a return to a strict regimen and a cessation of all drinking. After several talks with Nikolaev, he promised to quit drinking altogether and to apologize to Valya at once. Gagarin immediately stopped all his questionable gatherings and began to pay more attention to his wife . . . Two days later, Tereshkova and Nikolaev made up, but I can no longer hope that they will be happy.⁵⁴

Although Kamanin did not gossip as extensively about the women cosmonaut trainees, his views of their transgressions do appear, particularly with alcohol. Throughout much of 1962, Kamanin wrote about the recruitment of women cosmonauts, an achievement for which he had advocated for the better part of the previous year. They had fifty-eight initial candidates from whom they were to select the top five, which would include Tereshkova and Valentina Ponomareva. Kamanin was generally disappointed by the pool of potential women cosmonauts, stating that it was not sufficient and there were not enough experienced and physically fit women on that list who would be suitable for cosmonaut training.⁵⁵ He wrote about the women trainees late in 1962:

Ponomareva passed her training with top scores, and she aced all but one of the theoretical courses. Because of her health and her preparedness, she could become the first candidate for the flight, but her behavior and conversations suggest that she has questionable morals . . . She smokes occasionally, [insisting that] "Every proper woman must smoke." She went AWOL several times in Feodosia. Everybody is favorably impressed by Tereshkova—she is a model of proper behavior and good manners. Tereshkova and Ponomareva both feel they may be the first candidates for the flight, and some rivalry between the two is already noticeable.⁵⁶

A week later, he wrote of Ponomareva:

Ponomareva has a more substantial theoretical background and she is more capable than the others—she picks everything up on the fly—but her behavior needs a lot of correcting. She is snobbish, self-loving, exaggerates her abilities and does not shy away from a drink, smoke, or a "wandering eye," despite the fact that she has a husband and a five-year-old son.⁵⁷

For her part, in a 2007 interview with historian Andrew Jenks, Ponomareva acknowledged the fundamental accuracy of Kamanin's diary accounts.⁵⁸

Amid Kamanin's gossip, however, one can also read a rehabilitation arc. Those about whom Kamanin shared personal failings were permitted an opportunity to be reformed, to lend further power to Kamanin's gossip by accepting his truth that they were at fault. In March 1962, Kamanin updated the status of troubled trainee Mars Rafikov, who had just been dismissed from the program for drinking and domestic abuse:

I read the order of Rafikov's dismissal to the other cosmonauts. This was met with a stony silence, and for a few moments everyone was stunned. Rafikov said that he admits his mistakes that caused problems for him as well as for the cosmonaut group and its command. He asked for forgiveness, and begged us not to forget him and to help him come back in a year or two. We promised to help, but warned him that everything depends on his actions. I had a talk with Rafikov's wife. She loves her five-year-old son and her husband very much, and she is ready to follow him wherever he goes. I spoke with Gagarin, Titov and Anikeev. I told them that the bad example set out by Titov as well as Anikeev's feeble-mindedness "helped" drive Rafikov to this lifestyle, and that they are also guilty of what befell him.⁵⁹

The shocked reaction of the cosmonauts to Rafikov's punishment suggested that they might have felt untouchable in their elevated station and immune to consequences, only to be rudely awakened. Kamanin discussed his expectations for Titov's moral recovery in more detail after that, but it was ultimately unsuccessful. In June 1964, he was involved in a drunk driving accident in Moscow that killed his passenger, a young woman. "Again, there's a lot of trouble with Gherman Titov," Kamanin began on 27 June. Titov claimed he had offered the woman a ride as she waited at a bus stop. He flipped the car and came away with bruises, insisting later that the woman had left the scene of the accident and hailed a taxi. "At three a.m., the police showed up at Titov's apartment in the center. It turns out, the woman died in the cab before reaching Sklifosovskii hospital."⁶⁰ An investigation followed, which seemed to push the entire cosmonaut corps to its breaking point. After a team meeting a few weeks after the accident, Kamanin wrote:

Titov's case was brought up. In the three years following his space flight, Titov had committed so many stupid mistakes that some drastic measures were needed in this last attempt to keep him from unworthy conduct. The comrades angrily said right to Titov's face, "You have severed your connection with the rest of the team, you live badly with Tamara, you are stuck up, you make too many shady acquaintances, drive drunk and drive recklessly. With your behavior you shame all the cosmonauts and harm the cause that we dedicated our lives to."⁶¹

But Kamanin deemed Titov too famous to remove from the program. "All voted unanimously in favor of a stern reprimand for Titov. We will lower his rank, prohibit public speeches, attendance of banquets, and driving."⁶² A full rehabilitation was evidently not possible for Titov, and Kamanin's repeated recordings of Titov's transgressions served to erode Titov's masculine authority and reinforce Kamanin's, as his moral superior.

Conclusion

What are we to make of these morality tales in the diaries of a senior Air Force officer, Hero of the Soviet Union, and one of the most esteemed men in the country? Kam-

anin's cosmonaut gossip in many ways fits storytelling antecedents in Russian culture. Barbara Walker has discussed the *anekdot* (anecdote) and its influence on Soviet memoir writing. "The *anekdot*," she writes, "is a spicy little story about personalities and their interactions, with a distinct moral which is not always obvious to the outsider, but which refers clearly to the social characteristics of the individual(s) in question."⁶³ She traces it back to the eighteenth-century imperial court and 1840s intelligentsia, an oral gossip tradition that developed when only "humorous anecdotes" were permitted in public discourse, not serious political discussions.⁶⁴ It was also a way to demonstrate one's "insider" knowledge and thus bolster one's social legitimacy.⁶⁵ In Kamanin's gossip, we are also reminded of the Russian village concept of *krugovaia poruka*, or collective responsibility, that carried over into the Soviet era and took on the meaning of "mutual surveillance."⁶⁶ Oleg Kharkhordin has examined the Soviet *kollektiv* (collectives) of the 1950s, for example, as sites of mutual community discipline, operating in the following fashion: "elect a ruling body, install joint responsibility, demand discipline from your comrades. Thereby, as another brochure put it, 'in a *kollektiv* a new man is formed.'"⁶⁷ Kamanin's use of gossip is also reminiscent of Lynne Viola's pioneering analysis of the power of rumor to voice peasant anxieties and forge their agency in Soviet villages during the early collectivization drive.⁶⁸ Timothy Johnston points to the ubiquitous concept of "tips" in the Soviet everyday: the transmission of oral information about how and where to find necessary goods.⁶⁹ Nancy Ries's work also applies to Kamanin, although after his time of writing, in her anthropological analysis of the peculiar catastrophizing discourse that characterized Russian table talk during *perestroika*.⁷⁰ Soviet life featured many hybrid communication forms with cross-over purposes and executions, such as oral/written, sanctioned/illicit, and private/public—as well as all the spaces in between.

For us to call Kamanin a "gossip" is to implicitly draw on centuries of gendered assumptions about moral policing and covert speech, but also to reclaim that label and broaden the discursive work it might do for masculine subjectivity. By gossiping with his imagined collective audience as a loyal Stalinist diarist, Kamanin positioned himself as an arbiter of communist morality. If the socialist man was part of a collective with communal responsibility for moral behavior, then Gagarin's infidelity, Titov's drinking, Rafikov's spousal abuse, and Ponomareva's "unfeminine" behavior signaled that something had gone wrong in their upbringing. The truth about such infractions had to be hidden from public view at the time, and Kamanin took seriously his responsibility to ensure that happened, but it also required socialist self-criticism and self-confession in the diary pages. The diaries provide new ways to understand the peculiarities of socialist masculinity; as Patricia Meyer Spacks has shown, "By talking about the concerns of other people's lives, the talkers grow to understand their own more fully."⁷¹

Kamanin's cosmonaut gossip helped define his masculinized selfhood as a privileged guardian of knowledge and protector of morals at a moment of unsettled masculine authority in post-Stalin society.

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◆ Notes

1. Slava Gerovitch, “‘New Soviet Man’ inside Machine: Human Engineering, Spacecraft Design, and the Construction of Communism,” *Osiris* 22, no. 1 (2007), 135–157, here 141.

2. N.P. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos: kosmicheskie dnevniki Generala Kamanina (kn. pervaya, 1960–1963 gg)* [Hidden cosmos: The space diaries of General Kamanin, vol. 1, 1960–1963] (Moscow: Infotekst IF, 1995). Citations will be to the online version: Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, Militera: Voennaia literatura [Hidden cosmos, war-lit: Military literature collection] (Moscow, 2001), Entry for 24 March 1962, http://militera.lib.ru/db/kamanin_np/index.html (accessed 8 June 2021). All translations of the online diary entries are our own.

3. Ibid., 27 March 1962.

4. For only a few of many examples, see Slava Gerovitch, “The Human inside a Propaganda Machine: The Public Image and Professional Identity of Soviet Cosmonauts,” in *Into the Cosmos: Space Exploration and Soviet Culture*, ed. James T. Andrews and Asif A. Siddiqi (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 77–106, here 84–85; and Andrew L. Jenks, *The Cosmonaut Who Couldn’t Stop Smiling: The Life and Legend of Yuri Gagarin* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012), 234–235.

5. Erica L. Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery in the Soviet Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 155–157.

6. Bart Hendrickx, “The Kamanin Diaries, 1960–63,” *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society* 50 (1997), 33–40, here 33; Gerovitch, “‘New Soviet Man’ inside Machine,” 138.

7. Slava Gerovitch, *Voices of the Soviet Space Program: Cosmonauts, Soldiers, and Engineers Who Took the USSR into Space* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), chapter 9, “Cosmonaut 13: Vladimir Shatalov.”

8. Andrew Jenks has argued that Kamanin was not a public figure, instead working behind the scenes while the cosmonauts—after their flights—became public celebrities. See Jenks, *Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling*, 243. While that was indeed the case in many instances, we submit that Kamanin was much better known before their flights than the cosmonauts were. Journalist Andrei Sidorchik has written, "In a certain sense, [Kamanin] became the face of the Soviet space program. Cosmonauts only became famous after their flights, but prior to it their names were kept secret. Kamanin, however, was always in the spotlight; he gave the interviews for the newspapers, radio and television." See Sidorchik, "Ot Cheliuskina do Gagarina. Neveroiatnaia zhizn' Generala Kamanina" [From Cheliuskin to Gagarin: The incredible life of General Kamanin], *Argumenty i fakty* [Arguments and facts], 18 October 2018.

9. Hendrickx, "Kamanin Diaries," 33.

10. Asif A. Siddiqi, *Challenge to Apollo: The Soviet Union and the Space Race, 1945–1974* (Washington, DC: NASA History Division, 2000), 796. On the diaries' place in extending our previous knowledge of the Soviet space program, see also Bart Hendrickx, "Russian-Language Sleuthing," in *Cold War Space Sleuths: The Untold Secrets of the Soviet Space Program*, ed. Dominic Phelan (New York: Springer, 2013), 185–217, here 208–210.

11. For an excellent comprehensive account of the Soviet space program, see Siddiqi, *Challenge to Apollo*. Other salient recent work includes: Gerovitch, *Voices of the Soviet Space Program*; Andrews and Siddiqi, eds., *Into the Cosmos*; Asif Siddiqi, *The Red Rockets' Glare: Spaceflight and the Soviet Imagination, 1857–1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and eds. Eva Maurer, Julia Richers, Monica Rüthers, and Carmen Scheide, *Soviet Space Culture: Cosmic Enthusiasm in Socialist Societies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Others have conducted excellent investigations into Yuri Gagarin's life and legacy, and new work seeks to further examine Valentina Tereshkova's impact on Soviet girls' scientific and technological education. See Jenks, *Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling*; Lev Danilkin, *Iurii Gagarin* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2011); Roshanna P. Sylvester, "'You Are Our Pride and Our Glory!' Emotions, Generation, and the Legacy of Revolution in Women's Letters to Valentina Tereshkova," *Russian Review* 78, no. 3 (June 2019): 392–413; and Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*.

12. Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 9.

13. On Kamanin as a committed Stalinist even after the leader's death, see Siddiqi, *Challenge to Apollo*, 175, and Slava Gerovitch, "'Why Are We Telling Lies?' The Creation of Soviet Space History Myths," *Russian Review* 70 (July 2011), 460–484, here 468. Related, Andrew Jenks has stated that Kamanin served as a KGB agent. While we have not been able to obtain further documentation about that, it would add a new dimension to Kamanin's sense of his own privacy—or its absence. We would certainly welcome further research on whether Kamanin might have used his diaries as a recording device, in a way, to capture information about his cosmonaut charges as a form of state surveillance. See Jenks, *Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling*, 106.

14. Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 9.

15. *Ibid.*, 10.

16. See Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); and Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, "Gender: A Useful Category in the Analysis of Ego-Documents?" *Scandinavian Journal of History* 38, no. 2 (2013), 202–222.

17. Natalia Kozlova, "The Diary as Initiation and Rebirth: Reading Everyday Documents of the Early Soviet Era," in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, ed.

Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 282–298, here 283.

18. Robert F. Goodman, “Introduction,” in *Good Gossip*, ed. Robert F. Goodman and Aaron Ben-Ze’ev (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 1–8, here 1. For a deep reading of the practice, see Patricia Meyer Spacks, “In Praise of Gossip,” *Hudson Review* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 19–38.

19. Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin, 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxxv.

20. Goodman, “Introduction,” 3. See also Lorraine Code, “Gossip, or in Praise of Chaos,” in Goodman and Ben-Ze’ev, *Good Gossip*, 100–105.

21. Louise Collins, “Gossip: A Feminist Defense,” in Goodman and Ben-Ze’ev, *Good Gossip*, 106–114, here 114.

22. See Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Melanie Tebbutt, *Women’s Talk? A Social History of ‘Gossip’ in Working-Class Neighbourhoods, 1880–1960* (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1995); and Suzannah Lipscomb, “Crossing Boundaries: Women’s Gossip, Insults and Violence in Sixteenth-Century France,” *French History* 25, no. 4 (2011): 408–426.

23. For an overview of this historiography, see Laura Derby, “Beyond Fugitive Speech: Rumor and Affect in Caribbean History,” *Small Axe* 18, no. 2 (2014): 123–140. See also James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

24. There has been a wealth of research on Russian and Soviet masculinities since the 1990s. Key historical and interdisciplinary work includes the essays in Barbara Evans Clements, Rebecca Friedman, and Dan Healey, eds., *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Dan Healey, *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Sergei Oushakine, ed., *Muzhe(N)stvoennost’* [On masculinity/femininity] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002); Eliot Borenstein, *Men without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917–1929* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Claire E. McCallum, *The Fate of the New Man: Representing and Reconstructing Masculinity in Soviet Visual Culture, 1945–1965* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2018); Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*; Marko Dumančić, *Men Out of Focus: The Soviet Masculinity Crisis in the Long Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021); and Amy E. Randall, “Soviet and Russian Masculinities: Rethinking Soviet Fatherhood after Stalin and Renewing Virility in the Russian Nation under Putin,” *Journal of Modern History* 92, no. 4 (2020): 859–898.

25. Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*, 118, 139–142.

26. See Amy Milne-Smith, “Club Talk: Gossip, Masculinity, and Oral Communities in Late Nineteenth-Century London,” *Gender & History* 21, no. 1 (2009): 86–106; Sally Johnson, “A Game of Two Halves? On Men, Football, and Gossip,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 3, no. 2 (1994): 145–154; Emily Ross, “Just Like a Woman: Misogynistic Gossip in the Correspondence between John Chamberlain and Sir Dudley Carleton,” in *Women and Language: Essays on Gendered Communication Across Media*, ed. Melissa Ames and Sarah Himsel Burcon (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011): 30–44; and Eyal Eckhaus and Batia Ben-Hador, “Gossip and Gender Differences: A Content Analysis Approach,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 97–108.

27. Milne-Smith, “Club Talk,” 87.

28. Definitions of “public” and “private” are fraught in Soviet history and indeed in the Russian language, as many historians have noted. Many Soviet citizens reflexively merged them. For an overview of the discussion, see Juliane Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation: Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 250n1.

29. We are omitting Kamanin's entries about Yuri Gagarin's death in a training accident in 1968, as this incident has already been well documented by historians. However, Kamanin does take great pains to show in those entries that Gagarin was a moral man. He brings up the accusation that Gagarin and the experienced test pilot who died with him, Vladimir Seregin, were drinking that day only to refute it: “It was established with absolute certainty that neither Gagarin nor Seregin had a drop of alcohol” that day. See Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 30 April 1968, and entries throughout 1968. See also Jenks, *Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling*, and Siddiqi, *Challenge to Apollo*.

30. All transliterations from Russian in this article use the Library of Congress system, with two exceptions: Iurii Gagarin is transliterated as “Yuri,” as this is an exceedingly common and well-known spelling in English; and German Titov is rendered as “Gherman,” to prevent confusion with the nationality.

31. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 18 January 1961. Kamanin also insinuates here that there is a certain standard of behavior or ideal, that these men are the embodiment of a model cosmonaut, although Kamanin does not outline what that standard is.

32. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 18 January 1961. This group of early cosmonauts, known collectively in the press and in participant memoirs as the *shestiorka*, or Group of Six, was led by Gagarin. Although he had not yet been selected at the time of this entry, he would become both the first man in space and the first to complete a full orbit of the earth. The group also included Gherman Titov on *Vostok-2*, who flew on the first twenty-four-hour orbital flight on 6–7 August 1961; Andriian Nikolaev and Pavel Popovich, who became the first to lead spacecraft in orbit at the same time on *Vostok-3* and *Vostok-4*, respectively, from 11–15 August 1961; and Valerii Bykovskii, who flew on *Vostok-5* for five days from 14–19 June 1963, setting a record for a solo space flight. The sixth cosmonaut in the *shestiorka* was the first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova. She fronted *Vostok-6* from 16–19 June 1963, overlapping with much of Bykovskii's flight. For more details on these flights, see Siddiqi, *Challenge to Apollo*.

33. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 18 January 1961.

34. As Slava Gerovitch has written, it is not quite right to use the word “piloted” here; the cosmonauts neither needed nor were permitted to touch the controls of the spaceship. See Gerovitch, “‘New Soviet Man’ inside Machine,” 136.

35. For more details on this episode, see Jenks, *Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling*, chapter 8. Fraser also discusses it as a moment when Gagarin's injured masculine body had to be hidden from public view: Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*, 155–156. Kamanin's narration of the incident and its aftermath is found in Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 4 October 1961, 17 October 1961, and 14 November 1961. Soviet journalist Iaroslav Golovanov has also described the press reaction to Gagarin's injury and its cause: Golovanov, *Zametki vashego sovremennika, tom 1, 1953–1970* [Notes from your contemporary, vol. 1, 1953–1970] (Moscow: Dobroe slovo, 2011), book 16. Available online at <http://epizodsspace.airbase.ru/bibl/golovanov/golzap/1/kn1-1.html> (accessed 8 June 2021).

36. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 21 September 1961.

37. *Ibid.*, 14 December 1961.

38. *Ibid.*, 15 December 1961. By “Premier Daoud,” Kamanin was presumably referring to the prime minister of Afghanistan at that time, Mohammed Daoud Khan. On cosmonaut marriages in the public eye, Slava Gerovitch has also noted Kamanin's interest in controlling the cosmonauts' marital images. Gerovitch, “Human inside a Propaganda Machine,” 86.

39. Other official sources from this time depicted Tamara Vasilievna Titova as particularly unsupportive. The *Pravda* [Truth] report on Titov's flight in August 1961, for example, included a section in which Titov told Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev that his wife had to be brought around to accepting his imminent space flight. See Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*, 158.

40. See Sue Bridger, "The Cold War and the Cosmos: Valentina Tereshkova and the First Woman's Space Flight," in *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Melanie Ilić, Susan E. Reid, and Lynne Attwood (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 222–237; Roshanna P. Sylvester, "She Orbits over the Sex Barrier: Soviet Girls and the Tereshkova Moment," in Andrews and Siddiqi, *Into the Cosmos*, 195–212; Sylvester, "'You Are Our Pride and Our Glory!'" ; and Gerovitch, "Human inside a Propaganda Machine."

41. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 21 December 1964.

42. *Ibid.*, 1 January 1963.

43. *Ibid.*

44. For an overview of recent historiography on postwar Soviet fatherhood, see Randall, "Soviet and Russian Masculinities."

45. Meyer Spacks, "In Praise of Gossip," 29.

46. Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*, 157. Slava Gerovitch has also discussed the generational divide between Kamanin and the cosmonauts. See Gerovitch, "Human inside a Propaganda Machine," 104. For a more thorough discussion of generation as a category in postwar life, see Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation*.

47. Fraser, *Military Masculinity and Postwar Recovery*, 168; Ekaterina Alexandrova, "Why Soviet Women Want to Get Married," in *Women in Russia: Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union*, ed. Tatiana Mamonova (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 31–50, here 39. Writing in the 1980s, the anecdotal evidence from Mamonova's essayists suggests that being divorced was preferable in society to being never married. On women's experiences as single mothers after the war, see Mie Nakachi, *Replacing the Dead: The Politics of Reproduction in the Postwar Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

48. Kate Transchel, *Under the Influence: Working-Class Drinking, Temperance, and Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1895–1932* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 39. See also Mark Schrad, *Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Laura Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle: Drink and Worker Culture in St. Petersburg, 1900–1929* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000).

49. The connotation here is that Akhmerov procured women for sex with Titov, both paid and not.

50. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, group of entries titled, "14 September–3 October" 1961.

51. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1962.

52. This passage implies that driving himself was improper, and Titov should have had a chauffeur.

53. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 17 February 1962. This crash would not be the final count: Titov drove the car off the road and into a ditch on 14 July of the same year.

54. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 21 December 1964.

55. *Ibid.*, 16 and 18 January 1962.

56. *Ibid.*, 19 November 1962.

57. *Ibid.*, 29 November 1962. This passage implies that Ponomareva engaged in sex outside her marriage.

58. Jenks, *Cosmonaut Who Couldn't Stop Smiling*, 289n46.

59. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos*, 27 March 1962.

60. *Ibid.*, 27 June 1964.

61. Ibid., 2 July 1964.

62. Ibid.

63. Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s," *Russian Review* 59, no. 3 (2000), 327–352, here 336.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., 339.

66. Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 110. On the early modern origins of the term and practice, see Horace W. Dewey, "Political *poruka* in Muscovite Rus'," *Russian Review* 46, no. 2 (1987): 117–133.

67. Kharkhordin, *Collective and the Individual*, 112.

68. Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

69. Johnston, *Being Soviet*, xxxv.

70. Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

71. Meyer Spacks, "In Praise of Gossip," 28.