The Birch

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Columbia University



A Journal of Eastern European and Eurasian Culture

Creative Writing — Literary Criticism — Culture and Affairs — Original Photography

The Birch

A National, Student-Run
Undergraduate Journal

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Editor's Note

It is a strange feeling to put the finishing touches on this issue of *The Birch*. I adjust a photograph here, add a hyphen there, but I do not just copyedit. Rather, I watch as an enormous amount of individual work coalesces into a single body of academic and artistic vision. It's the product of young minds, observant and ardent. You won't find stodgy ideas between these covers and you won't find foolishness either. I am immensely proud of the bold statements in Philip Petrov's essay and the careful arguments in Amanda Weaver's. Yelena Shuster's recollections make me shudder, smile and attempt to swallow the lump that forms in my throat by the end of the page—precisely in that order. I take pleasure in the shape these words and images together create, and I hope you will too.

If I could, I'd drop this issue into every mailbox, starting with the one on the back cover.

—Sierra Perez-Sparks

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Arches—castle ruins (Kosova, Belarus)

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Visiting the dacha (Kirovsk, Russia)

Back cover photo by Kristina Brendel (Arizona State University)
Mailbox—in a village north of Lepel, Belarus



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The Birch would like first and foremost to thank its many supporters, without whom this journal would be merely a concept. We are overwhelmingly grateful to the Harriman Institute, and especially to Catharine Nepomnyashchy, Alla Rachkov and Frank Bohan for their guidance and support from the inception of *The Birch* to the present day. We would also like to thank the Activities Board Council and the Office of Student Development and Activities at Columbia, whose assistance enables *The Birch* to publish at the highest quality. Additionally *The Birch* thanks CU Arts for their belief and confidence in our organization.

I would like to thank the many editors, writers and photographers who collaborate to make this creative and academic journal worthy of its audience. Finally, *The Birch* thanks its readers.

ARTS INITIATIVE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Funding is made possible through a generous gift from The Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

The Names

Rachel Z. Feldman, Franklin and Marshall College

I walked through the Jewish quarter of Trebič,
Where amongst the abandoned homes
A sculptor works,
Selling statues of the golem.

I visited the crematoriums of Auschwitz,
Where tourists pose for pictures
Next collections of luggage,
And rooms filled with human hair.

I stumbled upon the metal shoes in Budapest,
The ones that sit on the edge of the Danube
Perched with the pigeons,
Memorializing Jews who were shot into the river.

And I have seen the empty chairs in Krakow,
Erected there to remember
The Jews who waited for trains,
When the ghetto was liquidated.

But nothing breaks me
Like the names that cover the walls of
The Old-New synagogue in Prague.
A cacophony of names,
Wrapped around the room from floor to ceiling,
Swarming like bees.

As I stood among them
I remembered what the sculptor told me in Trebič:
"To bring a golem to life you must write the word for truth on its forehead (אמת)
And to destroy a golem you erase the first letter to form the word for death (מת)."

I force myself to pronounce the names aloud,
As if I could bring them to life again like a golem,
But each syllable just leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

How to Tell a Story about Russia

Sasha de Vogel, Columbia University

How was the trip? We want to know,
Did you eat a lot of cabbage?
Did you drink a lot of vodka?

I stomped around a city for weeks,
where the streets glittered with broken glass from beer bottles.
I stranded myself at night on the wrong sides of riverbanks,
and saw sunset slip into sunrise, with no darkness in between.
I called the ground by its first name—Peter.

What was it like what we've heard about Mother Russia,
Were you being watched?

Yes, I was watched,
when I gave twelve rubles instead of the twenty I owed,
When they showed us how many grams of cardboard went into a loaf of blockade bread,
When the marshrutka drove by me without stopping.
Except on those interminable escalator rides down to the metro,
when everyone's watching young lovers kiss.
Being watched is a feeling you have about yourself.

Well, what did you do when you were there?
You must have seen so many things—like dancing bears?

At the Pushkinsky Dom, I saw Tolstoy's shirt and shoes and drinking cup.
Off Vladimirskaya, I visited the room where Dostoyevsky passed,
and where Raskolnikov killed that woman, near the Marinsky Theater.
In a museum like a temple, I took a picture with Pushkin's death mask,
his fat lips and nose cast in plaster.
I read Esenin's suicide note, written in blood at the Astoria Hotel.

But tell us what it was like in Russia? We want to know!
You must have so many stories.

Nadezhda feeds me sour cream at dinner and tells me,
"It's always the same, Americans are scared,
and then they come here and fall in love."
We are in the kitchen watching a talk show
about soccer goals that collapse and break schoolchildren's necks.
Today we have only cold water, no hot for another week,
and my underwear is strung up on the clothesline in the front hall.
"Those soccer goals, twenty years ago they would already be fixed.
With Communism, someone was responsible for every problem.
But things are better now," she says, and I pet the cat.
Outside, fireworks are going off in the pink-white night,
because in the summer every day is another wedding,
who can blame them for setting off car alarms like that?
"Eat a cookie, or a Twix, or a Snickers,
eat something. In Russia you can't just drink tea by itself."
So I do, and she teaches me the words for
carbohydrates and fat.
Then, because it's night, I tell her I'm going,
and I'll be back later, late,
or not.

But I am having a problem with plot.
After all, how many times can I walk down Nevsky Prospect,
if the weather is always the same—swampy, half raining.
And I keep walking until I've gone past everywhere I've been again,
until I am back at the airport,
saying, Do svidaniya moi drug,
Because I don't know what else to say.

Kasha

Yelena Shuster, Columbia University

As a three-year-old, I tasted the Soviet Union—and almost threw it up.

That day's meal was a milky glob of oats, otherwise known as *manaya kasha*. The porridge had a revolting outer layer of dry white skin that I could peel, the result of throwing butter on boiling milk as it cooled. My caretaker at the Khmelnitsky preschool was blonde, young, and evil. Like any good villain, she refused to let us leave the table until we had cleaned our plates. Her voice was deep and her threats terrifying. As I struggled with my stomach, the kasha congealed into a tough blister. I'm not sure if I got to play with the other kids that day, if the cold spoon shoved down my throat was real or imagined. But tyranny was the taste of that milky flesh.

A few weeks after my fifth birthday, my family and I left Ukraine and I tasted the freedom of America. In a miracle straight out of the American Dream, my *babushka* Nina was able to convince me to eat—and love eating—*grechnivaya kasha,* the sister dish to my childhood nemesis. Cooked in water as opposed to milk, her kasha smelled "mmm" good, as she would indicate with her mouth while nodding sideways when trying to feed me. Her kasha was always an inviting brown field of oats, never swimming in a milky skin that looked as if it was about to pop. Sometimes I caught a misplaced glob of butter that she added in secret.

My Russian was soon buried under my English thoughts and I had trouble telling *baba* Nina about my classes, friends, and passions. Instead, we would chat for a few minutes about cereal and chips—the only English words she had no trouble adopting as her own, her Russian trilling of the rrr and hissing of the sss following her tongue as she pronounced сириал and чипсы. Like any good *babushka*, feeding me was her main fixation. When she called, the first thing she'd ask was, "What did you eat today?" Every time I came to visit, she would cook up a feast for me and *dedushka* Misha, and say, "You should gain weight, you are too skinny."

"What, do you want me to be fat?" I would reply, and as if on cue, we both laughed. The sly remark about America's impossible standards of beauty was not lost on my *babushka*.

Often, she showed me black and white photographs of her younger self hanging on the walls, next to pictures of *deda* Misha in his army uniform. I was mesmerized by her glamour. I'll never forget when she told me she married him after only three weeks of dating. She looked proud, (as when I finished my plate), the sparkling eyes telling me, "Don't you know? That's how it worked back then," the innocent grin saying, "It was simple. He found me attractive. I wanted to settle down and followed him to Siberia."

Now, my *dedushka* lives alone in their silent apartment and faces her smiling image in every room. He watches Russian satellite TV all day, reads Russian papers, ventures outside for a walk when the weather's nice, and tries to hide his tears when we talk on the phone. He continues her habits, asking what I ate for breakfast, lunch, dinner depending on when I call, always adding "You are too skinny! It's all right to gain a few pounds, show some curves—you're a woman now." He tells us he eats, but we are never sure. I wonder if, like me, he still smells her *grechnivaya kasha* wafting from the kitchen.

Eating My Words

Rachel Ulrich, University of Kentucky

On the birch-ridden banks where the Volga and Oka rivers intersect in Nizhny Novgorod, I spent June and July at the linguistic university studying phonetics, grammar and vocabulary. Prior to our arrival in Russia, seminars concerning the most efficient way to learn a language were proctored by professors from Harvard and Princeton, who suggested Russian–Russian dictionaries, studying flashcards at the bus stop and summoning the courage to banter idly with strangers. Once settled into our strange new lives in Nizhny, daily schedules consisted of lectures and video-courses in Russian, offering insight into the life, culture, politics and economics of modern and traditional Russian peoples. Most weekends were booked with excursions to reputed sites such as Pushkin's home at Boldino; the original Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir; monasteries of rural Suzdal, where time froze sometime during the twelfth century; or simply around our town, better known during Soviet times as Gorkiy after the Russian author.

Despite countless hours of structured learning, the majority of my language acquisition occurred at the dinner table with my host family in our flat on the eclectic Kazanskoye Shosse, a street mixing ancient dachas, crumbling Soviet industrialization and modern 24-hour supermarkets. Each day, as the respective activities of each member of my host family ended, we would slowly accumulate in the kitchen—Vadim and Galina, their children Nastya and Grisha, and I.

Both Grisha and Nastya were twenty-three, "working" for their father, although I hesitate to call the midday hours between ten o'clock and two o'clock a workday. Grisha and I slowly discovered a shared love for all things geeky: science-fiction novels, Japanese Anime, and mythological creatures. Afterward we became inseparable. Nastya and Galina (my host mother) were extremely patient with my broken Russian, although our interaction was often punctuated by the nuisances of everyday life. Galina spent most of her free time at the family dacha located about an hour's drive away from the city, tending to her beloved garden and preparing endless batches of borsch. Nastya's cell phone was an extension of her right hand, on which she chatted incessantly with her Muscovite fiancé, Alexi.

Vadim almost defies description; his antics and English improvisation became legend at school, as my American cohorts would gather each morning to hear the latest hilarity. I will never forget our first meeting: I was sitting at the table with the rest of the family, when he arrived home by kicking open the door. In a booming voice with a grandly rolled "r," he yelled, 'Rrrrrachel!' and proceeded to produce a two-liter bottle of beer and champagne hidden behind his back.

Each evening, after Vadim gulped down his first course of dinner in an amazingly efficient manner and Galina satiated his appetite with a second plateful, the events of each family member's day would slowly unfold, as he drilled us with questions in his charismatic manner. He was intensely curious about my schooling and wanted each lesson recounted in detail, often interrupting, in the Russian manner of questioning, with one-word barks of, Who?! What?! When?! Where?! Everyone else would mutter answers into their plates, but I found myself sweating as I struggled to express simple thoughts clearly and quickly. Under such pressure my comprehension and short-response skills

sharpened considerably.

As dinner finished, the table was cleared and tea set out with accompanying blini, thin pancakes stuffed with jelly and topped with dollops of sour cream; an assortment of store-bought konfeti, often with portraits of past tsars delightfully decorating their foil wrappers; and apple- or berry-stuffed piroshki. At this time, conversation transitioned to more lively banter, with a much broader range of topics up for discussion. Here we mused about the differences between Russian and American culture, the family's history—including Vadim's grandfather's military service under Nicholas I—Vadim and Galina's courtship, and Grisha and Nastya's plans for the future.

Sometimes, Vadim refused tea and instead produced cognac, vodka, and shot glasses. Galina and Nastya usually refused, but I never did, and learned to drink like a true Russian— straight liquor preceded by a lemon slice and followed by a pickle or cherry, earning me my nickname of "*gadost*" or "badness." Vadim loved to team up with me in drinking contests against Grisha, often ending in Vadim berating Grisha by adding a diminutive ending to his name, basically calling him a little girl. My *gadost* tended to improve my Russian, the wizard of booze replacing hesitancy with courage.

Still, the conversation would stall as I ravaged my dictionary in an effort to express my ideas, but nobody minded. Vadim and Grisha were mildly interested in learning English and would often look up words themselves. Eventually, we tore the dictionary in half: English-Russian for me and Russian-English for Vadim and Grisha. Sometimes Vadim would memorize lines from Grisha's old English grammar books and repeat them to me at breakfast, causing me to snort milk through my nose in laughter. Not only did he use a French accent to speak English, but the grammar book lines were hilariously ill-conceived; before leaving for work he would repeat in English, "I need to leave: I have urgent business to attend to." Vadim's desire to learn English was capricious and more often than not he spent time correcting my grammar, explaining different words and phrases to me and reviewing my flash cards. These hours were invaluable, both to my personal improvement and the development of our relationship.

Slowly, my time at home became tantamount to structured classes as the line between casual conversation and daily language instruction blurred. Of course, the fact that dinner with my family was perhaps the most enjoyable part of the day didn't hurt—as evidenced by the incessant pleas of my American classmates for an invitation to dine at my house. Late July rolled around and I left Russia, but far from empty-handed; my improved fluency is not nearly as important as the lasting relationships I developed with my host family. I am convinced this is one Russian tradition that persists: the dinner table as the center of the social world; a place for family and friends to eat, drink, talk and learn—about life and each other.



Graffiti near the Helsinki ferry terminal (Tallinn, Estonia)

E.B. Bartels

An Insider's Journey to and through Brighton Beach

Ilona Potiha, Columbia University

-Devushka, what can I help you with?
-Half a pound of fantina by the slice, pozhalusta…
-Is it possible to have it any other way? Who's next?…

The last line of my exchange with a saleslady at Taste of Russia was drenched with sarcasm. I brushed it off, took the grainy cheese my father had requested, and walked towards home on Brighton Beach Avenue. The salesladies who work in the Russian shops here are always understandably agitated; anyone would be after standing for ten hours at a time, never having anticipated that this would be their fate upon their arrival to New York City from the Soviet Union.

Stores like Taste of Russia make life all the more convenient and pleasant for the large population of Jewish refugees here, who immigrated during the collapsing years of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. My settlement in Brighton Beach, however, is a bit unusual. My family left Odessa, Ukraine, in the late 1970s with the help of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, an organization that helped 80,000 Jewish refugees flee the extensive religious persecution of the former Soviet Union. HIAS helped my family escape into Vienna and then Rome, paid for their living expenses, and assisted them in getting visas to move to the United States.

My mother and my father lived with their families in both Vienna and Rome for several months. My mother was fifteen and my father eighteen. When they reminisce about their stay in Italy and Austria, they are wholeheartedly enthusiastic: my father is nostalgic for the Italian girls, and my mother, for the chocolate. Their enthusiasm, however, is difficult for me to fathom. To me, moving to another country during the crucial teenage years would be unthinkable, but for my parents, it represented their only hope for a better life.

My parents finally arrived in Los Angeles in 1977. They comfortably assimilated to life there, but the heightened tension over the Rodney King trial and the Los Angeles riots of the early 1990s forced my father to seek different business options. We were faced with starting over again, this time not across the world but across the country, and felt that Brighton Beach would be a good segue into a new life.

Why Brighton Beach specifically? My grandfather, a prominent Russian restaurant owner living in Brooklyn, suggested we take advantage of the many unexplored business opportunities there. I was six. Fifteen years later, I still wonder how life would have been different had I stayed in Los Angeles. I've concluded that I would have lacked the grounding in my heritage that I owe to so many years of living in a neighborhood drenched in Russianness, from the Russian titles on virtually every establishment and the smell of Russian food emanating from the stores to the sound waves of the language in the air.

Since moving into the dorms for college, I find myself missing the solemn faces and slightly grayer buildings of the only place that's ever felt like home to me. I treasure the richness of the culture behind the dreary façade. The downtrodden, yet animated musicians outside of M&I International Food always have a more somber tone than the average American classic. They sing of subjects

ranging from the streets of old Moscow to the faithful wives of the Decembrists. I know, however, that within the unassuming melodies lie messages of hope and resilience that have accompanied the Russian people for centuries.

Although my grounding lies on Brighton Beach, I'm not a typical resident. Many people never leave the neighborhood, so although Columbia is only a subway ride away, I'm seen as having rejected the idea that Brighton Beach is a final destination. As a first-generation Russian-American rather than an immigrant, I embrace my identity while realizing that for me, Brighton Beach is the Vienna and Rome of my parents, a cherished waypoint on my journey.

Many people here hide skeletons in their closets. My great-grandmother swallowed her wedding ring to evade strict Soviet laws as she fled for this country. A woman enamored with designer clothing, holding cigarette butts in her ringed fingers and chatting loudly on a jewel-studded cell phone, might have had to bribe university officials for her education—a luxury Jews were not allowed. The old man who spends his days sitting outside the fruit store playing checkers might have numbers tattooed on his forearm. And who knows what secrets the businessmen hide, strolling outside at 2:00 on a weekday?

Though younger generations only learn of oppression and anti-Semitism from their parents and grandparents, those stories mingle with news and gossip and remain part of our Russian culture. It feels like a secret society, as our theories about the fire at Café Tatiana move with the wind down Brighton Beach Avenue, where black Mercedes and NYPD cars are double-parked—not coincidentally. We all know the *lekarstva* lady who stands on the street corner with bags in hand, mumbling, "medicine, medicine," in Russian. She is a reminder of hardship; in Russia, she was an engineer.

Her story is not uncommon. A professor is now a limo driver. The former dean of mathematics and physics at Novosibirsk State University now ekes out a living tutoring algebra to high school students. To some, these are stories of wasted talent, of people descending from success into poverty, but to us, these are also stories that attest to the resiliency and endurance of many Russian immigrants.

The Russian spirit is unlike that of any other; we believe in our culture and in ourselves because we know that together, we have lived through far worse. Look into the eyes of an immigrant and you will see the knowledge that he can succeed—he must. For me, this strength has been a source of inspiration and has provided a sense of belonging. We carry the plight of our families and the endurance of the Russian spirit. *This too shall pass*, continues to sing through the street performer's tune.



Brighton Beach (Brooklyn, NY)
Ilona Potiha

Gareth Jones
Journalist of the Holodomor
1905-1935

Biographies by Margaret Colley:
More Than a Grain of Truth and ***A Manchukuo Incident***



The Evening News

GARETH JONES

FOUND MURDERED

FORMER SECRETARY
TO MR. LLOYD GEORGE

Troops Chasing the Chinese Bandits Who Had Held Him to £5,000 Ransom Find His Body

THREE BULLET WOUNDS

Gareth Jones, a young Welsh journalist, died in mysterious circumstances, on the eve of his 30th birthday in Inner Mongolia investigating the intentions of the Japanese in the Far East. He had been captured by bandits, ransomed and murdered after 16 days in captivity. His death was certainly politically motivated but who was responsible?

During his distinguished career Gareth assisted British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, was spectator to the Depression and met President Hoover. Gareth flew with Adolph Hitler and visited Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Soviet Union. In 1933 Gareth witnessed and reported the Great Famine in Ukraine.

From his letters home, his diaries and his hundreds of articles his niece, Margaret Siriol Colley, has written two biographies, *More Than a Grain of Truth* and *A Manchukuo Incident.* For further information and purchase see:

www.garethjones.org

www.margaretcolley.co.uk

Or contact margaret@colley.co.uk

Truth, Illusion, and the Meaning of Dostoevsky

Philip Petrov , Columbia University

Thesis

There is nothing more unnecessary, perhaps, than yet another juxtaposition of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche—in fact, one wonders whether this world can endure another comparison of these two men. But what if it were true that there's nothing more exciting than such a comparison? What then?

Nietzsche was a man who could not stand still: it was impossible for him to refrain from changing his mind. His worst fear, in fact, was that he would at some point turn against himself. It makes little sense to accuse Nietzsche of contradicting himself, for a man who demolished his own ideas as he formulated them shouldn't be expected to think systematically. There is one position, however, from which he never deviated: he never gave up his belief in the power of illusion to make life bearable. In early Nietzsche, one finds the idea that—historically speaking—art was an absolutely necessary development, a development that made it possible for men to endure a vile and ghastly world. Hamlet is early Nietzsche's finest example of this phenomenon. On Nietzsche's account, Hamlet stumbled into a grave error: he somehow caught a glimpse of the truth of life. Hamlet saw through all illusions, and the consequences were catastrophic. He opened his eyes to reality and paid a heavy price—he felt ridiculous, lost the desire to act, and died.

With late Nietzsche, the situation becomes even more interesting. Late Nietzsche is not content with reminding his readers of the necessity of illusion: late Nietzsche transforms *himself* into an illusion. When one reads Nietzsche's final works, one finds him making arguments in which he doesn't believe, espousing views to which he's not committed. Truth is not important—late Nietzsche is primarily concerned that his arguments be beautiful. It is this ambivalence towards the value of truth that allows late Nietzsche to claim, among other things, that Christian dogma arose from the primeval economic relationship of creditor and debtor, and that Socrates could be refuted by the fact that he was ugly. (This is not to suggest that Nietzsche was necessarily wrong on either count.)

Throughout his career, Nietzsche remained free from the belief that truth is more valuable than illusion. Yet he had more to offer than the insight that the falseness of an idea does not constitute an objection to it. What is most exciting about Nietzsche, perhaps, is that he cheerfully demolished the view that illusion is shameful escapism. In Nietzsche, there is nothing pathetic, nothing puerile, about the desire to withdraw from reality; on the contrary, the decision to avert one's eyes from the horrors of the world is the hallmark of a sensitive, artistic, and noble spirit. But what about Dostoevsky?

Antithesis

The terrifying emotional chaos of his environments, the overpowering sensations endured by his characters, the near-perpetual uncertainty of his text—these features make it clear that Dostoevsky was intent on looking directly into the reality of life. Embedded in Dostoevsky's writings is an impulse to cut through illusion, to see the truth that lies beneath things. Consider Dostoevsky's major works. *Crime and Punishment* is the tale of a man who is nearly led to ruin by his belief in the twin illusions of Hegelianism and utilitarianism. *The Idiot* tells of a

woman who retreats from reality into a world of her own making and ends up getting killed. And *The Brothers Karamazov* is a tragedy about the unbearable consequences that ensue when men misunderstand each other's intentions and misread the world around them. Dostoevsky is not just a man—he's a declaration of war upon illusion.

It's not that Dostoevsky is interested in systematic knowledge; he would be the first to remark that the accumulation of knowledge can never be a mechanism for the elimination of suffering. Dostoevsky has little interest in philosophy, and, for this reason, it would be perverse to associate his assault on illusion with some kind of a quest for wisdom. For Dostoevsky, the problem with illusion has nothing to do with its relationship to knowledge. Rather, illusion is a problem because it represents an undue focus on the self. When a man constructs illusions for himself, he becomes excessively fixated on his own imaginative powers, and this hinders him from perceiving the suffering of others. Illusions cloud one's vision, thereby rendering one unreceptive to the pain of one's neighbors. One can find something very unusual in Dostoevsky: one can find a critique of illusion in the name of compassion. Because he is first and foremost an emissary of compassion, Dostoevsky needs to preserve the integrity of reality at all costs. He knows that if he fails to uphold the existence of a single, shared world, he will be left with no foundation upon which to build his heaven of universal love. Perhaps we owe Dostoevsky some gratitude for pointing out that compassion can't be transmitted from the illusion of one man to that of another. Compassion cannot survive translation—this is why there must only be *one* reality. The question of truth and lie, then, was no laughing matter for Dostoevsky.

On the one hand, there's Nietzsche, chuckling to himself, suggesting that men simply won't remain alive if they insist on dispelling their illusions. On the other hand, there's Dostoevsky, raising his deep Russian voice, claiming that to evade the truth of the world is to repudiate the very possibility of life. What is to be done?

There's always the view that Dostoevsky and Nietzsche represent two distinct and contradictory approaches to the world. If one feels tempted to accept this view, one should visualize these two great men as deer—that is, as beasts who charge one another, lock antlers, and engage in world-historical struggle. But this view is mistaken, for there's nothing at issue between the two men.

Synthesis

There is no difference between the man who loves the truth and the man who lives for illusion: both of them take the dichotomy of truth and lie seriously. It is so with Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. Nietzsche discovered a corridor that connected truth and illusion, and he spent much of his career going back and forth through this little passageway. He transformed life into a game whose object was to blend truth and lie in the right proportions, and his writings were intended as a rulebook for this strange game. Nietzsche needed the dichotomy of truth and lie. He needed a pair of opposites, for he was determined to solve the greatest and most important puzzle of all time—he was determined to become happy. And here is a fact that nobody will deny: when one needs to learn to be happy, when one needs to overcome the disgusting suffering that makes life tragicomic, one doesn't confine oneself to one end of a corridor.

Dostoevsky needed the dichotomy of truth and illusion no less than Nietzsche. Dostoevsky assembled all the thoughts that made the men and women of his day neurotic, all the fears that kept the people he knew from loving one another, all

the obsessions that stood in the way of a compassionate world—Dostoevsky assembled all these things and put them in a box on which he wrote the word "Illusion." Dostoevsky didn't want to tolerate bad air; he set himself the task of clearing his Russia of the ideas—that is, of the illusions—that kept men from understanding one another. Like Nietzsche, Dostoevsky needed to find happiness. But Dostoevsky hedged his bets on truth—he felt certain that illusion would destroy the very possibility of compassion, the very possibility of happiness.

The situation, then, is this: one man veils reality with illusion so that he'll see only that which he finds beautiful; the other dives headfirst into reality to find the beautiful things that reside therein. Both strategies are based on the belief that truth and lie can be differentiated, that they're two distinct things.

When the Buddha attained enlightenment and saw through all delusions, he did not attempt to abandon the illusory world. He made himself equally acquainted with both truth and lie, and he had no interest in judging between the two. It is in this way that, when the world becomes more Buddhist, scholars will refuse to judge between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. It will be known that Nietzsche *is* Dostoevsky, and scholars will amuse themselves by telling stories of men who once thought that Dostoevsky and Nietzsche were two separate beings. Everyone will know that Nietzsche wrote *Crime and Punishment*, and Dostoevsky will be recognized as a great German stylist.



Abandoned Monastery at the Battlefield of Alexander Nevskij (Russia)

Meaghan Patrick

A Cloud in Dialectics: The Contradictions of Vladimir Mayakovsky

Julie Schulte, University of California, Berkeley

Vladimir Mayakovsky defies categorization. Positing him based on his artistic connection with the Futurist movement or his tie to the Communist Party seems inaccurate upon any close examination of his poetry. Mayakovsky's image of the poet as a prophet leads to images and metaphors that question his ideological beliefs. Victor Erlich calls these contradictions "The Predicament of Vladimir Mayakovsky."[1] He highlights "the pervasive theme of martyrdom [which] occasions here a wealth of religious imagery, striking in a poet so militantly secular and so blatantly materialistic."[2] It is important to understand how Mayakovsky uses religious imagery in a new way.

When the Futurists established themselves in 1912 with the manifesto "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste,"[3] they stipulated that poets are "to feel an insurmountable hatred to the language existing before their time." This accounts for Mayakovsky's need for negation in his 1915 poem "A Cloud in Trousers." He proclaims, "Glorify me! / The great ones are no match for me! Upon everything that's been done I stamp the word 'naught.'"[4] Erlich references this passage as "a strident repudiation of all traditions, all authority, all established standards (social, ethical, aesthetic), a personal commitment to a Future totally discontinuous with the 'stifling past.'"[5] These lines take on a dialectical, even paradoxical quality, in that for Mayakovsky to possess the authority to eradicate the past he must assume the role of prophet, a figure of the very orthodox conceptions he sets out to eradicate.

Theodor Adorno wrote: "Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world. It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge."[6] The essence of Adorno's argument is that the Enlightenment's call to eradicate myth is the result of the same mindset from which myths originated, the need to dominate nature. Mayakovsky's need to reject the past commingles with his link to it; he roots himself in the past as a Futurist. Adorno explains that "so close is the self to the primeval myth from whose embrace it has wrested itself that its own lived past becomes a mythical prehistory."[7] This dialectic necessitates Mayakovsky's renunciation of his role as the poet/prophet.

The title "A Cloud in Trousers" takes on a religious connotation. The cloud in trousers can be seen as the ethereal or the spirit taking on a form, but rather than a body he takes on only a pair of pants. This evokes the notion of Christ as "spirit made flesh," but rather than being a man like Christ, "A Cloud in Trousers" is something quite different. In the line in which the title is articulated he proclaims, "I can be irreproachably gentle, / Not a man—but a cloud in trousers." Mayakovsky boasts how much he is not like a man: he can "rage on raw meat" and "change into hues."[8] He denounces poets who "play your love on the violin" or "crude ones [who] play it on the drum violently." As his challenge suggests, "Can you turn yourselves inside out, like me / And become just two lips entirely?"[9] This question shows that worth requires a *deterioration* of the self. His self is at the mercy of the feats he performs; in Part I he confesses, "I feel- / 'I'/ Is too small to fit me. Someone inside me is getting smothered."[10] This "too small I" suggests there is something bigger that he is struggling to uphold. It is reminiscent of Christ "giving his life as ransom for many," but Mayakovsky imagines it as something purely corporeal. The "I" is

"smothered" as a result of the many he will represent.

The Prologue establishes the poem's pervasive theme of mockery:

Your thought,
Fantasizing on a sodden brain,
Like a bloated lackey on a greasy couch sprawling,
With my heart's bloody tatters,
I'll mock it again.[11]

The first action attributed to the "I" (Mayakovsky) is "to mock" (*boodoo draznat*) but it is done with his "heart's bloody tatters" (*ob okravavlyenni serdtsa loskoot*). The violence of the mockery works to show his self-sacrifice. This sacrifice enters into the realm of his desire, "Whether the heart is cold metal. / At night, you want to wrap your clamor / In something feminine, / Gentle."[12] But his desires are never granted; Maria continually denies Mayakovsky love and it is by this figure that we see the rejected Mayakovsky. Yet his degradation is not solely the result of Maria's aloofness but is at times a deliberate choice. He refers to himself as "a pimp and a fraud all the while,"[13] and in this self-immolation he effectively negates such moments of self-aggrandizement as "I am, / Perhaps, / The handsomest of your sons / In the whole human race."[14] Adorno states, "Ruthless towards itself, the Enlightenment has eradicated the last remnants of its own self-awareness. Only thought which does violence to itself is enough to shatter myths."[15] His self-negation must take on a cyclical nature continually to prove he is not a great prophet.

Words are sacrificed as well. Mayakovsky depicts them as "prostitutes":

Every word,
Whether funny or crude,
That he spews from his scorching mouth,
Jumps like a naked prostitute
From a burning brothel."[16]

Words here do not represent love itself but rather commodities of love, prostitutes, and the poet is the brothel they must escape from to be saved; he must cheapen them to allow them to stand apart from bourgeois art. In other moments, Mayakovsky playfully chooses words that in their humor become trivial. One clear example is the passage: "You used to say: / 'Jack London, / Money, / Love and Ardor,'— / I saw one thing only: / You were La Gioconda."[17] In the Russian pronunciation, "*Dzhjek Lhondon*" rhymes with "*Dzhjekonda*." This flippant rhyme further trivializes images he rejects. In the guise of a braggart he exclaims, "I pass you by,— handsome, / twentytwoyearold."[18] Yet in Russian, while correct grammatically, "*dvadtsatee -dvooklyetni*" (twentytwoyearold) is more cumbersome than the rhythmic "*dvadtsit dva goda*," which carries the same meaning. Mayakovsky demonstrates this by defacing an aesthetically pleasing image with an oral clumsiness; he repudiates the self he has just aestheticized with ironic word choice.

Mayakovsky demonstrates a tension between moments of poetical sacrifice and the deep poetry that sacrifice implies. Various street people are seen petitioning the poet: "Will you moan, at least, / To report to the centuries that I'm on fire?"[19] The fact that they come to him to speak for them asserts Mayakovsky's power, and yet the appeal for a simple "moan" degrades his poetic ability. Furthermore, Mayakovsky's subjects themselves are unpoetic: "I will glorify you regardless— / Men crumpled like bed sheets in hospitals, / And women, battered like overused proverbs."[20] The "regardless" indicates the narrator's hesitation to acknowledge, much less represent, these marginalized figures. This asserts an acute awareness of the importance of his actions. In the following passage, "From all of you, / Who soaked in love for plain fun, / Who spilled / Tears

into centuries while you cried, / I'll walk away / And place the monocle of the sun / Into my gaping, wide-open eye,"[21] Mayakovsky differentiates other poets from himself. His promise to walk away from them condemns their practices while depriving his own participation in them. He includes a prophetic vision, "Like a woman, quivering, the earth will lie down."[22] Nature is conquered in the same manner Christ conquered death.

In opposition to Christ's redemptive sacrifice, Mayakovsky relates the aftermath of his sacrifice of poetic speech. He describes, "Corpses of words are scattered about,— / Two live and thrive,— / 'Swine' / And another one,— / I believe 'borsch.'" He chastises the other poet's reaction of "soaking in sobs and complaining," because "there's no way to portray now / A beautiful lady, / Or love / Or a dew-covered flower."[23] Limiting speech to such an extent is bought at the cost of beauty. The bleakness of poetic language calls into question the usefulness of such sacrifice.

In the closing Part of "A Cloud in Trousers," the poet relates, "The sky is again bloody with slaughter."[24] The prevalence of such violent images creates a sense of inevitability. Mayakovsky's use of "again" here clarifies how past imagery when repeated (such as the bloody slaughter of a sacrificial lamb) can become mythic repetition. Adorno explains this in terms of ancient nature cycles: "The postulation of the single past even endows the cycle with a quality of inevitability, and the terror radiating from the ancient event spreads over the whole process as its mere repetition."[25] This is why Mayakovsky's usage of religious and prophetic symbolism is more complex than a mere contradiction. By perpetuating these symbols—"the most golden-mouthed," "the present day Zarathustra," "the thirteenth apostle,"—Mayakovsky portrays the process as one beyond his authorial control despite his initial intentions. It becomes inescapable because rather than something new, it is continually old.

The poet's need to negate the past proved too strong a dialectic for Mayakovsky to escape through imagery and representation alone. The conflict of his artistic ideas with his own grandiose self-image locked him into a pattern that required self-destruction. Yet complete self-destruction could never be accomplished as it occurred only on the level of his poetry; even in its enactment the actual poet still remained. Mayakovsky's 1930 suicide provides a shocking real-life correlative to the self-destruction that haunted his poetry; it allowed him to escape the dialectic.



Cloudscape—in a village north of Lepel, Belarus

Kristina Brendel

Manipulating the Systems of Languages in *Anna Karenina*

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The Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin once claimed that two basic characteristics of the novel are its "multi-languaged consciousness" and its "zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality)."[1] Later, in *The Russian Novel from Pushkin to Pasternak,* John Garrard observed that "Russian writers have been obliged to assume a heavy burden of responsibility" because there has generally not "been [an] institution or forum for public discussion of ethical and social issues."[2] By presenting a variety of languages and contemporary issues in *Anna Karenina,* Tolstoy takes on this "heavy burden" and uses a "multi-languaged consciousness" to fill in Garrard's void. As Konstantin Levin and Anna struggle with their godlessness and their need for a meaningful life, languages define the ideas they both explore as they seek clarity. These languages are "specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. [...] [T]hese languages live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia."[3] The interaction of these languages develops alongside the evolution and interactions of the characters. The conclusions Levin and Anna reach at the end of the novel reflect how their approaches to these external and internal languages change. Tracing these changes throughout the novel reveals that it is Levin's ability to consolidate the contemporary and traditional languages into a dominant system of languages that keeps him going, while Anna's inability to bring together various systems of languages leads her to suicide.

Tolstoy's technique of alternating which character the narrator follows creates a multitude of languages. As these "specific world views" are alternated, the reader becomes aware of the distinct languages that exist in the novel's world. Living outside of the conventional languages, Levin and Anna struggle the most with the "environment of social heteroglossia" and the challenges of clashing ideas they see in their generation and their own lives. Part of this clash is caused by a growing European influence on Russian agriculture and society, and between the cultural languages of Europe and Russia. As Bakhtin notes, "consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*,"[4] which is problematic for both Levin and Anna. Seeing no "institution or forum for public discussion of ethical and social issues," they create such a space within their minds. In their internal forums, Anna and Levin fight the noise of hetero- and polyglossia created by vast variety of Russian lifestyles and philosophies.

Levin's quest is to find "something more important in life than reason."[5] During his struggle to find an alternative to reason, Levin interacts with many "specific world views" as represented by his family members, peasants, books, and his own doubts. In one such interaction, Levin tries explaining his theory on successful agriculture to the peasants. He finds that the peasants mistrust him and are "firmly convinced that his true goal [...] would always lie in what he did not tell them."[6] Levin tries to implement changes to better life for everyone, but he and the peasants are unable to have a successful dialogue. He earnestly explains his ideas to them, but thinks the peasants "said many things, but never said what their true goal was."[7] They thus speak to one another in a language of

omission. Levin believes that Russia has "excellent workers…but in the majority of cases, when capital was employed European-style, they produced little, and that this came only from the fact that the workers wanted to work […] in the one way natural to them."[8] Levin makes assumptions about the peasantry in his own language and judges the disposition of workers without considering that they too have varied and individual methods of communication. As Levin has yet to consolidate and truly understand various languages, he has difficulty communicating with other "world views" and struggles to live harmoniously.

However, after a particularly meaningful exchange with a peasant, Levin begins to make everything part of one system of languages and beliefs, therefore preventing each sub-system from obscuring the rest and allowing them to meld together. The peasant tells Levin: "Well, that's how it is—people are different. One man just lives for his own needs, take Mityukha even, just stuffs his belly, but Fokanych—he's an upright old man. He lives for the soul. He remembers God."[9] In reaction to this conversation, Levin experiences "a host of vague but important thoughts burst from some locked-up place and, all rushing towards the same goal, whirled through his head."[10] By streamlining his complicated thoughts towards one purpose, Levin finds the peace of mind he hoped for. Whereas previously, "reasoning led him into doubt and kept him from seeing what he should and should not do,"[11] the simplicity of Levin's newfound state of mind allows him to muffle his thoughts, listen to his soul, and interpret the systems of languages around him without doubt. As Levin is now able to interpret the systems of language without the language of reason that previously hindered him, he is able to avoid the inner turmoil Anna's mind sustains.

Anna's affair with Vronsky creates a system of languages in her head, a world with its own "problem of heteroglossia *within* a language, that is, the problem of internal differentiation, the stratification characteristic of any national language."[12] Anna's system of languages includes those of the different social circles she inhabits in Petersburg, Moscow, and Europe. Depending on where she is and with whom she is interacting, she uses various languages of desire. Anna passionately reflects on the systems of languages she speaks and perceives around her**.** The language Anna creates in order to have an affair backfires because, unlike Levin, she cannot reconcile her old systems with the new languages she learns. When Anna thinks about Vronsky, she redefines her desires and her personal narrative and enters into the literary language of novels, wishing to live the way the people in her book live. The thrill she finds in creating a literary affair changes her world into a foreign, fictitious language by embracing the words and morals from a book in English. At the end of the book, acknowledging the loss of one of her created realities, she asks in English: "He loves me—but how? *The zest is gone*."[13] The "zest" is from Anna's "English novel" on the train ride,[14] where "the hero of the novel was already beginning to achieve his English happiness, a baronetcy and an estate, and Anna wished to go with him to this estate…"[15] Anna's daydreaming leads her to the English word "*zest*": an affair that takes her to Europe and Vronsky's estate in the countryside with English horses, English novels, and an English-style nursery with an English governess. Her reality with Karenin is destroyed by her affair, but the affair was barely a reality; it was an invention that needed the English novel's "zest" in order to survive.

Anna and Levin search for answers to their problems in various languages and try to live "firmly and definitely."[16] Levin is able to combine many systems of

languages into one system of heteroglossia by remembering God in his everyday family life. He concludes, "I and all people have only one firm, unquestionable and clear knowledge, and this knowledge cannot be explained by reason—it is outside it."[17] Levin shifts from thinking in a language of reason to thinking in a language of religion, but Anna continues to use reason to find relief from her personal life. In the final hour before her death Anna asks: "But if you see the truth, what can you do?"[18] Anna's "truth" at that moment is that life is eternal suffering. She overhears a lady, speaking in French, say "'Man has been given reason in order to rid himself of that which troubles him."[19] These words lead her towards death, as she uses reason to "rid [herself] of that which troubles [her]." Levin, in contrast, sees reason as something separate from truth, and believes that the language of reason is unable to answer the questions of life. The ultimate difference between Anna and Levin is their opposite methods of quieting their minds: whereas Levin comes to terms with death by living zealously, Anna comes to terms with life by dying. Levin's world becomes less like polyglossia and more like monoglossia over the course of the novel, because he finds a way to exist within the languages of religion and family in the language of Russia. Both Anna and Levin show the difficulty of interpreting the languages of their time, and demonstrate the struggle between Western influence and the values of religion, family, and society that are embedded into Russian life.



Yuriev Monastery (Novgorod, Russia)
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Blok's Apocalypse: A Poet's Elusive Revolution

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A characteristically modern apocalyptic current runs through many of Aleksandr Blok's works. But despite their fervent calls for revolution, Blok's poems were classified as unnecessary in post-revolutionary Russia and Blok was pushed to the outskirts of the new Soviet literary circles. In the months following the Revolution, Blok stopped writing poetry, withdrew from his official responsibilities, and soon died, rejected and belittled by the new world for which he had yearned so strongly. At the bottom of it all is the poet's conception of revolution and its implications. As Viktor Zhirmunsky notes, "It is not the political fortunes of his native land that concern the poet, but the salvation of its living soul."[1] Blok called for revolution as an agent of nationwide, even worldwide, spiritual rebirth. He lamented the bankruptcy and shallowness of his age more than he ever did labor conditions or workers' rights. Unfortunately, Blok's revolutionary hopes did not coalesce into reality, and as his apocalyptic dreams were brushed away, so too, was Blok.

It would be wrong to classify Blok as a poet *of* the revolution. Rather, he is a poet *for* the revolution. Blok's poetry is not the art of the proletariat, but rather the lofty speech of a prophet. Blok scorns the common masses, as if insulted by their banal and unfeeling lives. He characterizes the average nobodies of the city as "heaps of human trash, [...] human roast beef, grey specters of wet boredom."[2] This disdain for everyday man, as well as Blok's noble personality and pedigree, prevents his inclusion in the pantheon of wholly revolutionary literature. Blok grew up in the arms of Russia's established upper class, describing his childhood as "a veritable Christmas tree of aristocratic overindulgence."[3] Of course, Blok puts down his silver spoon in both his life and his art, but as a revolutionary poet he can't help but battle with his past: "His art was at odds with his way of life. What he lived by in his life he burned to ashes in his art."[4] These ashes, scorched as they may be, still smudge the pages of Blok's work. We find them in the poet's unyielding spirituality, elevated speech, and his messianic tone. These ashes color Blok's revolution as one distinctly different from that of the Bolsheviks, a discordance that ultimately led to the poet's marginalization in the years that follow 1917.

The greatest disconnection between Blok's anticipated revolution and the October revolution lies in Blok's spirituality. Indeed Blok speaks more generally of apocalypse than of revolution. Blok's work is permeated by a cataclysmic drive from his very earliest poems all the way to "The Twelve," but this is the cataclysm of Revelation, not revolution. In "Autumnal Love," Blok equates Russia's disarray with a profound spiritual suffering, and, casting himself as a Christ, calls for God's intervention on the country's behalf:

> Oh, Christ, My Lord! My land is sad.
> I faint upon the cross, I die!
> When will Thy bark now reach the shore
> Where I hang, crucified, on high?[5]

Blok often returns to this motif of poet as prophetic Christ figure. He repeatedly likens his occupation to a sacrifice made on behalf of the Russian people, building himself up as a vanguard of the coming apocalypse, a spiritual leader taking a nation of lost souls to their redemption. Boris Eikhenbaum titles this shade of Blok the "dictator of thought of an entire generation [...] [the] dictator of feelings."[6] With this characterization in mind, it becomes clear why so many of

the poets who follow him look up to Blok as a God figure. His poetry is "The grim hangman, railing, [who] drives / Into my palm the iron nail";[7] it burdens the poet and at the same time indebts all those who hear his voice to his martyrdom.

At times Blok's prophecies are terrifying and sobering. In "A Voice from the Chorus," Blok warns of "the darkness of the days ahead!"[8] Russia, drunken, frivolous Russia, must experience the worst before she can receive her redemption:

> And we shall see the apocalypse,
> the last, worst age descend.
> Repulsive evil will eclipse
> the sky, laughter freeze on all lips,
> a longing for life's end...[9]

The "last, worst age" is Russia's final trial before the end of history, before a "'New Petersburg city, coming out of heaven [...] will return *transformed* 'on the last day.'"[10] Blok expects of the revolution not just a political power shift, but a complete transformation of the world and of the souls of men. His righteous "New Petersburg" is God's kingdom on earth and ingrained in this city is an optimistic, overarching sense of hope that refrains throughout Blok's works. In "Russia," Blok bemoans his homeland's abundant suffering, but nevertheless is filled with hope for her future:

> And the impossible is possible,
> the highroad is light and long,
> and the glint of an eye far off
> glances from under the scarf
> as prison-weary, sorrowful,
> begins the troika-driver's song.[11]

Blok, who is never afraid to criticize his country for her shortcomings, firmly believes in Russia's potential for absolution. He looks to the nation's reverent past, criticizes the superficiality of the present, and then sees retribution, onerous as it may be, on the horizon. The poet is convinced that the coming upheaval will bring salvation, that "the revolution [is] omnipotent, and he [makes] enormous demands of it without doubting that they [will] be satisfied."[12]

No one piece captures all the nuances of Blok's voice better than "The Twelve." In this masterpiece we see prophecy, denunciation, and hope alongside one another. Published in 1918, "The Twelve" is rooted in the events of the October Revolution and yet, as Viktor Zhirmunsky relates, the tone is spiritual, not political: "Like the poet's entire work, it is completely removed from politics, programs, and the like; the problem it poses is not a political, but a religious and moral one, and its message is individual rather than social."[13] Blok takes the world as he sees it, dark and uncertain, and relays it with the full force of his prophetic voice. We enter this world in the midst of a maelstrom:

> Darkness—and white
> snow hurled
> by the wind. The wind!
> You cannot stand upright
> for the wind: the wind
> scouring God's world.[14]

The contrast between the dark of night and the white blinding snow defines the poem's color palette. The only shade present to stain the city's drab grayness is blood red. The Revolution's haze sets a stage of grotesque moral ambiguity. This is Russia in the same darkness that Blok predicts in "A Voice from the Chorus." Even nature gets caught up in rebellion. Amidst the blackness of night, the wind torments the city's inhabitants. And still, the "Black sky grows blacker";[15] the night's chaos entrenches Russia even further into darkness.

> The wind plays up: snow flutters down.
> Twelve men are marching through the town.
>
> Their rifle-butts on black slings sway.
> Lights left, right, left, wink all the way...
> Cap tilted, fag drooping, everyone
> looks like a jailbird on the run.
>
> Freedom, freedom,
> down with the cross!
>
> Rat-a-tat-tat![16]

With several vivid, tight stanzas, Blok introduces a company of Red Guardsmen on a march engulfed in wind, pierced by gunshot, illuminated by the fires burning all around. These soldiers, who at once become raucous troops, angels of death, and Christ's disciples, are not majestic, glorious harbingers of the Revolution. Instead, they are a ragamuffin band, each one looking "like a jailbird on the run." The lowness of this description and of the soldier's forthcoming behavior casts the setting of "The Twelve" as the vulgar, bankrupt Russia that Blok often denounces in his poetry. These soldiers, consorting with the same prostitutes as their counter-revolutionary enemies, represent Russia and all of its deficiencies tearing itself apart. "Let's take a crack at Holy Russia, / Mother Russia / with her big fat arse!"[17] they cry, as if the careless violence of their march makes them any holier than the old world which they overthrow.

Leaving the old world behind them, and "Abusing God's name as they go, / all twelve march onward into the snow ..."[18] The Guard's blasphemous words are the penultimate step before they are redeemed, before the second coming. A red flag is seen in the distance, shots are fired, and the target is presumably hit:

> "Come out, comrade, or you'll regret
> it—we'll fire when I've counted five!"
>
> Crack–crack–crack! But only the echo
> answers from among the eaves...[19]

And suddenly, as if from nowhere, Christ:

> carrying a blood-red flag —
> invulnerable where bullets crossed —
> crowned with a crown of snowflake pearls,
> a flowery diadem of frost,
> ahead of them goes Jesus Christ.[20]

Enveloped in white purity, arisen unscathed by bullets, Christ—and Blok's long-awaited salvation—has arrived as Russia's new leader. This single line shocked and confounded Blok's contemporaries—what does Christ have to do with the people's uprising? For Blok the relationship is clear:

> He seems to suggest, as he pauses in his work on "The Twelve," that the revolution is neither a question of politicians ("Lunacharsky or even Lenin"), nor of freshly provoked territorial disputes ("neither Rumania, nor Finland, nor Ukraine"), but "the end of the historical process."[21]

After the revolution, Blok was positively giddy with a sense of the end. Korney Chukovsky writes, "when the revolution came, Blok greeted it with a kind of religious exultation as the festival of the *spiritual* transfiguration of Russia."[22] Unfortunately for the poet, the actual events that transpired never approached anything like a "spiritual transfiguration." Life was as tedious as ever, if not more so. The old world had been destroyed, and yet nothing new was put in its place. Bureaucrats, the foot-soldiers of *Byt,* still flooded every office floor, and in the midst of it all, Blok lost his gift for prophecy: "I have forgotten how to write poems and how to think about poems."[23] A far cry from the resplendent sonorous kingdom of God that he had envisioned, the new Russia was dull, silent, and stifling. Blok gave up hope in his vision; it had been crushed under a wave of reality that hope and poetry could no longer hold back. In but a few months, all Blok's accomplishments were sucked into the past:

> Life has changed (but it is not new, not nuova). We have conquered the whole world, this is now an accomplished fact, and everything will now change in the opposite direction, not [the direction] in which we live and which we loved.[24]

Blok died after a long illness, purportedly of starvation in the midst of food shortages, but his poetry died long before this event. Essentially, there was no room for it anymore—the Soviets didn't need any mystical "Poems to the Beautiful Lady," and calls for revolution had already become dated. When they did publish Blok's works, they did so disdainfully. Even while he was still alive,

publishers told Blok that "The Twelve," while one of "the best works of Russian literature," was only valuable because of its "historical significance."[25] Others were not so kind in their interactions with the fallen poet. As Boris Pasternak recalls:

> Blok had been told a pile of monstrous things and they had not been ashamed to tell him to his face that he had outlived his time and was inwardly dead—a fact with which he calmly agreed. And all this was said to him just a few months before his actual death.[26]

One can imagine a post-revolutionary Russia in an alternate universe in which Blok comes out on the other side of the apocalypse as a triumphant messiah, having led his people to the promised land. Blok was such a prophet, such a Christ, that he could only have survived if the new art of the Soviets, and even the new Soviet world, had been rebuilt in his image. In the real world, however, what can you do with a "Dictator of Feelings" when you already have a "Dictator of the Proletariat" in place? Autocracy by its very nature saves only one seat, and Blok, because of his nobleness, his spirituality, or perhaps his naive hope for change, had his chair pulled out from under him before he was offered a chance to sit down. Blok's legacy, however, lives on in his words, and those of the generations of writers who grew up under his towering shadow.

> We are traitors in life and friendship,
> we are spinners of empty words.
> So What? We are clearing the way
> for those who come afterwards.[27]



Stormy Arches (Ruzhany, Belarus)
Kristina Brendel

The Russian Negative Simile

Amanda Weaver, Arizona State University

The negative simile is a unique literary trope, for it does not occur extensively within Western literature and only appears noticeably in Eastern European epic poems and folk songs. The artistry of the negative simile (sometimes also referred to as negative parallelism or the negative analogy) is contained in its ability to connect two superficially unlike objects together by means of negation, in such a way that the verbs within the device are indispensable to the description. Yet even within this already unique literary apparatus, the Russian model of the negative simile stands at variance with its Eastern European counterparts in that the Russian form is an abbreviated version of the device. There exists some conjecture among scholars as to what the original form of negative parallelism was, but there is widespread agreement that, whatever the earliest version, it had its foundations in Russia. However, analyzing the Russian and other Eastern European forms side by side reveals that the earliest form of the negative simile in Russia was most likely not the truncated form, but actually the longer version apparent in other parts of Eastern Europe.

The negative simile does not utilize the same mechanism for comparison conventionally present in usual metaphors and similes. Normally, the tenor precedes the vehicle (to which the tenor is compared), as in the English poem "Red, Red Rose" by Robert Burns: "O my Luve's like a red, red rose, / That's newly sprung in June; / O my Luve's like the melodie / That's sweetly play'd in tune."[1]

In other words, the tenor (here, "my Luve") first creates the image in the reader's mind, and the characteristics of the vehicle are imposed secondarily. By contrast, the negative simile features a reversal of the generally expected order, where the vehicle (which is invalidated) introduces the tenor. A perfect example presents itself in Pushkin's "Brat'ja Razbojniki": "No flock of ravens has flown together / On to heaps of rotting bones, / Beyond the Volga, around fires at night / A gang of daring fellows has gathered."[2] The subject of the analogy is a group of men, but that is presented only after the (negated) comparison to a flock of ravens. Therefore, the negative simile bestows the reader with a different order of mental images, first presenting the comparison and then the subject.

The verbs within a common simile or metaphor generally are not as essential to the meaning as with a negative metaphor. When a conventional simile comes to mind, the comparing word is generally "like" or "as," demonstrated excellently by two subsequent lines of Alexander Pope's "Imitations of Horace": "I pluck out year by year, as hair by hair, / And melt down ancients like heaps of snow."[3] Here, the links between the tenors and the vehicles do not even consist of a verb, for the comparison is constructed with "like" and "as." This can limit the imagery, especially when compared to an example of the Russian negative simile: "It is not a green oak tree bending to the earth, nor paper leaves fluttering low to the ground—a son is falling down before his father, and begging his blessing."[4] The variance of actions here, coupled with the somewhat unusual connection of a son to an oak or to leaves, creates a much richer metaphor than a simple positive simile. As Patricia Krafčik states, "The negative simile does not simply reiterate the symbolic substantive pairs, but rather invests them with [...] [a] vitality of their own. [...] It is the action that affords the total substantive image its dynamic expressiveness. In this way, all

parts of the device are woven into the fabric of the whole."[5] Indeed, the verbs within a negative simile add an expressiveness that a positive simile does not contain.

In general, the regular Slavic and Baltic forms of the negative simile consist of three parts, at odds with the Russian variant. The initial statement (in all but the Russian version) presents a perception, or a proposed vehicle for the imagery; the second negates the proposed idea; and the third statement declares what the actual tenor is. Such an example appears in a Finnish folksong: "What is foggy outside, / Could it be dense smoke, / Could it be a dark cloud? [...] / It is not dense smoke / Nor a dark cloud, / Untamo's gang [...] is coming."[6] Although both the initial and second statements consist of two parts, it is still possible to see the triple nature of the simile. This form of the device appears most notably within Serbian, Karelian, Finnish and Estonian folk literature.[7] Yet this triune form contrasts noticeably with the Russian, as apparent in the following bylina: "Fellows, it was not a storm-cloud that came up, / It is not fog spreading over the field, / It is Vasilij Permjagič rising from the sea."[8] Here, the Russian version does not contain an initial hypothesis or a rhetorical question; instead, it begins directly with the negation. Although the Russian negative simile lacks the triplistic formula of other Balto-Slavic forms do, the Russian simile still consists of three parts: "[1] It was not a dark storm-cloud that came up, / [2] And not a dark cloud was rolling up,— / [3] It was Dunaj, Ivan's son."[9] Indeed, the majority of instances of the Russian negative simile features two negated vehicles, followed by a validated tenor.

The overall similarity of the Russian negative structure with its East European counterparts certainly suggests some sort of relation between the two forms. The use of negative analogy in Karelian and Finnish folk songs is geographically limited, appearing only in regions with close proximity to Russia.[10] In addition, the choices of vehicles are often thematically similar. For example, Felix Oinas observes that, "In Russian folksongs, as in Karelian and Finnish, menacing atmospheric phenomena (clouds, heavy rain, spreading fog) symbolize an attacking army or the arrival of a hero."[11] Beyond such weather motifs, the vehicles in both forms tend to hark back to nature, often in the forms of wild animals or trees. The verses of a Finnish folksong ("'What has tumbled into the snow on his face, / Is it a wise black bird, / Or a cold pigeon?' / [...] 'It is not a wise black bird, / Nor a cold pigeon, / A serf has tumbled into the snow on his face,'"[12]) and a Russian verse about *bogatyri* ("No two elephants are swaggering in the open field, / No two damp oaks are swaying, / Swaggering-swaying are two *bogatyri* / Toward the very Danila Denisič himself"[13]) both display similar themes. In both of these examples, the vehicles are parts of nature and are not things that would initially come to mind when thinking about the tenors (which again relates to the richness of negative imagery). Given these extreme similarities between the Russian and non-Russian forms of negative analogy, it would be logical to assume that there is a concrete relation between the two. Novgorod overtook Ancient Karelia in 1275, making it likely that the negative simile from Russia was the initial form, and other Balto-Slavic examples were assimilated into their respective cultures.[14] However, considering the natural entropy and evolution of languages, there appears to be a likely possibility that Russian originally utilized the longer form of the negative simile. This would mean that Russian, after infusing other cultures with the original longer form of the negative simile, subsequently truncated the form, while the other influenced areas preserved the original form.

Therefore, as Oinas states, "there exists a curious situation—the preservation of a construction in the area of its penetration and its modification in the area of its origin."[15] Although this is a theory merely shared among certain scholars, the two forms correspond too closely to be mere coincidence, thus adding a substantial amount of likelihood to the above proposition.

The negative simile truly is a work of art, for it imbues whatever work it graces with a rich tapestry of synesthetic images. It serves as an inclusion device for the reader or listener, who is directly addressed in the course of the rhetoric. Furthermore, the repetitive nature of the imagery enhances the (often triplistic) motifs found in Eastern European folk songs and lyric or epic poetry. The fact that the Russian semblance of the device aligns so closely with other Slavic and Baltic forms certainly speaks to some close connection between the two. Yet whatever the connection, it is undeniable that the negative simile adds invaluable literary depth, regardless of the culture or environment in which it appears.



Uhowo, Poland
Patricia Manos

The Harriman Institute

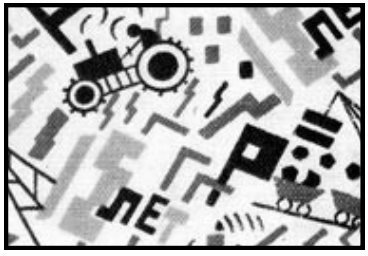
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Cinema of Moral Concern

Patrick Smyth, University of Notre Dame

"So if we ask ourselves what is the fundamental obligation of the artist towards the contemporary Polish experience we can only arrive at one answer: it is to speak the truth. Though this answer may seem a platitude, it remains an unshakable fact that only the truth can lead us out of the present crisis, restore confidence between people, and also between society and government, and liberate the creative energies of our nation."[1]

-Andrzej Wajda (1980)

The Context

Wajda's statement seems a simple "platitude," but within the context of a Communist system that had, from its very inception in Poland, operated on a political and social platform of mass deception, corruption, manipulation, and hypocrisy, the statement becomes quite telling. The Cinema of Moral Concern that emerged in the mid-1970s to provide a realistic examination of contemporary issues and social institutions in communist Poland prided itself on the representation of "obvious truths."[2] There was nothing unclear or ambivalent about their films; rather, each stressed simplicity and universality. In the telling of "obvious truths," the cinema became a key element in empowering its audience to negotiate with the defunct Communist system from a moral high ground—because "while moral perturbation is not necessarily political, political decisions are always at least in part, moral, therefore subjective, personal."[3]

In a society that had been encouraged to lie, steal, cheat, and even murder in the name of ideology, the program of this brave 1970s cinema posited itself as a beacon of hope. The auteurs of Moral Concern were of a specific generation that possessed a distinct and enduring collective memory. Most had experienced the entrenched abuses within the communist system firsthand, as the corruption, hypocrisy, and opportunism that were trademarks of the political bureaucracy were equally pervasive in the film industry.

The Films

Such were the circumstances that allowed for and fueled the audacious agenda of Moral Concern. But concern for moral issues related to political and social problems was one thing; their translation vis à vis film was quite another. A demonstrative cross-section of this evolution can be found in the progression of three films: Kieslowski's documentary *From a Night Porter's Point of View* (1977), Wajda's masterful *Man of Marble* (1976), and Kieslowski's introspective *Camera Buff* (1979).

Any discussion of Moral Concern must begin with an explanation of its documentary roots. Many critics, while acknowledging the documentary influences of Moral Concern, believe the movement to be defined solely by the feature films produced during the period.[4] While a discrepancy does indeed exist between the universality of the themes portrayed by the features in-

cluded in Moral Concern and the individualistic themes of the documentaries, the movement as a whole must be considered as a sum of its parts—documentary and feature alike. As such, the documentary works of Kieslowski, Marcel Lozinski, Irena Kamienská, Piotr Szulkin, and Tomasz Zygadlos must be considered as an integral component of the Moral Concern movement.

Kieslowski's *From a Night Porter's Point of View* documents the authoritarian sentiments of a lowly security guard working at a local factory. The short film is based on transcripts from an actual interview with the subject, a toothless and incomprehensible Lodz man; but the actor who appears in the film, Marian Osuch, serves as a viable substitute.[5] Reflective of a contemporaneous dialogue taking place in the 1960s and '70s concerning the "everyday fascism" in Polish society, Kieslowski delves into the nit-picking, power-tripping, distorted world of an individual who has fallen victim to his debasing environment.[6] The social status of the man was essential in Kieslowski's mind, for, "if this exists on the lowest rung of the social ladder, that means it is far more widespread than if we'd looked for it higher up."[7] As the monologue gains momentum, Osuch's abominable social ideals come forth. He advocates public executions and promotes law enforcement over human rights, justifying physical retribution for dissident students.[8] Although eschewing any definite ideology, Osuch seems blindly to support Party power above anything. His ruminations illuminate the appeal of the socialist state's authoritarianism and the "readiness for a fascist philosophy" amongst society. But more importantly, the sinister tone of the film acts as an ominous foreboding concerning these unchecked tendencies and their malicious effects on the individual. Kieslowski prevented the film's television release in order to protect the naïve Lodz man. Made in 1977, the film was shelved until 1979 when it was allowed a very limited release in Polish film circles.

In the tense atmosphere of the 1970s and early 1980s there was perhaps no better "cultural conveyor" of Polish national and social identity than the established master, Andrzej Wajda. His crown jewel of the period and a quintessential piece of the Cinema of Moral Concern was the internationally acclaimed *Man of Marble*. It was the first effective feature film of the period. The project represented a completely new kind of undertaking for Wajda, one that resonated with worker and intellectual alike, spurred further reconciliation between the two, and helped to unite them in opposition to the communist system. The film is an examination of two distinct periods of Polish history, which Wajda portrays simultaneously through a plot that intertwines the experiences of two separate protagonists—one within the context of the Stalinist repressions and the other within the lead-up to Solidarity.

Wajda's main character, Agnieszka, is on a mission to complete her diploma film, a dissertation for film students. Her story line traces the vicissitudes of Mateussz Birkut, a Stakhanovite bricklayer and national hero of the 1950s. Agnieszka's supervisor on the project discourages her from making a film about such a contentious issue, but Agnieszka persists and probes deep into the life of the somewhat mysterious Birkut. A former Party official informs Agnieszka of the "accident" that ruined Birkut's future as a bricklayer (he was sabotaged), the job he was given providing housing for workers, and the disappearance of his friend Wincenty Witek. Witek had been identified as a harbinger of rightist deviations and a possible saboteur based on a trip he made to France following the Spanish Civil War. He was arrested as the show trials of the early 1950s were sweeping the country. Birkut sought out Witek,

attempting to defend him against bogus charges, but he too was arrested, tried, and sent for rehabilitation. Agnieszka finds that Birkut has since died, but that his son, Maciej Tomczyk, is alive and working in the shipyards of Gdansk. Before she has an opportunity to seek out Maciej, her supervisor informs her that she has gone well over budget and that her film will not be made. Aware that this is a ploy indirectly to censor her dealings with the sensitive issue of the Stalinist era, she proceeds to Gdansk to seek out Maciej anyway.[9] *Man of Marble* provides a distinct link between two generations, that of the Stalinist 1940s and early '50s and the relatively liberal 1970s, through a common disillusionment with communist ideology. It is also a commentary on the institutions and functionaries within the film industry itself and the obstacles it posed to artistic expression. Ironically, Wajda's film suffered from the restrictions of censorship as it was only made available for limited release in 1977.

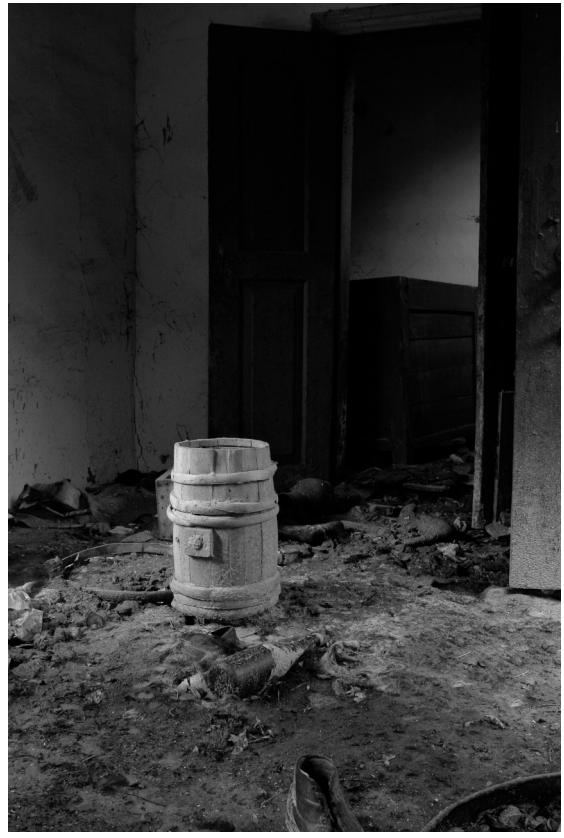
Whereas Wajda merely touched on the experience of the auteur within the Communist system, Kieslowski's first international success *Camera Buff* provides a rigorous examination of this theme. The film is a self-reflective look at the responsibilities of filmmakers.[10] Filip Mosz, a common factory worker from outside of Krakow, develops an amateur passion for filmmaking after purchasing an 8mm camera to document the birth of his child. When his superiors at the factory catch wind of his new hobby, they ask him to document the progressive happenings within the factory to be aired on Polish television. Despite ambivalent misgivings concerning Filip's varied film subjects, his supervisor releases a censored reel for official use. Feeling his short films to be more effective if viewed unedited, Filip enters an amateur film competition where he is awarded the second-place prize. The results of the competition encourage Filip to start looking beyond the mere façade of things in order to film reality. He begins attending meetings of the local film society and convinces Krzysztof Zanussi to attend one of the society's gatherings and discuss *Camouflage* (1977), Zanussi's complex yet powerful contribution to Moral Concern. After showing Zanussi some of his latest work and receiving his approbation, Filip decides to risk airing some controversial footage of a handicapped worker within the factory during a television special. The documentary proves to be a remarkable accomplishment, but fallout from the film devastates Filip. A friend is fired, and his estrangement from his wife is further exacerbated as a result of the film's airing. In a direct reference to the self-imposed censorship common during the period, a distraught Filip destroys a project that was near completion.[11] In the film's tragic ending, Filip's wife and daughter leave him and, in a moment of profound self-introspection, Filip turns the camera on himself as, in Kieslowski's words, "[he] simply realizes that, as an amateur filmmaker, he's found himself in a trap and that, making films with good intentions, he might prove useful to people who'll use the film with bad intentions."[12]

The End of Moral Concern and Its Legacy

Though an exact date for the beginning of Moral Concern is open to argument, it is clear to most familiar with the cinema that December 13, 1981, signaled its end. It was on this day that General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland: "Political and social life froze in that cold oppressive December. A curfew was declared. There were massive arrests of Solidarity activists [...] Public places, including theaters and cinemas, were closed. For the moment film production stopped."[13] Fallout from the declaration led to the disbanding of Wajda's

production company and censorship took on a renewed rigor.[14] A Party-supported shift towards popular cinema, dealing with the "imaginary sphere of sensation, eroticism and escapist entertainment," gradually replaced Moral Concern in the "period of normalization" from 1983 to 1986.[15] However, it is impossible to ignore the role Moral Concern played in precipitating the revolutionary events of 1980.[16] It empowered key elements in Polish society with the tools effectively to engage their Party counterparts from a moral high ground. The Cinema of Moral Concern demonstrated how culture, and more specifically collective memory expressed in culture, could shake the political and social foundations of an entire country, leaving irreparable cracks in the Communist façade that would falter in the decade to come.





Bragin, Belarus
Kristina Brendel

Neither Direct Nor Indirect Aid: Russia's Response to the Greek Revolution, 1821-1822

Ester Murdukhayeva, Columbia University

At the start of 1821, the great conservative statesmen of 19th-century Europe gathered in Laibach to discuss the best approach to resolving a situation. After one month of passionate speeches against secret societies and revolutionary fervor, Alexander I received news from Moldavia. Joined by his foreign ministers, Counts Karl Nesselrode and Ioannis Kapodistrias, Tsar Alexander I steadfastly defended the Great Powers' obligation to suppress the revolutions.[1] A group of Greek rebels led by Alexander Ipsilantis had crossed the Pruth River, calling for open Christian revolt against the Ottoman sultan while promising the loyal support of a "great power."[2] Several days after hearing the news, Alexander I received a letter from Ipsilantis, calling on Russia to "help the Greek people in their battle against the Ottoman yoke."[3] By directly and publicly calling on the Tsar for assistance, the Greeks forced Alexander I to respond immediately.

Reacting with equal parts humiliation and anger, the Tsar rebuked the revolt. Kapodistrias immediately wrote to Ipsilantis with a warning that "Russia will provide neither direct, nor indirect, aid unless you listen to this advice that will save you—cease this uprising!"[4] Ipisilantis and the Philiki Hetairia, the secret society responsible for planning and executing the revolt, created fundamental problems for Russia. The Tsar's forceful denouncement did not convince some notable contemporaries, who believed that Russia must have had prior knowledge of the rebellion.[5] Rumors circled around Europe suggesting that Alexander I and Kapodistrias had always known of, and supported, the plans for the Hetairist revolt, but "disowned Ipsilantis's venture at Laibach [only] because of the pressure of Britain and Austria."[6] Alexander I's plea of ignorance seemed suspicious. Ipsilantis's distinguished career in the Russian army and his confidence in the Tsar's support suggested a close relationship and perhaps, an existing promise of assistance.

Powerful social and economic ties between the two nations, increasingly solidified by 1821, had tremendous influence on Greco-Russian relations. A significant portion of the Russian Foreign Service was Greek-born, including Kapodistrias and his secretary Alexander Sturdza. Greek Phanariot aristocratic families, including the Ipsilantis clan, often found themselves settling in Russia as a result of exile or other political circumstances. The children of these families often served in the Russian army and married into Russian nobility. Considering the long and highly developed Greek conceptualization of its spiritual and political relationship with Russia, Alexander Ipsilantis's proclamation to the Hetairia—"Act, oh friends, and you will see a Mighty Empire defend our rights"—did not seem excessively misguided or strange.[7]

Yet Alexander I eventually chose not to assist the Heitarist uprising. Russia saw its relationship with Greece as one that centered on religious sympathy and political convenience. This is not to say that the two were mutually exclusive according to situation, or that Russia's choices were purely cold and calculating. Rather, the varieties of Russian philhellenism never posited the kind of obligation to provide deliverance that the Greeks had imagined they would. These philhellenisms were based in compassion, religious unity and political strategy. None of these varieties succeeded in convincing the government to take official action, yet each failed for different

and important reasons. Understanding these failures helps to illuminate the choices made in 1821 by a Russian government tied to both East and West.

After some thought about the Greek conflict, Alexander I's government decided to pursue a policy of neutrality. Despite the ultimate failure of Ipsilantis's Rumanian uprising, Grigorii Stroganov, the Russian envoy in Constantinople, found it difficult to both "reassure Ottoman officials and at the same time [urge] moderation and caution in suppressing the rebellion."[8] The greatest struggle was to convince the sultan that the rebellion was political, not religious. "Ipsilantis, with fatal imprudence that will doom his nation, has given the sign that this is to become a war of faiths," Stroganov wrote to Count Nesselrode. "[Ipsilantis] has sworn to die or to exterminate the tyrants who have oppressed Greece for four centuries."[9] Violent Turkish reprisals against the Ottoman Christian community confirmed Stroganov's fears of a religious war and severely strained the relationship between the Ottoman Porte and the Tsar.

News was pouring into Stroganov's embassy daily about the massacres of Phanariot Greeks, bishops, priests and other Christians. Churches were destroyed with impunity. Cities with large Greek populations were regularly stormed and terrorized. Returning to St. Petersburg from Laibach on May 12, Alexander I learned of the most shocking of the Turkish reprisals—the hanging of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Gregory V, on Easter Sunday. While the other reports sickened the Tsar, the symbolism and violence of the Patriarch's murder was particularly troubling.

One month later, Stroganov received instructions from the Tsar to deliver an ultimatum to the sultan. The demands, drafted by Kapodistrias, called for "the restoration of damaged Orthodox property, the protection of the Christian religion, an assurance that a distinction would be made between the innocent and the guilty [...] and the acceptance of Russian cooperation in organizing the internal affairs of the Danubian principalities."[10] Ottoman officials did not respond to the document in the given time frame, which resulted in Stroganov breaking diplomatic relations and departing for Odessa.

Kapodistrias' secretary, Sturdza, argued that the rebellion was not an illegal act against a legitimate government. Rather, the violent Turkish actions proved that "the Greeks [...] were tributaries rather than legal subjects of the Porte; they were connected to the sultan by bondage and servitude instead of by religion and nationality."[11] Utilizing a direct analogy between the Greek independence movement and the Russian defeat of Tatar rule, he stressed that the revolt was an attempt to overthrow an unjust yoke to whom there was no legal obligation. By proclaiming neutrality, Sturdza argues, Russia was not only acting as "an accomplice in the fall of the church and in the extermination of an entire people," but was also allowing Britain to strengthen its position in the Eastern Mediterranean.[12]

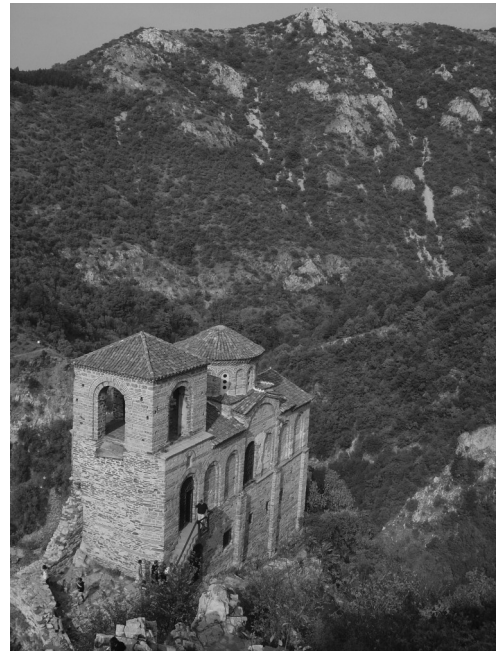
The influential substance of Sturdza's argumentation is evident in the efforts of Kapodistrias and Stroganov to implore the Tsar to aid the Greeks. The ineffective Byzantine religious rhetoric of Prince Shiksmatov was revitalized when expressed in contemporary political terms. Both Stroganov and Kapodistrias were astute diplomats who knew that as much as the Tsar was emotionally affected by religious loyalty and humanitarianism, he would only be convinced to intervene by political rationale. Using religion as a base, the "war party" sought to prove that military assistance was necessary to protect the Russian, rather than Greek, political position.

Stroganov's breaking of diplomatic

relations with the Ottomans in July of 1821 only further contributed to the restlessness of Kapodistrias and Destunis. The removal of an ambassador was known traditionally as the first step to an official declaration of war. At the very least it should have contributed to Russian occupation of the Danubian principalities as dictated by the Kutchuk-Kainardji treaty. Yet Alexander I chose not to pursue this course and instead sent out feelers to European diplomats. Since it was decided at Laibach that Austria would intervene in the Italian rebellions in order to restore political order, the Tsar wanted permission to pursue the same program in the Peloponnese. Metternich and Lord Castlereagh, the British Foreign Secretary, refused to provide backing for military intervention and instead half-heartedly ordered the Ottomans to protect the status of Greek Christians.

In addition, Metternich and Castlereagh began to place seeds of doubt in Alexander I's mind about Kapodistrias and his intentions. Sir Charles Bagot, the British ambassador to Russia, wrote that "the labour and intrigues of Count Kapodistrias to bring on the war are inconceivable [...] his enourmous presumption still makes him think that he can guide the politics of Russia and lead the revolutions of Greece at the same time."[13] The Tsar ultimately succumbed to European suspicion of his Foreign Minister's motives. By the beginning of 1822, Kapodistrias realized that he would have no future influence over Alexander I's Greek policy and soon resigned.

With the end of Kapodistrias's service came the end, at least for the time being, of the war party's hopes that Russia would intervene on behalf of the Greek cause. Despite the rhetorical strength of the religious and political arguments, Alexander I could never bring himself to unilateral action against the Porte. Although Kapodistrias, Stroganov and Destunis touched on all the right points—religious reprisals, treaty violations, and decline of prestige—they were never able to craft an Eastern policy that was attractive enough to make Alexander I turn away from his Western goals. He was sympathetic to the plight of Greek Christians, angered by Turkish disrespect, and wary of the political significance of taking a weak stance. Yet, Alexander never believed that pursuing a stronger course of action would bring more good than harm. Alexander was not manipulated by Metternich and Castlereagh, nor was he so completely revolted by the uprising that he coldly rejected the idea of intervention. He did seriously consider the war party's arguments. In the end, they were simply not convincing in the right way.



Assen Krepost (Asenovgrad, Bulgaria)
Grace Zhou

Bilingualism in Ukraine

Iryna Dzyubynska, University of Kentucky

Ukraine is in the midst of a linguistic problem which divides the country into two parts: the Russian-speaking (in the south and the east) and the Ukrainian-speaking part (in the west). Although today the national language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, it has not always been this way, and Russian still remains the first language for many.

More than 300 years ago, central, southern and eastern Ukraine were all part of the Russian Empire, and in the 20th century Ukraine was one of the republics of the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, Russian had the status of a language of international communication. In most schools in Ukraine, subjects were taught in Russian. Although Ukrainian existed as a subject in Ukrainian schools, it was not obligatory to learn it.

After Ukraine gained its independence from the Soviet Union, the government did everything in its power to "Ukrainianize" the former Soviet republic as quickly as possible and to restore the primacy of the Ukrainian language. Over the course of the last eighteen years, the Ukrainian government switched the instruction in most schools, universities, work places, and the media in Ukraine from Russian to Ukrainian. Many people in Ukraine were uncomfortable in adjusting to this change, as their first language was Russian. However, the changes that occurred to Ukraine historically and culturally have led to a bilingual society.

Ukraine, as an independent country, is still searching for identity, and the Ukrainian language plays an important role in this search. However, I think it wouldn't be wise for Ukraine to lose its unique bilingualism. In my opinion, it would be a good idea to make both Russian and Ukrainian the official languages of Ukraine. For if that does not happen, Ukrainian people will keep using the Russian language, as many still feel it to be their native tongue.

Несмотря на то, что официальным языком Украины является украинский, он не является единственным языком, на котором говорят ее граждане. Среди языков национальных меньшинств - белорусский, болгарский, гагаузский, греческий, еврейский, крымско-татарский, молдавский, немецкий, польский, румынский, словацкий и венгерский. Что же касается русского языка, то он в Украине является не менее распространенным, чем украинский. На западе Украины большинство населения говорит на украинском, в то время как на юге и востоке большая часть населения – русскоязычная, а в селах говорят на суржике (смесь русского с украинским). При этом подавляющее большинство населения Украины является двуязычным. То есть, если даже не все могут свободно говорить на русском и украинском, то понимают оба языка практически все.

Почему русский язык на Украине является не менее распространенным, чем украинский? Так получилось «из-за» истории. Более 300 лет центральная, южная и восточная Украина входили составной частью сначала в Российскую империю, а в двадцатом веке Украина являлась одной из республик Советского Союза. В Советском Союзе русский имел статус языка межнационального общения, его изучение было обязательным. В большинстве школ, даже в Киеве – столице Украины – и в западных областях, все предметы были на русском. Украинский язык

существовал как школьный предмет, но, учить украинский было необязательно. Спустя 18 лет после распада Советского Союза, многие граждане Украины, даже те, кто являются украинцами по национальности, до сих пор чувствуют себя русскими. И русский для них – родной язык.

За 18 лет независимости Украины, украинское правительство занималось тем, что многие называют насильственной украинизацией. После распада СССР в школах стали постепенно изменять систему обучения: сокращать классы русской литературы и языка и переводить преподавание всех предметов на украинский язык. По закону о телевидении и радиовещании, не менее половины передач в украинском эфире должно быть на украинском. Оставшаяся половина – на русском языке. Но от этого почти никто не страдает. На украинских ток-шоу нередко встречается, когда ведущий говорит на украинском, а приглашенный гость разговаривает с ним на русском, и один другого понимает без особых проблем. Иногда, при переводе мультфильмов, роли дублируют на украинский, а другие – на русский, что, естественно, создает комический эффект.

Но происходящей трансформацией довольны далеко не все жители Украины. Есть те, кто знает только русский язык или, скорее, знают его значительно лучше украинского. Их не устраивает, что им придется переучиваться. Они хотят сохранить знание русского языка, потому что это их родной язык. Они также хотят, чтобы их дети и внуки имели возможность изучать русский и общаться на нем.

Интересно отметить однако, что украинский язык более распространен в сельской местности, даже на востоке и юге. Правда, во многих селах этой части страны говорят на так называемом суржике, не диалекте, а своеобразной смеси украинского и русского, который возник благодаря взаимному влиянию этих языков друг на друга. В русском языке на Украине можно найти отличия от русского языка в центральной части России. Отличия, прежде всего, в произношении, такие как замена «что» на «шо», произношение украинского «г» (более мягкого) вместо русского и прямое использование слов из украинского (например, «буряк» вместо «свекла»). В школах и в институтах, в которых поменяли язык обучения на украинский, есть преподаватели, которые имеют минимальные знания украинского языка, но все равно пытаются преподавать свой предмет на государственном языке страны. Результат при этом часто не самый хороший – происходит некое смешение русского и украинского. Вследствие такой учебы может пострадать и качество восприятия учащимися предмета, не говоря уже о том, что и шансов выучить литературный украинский язык таким образом мало.

Будучи на зимних каникулах на юге Украины, в городе Николаеве, я провела интервью со своими сверстниками и узнала об учителях, которые преподают на смеси русского с украинским. Я родилась в Николаеве, жила в этом городе и училась в школе, где преподавали на русском языке. Потом несколько месяцев я жила в Киеве и училась в школе, где все предметы были на украинском. Однажды на уроке наша учительница по музыке, сама этого не заметив, плавно перешла с украинского на русский, а потом, когда заметила, то воскликнула: «Ой, извините меня, пожалуйста, я забыла,

что я должна говорить на украинском». Еще больше меня шокировало то, что и мои киевские одноклассники и учителя, которые разговаривали на украинском на уроках, сразу же переходили на русский, как только звенел звонок на перемену.

Интересно, что же будет с языком в Украине теперь, четыре года после «помаранчевой революції» (оранжевой революции), когда к власти пришла оппозиция под руководством Виктора Ющенко. В результате многие граждане Украины стали по-настоящему гордиться тем, что они украинцы. Знать украинский и говорить на нем становится престижным. Как это отразится на русском языке? Останется ли русский настолько же распространенным, как украинский, будет ли он существовать как второй язык, снизится ли его популярность или же он станет одним из официальных языков страны? Во время предвыборной кампании Ющенко обещал, что существующие русские школы закрываться не будут и все желающие смогут учиться на своем родном языке (но при этом знание государственного – украинского – языка будет обязательным). Не забудем, что и митингующие на Майдане Незалежности[1] говорили кто на украинском, кто на русском, но при этом прекрасно друг друга понимали.

Для Украины, как независимого государства, поиск своей идентичности продолжается, и украинский язык играет в этом важную роль. Но и терять существующее двуязычее (в своем роде совершенно уникальное) было бы, на мой взгляд, глупо. Я считаю, что иметь два официальных языка на Украине – русский и украинский – было бы неплохой идеей. Но даже если этого не будет, я уверена, что люди будут продолжать общаться на русском языке и учить его, чтобы иметь возможность пользоваться богатствами русской культуры.



Chernobyl, Ukraine
Justin Starr

Leveling Neutrality: "Third-party" Contrivance in Contemporary De-Sovietization

William J. Sadd, Boston College

The Soviet Union officially collapsed on December 31, 1991. Since then, much of the world which had been consumed by the frenzied experimental political union that was the U.S.S.R. has become inundated with degeneration, death, and destruction—of course, under the framework of democratization. In light of the war in Georgia this past August and the many separatist conflicts that have been so evident in Russia's "near abroad," I hope to re-appraise one simple question: what had the United States and the international community expected of these many small, newly recognized states and unrecognized quasi-states, when the fabric of their previous stability had been but barely supported under a central authority in Moscow? Notably, when their loosely bound unions (of a multiplicity of peoples) had existed, they had been under an anti-ecclesiastical, oddly inconsistent totalitarian state with unreliable, shifting levels of autonomy. Ultimately, who is to blame for the appalling and needless war that occurred this past August?

To understand the current situation, it is important first briefly to examine what was. Georgia was a society where statehood, and central development of the state, had previously existed. At the same time, however, Georgia's post-Soviet survival had several fractious challenges to the legitimacy of its statehood, in part as a result of what were Soviet-era experimentations with nationhood and autonomy. Namely, Georgia had three autonomous sub-republics: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjaria. While Adjaria was, for all intents and purposes, a fictitious pseudo-nation created by Moscow because the Georgians living there were Muslims (as opposed to the majority Christian population in Georgia proper), both Abkhazia and South Ossetia have distinct ethno-linguistic populations. As the corrosion of stability within the Soviet Union worsened, Abkhazia and South Ossetia both became regions of increased tension.

With the downfall of central development and authority in the late 1980s and early 1990s, both throughout Georgia and much of the Soviet Union, any vague sense of cultural or ethnic identity which had previously existed was propelled into full-scale nationalism.[1] Manifestations of such unrestrained, nationalist-driven divisions were, in many ways, responsible for the alarming levels of violence that have since become an indelible mark of statism and separatism in the South Caucasian post-Soviet world.

All of this unrest became apparent by the late 1980s. During this time, a growing number of Georgians were expressing their will to secede from the Soviet Union completely. Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the Soviet Union, had instituted a number of state-wide reforms throughout the 1980s. Gorbachev's reforms were meant to create a stronger union. Ironically, they ultimately contributed to the final dissolution of the Soviet state in creating the latitude for populations to articulate discontent and display movements for greater autonomy.[2]

Popular will to separate and establish true independence from the Soviet Union was as evident in Georgia as anywhere else in the former Soviet states. This came to a head on April 9, 1989, when a group of hunger strikers began a protest in front of a building in Tbilisi known as the Supreme Soviet. Their message: the Republic of Georgia wants and deserves its independence from Moscow. Soviet troops violently thwarted the protests, killing demonstrators. This single

event virtually ended Soviet rule in Georgia. I would argue that current Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's violent suppression of demonstrations just one year ago — now of greater significance in light of the civil-war-turned-war-with-Russia— will similarly be seen as a sort of end of popular rule.

For the early 1990s, the unusual political organization of nations within the Soviet Union and the bitter, violent road to collapse would ultimately provide a footing for Georgia's internal wars. At the same time, the balance of inter-ethnic relations in Georgia and pre-Soviet Georgian history also need to be regarded. To be sure, disunion in the Caucasus among its many diverse populations is nothing new. Abkhazia, for example, while still to this day internationally recognized as being within Georgia, contains an acutely divided population. The peoples of the Abkhaz region and those of Georgia proper have in their long disjointed histories periods both of union and glaring division. This is evident in South Ossetia, as well. And while South Ossetia may appear as the more worrisome issue today, Abkhazia has historically far more consistently been the contested territory.

It should be noted that many of the grievances among the variegated ethnolinguistic populations of the Caucasus revolve around issues of indigenousness and homeland. And while the reliability of census records from antiquity may be questionable, there is some certainty regarding the census of 1989. This census showed that Georgians made up approximately 45.7% of Abkhazia's population.[3] This may have suggested that the territory would, for pragmatic purposes, remain a part of the emerging post-Soviet Georgian state. But for a number of reasons, this did not happen and war broke out between the Georgians and the Abkhazians. Notably, the brief tenure of the Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia contributed greatly to this conflict. Rhetoric and policymaking, driven by a man who had deteriorated to a sort of ethnocentric, messianic Georgian nationalist, were the marks of his short-lived presidency. Gamsakhurdia's language led to a Georgia stained with the blood of civil war—war which drowned the country in 1992-93, resurged occasionally throughout the 1990s, and, still unresolved as of last August, ignited again. As many may be aware—in seeing the human devastation of the early 1990s in Abkhazia and throughout Georgia, the Russo-Chechen Wars, the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, the fighting between the Armenians and Azeris over Nagorno-Karabakh, and again, Georgia this past August—the conflicts of the Caucasus have been bloody and sordid. What is more, these conflicts paint the skyline of Russia's conflict-ridden "near-abroad."

Now, in light of all of the conflicts of the early 1990s and the wider geopolitical balancing act since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one thing has become abundantly clear: Russia cannot be both a "third party" and a second party in resolving conflicts in its "near-abroad."[4] This, in differing from most other intricacies of the South Caucasus, is fairly plain and simple. This August war in Georgia has only further supported such an argument. Today, few would suggest that the Russians can objectively reassume their roles as peacekeepers. They are the victors; Georgians, Abkhazians, Ossetians, and of late, increasingly so the Ingush, are proving to be the vanquished in this whole ongoing process of de-Sovietization. Perhaps there is some truth in the argument—as Georgia's president Mikheil Saakashvili put forth in the days following the Russian incursion—that allowing a Russian peacekeeping force in the South Caucasus is no more reasonable than designating a fox to guard a chicken coop.

But the United States too must not be seen as a third party in this conflict.

While the U.S. may consider Georgia its democratic "darling" of the Caucasus region—as several media outlets have suggested—U.S. foreign economic and military investment in Georgia is not so exceptional.[5] Further, I might suggest that the less than adequately informed envoys the U.S. government has been sending to Georgia of late has done little more than aid in fueling the conflicts. In an article from August 4, 2008, just prior to the war, it was reported that Hrant Melik-Shahnazaryan (the chairman of the Armenian Mitq analytical center) noted the following: U.S. mediating delagations with shallow understandings of the many complexities of the conflicts and many complexities of the region, are advancing the potential of actually escalating the conflicts. In fact, he stated directly in reference to the United States' Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Bryza, that his "contradicting statements arouse tension in the conflict zones. American diplomacy neglects historical realities."[6] The escalation of conflict is, quite obviously, no longer a prospect or matter of question; it is now our reality.

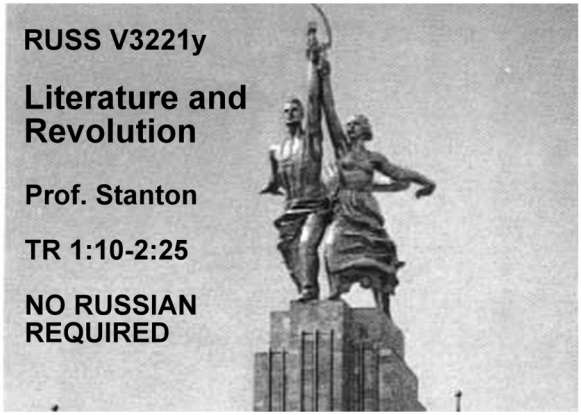
So who are these contrived "third parties"? Well, Russia, as mentioned above, for starters. This is perhaps of primary importance now, considering the current circumstances. Also, of course, the United States is included in this. The Georgian Orthodox Patriarch Ilia II must too take some responsibility for the impact of several of his more controversial statements. Ilia maintains a position as one of the most important and influential quasi-political figures in Georgia. And disappointingly, I might also include certain historians here as one of the fraudulent third parties involved. History has been grossly politicized in Georgia's conflicts. Here I am reminded of a quote by British historian Eric Hobsbawm who once suggested that "historians are to nationalist politicians what poppy growers are to heroin dealers."[7] With the exceedingly ethno-nationalist-fueled and politicized nature of Georgia's wars, such a description seems fitting.

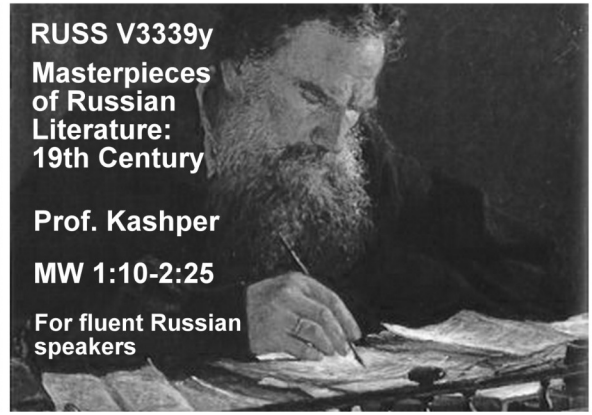
It would be foolish to say in any declaratory way "who" or "what" is most responsible for the war of this past August—a war that is only the most recent escalation in a series of post-Soviet conflicts that continue to plague the peoples of Georgia and the Caucasus region. Was it the fault of Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili for seeking to reclaim power over lost territory, banking on support from allies who would not come? Or was it the fault of the government of the United States for any number of mistakes made regarding both Russia and Georgia? Vladimir Putin, who presumably still runs Russia, may be to blame here; or perhaps the *new* Russian President Dmitry Medvedev was looking to make a proclamation on behalf of himself or his country. The international community certainly failed diplomatically to resolve this most recent conflict before the start of the war, having previously left Georgia's two conflicts "frozen," in positions of fragile stalemate, yet still within a struggling Georgia for a period of roughly 15 to 20 years. Thoughtlessly, the international community has continuously supported territorial integrity as a geopolitical catchphrase in the case of Georgia, without ever actually doing anything substantive to rectify and reconcile its broken statehood.

Ultimately, in light of the misery of this past August, those who might try to defend measures which have led to acts of violent exchange should probably now heed the cautious words of the great humanist and theologian Desiderius Erasmus, who famously observed: *scarcely is there any peace so unjust that it is not better than even the fairest war.* In times of tension, regrettably, this is not always clear.

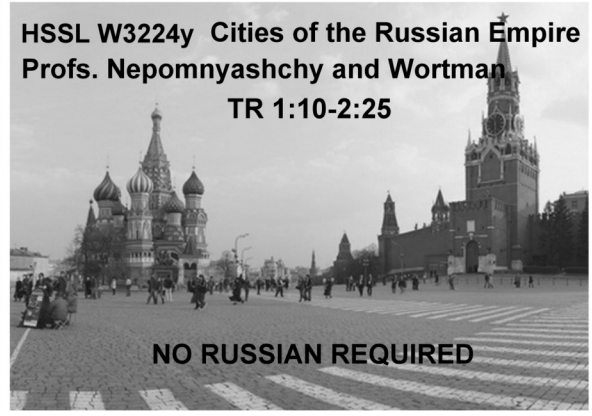
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Prerequisites: Native or near-native knowledge of Russian and permission of the instructor.

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Двуязычие на Украине, pp 38-40

Endnotes

[1] Площадь в Киеве, где сотни тысяч людей в ноябре-декабре 2005 года протестовали против фальсификации результатов президентских выборов

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[3] Zurcher 89.

[4] This summer was the first time in several years that Russia had been recognized as a second party in a conflict of the Caucasus (i.e. the Russo-Georgian conflict). Previously, wars have been referred to—if in name only—as conflicts sans Russia (e.g. Georgia-Abkhaz conflict, Georgian-Ossetian conflict). During these conflicts, the Russian military acted as "third-party" peacekeepers.

[5] The U.S. government gives a tremendous amount of economic and military aid to many countries which taxpayers might suspect. As of 2005, the Sudan was receiving far more in both categories than Georgia. And warring countries as well—both Armenia and Azerbaijan receive an equal amount of military aid. This is all available for public viewing on our government's census website: <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/foreign_commerce_aid/foreign_aid.html>.

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