

LECTURE ■ ■

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIXTIERS: THEIR LEGACY AND IMPORTANT LESSONS

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The philosophical Sixtiers (shestidesiatniki) were a cohort of Soviet thinkers who emerged during the Khrushchev Thaw and played a decisive role in revitalizing philosophical life under conditions of ideological pressure and political control. This paper argues that they are best understood not through the lens of generational identity, but through the framework of the enduring struggle between philosophy and power. What united them was not age or shared experience as such, but a sustained commitment to preserving philosophy as an autonomous practice of critical thinking, grounded in intellectual rigor and moral responsibility, in a context where thought was subject to political instrumentalization.

The paper traces how this commitment took shape in a normative reorientation of philosophy, expressed in a critical engagement with the young Marx, methodological innovation, and the development of indirect forms of critique. It then examines the limits of this achievement, showing how the shift from ideological coercion to institutional incorporation during perestroika transformed the conditions of philosophical practice and weakened the critical independence that had defined the Sixtiers' work.

By reconstructing this trajectory, the paper highlights both the achievements and the fragility of philosophical autonomy. The legacy of the philosophical Sixtiers thus offers a critical perspective on the contemporary Russian situation, where philosophy once again confronts pressures of political instrumentalization and renewed entanglement with state power, raising urgent questions about the conditions under which critical thought can be sustained.

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