THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE KING:

INTELLIGENTSIA IDEOLOGY IN TRANSITION

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> I had just started the coffee when Richard, my very large and handsome son, appeared. He is known far and wide for his nosy ear. Why are you still in your pajamas? I asked. He answered, What is this crap, Mother, this life is short and terrible. What is this metaphysical shit, what is this disease you intelligentsia are always talking about? First we said: Intelligentsia! Us? Oh, the way words lie down under decades, then the Union of Restless Diggers out of sheer insomnia pulls them up: daggers for the young but for us they look like flowers of nostalgia that grew in mother's foreign garden. What did my mother say? Darling, you should have come to the Town Hall last night, the whole intelligentsia was there. My uncle, strictly: The intelligenstia will never permit it! So I laughed. But Jack said, Don't dare talk to your mother like that, Richard! Don't you dare! Ma, Richard said, get his brains out of the pickle jar, it's no insult. Everyone knows, the intelligentsia strikes the spark, so that they'll be relevant for a long time, striking sparks here and there. Of course, he explained, the fire of revolution would only be advanced, contained, and put to productive use by the working class. Let me tell you, Jack, the intelligentsia better realize this.
> Grace Paley, "Listening" from Later on the Same Day (1985).

It will be noted that the topic of this conference has to do with an end, rather than with the millenium. My assigned topic is even more lugubrious - to look into the possible death of the intelligentsia.

The first order of business would seem to be to define what is the "intelligentsia." In Russian parlance of this century "intelligentsia" has had three main meanings; two of them are particularly relevant here since they define the poles of common usage. Firstly, as a term of social classification or as a census category intelligentsia has tended to mean the educated professional classes. At times, this category has been interpreted extremely broadly. Stalin in the thirties, for example, generally spoke of contemporary Soviet society as comprising three broad groups - the proletariat, the peasantry and the intelligentsia (which he often preferred to call the "worker intelligentsia"). In such formulations, the term was essentially synonymous with white collar and referred in particular to the huge Stalinist bureacracy of which professional intellectuals comprised a

part.

Many might be offended by the Stalinist usage because they see "intelligentsia" not as designating a mere category of employment or level of education but as a much more exalted entity. This "intelligentsia" is a self-proclaimed interest group that emerged in the nineteenth century and always considered themselves a unique and indigenous body with privileged access to truth. By this definition, "intelligentsia" refers to those people or those groups of people who see themselves as, variously, the conscience of the nation, fighters for truth and social justice, prophets who can divine the way forward for Russia, or perhaps just defenders of aesthetic values in the face of creeping philistinism and mass culture. In tsarist Russia, many of them shared a mission to save the country from the state's oppression or plain mismanagement. In the Soviet period, by most Western accounts, the intelligentsia faithful carried on this tradition, despite the extreme inducements, both positive and negative, to abandon their independent stance and be absorbed into the intelligentsia in the Stalinist sense, that is, to become a mere sub-group within the broad category of white-collar workers of the state. Those who held out, though not always visible on the surface in any numbers, were able to keep the tradition alive to emerge in greater strength under Gorbachev.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, however, the identity (and even existence) of the intelligentsia in this particular sense has been threatened. There are several factors contributing to the intelligentsia's current perilous state, including a general scarcity of state funds, problems in finding alternative sources of patronage in a chaotic, proto-capitalist world, and the tremendous adjustment from established patterns of conformity or dissidence to the state. Much of the fervour and sense of mission of the traditional

Russian intelligentsia is dissipated in the proliferation that we have seen in recent years of new journals and other media targeted at particular interest groups, on the one hand, and of lowbrow, mass culture, on the other. As, with collapse of the Soviet Union, the intelligentsia were thrust into a global intellectual economy, their sense of unique identity was even further challenged. At best, they are losing their special status and aura, becoming scarcely distinguishable from the intelligentsia in a third common understanding of the term, an understanding somewhere between that which sees the intelligentsia as a sacral entity and that which sees them as mere white collar: the intelligentsia as professional intellectuals. Even as "mere" intellectuals, their situation has deteriorated. Formerly part of the privileged elite of the country, they are now, rather, poor relations of their Western counterparts.

One could only assume that, were the country's economy to improve, so would the fortunes of the intelligentsia. In a pluralist society, however - assuming that Russia will be a pluralist society in the future - they are unlikely to regain the status they enjoyed during the Soviet era.

The late Andrei Amalryk in his well-known essay posed the question "Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?" His clearly symbolic date proved to be not so very inaccurate, more accurate than most assumed, but the question today has to be - to use another symbolic date taken from a well-known literary text, "Will the Russian intelligentsia (in that special sense) survive until 2001?" - in other words, will it survive much beyond the demise of the Soviet Union? Then one must ask, are we looking at cause and effect here, or is the intelligentsia's crisis state just coincidentally occurring in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union? After all, the intelligentsia did survive in the

relatively pluralist Russia of early this century. Russia was then only "relatively" pluralist, however, because of the oppressive tsarist censorship and extremely limited institutions of representative government. Both these conditions apply much less today - in the case of censorship, particularly so.

Here I will argue that the real crisis for the Russian intelligentsia, that is, for those intellectuals who see themselves as bearers of a unique and longstanding Russian tradition, has come less from local factors, such as a shortage of funds, than from broader changes in the world at large which also contributed to the demise of the Soviet state itself.

The stature of the intelligentsia in Russia (and Soviet Russia) has effectively been a function of the power of its centralised, authoritarian state. Both parties - state and intelligentsia - lay a claim to knowing "the truth," knowing what is best for Russia. In this situation, as the state becomes less able to, or less interested in, acting as guardian of a single ideology for the country, so does the role of the intelligentsia weaken. Under a powerful state, they may function either as promulgators of the official ideology, or as staunch opponents of it. In either case, their power (whether symbolic or actual) derives from the power of the state. But both parties rest their claim to authority on particular texts (if often rival ones).

During the Soviet period, the Russian intelligentsia were particularly implicated in the state, not just institutionally, but also in certain senses ideologically. Such a contention might seem surprising, given the regime's well-documented persecution of individual intellectuals and the fact that pockets of intellectuals provided the main known centers of Soviet dissidence. However, the intelligentsia and the regime were both driven

by a sense of sacred mission. Though both groups conceived that mission differently, their conceptions were in each case informed by two defining features. The first of these was a phobia of market forces which were seen as threatening the purity of political and cultural life. Though this deep-seated prejudice has made problematical many intellectuals' adjustment to post-Soviet society, their identity has been more formidably challenged by a second, related cluster of beliefs that was likewise shared with the political elite; these beliefs centered around the value of lettered culture.

The traditional Russian intelligentsia grew up around a lettered culture, but at its heart was literature. In the Soviet period, but most paradigmatically under Stalin, these values of the prerevolutionary intelligentsia were adopted to a hyperbolic degree by both intellectuals and the state. Arguably, in the thirties writing emerged as the highest occupation.[1] The written word (pismennost'), as distinct from the spoken word or, especially, the vernacular, was held in particular awe.[2]

Why did writing and texts play such a major role in Stalinist Russia? One could argue that this was because the country had become literate by then, whereas in the twenties the masses had still been largely unable to read or write. Of course this was a factor, but the emphasis on letters also has to do with permanence, rationalisation and consolidation (and respectability). The special role assumed by texts was symptomatic of a new phase of consolidation and legitimization which the regime entered around 1931 after the upheavals of collectivization and the cultural revolution.

Foucault and others have pointed to the historical link between power and

1. It is to be noted that the culmination of Nikolai Ostrovskii's How the Steel Was Tempered (Kak zakalialas' stal', 1932, 1934) is the moment when the book which the warrior hero has written about his experiences in the Civil War is accepted for publication.
2. See my Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,

writing.[3] And Angel Rama has argued in The Lettered City, drawing on the example of colonial Latin America, that lettered culture, the culture of scribes and literati alike, has often played a central role whenever a state has sought to impose its own, single order on a disparate populace.[4]

Both in nineteenth century Russia and in the Soviet Union, the state and the intelligentsia vested extraordinary power in texts. Indeed, the Stalin revolution in some senses began (around 1928) when the economy was shifted to a "planned" - or in other words textual - basis. But in the thirties there was a palpable shift of primary focus from such more pragmatic texts to the more strictly ideological. The thirties were a decade framed and punctuated by the successive publication of authoritative texts, some from the Marxist legacy, others newly generated[5] The intelligentsia shared with the Stalinist regime a faith in the sacrality of the written text, epitomized in the famous quotation from Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita, "Manuscripts don't burn." This line has been cited again and again to suggest that under Stalin the intelligentsia prevailed morally and spiritually over a corrupt state. Yet it could also be said that in making such a statement Bulgakov was participating in the illusions of his decade about the sacred status of texts (and authors). As we are becoming increasingly aware, under Stalin many manuscripts did burn, or more specifically were lost in the various purges. Moreover, Bulgakov clearly did not mean that all manuscripts "don't burn"; in the same novel he

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1995), pp. 284-289.

3. Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Russian Prison, trans Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage books, Random House, 1995), esp. pp. 189-94; Power/Knowledge. selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon books, 1980), p. 127.

4. Angel Rama, The Lettered City , translated and edited by John Charles Chasten (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

5. Eg. I. Stalin, "O nekotorykh voprosakh istorii bol'shevizma. Pis'mo k redaktsii zhurnala," Proletarskaia revoliutsiia, 1931, no 6 (113), pp. 3-12, the Short Course of Party History (Kratkii kurs), published in 1938.

implies that those of "Massolit" (in other words, of state-sponsored hack literature) should burn. Essentially, only those texts that are in some way "true" have the right to immortality, the right not to burn.

This focus on "manuscripts," rather than the published version of a given texts (which is after all what was actually burnt in the rituals of nazi Germany or the auto da fe of the Inquisition), is arguably because in the hierarchy of texts the upper reaches were reserved for those that are unique, authentic and authoritative. In consequence, handwriting acquired enormous symbolic value, especially Stalin's own handwriting.[6] In this respect, textual prejudices of the Stalinist thirties can be compared with Benjamin's concern, in his "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," with the loss of "aura" in art work which can be reproduced mechanically.[7] In Stalinist society, since ordinary citizens generally had access only to the published version of a given text, not to its "original," they were to that extent less privileged.

Textual purity was of great importance in the thirties. Thus, for example, texts played a central role in all phases of purging - arrest, interrogation, trial and sentencing - even in camp life where there were frequently libraries and literary periodicals for the dification of prisoners. But concern for the correct text, and the correct version of a given text, was connected ineluctably to concern for the correct exegesis. All texts, and all acts of exegesis, had to be authorized and endorsed.[8] Indeed, the exchange at the

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6. I am grateful here to Gregory Freidin who suggested this analogy during the discussion of my paper at the Stanford conference.
7. [Concluding paragraph], "Stroika rekordnykh srokov," Stroitel'stvo Moskvy, 1937, no. 2, p. 23. See also Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931-1939)," Jahrbucher fur Geschichte des Osteuropas, Neue Folge, Band 44, 1996, Heft 3, pp. 361-62.
8. This dynamic is illustrated in an incident in Andrei Tarkovsky's film Zerkalo (The Mirror) where the protagonist's mother comes to the verge of a breakdown when it suddenly occurs to her she may have left a provocative typo in a text she was working on at the publishing house. See also V. A. Podoroga's analysis

Great Purge Trial of 1938 between the main accused, Nikolai Bukharin and the chief prosecutor, Vyshinsky can be analysed in terms of a debate over who has authority for textual exegesis.[9]

Thus the Stalinist state had a hierearchy of power based on power over texts. This hierarchy was articulated in terms both of who has, and who has not, access to written documents, and in terms of the ability or right to control their content (ranging from mere scribes at the lowest levels through ever higher degreees of authorship). Stalin enjoyed the ritual role of ultimate author, but in practice he more often exercised the related role of ultimate editor (or censor), as the one who could most surely guarantee that any text was "true." Both true authorship and true editorship were not always publicly visible. So often the author(s) or editor(s) listed on any publication were not its sole authors or editors, and may not have been the author(s) at all. Similarly, to this day, speculation continues as to which of the major texts of the Stalin period he authored himself.[10] On a symbolic level he was the nation's author in the sense that he had the power to rewrite any version - or not. In practice, however, he largely relegated this function to literature. Ironically, the highest power in the hierarchy of writing entailed the power not to write.

During the thirties, a close symbiotic relationship between literature and politics

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of textual anxiety under Stalin in his "Golos vlasti i pis'mo vlasti," published in Totalitarizm kak istoricheskii fenomen (Moscow: Filosofskoe obshchestvo SSSR, 1989),.

9. Sudebnyi otchet po delu "antisovetskogo pravo-trotskistskogo bloka" 2-13 marta, 1938, rasmotrennomu Voennoi kollegii Verkhovnogo suda Soiuza SSSR (Moscow: 1938), pp. 357, 358, 375, 377, 387, 551-3, 553.

10. Eg. Evgeny Dobrenko argues in a forthcoming article that Stalin authored Kratkii kurs, and also the Lenin and Stalin biographies ("Pisatel' Stalin i literaturnye istoki sovetskogo istoricheskogo diskursa" in and Evgenii Dobrenko and Hans Guenther, eds., Sotsrealisticheskii kanon, (Spb.: , 1999).

was at the heart of official culture.[11] Literature's principal function was to translate politics, to reveal, in narrative form, the truth of the order to be found in Bolshevik experience, the structure behind the event. Those in power had to rationalize the Revolution, the change from one world order to another, to give the Bolshevik regime a new narrative of identity.[12] Unlike most of the other world belief systems, Marxism-Leninism was founded not founded on hagiographic biographies so much as on texts which describe the working through of large, trans-personal forces. Literature's task was to personalize the trans-personal.

Literature was not just to systematize reality - Bolshevik experience - but also to manufacture subjects for the state. It was in the thirties that it was was most explicitly assigned this function. As Zhdanov, the Party spokesman at the First Writers Congress in 1934 put it (betraying no less faith in the power of literature than had the traditional intelligentsia) writers were to become "engineers of human souls." In addition to "engineering" a transformation in ordinary citizens by means of literary works, those in power in literature tried to "engineer" their transformation by having ordinary citizens write of their own experiences. However, as Skip Gates has argued for the case of the slave narrative, a text with an analogous function, this kind of writing inevitably involves in large measure inscribing the self into a preexisting narrative.[13] In the case of these Soviet texts allegedly based on indiviuals' experiences, their "authors" were to be guided

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11. This is evident in such details as the choice of subjects for the new statuary ("Skul'pturnye pamiatniki" Stroitel'stvo Moskvy, 1937, no. 12, p. 32.), and the renaming of Moscow's central artery Gorky Street (moreover, Gorky street was to intersect with Marx Prospect which was to continue on as the new Alleia Il'icha).
12. This kind of argument is to be found in a great deal of recent theoretical work on nationalism, such as the collection of essays edited by Khomi K. Babha, Nation and Narration (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

in composing them by authorized Marxist and historical writings, on the one hand, and by professional writers on the other, memory was "corrected" to conform to the texts.

In Stalinist society there were two orders of writing: writing was both process and writ. Those in authority could produce writ, or give it their imprimatur. Others could use the process of writing to inscribe themselves ever closer into the models presented in the writ. Even as they produced texts, they were also themselves texts in the process of production.[14]

But increasingly literature did not just assume a functional role in Soviet society. The second half of the thirties witnessed an extraordinary cult of literature itself, to be seen in a multitude of ways, not the least of which was its prominence in the Soviet school curriculum. Significantly, at this time the term "intelligentsia" also returned to prominence in Bolshevik rhetoric.

The exalted role played by literature in Stalinist public life was particularly apparent in 1937, not coincidentally a year of the Great Purge. Public celebration that year was dominated by two anniversaries which for some months were run virtually in tandem, the 100th anniversary of Pushkin's death and the twentieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. The interconnectedness of the two can be seen in the fact that, as the Moscow city government looked for appropriate ways to celebrate twenty years of revolution, they resolved that by the November anniversary they would demolish

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13. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism (Oxford/New York: Oxfor University Press, 1988), esp. pp. 128-132, 156.
14. Arthur Koestler in Darkness at Noon (1940) raises the intriguing possibility that even Stalin had to inscribe himself into the role "Stalin" (pp. 94-96).

Strastnoi Monastery, which stood on Pushkin Square and after which the square had previously been named, “leaving not a trace." They also resolved to move the statue of Pushkin to a more prominent position on the square.

This gesture throws into relief the extent to which, in Stalinist Russia, not just Marxism-Leninism, but also literature as somehow inextricably linked with it, had replaced religion. But the state's semi-religious awe for literature had been, and continued to be, a defining trait of the intelligentsia. During the thirties, literature played an extraordinary role in forming a sense of identity for a broad spectrum of the Soviet populace, ranging from political prisoners in the camps and their jailers,[15] to elite circles.[16] Even ordinary citizens, as they struggled to find their identity at this dificult time, modelled themselves on characters or utterances from literature.[17] The most popular sources for this were works by Gorky, until his death in 1936 titular head of Soviet literature, and Nikolai Ostrovsky’s autobiographical novel How the Steel Was Tempered (Part I 1932, Part II, 1934), which was canonized in 1936 as the model text of the decade.[18] The novel provides an account of extraordinary heroism and sacrifice in the Revolution and Civil War on the part of its protagonist, Pavel Korchagin, but throughout Korchagin himself cites the literary texts that have inspired him to such single-minded commitment, and the novel culminates not in a victory in battle, but with

15. See eg. Evgeniia Ginzburg, Krutoi marshrut. Khronika vremeni kul’ta lichnosti (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadon Editore, 1967), pp. 199, 215, 223-25, 231, 241, 259, 263, 279-80, 291, 337-38.

16. Larry E. Holmes, "Part of History: The Oral Record and Moscow's Model School No. 25, 1931-1937," Slavic Review, volume 50, No. 2 (Summer 1997) esp., pp. 291, 302.

17. One can find several examples of this in the anthology Intimacy and Terror. Soviet Diaries of the 1930s, edited by Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaia and Thomas Lahusen (New York: The New Press, 1995).

18. Ibid., p. 301. It has to be admitted that their literary training at the school was not always completely orthodox, depending on the teacher (with some, however, it was.).

Korchagin receiving word that his novel has been accepted for publication.[19]

This cult of letters was at its peak in the thirties, the decade of High Stalinism, but was characteristic throughout the Soviet period. Even after Stalin died in 1953, during the period of destalinization under Khruschev and then the Brezhnev years, literary texts played a key role in defining the national agenda. When Gagarin made man's first flight into space, he was moved to spout Pushkin.

During the Khruschev "thaws" a central preoccupation was reinterpretation of the foundational texts by Lenin and Marx and exposure of Stalin as a false exegete. There was also an (unsuccessful) attempt to challenge the doctrine that Lenin, in his essay of 1905 "Party Organization and Party Literature" (one of the canonical texts for the theory of socialist realism), had intended "Party-mindedness" (partiinost') to be mandatory for all literature at all times.[20] Even the rehabilitation of so many political prisoners sentenced under Stalin could be interpretated as textual revision (i.e. of the trial and interrogation transcripts, and of the documents announcing the sentence).

An important aspect of these thaws was the restoration of texts and authors, especially the literary, ranging from the fiction of Dostoevsky to that of Babel and Pilniak. The movement was not completely one-way. As before, there were true texts and false texts. Some that under Stalin had been considered authoritative were now proscribed or fell into disfavor; most conspicuously, the remaining three volumes of the collected works of Stalin (XIV-XVI) were withdrawn from publication - censored! - and had to appear here, locally, with the Hoover Institute Press. Similarly, much of the award

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19. N. O. Ostrovskii, Kak zakalialas' stal', revised [and canonical] edition (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1936), pp. 316-317. A central model in this novel was E. Voinich's The Gadfly (Ovod): E. Taratua, Etel' Lilian Voinich. Sud'ba pisatelia i sud'by knigi (Moscow: GIKhL, 1960), esp. Pp. 19, 83, 84, 109, 111.
20. Ia. M. Strochkov, "O stat'e V. Lenina "Partiinaia organizatsiia i partiinaia literatura'," Voprosy istorii,

winning literature of the Stalinist forties was attacked for "varnishing reality" - for not being "true" - especially the kolkhoz idylls of S. Babaevsky.[21]

Much of the new writing that appeared during the Khruschev "thaws" was hailed in the West as works of "protest." Actually, in many instances texts that then seemed outspoken and daring were essentially harbingers or explicators of shifts in Party policy, their authors, in effect, poet laureates of the new regime. For example, Valentin Ovechkin's cycle of sketches "District Routine"(Raionnye budny) which were published in the "liberal" journal Novyi mir over the years 1953-56 and regarded as daring critiques of Party policy, had in fact all been previously published in Pravda, and generally followed after a short interval by an article in Pravda endorsing some policy shift that had, in effect, been recommended in the preceding Ovechkin sketch.[22] Even the odd outspoken poem of that roue Evtushenko was published in Pravda or Izvestiia (including "Stalin's Heirs" of 1962).

During the Khrushchev years, as under Stalin, both the intelligentsia and the regime had a fundamentally binary sense of truth. It was held that a good work literary work or a good person will be one who exhibits "sincerity" (iskrennost'), who stands for

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1956, no. 4, pp. 29-37.

21. F. Abramov, "Liudi kolkhoznoi derevni v poslevoennoi proze," Novyi mir, 1954, The novels by S. Babaevskii attacked here are Kavaler zolotoi zvezdy ,(1947-48) and Svet nad zemlei (1948-49).

22. V. Ovechkin, "Na perednem krae," Pravda, July 20, 23 1953; "V tom zhe raione," Pravda, February 28, March 1 1954(a supporting article was published in Pravda on March 8); "Svoimi rukami," Pravda, 27, 30 April, 1954 (supporting article in Pravda September 12, 1954); "Trudnaia vesna," Pravda, 10, 15 August, 1956.

"pravda"(truth). But there were essentially two rival claimants to truth (dve pravdy) - the true and the false. After February 1956, the "true" was largely derived from a new authoritative text, Khrushchev's secret speech to the Twentieth Party Congress that month (it is to be noted that, though the transcript of this speech was smuggled out and published in the West, its existence was denied officially until the Gorbachev years - as in the Stalin period, authorship and even text were clouded in mystery, but no less authoritative for that). Within literature, there were squabbles over which political position is the "true" one, a squabble focussed in the opposition between the "liberal" literary journal Novyi mir and the "conservative" or "diehard" Oktiabr'. In terms of literary method, similarly, literature had not departed far from Stalinist models. Most literary works from this period, even the ostensibly "dissident" texts, essentially represent mutations on the Stalinst models rather than anything palpably post-Stalinist. However, there were some signs of evolution in that direction.

Vladimir Dudintsev's Not By Bread Alone, the bombshell of the 1956 thaw, provides a good example of this. In this novel, the action revolves around inventors who have rival plans for a machine used in the centrifugal casting of sewage pipes, and features a cast of self-centered bureaucrats who are obstructing adoption of the machine that would most benefit the state. Thus this "bombshell" is potentially a particularly dull or even ludicrous variant of the "boy meets tractor" standard plot of the Stalinist production novel. Yet, at the same time, its very title suggests a more fundamental allegiance to a rival body of texts, the Christian, a possibility reinforced in scenes where reference is made to carrying the torches of faith in the catacombs (the standard socialist realist theme of Party mentorship for the positive hero is also conspicuously minimized).

In such passages, motifs from Christianity, especially those having to do with martyrdom and persecution, are conflated with idealised representations of intellectuals and celebrations of creativity. The central production feat of the novel is the creation of a text rather than the production of any material object; it entails producing a design for a superior machine and winning official endorsement for that machine. The protagonist-inventor, in his Korchagin-like dedication to this cause, sets himself a very Spartan regimen with a diet of just bread and gruel, and for relaxation long daily walks to clear the head so that on his return he can achieve sufficiently elevated heights of creativity. This image of dedication to creativity is somewhat reminiscent of the icon painter and seems a trifle incongruous in the context of sewage pipes.

What we see here in the shift from an Ovechkin to a Dudintsev is the tentative beginnings of a shift in the dominant orientation of the intelligentsia that has grown in strength until, in the post-Soviet era, it became complete - that is, a shift from one body of authoritative texts to another, from the Marxist to the Christian. But, in reassigning textual authority to the Christian, authors have not been engaging in a biblical fundamentalism akin to the Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist fundamentalism of earlier decades. That would mean foregrounding texts that hold sway throughout the Christian world. Rather, they have privileged uniquely Russian texts, ranging from medieval manuscripts to the writings of religious philosophers from Russia's Silver Age of early this century, many of whom critiqued Marxism. In turn, writers representing some of the ethnic minorities began incorporating elements from their religious traditions as a way of distancing themselves from generic Soviet culture and laying claim to a distinctive identity. The turn to Christian (or in some instances Muslim) texts and imagery did

not always mean a return to religious faith, let alone to organized religion. The appropriation of Christian symbolism (particularly having to do with martyrdom, an all-time favorite for legitimizing movements) was part of a resurgence of intelligentsia claims to a superior hold on "truth" and greater "spirituality."

The sense of the intelligentsia as a tradition and an ethos independent of the state which informs much of the incongruity in Dudintsev's "production novel" of 1956 became a stronger factor in intellectual life of the subsequent decades, forcing many would-be intelligenty to seek outlets in non-legal sources such as samizdat (underground publication) and tamizdat (publication in the West). This trend emerged around the time when Pasternak was persecuted for Dr. Zhivago (the late fifties) but grew in scale until the easing of censorship under Gorbachev.

During the seventies and eighties, literature assumed something close to the function it had had for the intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. So much of the theory and rhetoric of the emerging nationalism and religious consciousness was focussed in literary works and literary criticism. Literaturnaia gazeta, one of the few periodicals that addressed such issues of growing interest as personal morality and the environment, became the newspaper that was read most avidly by the educated public.

In general, however, the direction of intellectual life was toward weakening the intelligentsia's role as a single, powerful body that "stood for truth" (or as one divided into just two camps, "liberal" and "conservative"). Already, by the end of the Khrushchev era some writers had begun to suggest that there might be more than "two truths" (the "true' and the "false"), that truth is complex.[23] Also, even officially

23. Eg. M. Bremener, Pust' ne soshlos' s otvetom, Iunost', 1956, no 10, p. 51.

published literature became increasingly less bound to models set up in the Stalin years (though the obsession with Stalinism is evident in Russian literature even today), and increasingly more sophisticated. The doggedly bookish language of Stalinist literature was progressively undermined as Aksenov and other practitioners of "youth prose" from the late fifties and early sixties celebrated urban slang in their texts, to be followed by a counter move on the part of "village prose" writers (derevenshchiki) to reintroduce dialecticisms and other forms of substandard speech typical of rural Russia. And Novyi mir's unique status as the voice of the liberal intelligentsia was weakened as two nexuses of "thick" literary journals emerged (one for the liberals, the other for the nationalists). Now the journals in each camp presented an array of different political and aesthetic positions, symptomatic of an ongoing pattern of an ever ramifying political and cultural spectrum which offered a greater range of ideological hues. But such variegation also threatened the intelligentsia sense of common mission. Other factors threatened its sense of unique identity. For example, by 1970 higher and even graduate education was more widespread among the population and the prestige of intellectuals was diminished.[24]

Ironically, those who wanted to keep alive the tradition of the intelligentsia were helped by repressive acts on the part of the state, so many of which were focussed on maintaining textual purity and persecution of writers. It was, for example, still the case that one could be arrested for having the wrong texts. The "show trials" of the early Brezhnev years were about writers and their texts (Sinyavsky and Daniel, Brodsky), rather than about political leaders. The court record of these trials was not published in the Soviet Union, as in the Great Purge, to be edited by a Stalin beforehand, but rather

24. L. Gudkov, B. Dubin, Intelligentsiia. Zametki o literaturno-politicheskikh illiuziiakh (Moscow:

transcribed by intellectuals such as the writer Frida Vigdorova, to be smuggled abroad for publication there. Effectively, the intelligentsia appropriated these trials of writers as their show trial, the transcripts as texts authorising their independent stance. Later, in the seventies and eighties, dissident intellectuals were exiled rather than arrested and tried, but those exiled were primarily the heroes of samizdat and tamizdat. By contrast, in the Stalin period the main exile was Trotsky, a rival political leader.

The advent of perestroika when Gorbachev came to power gave the intelligentsia their greatest moment in the Soviet period; the culminating era of Soviet power was also their culmination. Perestroika reversed the dissipative trend in intellectual life of the seventies and eighties and galvanized the ranks into action.

Perestroika, like the other major revolutions of the Soviet period (the Stalin revolution, the Khrushchev "thaws") meant new authoritative texts, a new list of positive and negative characters (further rehabilitations), and new exegesis. The political establishment even flirted with the notion that the correct texts might be those of Bukharin whom they had to rehabilitate hastily since that had not been done even under Khrushchev. Once again, the ban was lifted on a large body of literary texts, this time extending to religious philosophers and emigres, as well as to many manuscripts written over recent decades which had previously been rejected for publication. Unlike the case with previous changes of government, however, literature - new literature - did not spearhead the changes. Restoring earlier texts is not the same as generating a new literature. While the writers fought and their association (the Writers Union) splintered,

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Epitsentr, 1995), p. 131.

film and television responded to the moment

The equivalent for perestroika of Dudintsev's Not by Bread Alone from the Khrushchev era was Tengiz Abuladze's Repentance (Pokaianie, 1984). This film, which was about the necessity of facing the reality of stalinist abuses, was considered politically risky and in late 1986 there was intense speculation as to whether or not it would be released, even under the new conditions of perestroika. When, at the very beginning of 1987 it was not only released but actually promoted for mass viewing, this became the signal for intensifying the rehabilitations.

At the heart of this film are two counterposed dynasties, that of a Georgian intellectual, the artist Sandro Barateli, and that of the man who had him purged, the tyrant dictator Varlaam Aravidze (who is presented as a Stalin figure, though the portriat of Aravidze has elements of other well-known dictators, such as Hitler and Mussolini). The plot centers around the trial of Barateli's daughter, Ketevan, who is tried because, after the tyrant's death, she has dug up his body, insistently repeating this gesture every time he is reinterred. Exhuming the Party dictator, Aravidze, is of course a figure for correcting the record, exhuming the truth of past abuses. Thus this film reverses the pattern for the Stalinist show trial completely. The woman on trial is not terrified but confident. It is Aravidze's family who are nervous.

In this film, as in Not by Bread Alone, Christian and intelligenstia myths are conflated, but now much more blatantly. When Sandro Barateli, the martyred intellectual (artist) is purged, he is literally represented as dying, Christ-like, on a cross. At the very moment of his death the local church which he has been trying to save is blown up.

In Repentance, the story of the two counterposed dynasties, that of the

intelligentsia and that of the state, is structured as a tragedy. Part of this tragedy derives from the failure to wed the intelligentsia line to a (necessarily purified) line of state power. This unrealised potential is most evident in one climactic scene involving the two purest spirits remaining - Ketevan, and Tornike, the grandson of Aravdize. Tornike, finally realising the enormity of the purges and of his grandfather's role in them, comes to see Ketevan in prison to beg forgiveness on behalf of his family. In this scene, the implicit possibility of such a union is reinforced by intimate close-ups as the pair converse in the sort of proximity which, by the conventions of film, normally precedes a passionate clinch. When, subsequently, Tornike fails to convince his parents to repent as well, he commits suicide; the line of state power comes to its end.

Though during perestroika the center of gravity in cultural life shifted somewhat to film, literature still enjoyed a particularly exalted status. Symptomatically, the idealised image of the intelligentsia to be found in Repentance is still very literature-centric. Even though the hero is allegedly an artist, in this film, as in so many others of perestroika, literary texts are cited in moments of great spiritual intensity. One of several examples would be the above-mentioned scene of encounter between Ketevan and Tornike which is framed at each end by Ketevan's quoting verse. Another would be an earlier scene where Barateli heads a delegation to the local tyrant asking him to spare the threatened church building. His main argument is that the church is a cultural monument and cannot be destroyed. To destroy this part of the spiritual heritage, he continues, would be like tossing the works of "Homer and Tolstoy, Dante and Rustaveli" into the pyre; it would be to tear out the very roots of society. In effect, Barateli's argument is a version of the belief that manuscripts which are "true" should not be burnt. Thus the shift

from Christianity to literature (Homer and Tolstoy...) appears seamlesss, as, in texts of the thirties, was the shift from Bolshevik ideology to literature.

The central status assigned to literature in Repentance was characteristic of cultural life in the Gorbachev era. This was true right up to the culminating moment of perestroika. When, during the attempted rightist putsch of August 1991, successive figures got up on a tank outside the White House (the Parliament of the Russian Federation) to address the many resisters to the putsch assembled there, as the poet Evgeny Evtushenko waited his turn to speak he decided to recite those five well-known lines from Pushkin about how "Russia will rise again from her sleep." To his consternation, a parliamentary deputy just two or three before him in line used his time on the tank to recite the same five lines. On the spot, Evtushenko quickly penned a new poem, "The Nineteenth of August" (19 avgusta), inevitably a somewhat clumsy effort that invokes Pushkin (and Tolstoy) and ends: "And the Russian parliament, like a wounded marble swan of freedom/ Defended by the people, sails on to eternity[25]; literature could, it seems, still confer immortality. But many laid claims to it. Intellectuals aligned with the leaders of the putsch were no less quick to find precedents in Pushkin for their cause.[26]

As others have pointed out in this conference, the late Gorbachev years were a

25. Literaturnaia gazeta, August 21, 1991, p. 1.
26. See for instance Vasilii Belov's interview on the television program "Dobryi vecher, Moskva!" a week later in which he likened himself to a Pushkin who allegedly told Alexander I that, in spirit, he had he been on Senate Square with the Decembrists, "that is the putchisty" (cited in Natal'ia Ivanova, "Sochiniteli i ispolniteli," Znamia, 1991, no. 10 (October), p. 218.

golden age for the "thick" (literary) journals whose subscriptions increased dramatically. Since the break up of the Soviet Union, however, subscriptions to the thick journals have dwindled considerably, falling well below the levels they enjoyed before the boom. This is not only due to economic pressures; the faith in literature and literary texts that was expressed in the journal boom has been challenged. There has been a concomitant existential crisis among the intelligentsia, reflected in literature itself whose characters' existential crisis is often identified with a crisis for literature.

So many of the protagonists of recent highbrow literature are foot soldiers in the cause of literature - teachers of literature, philologists, or undergraduate or graduate students of it. Some are even, so to speak, officers - actual writers. In so many recent literary works, even when the subject matter has no ostensible connection to literature, either the narrator or the characters obsessively drop the names of writers or literary works; most frequently they cite Pushkin or other members of the classical tradition, but they also invoke heroes from the Silver Age in the early twentieth century, to some extent Western authors (especially Proust), and even on occasion names or titles from the socialist realist canon.[27] Often these references occur as total non-sequiturs. Frequently, it is not clear whether such passages represent a cri de coeur or are a send up, a post-modernist ploy. But then, should it be clear? Generally, they appear like flotsam and jetsam from an earlier era, rather like the statues of political leaders and other Soviet heroes that now grace the area near (appropriately enough) Gorky Park in Moscow.

The old mantras are of no avail. This is particularly clear in Nikolai Iakushev's

27. Eg. Aleksandr Il'ianen, I finn (Tver': Kolonna publications, 1997); Anatolii Naiman, B. B. I dr., Novyi mir, 1997, no. 10; Valerii Popov, Gribinki khodiat s nozhami, Novyi mir, 1997, no. 6; Mikhail Prorokov, BGA, Roman, Volga, 1997, nos. 1-2, 3-4, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12; Aleksei Slapovskii, Anketa. Tainopis' otkrytym tekstom, Zvezda, 1997, no. 2-3; Viktor Sosnora, Dom dnei (Saint Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond,

novella People in a Squatting Position (Liudi na kortochkakh, 1997), which has many elements of a provincial absurd, the protagonist, Steblitsky, a high school literature teacher, laments his lost youth which was "all Pushkin" (sploshnoi Pushkin). In his new world, Pushkin can't help. At one point, Steblitsky is accused at school of being gay, and as he struggles to carry on his lesson the narrator comments: "He tried, like [the icebreaker] Krasin among the ice floes, [forging its way] through the shards of reality that were crowding fast into his tormented brain - drunken moons, corpses, toads, intelligenty, low flying attack aircraft, veterans of the Afghan war, schoolchildren, - [to forge his way through] to that quiet beauty of Russian literature where there were golden cupolas and the gardens of the lycee and the autumn in Boldino, and the troika bird, and words were packed in tight but thoughts soared [slovam tesno, a mysliam prostorno]."[28]

In this passage, the narrator is in effect alluding to the marriage between between literature and politics which had been at the heart of Soviet culture. The image of the icebreaker Krasin suggests the spirit of the Old Bolsheviks, after one of whom whom the Soviet vessel was named; Krasin, an engineer, was himself somewhat of an intellectual (Aksenov was even moved to write a book about him). It also suggests tropes commonly used in High Stalinist rhetoric to convey the indomitable Bolshevik will forging its way against all manner of obstacles; these obstacles were most often represented in terms of the elements, preferably the frozen wastes. The list of those "shards" that crowd Steblitsky's fevered brain begins by setting a phantasmagoric landscape (drunken moons, corpses, toads), but moves on seamlessly to invoke members of the intelligentsia - intelligenty. Then follow cryptic references to the alienated, misfit returnees from

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1997); Iuliia Startseva, Vremia nereal'no. Roman, Den' i noch', no. 1, 1996, no. 4, 1997.

Russia's disastrous war in Afghanistan and their military hardware. The list culminates in "schoolchildren." The quiet world of literature with which this troubling medley is contrasted is characterised by some of the all-time cliches of the Soviet classsroom about literature of the nineteenth century and its creators. The lycee and Boldino come from Pushkin's biography, the troika bird comes from the apostrophe at the end of Dead Souls where Gogol, using the figure of a horse-drawn troika (alluded to in Strobe Talbott's paper) that takes off into the heavens as all other nations step aside to give it way, exults in Russia's unique and God-ordained mission. Finally, the remark about words packed in while thoughts soar is the end of that line from Chekhov's letter to Chertkov about the poetics of the short story - "Rasskaz nado pisat' tak, chtoby slovam bylo tesno, a mysliam prostorno." All Soviet schoolchildren had to memorize this as an "aphorism" that gave birth to "the magic of Chekhov's short stories" but which, allegedly, as a "law of composition" was realised in socialist realism.[29] Literature, it was then ordained, should "soar" as it writes Bolshevik experience succinctly.

This passage by Iakushev implies that the old, officially promoted biographical progression has disintegrated, the progression that ran from childhood and school, via immersion in literature, to the mature self dedicated to service to the nation - if necessary, giving one's life (eg. in the military). Only the shards of that old world remain to be collected in incongrouous inventories such as the one quoted. Lettered culture can no longer "write the nation" and, as a corollary, "write the subject," all in a succinct and coherent text. In an age of relative ideological vacuum literature has failed to provide an alternative focus of faith and surety, of "peace."

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28. Nikolai Iakushev, Liudi na kortochkakh. Povest', Volga, 1997, no. 7, pp. 57, 28, respectively.

The intelligentsia, arguably, is in crisis for many obvious reasons, but for two in particular. Firstly, as we saw in the above quotation where Krasin and the indomitable Bolshevik will stand in apposition to the "peace" of Russian literature, the intelligentsia can no longer fulfill its function at least in part because there is a power vacuum. They are stranded, with neither the possibility of serving as handmaidens of a powerful state, nor as its rival. Secondly, the intelligentsia sense the need to hitch their star to a new authoritative body of texts.

The state itself feels a similar need for textual authority. Yeltsin after his reelection called for a new ideology to be generated for Russia. The powers-that-be (or in some instances former powers-that-be) who call for this are in effect saying we need an intelligentsia. But perhaps this is the surest sign that the intelligentsia is dead along with the monolithic, monovocal state.

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29. I am grateful to Evgeny Dobrenko for helping me explicate this passage.

Gavriil Popov, the erstwhile mayor of Moscow, recently formulated this demand for a new ideology a little differently, maintaining that the intelligentsia's task in this new historical moment is to think up a role for a post-industrial Russia.[30] In a sense, this is an oxymoronic demand because a post-industrial Russia is also a Russia in the electronic age. Arguably, that fact is very fundamental to today's crisis for the intelligentsia.

The Soviet Union collapsed in an historical moment when, throughout the world, the power of print-based culture was eroding. Within the country, this reality had been largely obscured, even under Gorbachev. As mentioned, his was a time of print culture euphoria when intellectual journals enjoyed a heyday with huge subscriptions. A preoccupation then was filling in the "blank spaces" of the nation's political and cultural history, restoring all those non-persons, non-events and proscribed texts to the national record. However, the very notion of the "blank space" to be filled in with specific material suggests the fixity of some master text, a sense of reality that was already being undermined as the electronic media were making inroads on intellectual life.

The question as to whether manuscripts "burn" or not becomes spurious with texts which have such a precarious material existence. Is the intellectual giving an arm chair chat or appearing as a guest on a television talk show an "intelligent"? The recent failure of Solzhenitsyn in that medium raises the question whether he is one of the last of the mohegan-intelligenty?

Yet there is no dearth of individuals who still identify themselves with an intelligentsia caste and its ethos. Is this a generational phenomenon, like support for the

30. Gavriil Popov, "Novyi stroi. Nad chem dumat' I chto delat'," Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1998

communist Party?

The recent shift of power away from the "liberals" and to figures who seek to turn the Russian clock back a little provides evidence both of this generational factor, and of the intelligentsia's continued vested interest in a text-based culture. At the end of September this year as Primakov was forming his new government, it was announced that Vladimir Egorov would be the new Minister of Culture. When Egorov visited Yeltsin to formalize his appointment, the latter entrusted him with "heading that great [actually vysokuiu] and ancient Russian culture." And indeed many are anticipating that Egorov, a former Komsomol functionary, will foster Russian cultural nationalism with a particular interest in indigenous varieties of religious philosophy. In the past, he has also proved an active champion for preserving the ideal of a print based culture against the incursions of the electronic age.

Egorov's most recent prior appointment (from November 1996) was as head of the State Library (i.e. the former Lenin Library). Two aspects of his tenure there seem particularly relevant. Firstly, he had been brought in to replace the previous incumbent, Filippov, whose aim had been to computerize the collection - "without which a library effectively does not exist in the world information network," as the newspaper Kommersant's report on the appointment put it. Secondly, Egorov's own main contribution as director had been to organize a weekly seminar at the library, ostensibly to work out some library policy for all of Russia, but the seminar was attended by several prominent intellectuals from the nationalist camp, including Stanislav Govorukhin and Vadim Kozhinov; the latter warned the seminar against "fetishization of the internet."[31]

31. Otdel kul'tury, "Leninskii bibliotekar'. Vladimir Egorov stal novym ministrom kul'tury,"

Admittedly, given the meager resources of the Ministry of Culture today, Egorov's post verges on the purely symbolic. Nevertheless, in its own way it signals an attempt at regression.

Kommersant", 1 October, 1991, p. 10.

There is no indication that today culture as ideology is not valued or sought. At virtually the same time as Egorov was appointed, the first recipient of the newly restored highest honor of the Russian state, the Order of Andrei Pervozvannyi, was invested. Rather than so honoring a politician, military commander or any such figure, the award was given to the 92-year old Dmitry Likhachev, Russia's most distinguished scholar of medieval literature - of "Great and ancient Russian culture." Likhachev had during perestroika been elevated to a position of principal cultural guru; he was a favorite not only of the Gorbachev's, allegedly of his wife Raisa in particular, but also among many groups of intellectuals. His moderate cultural patriotism seemed attractive as a corrective to rabid nationalism, and his textual scholarshp is impeccable. Indeed, Likhachev might be described as the doyen of lettered culture. Not only does his own work extend to its beginnings in Russia, but in recent years he has been particularly outspoken about taking better care of libraries and archives. An additional characteristic that has played a major role in the cult of Likhachev is the fact that in the late twenties and early thirties he spent some time in the camps. As we have seen, martyrdom has played a central role in legitimising intelligentsia claims to authority. But when the state, or individual leaders, promote formerly repressed intellectuals they are also appropriating intelligentsia myths for their own legitimising purposes.[32]

Thus, in a variety of ways too numerous to enumerate here pronouncements of the death of the Russian intelligentsia seem, to invoke Mark Twain's famous response to announcements of his own death, "greatly exaggerated." No one has a crystal ball to

32. Note: Solzhenitsyn, another prominent Russian man of letters, in this case even more associated with the gulag, was awarded the same honor on the occasion of his 80th birthday (December 11, 1998), but he declined it for the moment as a gesture of protest against the current Russian government.

predict what will happen in the current volatile situation. Nevertheless, the intelligentsia, defined as a body that believes in the sacrality of its truth but which identifies that truth with a print-based culture, seems destined in the long run, if not to "wither away," then at least to be diminished in stature.[33]

So - "The King is Dead, Long Live the King!" proclaims my assigned title. The traditional Russian intelligenstia, though not dead, is critically ill. As the intelligentsia staggers between its two principal identities as (self) annointed, on the one hand, and its more "material" existence as professional intellectuals on the other, the distinction made by Kantorowich about the king's two bodies in his seminal work of that title seems particularly appropriate. Kantorowicz distinguishes between the king as a mortal, physical being and the king as god's annointed authority. When any king dies bodily, instantaneously, as it were, another physical being assumes the role of god's annointed. But in Russia this progression appears to be running in reverse.

33. It seems unlikely that lettered culture will disappear altogether. However, it is bound to play an increasingly diminished role. See Ethan Bronner, "For More Textbooks, a Shift From Printed Page to Screen," New York Times, December 1, 1998, pp. A1, A27.