the birch

a journal of Slavic culture, literature and politics

Columbia University • Spring 2005



poetry & prose | photography | literary criticism | culture & politics

EDITOR'S NOTE

To recycle a phrase that I can remember saying during my fifth grade science experiment on photosynthesis: It's funny to watch things grow.

When I came up with the idea for this journal last fall, I didn't quite imagine it as the fifty-two pages of text, lines, and pictures that you have before your eyes today. In my mind, it was something more enigmatic—some kind of delightful and pleasing thing that I would love to flip through on a rainy day in my dorm room.

I soon realized that the logistics associated with my idea were not as pleasurable and mysterious as I had thought. Instead of basking in the marvelous and moving worlds of Russian literature, I found myself looking for a staff, trying to figure out where I should place a bunch of commas, checking out the *MLA Style Manual* from the library, barraging the board with e-mails and worrying about page numbers, word counts and, worst of all, money. Leo Tolstoy said, "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time," and after almost five months of planning and doing, I can certainly affirm those wise words.

Nevertheless, before sitting down to write this editor's note, I spent a few minutes examining and thinking about the cover photograph of this inaugural issue, and in some way, the fanciful beginnings of the journal came back in all their glory. The photograph is of a Russian woman sitting outside an apartment complex in Brighton Beach. She is one-hundred years old. When Elena Lagoutova took the photograph, the *babushki* sitting outside the complex gushed over her and spoke a mile a minute. This one woman, however, was silent—she simply smiled. In some way, this photograph represents what I hope for with this journal—it is just as much about Russian politics and literature as it is about the stories and challenges behind the faces that make up Russia and the Russian émigré community. If we only knew the one-hundred year long story behind those eyes.

Thank you to everyone who made this endeavor possible. You have helped create a journal that will endow the undergraduate Slavic community at Columbia with its own unique voice, one which will hopefully last for a good number of years to come. All the students on the board have worked extremely hard to make sure every last page of the journal is thought-provoking and interesting, if not even a little bit inspiring. Enjoy.

—Paul Sonne

cover photograph by Elena Lagoutova

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UPCOMING EVENTS

hosted by
Columbia Russian International Association and the Barnard Russian Cultural Association

April 14 (8pm):
Movie Night, Brother (Брат)
Director: Alexei Balabanov
Hamilton Hall

April 28 (8pm): Movie Night, I Step through Moscow
(Я шагаю по Москве)
Director: Georgiy Danelia
Hamilton Hall

April 22 (8pm): Romances: Love ballads and poetry
Sulzberger Parlor

CREATIVITY

Remembrances

monica finley

Each day before dawn, Larisa Alexandrovna stuffs sturdy, blunt feet into blue sandals and clutches a penguin-print robe to her shoulders (dawn doesn't wash the stained concrete towers before 9 a.m. now), and flicking on a single light, she shuffles to the kitchen. She pours crushed grains into a small pot of water over the gas flame, securing a mismatched lid over the simmering gruel (kasha is the unabashed winner of the morning breakfast relay). The cracked china indifferently accepts the generous avalanche, and silently bears the weight of the solid mash (I'm tempted to call it oatmeal, but that doesn't do it justice). And this is when I enter the room, bleary-eyed, wincing at the overhead light, and Larisa Alexandrovna adjusts my chair in front of the little kitchen table (a table set right in the kitchen makes the food taste better). She fills the chipped blue mug to the brim with kakao—a heaping spoonful of cocoa powder, sugar, and steaming milk (no, it's not called hot chocolate; they have another word for that). "Esh', esh' na zdorove, dorogaya," she says forcefully, then she pushes back wisps of home-curled hair and shuffles back to her bedroom, closes the door, and goes back to sleep.

A homeless man lives on Nalichnaya Ulitsa, a man with bulges of filthy clothing pouring forth from a rope belt, a man who wears a torn rucksack, a man who sometimes stands on the side of Nalichnaya and urinates on the passing cars which zoom past, drivers' teeth gritted shut. Larisa (naively? cluelessly? confidently? optimistically?) repeats, every day, that there are no homeless people on Vasilievsky Island, although I tell her often of this street-worn itinerant. On weekdays, he slumps against the light post to the side of the sidewalk, spreads a display of dirty glass bottles on a plywood plank on the burnt grass, and sits, patiently watching people pass with vague interest. Sometimes the rucksack alone curls up next to the bottles, and the man moves down the sidewalk to draw cryptic chalk circles and Greek letters on the sidewalk, which passers-by step around and glance down at with a mixture of curiosity and disgust. One day, the man gone but the empty bottles a monument to his existence, a mother grips her young daughter firmly by the hand and they warily approach the display. She reaches down, dips a slender finger into the neck of a bottle and removes a coin, urging her daughter to do the same. The pair collects several rubles before glancing around nervously and hurrying into the vestibule of their building. Later that day, the entire display is gone. I wonder whether Larisa Alexandrovna would believe me if I told her this, but finally decide not to say anything.

I come home one day in mid-October, and something is different. Oh, here it is, it's the couch. Without warning, a new couch and armchair have appeared in the living room to replace the worn-out predecessors, which were residents of this home for more than 20 years. Well, the green faux-fur throw is still here (there's a red one in my room too), and the hand-made doggie pillow, and the neat stained carpet, but the poor old guys are gone. "What happened today?" I ask, as the new couch and chair have appeared wholly without warning in the living room. "Well, I'll tell you," Larisa says, proudly looking at her new children. "I went with Nina to the furniture store, and she said, 'You've had that couch and chair for 20 years! You should buy a new one!' So I looked around and said, 'You know what, Nina? I'm not leaving without these!' And so I bought them, and they arrived the very same day!" We finger the crushed velvet fabric with satisfaction. "Yes, very pretty," I respond. I feel somewhat guilty, because they remind me of pieces culled from the waiting room of the Sizzler in the early 90s. Pastel seascape crushed velvet. *But how did they get here?* We live on the eighth floor after all, and the only elevator is about four by three feet. She throws her hands up exasperatedly. "I paid two nice young men 550 rubles to carry them upstairs. I mean, what other options did I have?" Considering that Larisa Alexandrovna makes less than thirty rubles per hour as a retired speech therapist, I'm touched that she was willing to fork over 550 rubles to get a couch upstairs. But her simple explanation aptly

describes the situation…what other options did she have? "Congratulations," I smile, and the new residents quickly become part of the fabric of my own life as well.

Well, this is strange. Bizarre, even. By late-October, I can safely surmise that Larisa has left me home alone less than three times. And yet, on this mild and damp autumn morning in Saint Petersburg, she's gone. There's a quick note jotted next to the sugar bowl: "Monica! Reheat the blini, take smetana from the fridge, there's jam there too. Boil water, there's already Nescafe in the cup. I'll be home later! –Larisa." After a struggle with the gas stove, I sit down to breakfast alone in the apartment, gazing through the window at a long-winded construction site. I'm meeting Becky at the Hermitage in two hours…and with a start, I realize: finally, an opportunity to wear the forbidden shoes! The cheap canvas flats that I smuggled in my suitcase from the USA and stuffed in the back of my closet will finally see the light of day! Rushing through breakfast, I quickly pull on a skirt, tights, and a sweater, jot a quick note to Larisa, and hurry downstairs. My feet are blissfully free of heavy boots and cotton socks, acutely aware of the rough pavement under my happily unsupported heels. Skipping slightly, I trot off down Nakhimova Ulitsa…straight into Larisa Aleksandrovna. "Monica! Where are you going?" She smiles suspiciously. "Just to the Hermitage with Becky, but I'll be home for dinner…" I try to sidle away, excusing myself for rushing off so quickly. She looks down at my feet with horror. "What are you thinking? Those are slippers!" She squawks in a horrified tone. "Well I thought they'd be ok to wear today… it's pretty warm out…" She shakes her head decisively. "It's a good thing I saw you. You could catch your death wearing shoes like that. What could have happened if I hadn't seen you? I don't want to think about the consequences!" Gripping my elbow lightly, with a final admonishment about the dangers of flimsy shoes in wintertime and the ensuing possibility of freezing my innards, we march back to apartment 82. Only after I change back into the thick black leather boots under Larisa's watchful eye does she allow me to set off again for the Hermitage, and this time, there is no skipping.



Katerina Vorotova

Утро

катерина воротова

Старческая дрожь охватила мою руку поутру. Я поднял стакан с колышущейся водой к губам и заметил мутные очки вдали на белеющей салфетке. Голубой стежок крестом по краю белой юбки ребенка всплыл в моей памяти как подводная лодка, пока пальцы дотягивались до дужки очков. Не понравилось это мне.

...Пошел грибной дождик во второй половине дня, когда я уже отдалился на семь кварталов от дома. Васильич приближался, опираясь на трость. Его красный огромный нос с крупными порами приблизился ко мне. Треснутая кожа вокруг волосатых ноздрей меня насторожила.

“Чего в дождь на улице-то делаешь?” пробормотал Васильич и подозрительно кашлянул, не закрывая скосившийся налево рот.

“Нужно было дома остаться”—подумал я.

Васильич о чем-то рассказывал, брызгая слюной. Капля села мне на губу, как муха на таз с вареньем.

“Облизнуть или вытереть?”—подумал я. “Если вытру, то Васильич заметит, что случайно плюнул на меня, взволнуется, заизвиняется и еще только быстрее начнет палить какую нибудь ерунду, да еще и больше наплюет на меня.” Решил облизнуть как будто сухую губу и продолжал слушать его бред.

Наконец, мне надоело быть жертвой его брызжущего рта, и я попрощался с ним. Опять заметил его нос, на этот раз исторгающий соплю, показывающуюся из-за перепонки между ноздрями. Она плыла медленно и плавно, как лебедь, точнее как утенок, и вскоре зарылась в густом лесу суровых усов.

Я пошел прочь и услышал сморкание старика позади. “Блин малина, с чего ж я вдруг облизнул-то? Какая мне разница, будет ему стыдно или нет!”

Дождик прошел, вышло солнце и заблистало на лужах в парке. Я не успел присесть, как почувствовал жар и щекотание в носу. “Гад!” подумал я. “Ведь он мне нарочно свой грипп передал. Вот уж подарок!”

Я просидел с подобными мыслями до пяти часов вечера, пока не заметил группу женщин. Они передвигались быстро, но беззвучно. У них не было ног, только длинные цветные юбки.

Женщины подошли ко мне. Дитя на руках одной из них, одетое в белое, но грязное платье с вышитыми голубыми крестиками, походило на пугало. Голова была непропорционально маленькая, да еще и бровастая. Эти брови мешали мне жить, как незахлопывающаяся форточка на кухне, приносящая сквозняк. Я взял существо от матери и посадил на колено. Рассказывая о государственных проблемах и надеясь, что отвлек женщин, я качал беззубого, как Васильич, ребенка, вызывая его радость, и брызги моей речи, как по команде, оказались на языке смеющегося маленького человека. Женщины меня окружили, и я вручил им моего спасителя.

“Дело сделано.” Я знал, что за это останусь без кошелька, но зато я избавился от Васильичина гриппа.

...Расправляя дужки и надевая очки, я напрямик направился в кухню и запер на шпингалет хлопающую на ветру форточку. “И это сделано”—подумал я и сел за завтрак.

Siostra, sister

katarzyna kozanecka

My sister prays in English.
Curses in English. Dreams in English.
For her, *Polska* is Poland;
Warszawa, Warsaw.
In the mornings when she rises
from her bed, my sister leaves
Polish words on her pillow
like chemo patients leave
clumps of hair. Soon I fear
I'll have to translate even her goodbyes.

I mount a vigil to save her,
to take the consonants she mangles
and make them fit for Polish ears.
I trail her tongue.
Its stuttering over idioms
mars conversations. I whisper,
Say it this way. Roll the *r*. Hiss the *sz*.
To her gagging I reply,
Open the vowels for air.

I approach from other fronts: I draw
maps of *Warszawa* on napkins,
earmark gardens where kings took sun
and baths, a low wide bridge thrown
like a fisherman's net over the *Wisla*.
On the outskirts of the city,
I tuck in women picking mushrooms.
But my sister never finds them—
she gives her Polish lunches
to pigeons or beggars.



Katerina Vorotova



Katerina Vorotova

Polish Jokes: Scenes From a Life

julia kite

My only memory of my Polish Catholic grandfather is a dance. When I was eight, he came from Brooklyn to visit us in my hometown, the second-biggest city in Poland—Chicago, Illinois.

"It was a mistake," my mother groaned, years later. "He should have never come here and scared you, Maddy. He only did it because he knew I would take care of him, and he couldn't be bothered to take care of himself." She was referring to the rapidly-spreading foot infection Dziadziu had brought along with him from Brooklyn, which landed him in our local hospital with the threat of amputation. Of course, I thought, Mom couldn't have had anything against a young girl meeting a grandfather who had been separated from her by multiple states, a few social classes, and a religion. I had grown up in Chicago surrounded by my father's massive extended Jewish family; surely nothing was wrong with treating a girl to the other side of her heritage.

But back in 1990, I hadn't been thinking of class conflict or what the Vatican and the Lubavitcher Rebbe would think about the child born to one Catholic and one Jewish parent when my mother, grandfather, and I strolled up Milwaukee Avenue. I was thinking of something slightly more elusive: what's carried in the blood. Everyone always told me I looked like my mother, and in my eyes she resembled her father, but when I peered into reflective shop windows I couldn't see the slightest connection between the old man and myself.

After a few hours, stuffed with pirogi and with my ears buzzing from incessant polka music, I began to wilt in the August heat. "We should head back to the car, Dad," I remember my mother suggesting, brushing my damp black hair flat against the crown of my head.

"What? I haven't gotten a dance yet!"

"Dad, she's really tired."

Dziadziu clumsily knelt down to my level, steadying himself against the bleachers. I was too young to have recognized the gait of an alcoholic and too grumpy to have cared.

"Madeline, Maja dear, you're not going to dance with me?"

In three years time, my grandfather would be braindead following a tumble down the stairs of his Brooklyn home, and four years later he would be actually dead. Maybe I would have been more enthusiastic back in 1990 if I had known this would be the basis for my only recollection of the man who was Walter Cygan.

"Go on, Maddy," my mother conceded. In my red-and-white summer dress, I clumsily skipped along to a clarinet polka, inadvertently stomping on my grandfather's sneakers now and again. I barely knew this old man, I remind myself now. My mother told me what to call him and I obliged. But who was he? A relic from the past my mother had willingly rejected for the sake of marrying up, marrying Midwestern, and marrying Jewish. Marrying into a group of stable in-laws, a family branch with no pesky history of alcoholism, inability to keep jobs, and sometimes, from what I could catch from the heated conversations she had with her brother, just plain stupidity. And, thanks to that decision, I came into being. I might as well honor the sacrifice and quit clinging to her belt loops, pestering her for the keys to whatever she had locked away in Brooklyn in 1979.

So I logged the Taste of Polonia into my short history, treated it like a vacation from my life as a middle-class Jewish girl. Some kids in my class had been to Disney Land or Door County—I had gone to Milwaukee Avenue and forgotten to take photos. Ever the good daughter, I absorbed my mother's resilience, what I would later call her Brooklyn legacy. I went to Hebrew school, but when my classmates jeered that I wasn't a real Jew because my mother had been born Catholic, I told them to go to hell and was promptly chastised for being sacrilegious in temple.

But by high school, I became militant. Half a heritage wasn't enough. It was a miracle that the school

bookstore bought back my European history textbook with the degree of geographic mutilation I had inflicted upon it: every map that named a town on the Baltic coast Danzig, I altered to read Gdansk. Breslau showed up less frequently, but it, too, felt the slash from my pen and was returned to its rightful name of Wroclaw. Posen? Poznan. And the most famous place in twentieth century Polish history received extra-special treatment. After all, digging back some decades, I could call it home.

I had always known my mother's family hailed from some backwater outside Krakow. In the summer of 2001, the money my parents had deposited year after year with the Jewish United Fund was going to finally pay off in terms of a subsidized trip to Israel with a convenient three days in Poland. I wanted a town, I wanted a field, I wanted a dilapidated little shack to call my own.

"Mom?" I piped up, forefinger hovering above the Carpathian Mountains, drinking in the garbled consonants of each place-name: Szczekociny, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Zakopane, Bielsko-Biala. "Where, exactly, was your family from?"

Without even looking up from her knitting, she sighed, almost apologetically, "Oswiecim."

No history book ever said Oswiecim because everyone knew the town by its German name: Auschwitz.

"But were they still there when—"

"I don't know."

It's a joke, I thought. This has got to be a goddamned joke. A half-Jewish Polish girl traces her non-Jewish family back to Auschwitz. As if both sides of my heritage didn't already have enough of a legacy of being persecuted, partitioned, and plundered, I couldn't even go back to anything alive and thriving. Not like it mattered—the threat of violence in Israel meant the trip was cancelled. I found myself surprisingly undisappointed. Who needed to spend a month with the Jewish-American Princesses and their ironed-straight, meticulously highlighted hair, their fake-baked tans, the high-pitched nasal whine that was the signature of every spoiled girl on Chicago's north side? "You *need* to go to Israel. It's your *home*," the girls at my temple pestered me while whispering among themselves about my "lesbian haircut" and no-name clothing.

"And be a tourist in a war zone? No thanks. I'm not going to pretend everything's fine when random people are getting blown up in cafes and people on both sides are suffering." Nah, Israel was not, would not, be my home. Who from my family ever lived or died there? Who needed to? Chicago's my home. New York was my mother's. And before both my parents, my family wandered around the Baltic. *That's* home. The girls could keep their designer handbags and pedigree status. I wasn't a Rosenblatt, a Goldstein, a Greenberg. No one could look at a class roster and immediately pick me out as the Jewish girl. After all, I wasn't gold or green or rosy, I was, on my mother's side, a Cygan. Gypsy, in Polish. Not that I was ashamed of being Jewish—I loved the foreign sound of Hebrew in my mouth, and I loved the liberality of my Reform sect. Hell, my rabbi had officiated at the civil union of two men, which, in my teenage far-left mindset, was just about the coolest thing any clergyman could do. I was just ashamed of having anything in common with girls who spent more on one handbag than I did on a year's worth of clothes. I relished the thought of being a mutt. For eighteen years I had given Chicago free reign over my identity. It was time to look East, not to Jerusalem or even Krakow, but to Brooklyn, New York.

I got my kicks on Thursday nights down the Polish National Home in Brooklyn. Without even so much as an audition, I joined the dance company.

We were no Radio City kickline; our physicalities testified to centuries of invasion and intermarriage in the one place, but one thing we had in common: Poland. Our dancers ran the gamut: Laura and Maciek were *Mazury*, their long limbs accustomed to the flowing gallops that characterized the dances of their region. Tiny Martyna, who had an awkward, pained face but the grace of a professional, came from the lowlands of Kaszuby where every generation of women up to her had looked out, bored, at the surface of the Baltic Sea, waiting for any ship to arrive. I inhabited the highly undesirable middle ground: thin as the handles of the highland axes nailed to one wall of the studio, but without the height to make much of it. Tent-like in my practice uniform, I often stumbled where I should have skipped, wobbled where I should have glided sylph-

like across the stage under lengths of brocade or satin. I chalked it up to inexperience. It will get better, I assured myself, as if clumsiness were some sort of long-term illness.

I wonder when most of them figured it out. After all, at our annual Christmas shows, I sang along with the best of them: *Glawr-ya, glawr-ya, GLAAAAWR-YA, een excelsis day-ay-o*. But maybe my pronunciation was off—a clue that while the rest of them had been sitting in mass, I had been sleeping late on Sunday mornings. Maybe someone noticed that I just happened to miss rehearsal on Yom Kippur. Or maybe it happened when I first wrote my name on a sign-up sheet and the hyphen made me suspicious: Madeline Cygan-Gordon.

Or maybe it was just the looks.

Polish girls weren't supposed to be dark. The men, no problem, but a room full of my fellow dancers proved that the Polish girl should possess a yard of golden-blonde hair - natural or otherwise—and either blue or green eyes. A little variation was permissible in one of the features, but in the lineup, I stood out for my ability to literally blend into the woodwork. "Damn, Polish girls are *hot*," I had overheard one man comment to his friend during our dance at Manhattan's Pulaski Day Parade. He had meant the blonde-blue-busty Polish girls. Those who looked like me were foils to make the other girls look even more stunning.

"Are you *Goralka*?" Martyna asked me one night. *Goralka*: A highland woman from the Carpathians in the south. She has her own dialect, her own accent, her own corner of Polish culture. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, and quick to age. "Is many *Goral* in Chicago," she added.

"Nah," I replied. "My family's from round about Oswiecim."

No one asked again.

This story is an excerpt from a larger novel which is currently a work in progress.



Katerina Vorotova



Elena Lagoutova

Вчера

анна койфман

Хорошо тихо сидеть,
слушать тоску,
играть с пустотой.
Хорошо быть одной,
без причины, дышать
и бросать мысли в пыль.
Долго ждать, каждый час
долго помнить шаги—
ваша память бесшумная
и смирная тень.
Я забыла начало,
смотрю в дверь как
в портрет—ищу
тайну, которую художник
старался раскрыть.
Все прошло, все
пройдет и в конце
нет момента,
где смогут сидеть,
тосковать, ждать
начала, искать,
пить и думать
о вас—все идет.



Katerina Vorotova

Chapter 1 mark krotov

Peter Belovski quietly marched through the city on his last day. He had known for months that this date would be his final opportunity to spend time in his place of residence of sixteen years, but he had largely ignored the thought until absolutely necessary. Soon, he would meet his friends for a last supper of sorts (as he was fully aware that retaining connections would be both pointless and futile), but, on this balmy evening, he wanted a few moments to experience his city in the way that he had lived it—by himself.

Peter lived in a city that lacked a name and did not need one. There were hundreds of them scattered across thousands of square miles—cities that had once shared nothing, but that now seemed to share too much. Communism had certainly failed, but its legacy—mental, political, and, in this particular instance, psychological and architectural, had remained forceful. Peter did not ponder the impact that foreign invasions had had on his country at this moment; rather, he looked around and saw something for which he would never feel nostalgic.

He was a fairly positive-thinking individual, but even he could not avoid the realization that this was very much a dead city. If not dead, then it was certainly dying. His vision encompassed three central features: drunks, huddled old women, and prostitutes. Of course, he had not chosen the legendary boulevards for his walk. He decided that he wanted to depart with a memory of reality. He wanted to be grounded in what he lived, so that he could never be compelled to come back. On his own terms, it had been a fairly decent life; but by any other measure, it was a life of shit, and his opportunity for escape would not be feared or avoided. Nevertheless, he was leaving sixteen years and thousands of memories behind, and this seemed like the perfect evening to recapture a few.

In the glory days of the nameless Eastern European city, the street upon which Peter walked had been all things to all people. The meat, fish, and vegetable vendors had gathered here early in the morning, comparing goods, making secret deals, and figuring out new ways to milk customers of their money (in this frontier town, communism and capitalism had always mixed rather organically). The bedraggled book vendors, with wispy gray beards and worn black hats, made no effort to promote their goods. Some stood, but most sat on the stone fences, and all were utterly disinterested in the proceedings until some very real money appeared in front of their faces. They sold everything, anything, and nothing, but mostly they sat.

The street had seen its share of political rallies, as well. Although impromptu calls for change and revolution were later replaced by much more forced calls for eternal change and a continuous revolution, there had once been a great public spirit on the street. Every speech made was radical and heavy, and every orator knew that in this venue, subtlety and humbleness were curses. Mostly, people flocked to the market, and not to the political rallies, but through it all, the street had retained a life force. It was not alive, but it was palpable. That, Peter could not help thinking, was then.

Now was a different situation. It was not the drunks, old women, and prostitutes that created such a different setting. Rather, it was the depressingly bedraggled nature of the entire place. Certainly, the steamy dusk light that peered through the thick opacity of the smog that now seemed inescapable in Eastern Europe did not beautify the street, which was already dark, due to the anonymous blocks of thin glass and collapsing steel that loomed threateningly over thousands of similar streets in at least three continents. There seemed to be a waterline that paralleled the street a few stories above that divided the buildings near it into pre and post (in this country, temporal allusions only referred to one regime).

As Peter walked, he could not decide which he found to be more brutally depressing: the old stone and terra-cotta department stores—once so confident in their glory and commercial prowess—that now sat in total disrepair and in direct proximity to collapse, or the so-called modernist buildings that had never had an opportunity to be glorious, whose job it was to reinforce the frighteningly universal mantra of 'function over form.' It was now hard to tell what function they performed, and the form was decidedly unappealing, so he

concluded that he felt sorry for the newer buildings—the ones that had been deprived of architectural beauty from their first cornerstones.

This was going to be a long night, Peter realized, so he stepped into a back alley to have a smoke. He had certainly not stepped away from the street due to disrespect. He simply wanted a quiet moment without disturbances from the streetwalkers. As he lit up his Camels, a luxury that he had decided to bestow upon himself as a going-away present, he recalled the article that he had read in some local lifestyle magazine. It mentioned that smoking was frowned upon in the United States, and that people were regularly kicked out of many different types of venues simply for smoking. Peter found this to be absurd, but he quickly realized that it would be doubtful that anyone would confront him about his habits, so he remained calm about the possibility of a cigarette-free zone.

He looked around the alley and realized that it was not an alley at all. The street upon which Peter had walked, along with the majority of the neighboring area, had been built in the late nineteenth century. At that time, the determination of a street's width was not a significant factor in construction. As long as it fit a couple of people and a horse-drawn carriage, there was no use fussing over such minute matters. At the beginning of the post-communist era, however, the automobile had been reintroduced into virtually every corner of this once delicate city. Its white gloves had been ripped over time, and they were now covered with thick gray soot. To be fair, it was only one soot replaced by another one, that of downtown factory buildings producing unneeded products in beautiful inefficiency replaced by cheap cars from the eastern side of Europe and an occasional demonstration of solitary wealth, in the form of an Audi with fake police lights.

The very street that had fit in so beautifully could no longer handle these new invaders—with their throbbing mufflers and shredded chrome. So, as had been common during the regime, no improvement or alternative had been proposed. The street simply lay dormant and ignored, and it had attained such a high level of unimportance that it now resembled an alleyway, with trash scattered throughout the old cobblestones and linens (that Peter rightly assumed would never get clean with this kind of air) hanging lazily on torn lines between the buildings. This street intrigued Peter, not only because he had never noticed it on his many walks, but because it quietly said everything that needed to be said about himself, his country, and the reason for his impending departure. He decided that a second cigarette could do no harm, and he quietly puffed away, wondering how much he had been destroyed by this place.

The sounds of traffic had never enthused Peter, so it was with great reluctance that he followed the alley to the main square of the nameless Eastern European city. A square that had once seen all kinds of activity was now reduced to nothing more than a McDonald's and thousands and thousands of cars, interacting mostly through horns, hand gestures, and occasional verbal exclamations from inside them. The square used to be big. A product of the massive architectural expansion that dominated the first years of the regime, it had been built as a symbol rather than a functional building block of the city. This was very much the era prior to 'function over form,' when the most important men in power insisted that their political glory be imparted through architecture.

The government architects, once called the 'city's willing executioners' by a dissident architectural magazine, saw it as their duty to replace the more organic city layout that had evolved over hundreds of years. They would make statements in granite and marble and concrete. They would build with only perpendicular lines and vertical ambitions and horizontal expanses. They would construct grand stories of glory with obelisks and acropolises. While the execution and realization produced horrors on all levels, the ambition was certainly present. Peter had once learned (in a clandestine manner while the regime was still alive and threatening) about the old city that had been demolished to make way for the Great Square.

The party leader had wanted a monument that would transcend beauty—it would be epic, like Albert Speer's unbuilt Great Hall, but unlike Speer, the leader insisted that these buildings would be eternal. They would never be subjected to ruin or defacement. They would be untouched and unwavering in their presentation of the leader's divinity. They would sit on this Earth after it was all over. Peter recalled what he had been told in secrecy—what had been torn down for the Great Square—old parks and quiet houses, streets

that wove along tranquil hills, and the peaceful hustle and bustle that was the center of life in the old town. Now, as he looked around, he smiled to himself at the beautiful twist of fate. No, the old town had not been resurrected and the bombastic monumental structures had not been restored, but what had replaced them was far worse—it was smallness. It was a smallness that could not have existed under communism, and it was not necessarily an improvement on the bigness, but it was beautiful, nonetheless.

Peter was more poetic than political (although he would never admit to being either) so he gazed upon the square with a ferocious sense of almost literary irony. The square, built to honor and deify leaders that sought nothing more than absolute size, was papered over with garish billboards and various indications of a profound cheapness. This place no longer aimed for anything beyond the basest, as evidenced by the scattering of sex shops on the west side of the plaza, and the neo-Nazi graffiti that seemed to poke through the most unassuming of walls, windows, and doors. Peter was not a fan of the movement, but all of it, all of it meant that smallness had triumphed over bigness.

Epic dreams were confirmed as nothing but the bullshit that they always were. His musings were interrupted by the nearby screeching of tires, the honking of horns, and the collision between two cars that would never be able to recover from this minor fender bender. It was probably for the better, Peter thought. He looked around again, and saw that while the place was small on a literary or perhaps social scale, it was still overwhelming in its hugeness. The four enormous skyscrapers, designed with burdensome neo-Gothic brushstrokes, still loomed over the square, which was really a large concrete plaza with a scattering of benches and a pedestal that had, for ten years now, lacked a monument. The statue's castration was humorous, but it did nothing to reduce the feeling that even in the face of so much change, this place still managed to hold a dominant power. Peter loved it.

This story is the first chapter of a larger novel which Krotov is currently writing.



Katerina Vorotova

The War Story

katarzyna kozanecka

We bathed in milk, Grandmother says, and sets the small clock near my plate. Watch the time so you're not late for school.

I'm visiting Poland's oldest city. Ptolemy the Greek mentioned it by name in his Geography of the World. It is American mid-winter break, but here the schools are open. I go one day as an experiment and the kids think I'm there to stay forever. I go back the next day, pretending I think so, too.

Mornings, Grandmother is a bard. She tells stories while she paves my bread with butter, slabs of cheese. She is blind like Homer, like Borges, but when I try to scrape the butter off, she notices, stops the story. I want to hear it so I bear with the butter. She picks it up again.

Grandmother also gives me an apple every day. I've no room for them. The days are short here and dinner is at three. At school they don't have lunch periods, only ten-minute breaks during which I cannot eat because I talk. Apples collect under my bed. I know she will find them soon, though she is blind like Homer, like Borges.

Grandmother says Germans took Grandfather Julian away. They needed his back and hands on their farm. Once he stole eggs from under warm hens; hid them in his bed under a blanket; forgot about them; slept. Later, the German housewife, peeling sheets off beds, found shells splintered like ice in yolk rivers. She figured it out. The hens had roosted in Julian's bedroom. She closed the window to prevent a repeat.

This was before we bathed in milk, Grandmother says, before the war ended and the Germans ran away without their cows. Who was supposed to drink all that milk? she asks. The Russians, I offer, but she's not thinking of the Russians. She's thinking of Quixote, who was not blind, who saw more than existed, who saw giant armed monsters where windmills stood. She's thinking of Grandfather. Julian was twelve, she says, when Germans took him in a truck. On the farm, Julian carried bags of grain between mill and road. He liked to hug the mill. It was an orphan like himself.

One windy day, he stood in the wrong spot, Grandmother says, and one of the vanes caught Julian by his jacket-hood. Before the cloth tore, he wrapped his arms and legs around the vane, as if he'd been climbing a tree and had stopped. He thought throughout the first full rotation. During the second, he hollered, eyes closed to the flat gray country, the poplar trees like sentinels on the horizon. The laborers came. Leaning on shovels, they watched the boy on the ferris wheel that was not a ferris wheel. The next time the vane approached the ground, Julian let go. The men caught him, one limb each. The housewife scolded him; prodded him in the backside with her boot; confided to her stove that if left alone, Poles would bathe in milk instead of drinking it. The next day, Julian stole the eggs, says Grandmother.



Katerina Vorotova



Monica Finley

Stormy Love, Predestination and Pechorin the Sailor

A Look at Lermontov and the Literary Digression

Paul Sonne

CRITICAL ESSAY

The literary digression is the key to unlocking some of nineteenth century Russian literature's finest moments. From Anna Karenina's "dirty ice cream" psychosis, to Grushenka's story of the onion in *Brothers Karamazov*, to Raskolnikov's dream sequences in *Crime and Punishment*, we find in nineteenth century Russian classics the tendency for authors to weave crucial thematic elements into seemingly aberrant literary digressions. These literary digressions offer a space for the author to advance the narrative's particular characterizations or motifs in a more abstract manner. In Mikhail Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time*, Pechorin, the novel's atypical protagonist, articulates a literary digression that speaks to his own character traits and to overarching motifs in the narrative. More specifically, the digression brings to bear both Pechorin's inability to accept calm love and the narrative's recurring theme of predestination.

In the digression, which occurs at the end of the "Princess Mary" tale, Lermontov uses sea and storm imagery to represent the novel's larger themes. After he repudiates any love for Princess Mary, Pechorin departs from the storyline into a soliloquy about his own nature. He likens his life to that of a "sailor born and bred on the deck of a pirate brig," who is "used to storms and battles." The sailor feels "bored and oppressed" when "cast out on the shore." He peers into the horizon of the "misty" sea, yearning for the storms and ships that he has so artfully mastered during his upbringing. He finally sets his eyes upon "the longed-for sail, at first like the wing of a sea-gull, but gradually separating itself from the foam of the breakers."

Pechorin's penchant for the unpredictable "storm" of life and love, coupled with his inability to remain on stable "shore," informs his actions throughout the novel. Pechorin refuses to be cast ashore into what he calls "permanent attachment, a pitiful habit of the heart." He constantly mentions his "insatiable heart" and his "restless fancy" for "life's storm." Like the sailor who grew up among storms, Pechorin only wishes to partake in the tumult (of love); he never desires to settle permanently onto love's peaceful shoreline. This is the very reason Pechorin disdains marriage; he says, "However much I may love a woman, if she lets me feel that I must marry her—farewell to love! My heart turns to stone." Pechorin's soul "knows that without storms, a constantly torrid sun will wither it." The sun metaphorically represents the consistency that Pechorin so passionately evades. He characteristically hurts women because, to him, they are only willing providers of the stormy love he craves; he believes a person should pluck the woman's soul, "and after inhaling one's fill of it, one should throw it away on the road." Thus, in Pechorin's digression, the sailor waits, longing for the "sail" of a ship bouncing in a storm, a sail that shuns the stability of

the shore and the sun.

The image of a ship's "sail" masochistically reveling in the battle of a storm metaphorically characterizes the way Pechorin acts. Lermontov's famous poem "The Sail," published in 1832, eight years before the release of *Hero of Our Time*, illustrates a similar sail. The poem's last couplet reads: "And yet for the storm, it begs, the rebel, / As if in the storm lurked calm and peace!" The poem's "rebellious" sail is like the "rebellious" Pechorin, finding glory in the storm. In both *Hero of Our Time* and "The Sail," Lermontov uses the image of the sun as a symbol of constancy and consistency—feelings that Pechorin and the sail wholeheartedly reject. One line of the poem reads, "The sun's bright rays caress the seas." In juxtaposing this sun to the fighting sail, Lermontov underscores the way the sail (and Pechorin for that matter) shuns the sun's consistency. The sail's imagery and connotations, as highlighted by Pechorin's digression, shed light on Pechorin's complex web of actions in *Hero of Our Time*—in many ways, we find that Pechorin's complicated and often undesirable character stems from his inability to commit to consistency and his desire to brew a storm around his own actions.

Why would Lermontov choose the sail and the storm as images to represent Pechorin and his actions? The sail is the heart of the ship, and without the sail, the ship cannot function; without the sail, the ship cannot gloriously crash through the ocean's waves. In some sense, the sail connotes necessity, and Pechorin's desire for life's storm develops into an unnerving necessity over the course of *A Hero of Our Time*. We begin to wonder why Pechorin keeps acting in such a brutal manner, and a masochistic necessity of sorts becomes the most viable explanation. An indispensible part of the whole that has begun to rebel (i.e. the sail and the ship, respectively), pinpoints this explanation of Pechorin's behavior.

Through the digression, Lermontov points not only to Pechorin's rebellious character, but also to the novel's recurring theme of fate and predestination. In the digression, Pechorin notes how the metaphorical sailor is "born and bred on the deck of a pirate brig"—that is to say, the sailor's birth and breeding, in particular, have caused him to procure an unconventional love for chaos and a hatred for the normalcy of the shore. Pechorin's characterization of the sailor's birth speaks to his tendency to blame his actions on his own birth or childhood. After committing a bad act, Pechorin habitually says, "I am stupidly made." He knows that he repeatedly makes others unhappy, and he says, "Whether it is my upbringing that made me thus or whether God created me so, I don't know." He never entertains the idea that he may actually control his own actions, and instead, he employs predestination, fate and ill birth as explanations for his flaws. The question of who is to blame for Pechorin's actions appears once again in the novel's last chapter, aptly entitled "The Fatalist." Lermontov does not provide a distinctive answer to the dilemma of predestination; instead he seems to invite the reader to judge for himself. The way one reads Pechorin's character influences where he or she ultimately decides to place the blame, and Lermontov seems to encourage the unclear interplay between the way the reader understands Pechorin and the undefined locus of the novel's blame.

What upon first glance may seem like a narrative non sequitur on Pechorin's behalf turns out to be a digression that underscores two main themes in the novel, namely, Pechorin's inability to accept stability and his tendency to attribute his flaws to fate. In the "Author's Introduction," Lermontov suggests that there exists in each of us a little bit of Pechorin. He implores the reader to judge: are Pechorin's desires for stormy relations and his inclination to place blame for his actions upon others not characteristics of all Russians, and indeed all people? It would seem that the answer is an emphatic yes.

Quotations from Hero of Our Time *are from Vladimir Nabokov's translation, published by Ardis in 2002.*

Quotations from "The Sail" are from Irina Zheleznova's translation, published in Mikhail Lermontov: Selected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1976.*

Anti-Sentimentalism from a Sentimental Author

Lyudmila Ulitskaya's *Iskrenne Vash Shurik*

MASHA MAFTER

BOOK REVIEW

Lyudmila Ulitskaya, the darling of middle-aged female Russian émigrés, published her new novel *Iskrenne Vash Shurik* (*Sincerely Yours Shurik*) in 2004, causing quite a furor in a crowd that was expecting a healthy dose of the same nostalgia that permeated her earlier works, such as *Veselye Pokhorony* (*The Funeral Party*). It is fair to say that with her new novel, Ulitskaya has undergone a radical creative transformation, drawing away from the quiet, affectionate irony that formerly epitomized her characterizations and moving towards a pitiless indictment of the entire "Old World" and its values, mores, and traditions.

Moscow in the 1970s is a world in which people are constantly striving to obtain the necessities of life, while attempting to maintain the semblance of human dignity and cultured existence. Shurik, the tireless protagonist of the novel, is always referred to by the diminutive of his full name and seems to fit his moniker perfectly. As a young man he is forever trapped in the shadow of his formidable grandmother and his helpless mother—the former instructs him how to live, the latter keeps him in a state of constant fear for her life and health. As Shurik, at age eighteen, becomes the main breadwinner for his family after his grandmother's death, he enters into a vicious cycle of responsibility that Ulitskaya assures the reader he will never be able to escape. His life is characterized by that Soviet "necessity" which permeates every pore of his existence and turns every imaginable pleasure into a tiresome duty. Even his relations with women turn into obligations, as he compares each of them with his "first and only love," Lilya.

Ulitskaya's previous novels dealt with people who might be termed "pathetic," but the focus was always on their courage, perseverance, optimism, and faith in the face of difficulties. Here, these same qualities are vividly painted—only to be mocked in the end. The sweet nostalgia for "the good old days," when human values prevailed and cultured people managed to maintain their dignity and interest in life under any circumstances, is thoroughly demolished by the last chapter, in which Ulitskaya exposes Shurik's life for what it is—one of endless drudgery for no particular cause, utterly laughable to an outsider. That outsider is Lilya, an old acquaintance who comes to Moscow for a visit after spending twelve years abroad. She remains in his mind the same romantic schoolgirl, but the career woman who is now in her place feels nothing but contempt and pity for his humble way of life. Indeed, the real tragedy of the novel may be Shurik's failure to see Lilya for who she really is.

This is the real crux of the novel: the Soviet *intelligentsia* and their hopes, dreams, and priorities are exposed rather pitilessly, but no viable alternative is offered. Lilya may have gained material wealth, but she lost whatever humanity she once had. The reader partakes in her contempt for



Shurik after 445 pages of drudgery, failure, dashed hopes, endless mundane duties, sex devoid of all pleasure, and words of devotion devoid of all meaning—everything that characterizes his existence and his relationships with those around him. But the reader's sympathies are hardly with Lilya either. She is a far cry from the struggling, persevering, nostalgic immigrant of the sort described in *The Funeral Party.*

This may be the ultimate essence of Ulitskaya's newly-found "anti-sentimentalism"—a world in which none of the characters are worthy of respect or emulation, and the best one can manage is a half-hearted admiration for their dogged perseverance. Whereas in *The Funeral Party,* and in many of her short stories, most of the characters may be described as fundamentally sympathetic, *Iskrenne Vash Shurik* seems to be altogether devoid of any such characters. They sink to new extremes: they are ruled by their desires; they use others shamelessly and don't even notice; they are heartless, hysterical, and weak—they are contemptible. Ulitskaya comes across as a writer who honestly despises her characters, and, far from the ironic affection that characterized her previous novels, her tone has turned almost vicious. If the best, the most educated, the most well-meaning are like this, she seems to say, then where is there hope?

Despite the pessimistic tone, *Iskrenne Vash Shurik* is a highly entertaining read. Ulitskaya's smooth, poetic prose and the twists and turns of the plot carry the reader along effortlessly, making this rather long novel a very manageable proposition for a one-time reading sprint. Indeed, it is difficult to put down, partly because of the tiny hope the reader retains that everything will work out, that all of Shurik's sacrifices will be worth it in the end. Ulitskaya builds it all up to a height of anticipation, and, were it not for the last chapter in which she demolishes everything, this might have been one of her previous works, ending on a suitably ambiguous note. It is in the last chapter that she, as one reviewer put it, "deliberately laughs at her own previous sentimentality."

The melancholy yet hopeful ending to *The Funeral Party,* the grim triumph of "The Queen of Spades," even the come-full-circle sadness of "Orlovy-Sokolovy," all soothe the reader's worries and illuminate the characters in an ultimately positive light—Ulitskaya makes no such allowances in her latest work. There is nothing in it to lift one's spirits or provide renewed faith in the goodness or the courage of humankind. Such altruistic qualities, and many others, are not denied—they are merely demonstrated to be useless. Shurik, well-meaning as he is, does not manage to rescue anyone from the pit into which they are bound to fall. He can cater to all their whims, but he cannot thwart fate. His sacrifices, as all sacrifices in this novel, are shown to be meaningless—in the end, nothing is acquired, despite the high price that the characters pay.

Iskrenne Vash Shurik may be the product of a more mature worldview, or it may be the attempt of a well-known writer to break free from the mold into which she has been placed. The elements of Ulitskaya's writing that have attracted her many readers—her smooth style, vivid characterizations, and imaginative grasp of the world of Russian families—are still present in her latest novel, making it a literary pleasure even as it is a veritable disappointment. In fact, disappointment is a prevailing theme of the novel—Shurik's endless disappointments, Lilya's disappointment in him, the reader's disappointment in the final chapter where Ulitskaya, in the words of another reviewer, "systematically destroys those emotions that she herself generates in the reader." It is in this tension between pleasure and disappointment that her true talent as a self-reflecting writer is revealed. For while taking away the sweet sentimentality of her earlier works, she leaves for the reader a more bitter concoction that, at its core, nevertheless retains the delectable appeal of a finely constructed, sensitively imagined work of fiction.

Canadian Émigrés and the Bildungsroman

The Mixed World of David Bezmozgis's *Natasha*

Ashley Cleek

BOOK REVIEW

In his collection of short stories entitled *Natasha*, David Bezmozgis describes the turbulent transitions from innocence to adolescence to adulthood with a poignancy that sometimes verges on conventionality, but his astute perception of the protagonist's psychological ordeals saves this "short story compilation of a bildungsroman" from going down a beaten literary path.

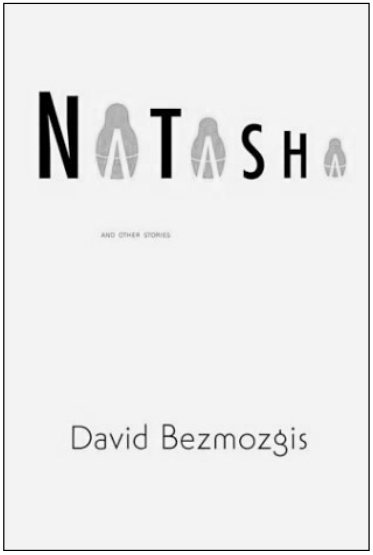
The Bergman family emigrates to Canada from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and many of the basic facts, such as where they live, work, and go to school, are lifted straight from Bezmozgis's own childhood. The parents remain in the background and serve as a reminder of the old ways, and it is through them that the reader views the real struggle of moving to a foreign country. Yet it is Mark, the only child of the two émigrés, whom Bezmozgis establishes from the first story onward as the central, active member of the new Canadian family. Even though he is just entering the first grade when they move to Canada, he is, from the first moment on, the strongest tie that his family has to their new culture.

The stories center around Mark and his coming of age, and must be read in succession in order to perceive the full breadth of his transformation—from ages six to late thirties. Though *Natasha* is not a novel, and thus is not by definition a bildungsroman, the book may be the closest a compilation of short stories can get to achieving bildungsroman status. The reader is able to see the many changes that affect the family. As the head interpreter for his family, any change, development or shift in the family proceeds from Mark. In "Tapka," the first story in the collection, young Mark creates relationships with the neighbors by walking their beloved dog, relationships that his father and mother only attempt to cultivate later on. "Tapka" is also the first stage in the bildungsroman; Mark, for the first time, shoulders responsibility and is held accountable for his transgressions. The personalities of Mark's father and mother come out of their shells in "Roman Berman: Massage Therapist," and it is through their forays into the new world that the reader glimpses a more realistic and disheartening Canada than the one shown through Mark.

Slowly, the rest of the Bergmans' relatives emigrate as well, and Mark, being the first to have learned English and to have gone through the Canadian school system, takes his place at the head of the newly relocated family. The shift from an old, familiar style to a new and puzzling life develops, with regard to Mark, by way of the bildungsroman structure. As in many bildungsromans, the catalyst for the change is a passionate first love. In "Natasha," the title story, Bezmozgis characterizes Natasha, Mark's love interest, with an air of reticence and mystery that speaks to Russia, and to the old life. The story, however, caters to its goal of an adolescent transition almost too markedly. Bezmozgis endows "Natasha" with many simple Russian stereotypes, such as that of "the experienced girl from Moscow."

Because the idea of a bildungsroman is such a

well-established literary form, it becomes imperative for Bezmozgis to provide something new for the reader to interpret. Bezmozgis does this, albeit late in the game, in "Roman Berman: Message Therapist." Although it does have a few unique moments, which center around the coming together of Jewish families and the mentioning of some Russian superstitions, on the whole, the collection is full of all the same struggles, setbacks, and clichés that characterize nearly every emigrant story.



While the book is named after the middle story, "Natasha," the parallel stories of two boxers ("The Second Strongest Man" and "Choynski") seem the most captivating. In "The Second Strongest Man," a famous boxer, who is the father's old friend and client and Mark's childhood role model, calls upon the Bergmans. As Mark shows the boxer around their new neighborhood, he points out every miniscule attraction, and says, "I could tell what I was showing and what he was seeing were not the same things." "Choynski" is almost an adult mirror image of this first story, and the story stresses the need for heroes and legends even when belief in them is broken in childhood. This idea of hero worship and boyhood ideals is not new; however, in pairing it with Mark's idealization of the past in "Choynski," Bezmozgis calls to similar themes present in "The Second Strongest Man." In this way, Bezmozgis forces the two stories to interact with and animate one another. In "The Second Strongest Man," Bezmozgis does not pave a predictable route of heartbreak and disillusionment for Mark. Instead, he uses "Choynski" to reinforce the idea that sometimes boyhood fantasies are indeed not shattered, but are merely channeled into a more realistic interest.

Although the stories sometimes toe the line of a hackneyed bildungsroman, there is something fragile and hopeful about them that nonetheless offers a rare, raw glimpse into the passions of a little boy and of an older man. Overall, Bezmozgis' *Natasha* presents an honest and moving portrait of a young man struggling to find himself in a complex world of mixed cultures, and the stories offer some touching and unique moments in spite of their sometimes pedestrian components.

Have you always wanted to read Russian novels and watch Russian movies but never had time?

War in Russian Literature and Cinema

in English, 3 credit points, Professor H. Baran, May 23–July 1, Mon. and Wed. from 5:30–8:40pm

This course explores the different ways in which Russian and Soviet writers and filmmakers have depicted the experience of war both by soldiers and civilians, in conflicts ranging from the War of 1812 to present-day Chechnya. Special attention is paid to changes in the treatment of World War II over several decades. Readings include poems by Lermontov, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's Caucasus tales, Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Stories*, tales by Garshin and Kuprin, Babel's *Red Cavalry* (selections) and Bulgakov's *White Guard*, songs and poems about World War II, Nekrasov's *Frontline Stalingrad*, Okudzhava's *Good Luck, Schoolboy!*, stories by Bykov ("The Ordeal") and Astaf'ev, and Vladimir Makanin's "The Captive of the Caucasus." Films discussed include *The Cranes are Flying* (1957), *Fate of a Man* (1959), *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), *The Ascent* (1976), *Come and See* (1985), and *Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996). Readings in English; students who know Russian are encouraged to read the texts in the original language.

www.harriman.columbia.edu/practicum.html Contact Alla Smyslova, Director at as2157@columbia.edu

Ирония и индивидуализм в творчестве Иосифа Бродского

Дмитрий Аронов

for English translation, see page 26

критический очерк

Изучая поэзию, трудно не задаться вопросом, в чем именно роль истинного поэта и истинного творчества. Бесспорно то, что в поэзии нередко важна человеческая личность и ее восприятие мира. Это качество особенно остро выражено в поэзии Советского Союза, где само присутствие индивидуальности могло противоречить официально установленным нормам. В поэзии Бродского сложность и разнообразие взглядов на окружающий мир часто выражены путем иронии. Противореча самому себе, поэт исключает единственность взглядов и чувств, а значит, и единство общественного мнения. Именно в иронии Бродского заключен индивидуализм, являющийся основой его творчества.

Некая иронизация повседневного наблюдения является основной темой стихотворения «Мы вышли с почты прямо на канал». Следя за удаляющимся человеком, лирический герой описывает обычную перспективу: «Он быстро уменьшался для меня». Однако, в этом привычном явлении он находит глубокий философский смысл. В то время, как движущаяся фигура уменьшается в глазах одного человека, она также резко увеличивается в глазах других, находящихся «в конце пути». Лирический герой подчеркивает, что это не два отдельных события, а именно аспекты одного и того же явления: «Он все собой заполонил, одновременно превратившись в точку». То есть, даже такое простое понятие, как рост человека, перестает быть абсолютным. Напротив, оно может быть вполне совместимо с двумя диаметрально противоположными взглядами. Все зависит от точки зрения наблюдателя, которая в данной ситуации определена всего лишь его физическим местонахождением.

В других стихотворениях Бродский также отрицает абсолютные взгляды, выявляя иронию и в более неоспоримых явлениях. В стихотворении «Я всегда твердил, что судьба – игра» он неоднократно путает части и целое: «Я считал, что лес – только часть полена». Также не один раз в этом стихотворении присутствует и смешение событий во времени.

Например, лирический герой задает вопрос, «зачем нам рыба, раз есть икра», якобы не понимая невозможность существования икры без рыбы. Говоря, что «лист разрушает почку», он также намеренно игнорирует природную цель почки. На первый взгляд, такая причинно-следственная путаница всего лишь вносит абсурдность в стихотворение. Но важно отметить, что лирический герой преподносит эту абсурдность как неотъемлемую часть своего прошлого творчества: «Я всегда твердил...», «Я писал...» То есть, именно в этом отрицании общепринятых норм содержится индивидуальность лирического героя как поэта. Отчасти, несоответствие такого мировоззрения стандартным взглядам делает его творчество неприемлемым для других людей: «Моя песнь была лишена мотива, но зато ее хором не спеть...»

В более поздних стихотворениях Бродского такая сложность наблюдается не только во взглядах лирического героя, но и в его чувствах. Одно из стихотворений цикла «Часть речи» является обращением лирического героя к другому человеку. Начинается это письмо довольно иронически: автор равнодушно отмечает, что не в состоянии вспомнить «черт лица» того, к кому он обращается и даже не может найти подходящее обращение («дорогой, уважаемый, милая, но не важно»). Однако, очень скоро стихотворение приобретает совершенно противоположный тон. Чувства становятся напряженными («извиваясь ночью на простыне»), и лирический герой вполне отчетливо представляет упомянутого человека: «Всем телом твои черты, как безумное зеркало повторяя». Одновременное существование разных чувств важно и в других стихотворениях. К примеру, печальность и мрачность «Рождественского романса» в последней строфе сочетается с неким оптимизмом. А в стихотворении «Дождь в августе» ностальгия и жизненные рассуждения, вызванные дождем, контрастируют с банальным замечанием «Ну и ливень».

Используя иронию и часто противореча самому себе, Бродский нередко создает стихотворения, кажущиеся сложными и отчасти абсурдными. Однако, избегая таким образом четких и однозначных высказываний, он добивается и более важной цели. Искажение общепринятых норм логики, запутанность чувств и взглядов, в первую очередь, подчеркивают возможность сосуществования противоположностей. В мире Бродского жизненные ситуации не требуют абсолютно истинных выводов, и эта неопределенность неоднократно отражается в поэзии: «Все то, что я писал... сводилось неизбежно к многоточью».

В таком свете можно представить суть всей поэзии, и даже неотделимый от нее жизненный опыт Бродского. Отрицание норм и неопределенность не могут быть совместимы с обществом, чьи взгляды определены заранее и, к тому же, официально. Индивидуалист, отрицающий такую систему, становится отверженным, а его творчество воспринимается – по словам самого Бродского – «товаром второго сорта». Особенно парадоксально то, что лирика может породиться именно предубежденным и стесненным обществом. Ведь именно в неофициальной поэзии советского застоя наиболее ярко выражено стремление к сложности и разнообразию чувств, широте взглядов и индивидуальности мировоззрения.

Irony and Individualism In the Works of Josef Brodsky

DMITRIY ARONOV
translated by Elena Clark

CRITICAL ESSAY

When studying poetry, the question of what precisely constitutes a true poet and true poetic mastery often arises. Undoubtedly, the human personality and perception of the world are important themes that poetry explores—especially poetry of the Soviet Union, where the very presence of individuality often contradicted officially established norms. In Josef Brodsky's poetry, the complexity and diversity of worldviews is conveyed through irony. By contradicting himself, the poet rules out any uniformity of views and feelings, and thereby any unity of public opinion. It is Brodsky's irony that speaks of individualism—the philosophical underpinning of his poetry.

A certain irony in the observation of daily life serves as the fundamental theme of the poem "We Went Straight From the Post Office to the Canal." Watching a retreating figure, the lyrical hero describes an ordinary perspective: "He was quickly diminishing in my eyes." In this commonplace phenomenon, however, he finds deep philosophical meaning. At the same time, as the moving figure diminishes in the eyes of one person, it also becomes larger in the eyes of others "at the end of the journey." The lyrical hero emphasizes that these are not two separate events, but merely different aspects of one single phenomenon: "He filled everything with himself, turning into a dot at the same time." Even such a simple concept as the size of a person stops being absolute. On the contrary, it can be completely compatible with two diametrically opposed views. Everything depends on the point of view of the observer, which in the given situation is defined only by physical location.

Brodsky also rejects absolute opinion in other poems, displaying irony in even less disputable situations. In the poem "I Always Maintained That Life Was a Game," he repeatedly confuses parts with the whole: "I thought that the forest was only part of a log." In this poem there is also frequent confusion of events in time. For example, the lyrical hero asks the question, "Why do we need fish, since we have caviar?" as if he does not understand the impossibility of the existence of caviar without fish. Saying that "the leaf destroys the bud," he purposefully ignores the role of a bud in nature. At first glance, such confusion of cause and effect does nothing more than introduce absurdity into the poem. But it is important to note that the lyrical hero presents this absurdity as an inalienable part of his past works: "I always maintained..." "I wrote..." That is to say, the individuality of the lyrical hero as a poet is demonstrated precisely in the denial of generally accepted norms. In a sense, the disparity between such a world outlook and standard opinions makes his works unacceptable to other people: "My song was devoid of a tune, but then, you couldn't sing it as a chorus..."

In the later poems of Brodsky, such complexity

can be observed not only in the views of the lyrical hero, but also in his feelings. One of the poems from the cycle "Part of Speech" is an address by the lyrical hero to another person. This letter begins fairly ironically: the author notes indifferently that he is incapable of remembering "the features of the face" of the person whom he is addressing, and cannot even find an appropriate term ("dear, esteemed, kind lady, but it doesn't matter"). Nevertheless, the poem very quickly acquires an entirely opposite tone. The feelings become strained ("twisting at night on the sheet"), and the lyrical hero distinctly imagines the person to whom he is referring: "My body imitates yours, like a deranged mirror." This simultaneous existence of different feelings is also important in other poems. For example, the sorrow and gloom of "Christmas Romance" are combined with a certain optimism in the last line. In the poem "Rain in August," nostalgia and discussions about life, brought about by the rain, are contrasted with the trite remark, "What a rainstorm."

By using irony and often contradicting himself, Brodsky creates a poem that seems complex and somewhat absurd. By avoiding in this manner clear and straightforward pronouncements, however, he achieves a more important goal. The distortion of the generally accepted norms of logic, and the confusion of feelings and opinions, emphasize the possibility of the existence of contradictions. In Brodsky's world, situations in life do not require absolutely true conclusions, and this lack of definition is repeatedly reflected in his poetry: "Everything that I have written...has unavoidably come to an ellipsis."

All of Brodsky's poetry and life experiences may be presented in such a light. A denial of norms and lack of definitions cannot be compatible with a society whose opinions are defined beforehand—officially, no less. An individualist, in denying such a system, becomes an outcast, and his works are perceived—in the words of Brodsky himself—as "second-class goods." The paradox is that such poetry can be produced in a society as prejudiced and constrained as the Soviet one. Indeed, it is the unofficial poetry of the Soviet era's creative stagnation that reflects most clearly the aspiration towards complexity and diversity of feeling, breadth of opinion, and individuality of worldview.

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Working in the Russian Archives

(in English)

Professor H. Baran

(June 6–July 1, Tues. & Thurs., 4:20–6:30 pm)

This course offers an overview of major Russian literary and social science archives and helps students develop basic skills needed to successfully locate, retrieve, and work with archival materials. Topics covered include: the organization of historical, literary, and other archives in the Russian Federation; archival "Rossica" in the West; printed and online finding aids; archival terminology, and scholarly do's and don'ts in Russian and Western repositories. Special emphasis on learning to read different types of handwriting, as used both in historical documents and literary texts; exercises in transcription and preparation of texts for scholarly publication. Lectures, discussions, practical exercises.

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Dostoevsky's Hydrotechnics

The Interplay Between Water and the Psyche in *Crime and Punishment*

ELENA LAGOUTOVA

CRITICAL ESSAY

In his novel *Crime and Punishment,* Fyodor Dostoevsky crafts words and imagery which offer different levels of access. A surface analysis of the text is satisfying in and of itself; through such an analysis, one perceives the chain of events which creates the characters and the dilemmas that make Dostoevsky popular among a diverse cross-section of readers. Embedded in the text, however, are many less noticeable details, which often go overlooked by the casual reader. It is those details that act as the tools for a more substantive level of analysis. Upon tracing the recurring images of water throughout the novel, one can conjecture that Dostoevsky employs water, and the movement of water, to convey Raskolnikov's inner state.

The imagery of water appears for the first time after Raskolnikov's first delirium, during which Raskolnikov, as a young boy, bears witness to the brutal beating of an old horse by a group of drunkards. Horrified to see that no one is defending the horse, Raskolnikov rushes to the fallen horse in a futile attempt to save it. After the dream, Raskolnikov awakens and, terrified of what the dream may imply, says, "Is it possible, is it possible that I really shall take an axe and strike her on the head, smash open her skull…that my feet will slip in warm, sticky blood, and that I shall break the lock, and the steel, and tremble, and hide, all covered in blood…with the axe…? God, is it possible?" As if in response to this plea, God seems to show Raskolnikov the way, as Raskolnikov crosses the Neva. "Freedom, freedom!" Raskolnikov silently exclaims. The sunset over the river ostensibly frees Raskolnikov from the burden of his dilemma concerning the fate of Alyona Ivanovna, the merciless pawnbroker whom he has planned to murder. In many ways, the river represents Raskolnikov's life and psyche—he must cross the river to achieve freedom, in the same way that he must cross over his own thoughts and insanity to achieve eventual calm. The flowing river mirrors his life, which will someday, perhaps not then, flow calmly.

Raskolnikov soon has another vision preceding the murder, in which water once again symbolizes his state of mind. During his second delirium, Raskolnikov finds himself near an oasis somewhere in Egypt. Carefully observing a caravan which has gathered in a circle, he suddenly begins to drink the water. Dostoevsky describes the water, "The water from a stream which flowed babbling beside him, clear and cool, running marvelously bright and blue over the colored stones and the clean sand with its gleams of gold…." By this point, Raskolnikov has finally convinced himself that murdering the pawnbroker is not simply his destiny, but a necessity. The marvelous, cool and refreshing water is a physical representation of Raskolnikov's lifted burden—he has decided, once and for all, to kill Alyona

Ivanovna. Raskolnikov's first dream about the horse represents indecision, and thus water appears as a challenge—something to be crossed. His second dream portrays a world without "Alyona Ivanovnas," and we therefore see water in a marvelous quenching capacity, an image that mirrors the way Raskolnikov's finalized decision has quenched his psyche. When he dreams about the oasis, Raskolnikov is in a calm state of mind, as if imagining a peaceful, extraordinary world that will come about when all evil, as personified by Alyona Ivanovna, is eliminated.

Water does not appear in Raskolnikov's third dream. When he wakes up, however, he immediately asks the maid Nastasya for water. When she brings it, she notes his worsening psychological condition. We are told: "But he hardly knew what happened next. He only remembered swallowing a few drops of cold water and spilling some on his chest. Then came complete unconsciousness." Raskolnikov's physical need for water is still prevalent. The spilling of the water occurs directly before it becomes evident that Raskolnikov no longer has full control of his consciousness. In some sense, his ability to reason, like the water, has spilled over onto his chest like a burden. Of course, the water falls on his chest, over his heart, the stereotypical locus of the body's emotion and torment. As Raskolnikov's reason slowly slips away, the water's ability to cleanse his body (and his conscience) becomes null and void.

As Raskolnikov changes, the water imagery in the novel changes as well. The imagery of water appears once again in Raskolnikov's fourth dream, in which he returns to Alyona Ivanovna's apartment. On the way to the apartment, Raskolnikov pays close attention to his surroundings: "There was a smell of lime, and dust, and stagnant water." The water that before had been so fresh and cold becomes stagnant. The stagnant water reflects Raskolnikov's inability to escape his psychosis—the sickness that Raskolnikov was hoping to exterminate by killing Alyona Ivanovna is still there, stagnant. In his dream about the oasis, the water was fresh, and Raskolnikov was optimistic about the future. The subsequent murder of Alyona Ivanovna, however, polluted Raskolnikov's mindset. The water has become dirty, in the same way that Raskolnikov's state of mind has become polluted; the water is stagnant, as Raskolnikov cannot force his contaminated psyche to move or go away.

As the novel comes to a close, the water and river imagery reaches conclusion along with it. The final instance of water imagery occurs following Raskolnikov's last delirium, in which he dreams about a disease that sweeps the world and only spares the chosen ones. After recovering from this dream, Raskolnikov returns to his daily prison duties, and we see him take a break: "Raskolnikov went out of the shed on to the bank, sat down on a pile of logs and looked at the wide, solitary river. From the high bank…the immensity of the steppe." The expansive and seemingly infinite river represents his subconscious: Raskolnikov is finally at peace. The river is spread before him like the rest of his life, and he begins his gradual transformation into a new man. He is solitary, but also solid. This final image of water juxtaposes the moment after Raskolnikov's first dream when he gazes over the Neva—then the river was an obstacle, but now it is a solid and picturesque scene that comforts him. Raskolnikov's state of mind is now firm and his ability to reason and live life is unhindered.

In many ways, water is the ideal medium to represent Raskolnikov's malleable and tormented mind. Water functions on different levels, at times as an obstacle, but also as satiating nourishment or as a pleasing view; Raskolnikov acts and functions on varied levels as well. Perhaps one of the Western canon's most infamous and psychologically deranged characters, Raskolnikov must be accompanied by imagery that is equally potent and that elicits equal amounts of feeling. The use of water in *Crime and Punishment* epitomizes Dostoevsky's striking ability to extend language and imagery beyond the boundary of literal meaning. It is impossible to forget Raskolnikov's plagued psyche in the same way that is impossible to forget the influence of water within life—both forces to be reckoned with and both revealing in and of themselves.

All quotations from Crime and Punishment, *translated by Jessie Coulson, Oxford University Press, 1998.*

From Pravda to PRAVO

The Politics of New York's Brighton Beach

Mark Krotov

In the Soviet Union, the political process was not open to widespread participation. Pre-selected candidates that received 99.8 percent of the vote with perhaps 0.2 percent abstaining—regardless of turnout or popularity—failed to galvanize tremendous interest or respect for the electoral system. It would seem that once immigrants arrived in the United States, a country generally respected for its open institutions of governance, their active participation would be a surefire inevitability. But that is not the case, as the situation has proven to be far more complex. The Brooklyn town of Brighton Beach, the place that New York's largest Russian émigré community calls home, demonstrates a conflict that mixes traditional political infighting with ethnically motivated distrust—the politics of Brighton Beach certainly weave their own special web.

The United States Census Bureau reported that there were 706,000 US residents who spoke Russian at home in 2000, yet there is only one native Russian speaker in the entire United States who holds elected office, Brooklyn's Democratic district leader Mark Davidovich. It is fair to ask why the political activity of such a sizable ethnic group is so small, and if the answer can be found anywhere, it lies in Brighton Beach, the area with one of the densest populations of Russian speakers in the nation.

The beachside Brooklyn hamlet, more notable as Coney Island's next-door neighbor than as a political power base, has seen its share of political intrigue over the last few years. Once home to newly arrived immigrants who sought a homogenous community far more than they did political activity, the neighborhood is now a battleground filled to the brim with controversies over representation. Chiefly, for a vocal minority, if not for the more silent majority, the struggle over non-Russian representatives has become a central battle.

Fira Stukelman is a member of the Brighton Beach-based Partnership of Russian-American Voters (PRAVO), a group focused on supporting aspiring Russian politicians. The group is made up of nine Russian-American members. "We [Russians] have one dream. Our dream is for a candidate from our group to be elected," said Stukelman. While Davidovich seems to be a step forward, PRAVO has its eye on posts in the New York State Assembly and the New York City Council.

Brighton Beach itself is split into two central Assembly and City Council districts that follow their own distinct boundaries, but the two most controversial politicians in the neighborhood are New York State Assemblywoman Adele Cohen (D-46) and New York City Councilman Dominic Recchia (D-47). The debate over these two representatives helps to illuminate the larger issues that divide the neighborhood.

Cohen has represented the neighborhood for six years, but her longevity has not made her especially popular, at least among the vocal PRAVO members. While many of Stukelman's comments were off the record, she essentially believes that Cohen has not sufficiently reached out to the Russian community. Although she said that Cohen "has become more loyal and more polite," she pointed out that "nobody helps and nobody [who is not Russian] is interested."

This allegation, in many ways, represents the somewhat popular mindset that until a Russian is in power, real Russian interests will not be addressed.

Cohen has also been the subject of rumors in the neighborhood that focused on the closing of the Brighton Beach branch of the public library on Election Day. The closing was provocative because the library was a polling place for many elderly residents who did not want to travel a few blocks down Brighton Beach Avenue to another location. Assemblywoman Cohen declined to speak directly to *The Birch*, but Michael Treybich, her Community Relations Director, completely dismissed those charges. He said, "The minority that provides the vocal resistance to any non-Russian speaking politicians is just that, a vocal minority." Moreover, it is hard to pigeonhole Cohen as a completely uncaring and aloof politician, given that every employee in her Brighton Beach district office speaks Russian.



Elena Lagoutova

Recchia provides another intriguing example of the ambiguity of Brighton's political scene. In 2003, when Recchia was up for reelection, the Democratic Primary received city-wide attention for some questionable behavior. Tony Eisenberg, a member of PRAVO, ran for the councilman's seat. During the race, Recchia charged that Eisenberg was misleading the public because his real name is Anatoly Eyzenberg, and that the Americanized name was simply an attempt to illegally promote himself. Eisenberg bitterly contested this accusation, arguing that he had used the name for a number of years, and that, regardless, the name change was legal. The public opinion in the neighborhood, bolstered by the Russian-speaking press, sided with Eisenberg, and many still blame Recchia for the trivial victory.

But Eisenberg was not simply the victim of a great injustice. After all, while Recchia's allegations were almost certainly misguided, the transcript of the New York Court of Appeals' decision on the matter indicates that Eisenberg was disqualified not because of the name change, but "because the candidate did not actually reside at the address he listed as his residence on the designating petition and which he had used for purposes of voter registration." So, while arguments over names were mere politics, Eisenberg's listing of his Brighton Beach supermarket as his residence proved to be the ultimate illegality. Eisenberg did not live in the predominantly Russian district in which he sought office, and in order to conceal it, he registered his place of business as his home.

Yet, even though Eisenberg misled the neighborhood, Recchia may have been the first to play dirty. Earlier in 2003, a district that covered a far bigger portion of Brighton Beach was divided. According to an October 13, 2004 article in the *New York Daily News,* "Powerbrokers … gerrymandered the Russians' south Brooklyn power base—taking 5,000 residents, most of them Russians, out of the 47th District and replacing them mostly with Italian-Americans."

Perhaps the most ambiguous element in Brighton Beach politics is PRAVO itself. Stukelman suggests that the partnership is designed to fight difficult odds. When "our candidates do not have the financial backing that [American] candidates do" and "no working politician will support Russian candidates," an organized group of people with a common interest is certainly necessary. Stukelman cites PRAVO's

recent meetings with Mayor Bloomberg as signs of success. But Treybich tells a different story. He points out that the organization is, in essence, "very hostile to anyone who is non-Russian."

PRAVO is led by Dr. Oleg Gutnik, a Brighton Beach gynecologist who himself ran against Recchia in 2000, and who, despite a number of requests, declined to speak with *The Birch*. Gutnik is widely described as charismatic, but his strong presence has won him some enemies. Pat Singer, the head of Brighton Beach Neighborhood Association, described a recent meeting with Bloomberg that Stukelman also cited. "When he ran the meeting, Dr. Gutnik would not let any questions come from the floor," said Singer. Treybich also said that "when Bloomberg came, none of the elected officials were invited," which meant a prevalence of PRAVO members and an absence of anyone else.



Elena Lagoutova

All of these ambiguous factors, in addition to PRAVO's strong connections with the influential Russian press and convincing but off the record rumors about voter intimidation, may perfectly illustrate Treyblich's categorization of a "vocal minority" that dominates the discourse. But this minority may not hold the interests of the majority at its core.

After all, while the politicians attempt to outmaneuver each other, the electorate remains largely unaffected—Davidovich is still the only Russian-speaking American in an elected office. Perhaps the most pressing issue is the absence of ballots written in Russian. While many of the state's other ethnic groups now have ballots issued in their respective languages, Russians cannot call the Board of Elections and request a proxy. Stukelman argues that this issue alone necessitates ethnic Russian representation.

Another factor that precludes Russian political involvement, and, thus, political action, is the age of the electorate. Many Brighton Beach residents are senior citizens with poor language skills and an inability to gather much research outside of what they read in the papers. While some new residential construction promises an influx of younger, more active Russians, it is still unclear what the effect will be.

In many ways, the ultimate lesson that may be derived from Brighton Beach's ambiguous political scene is the need to find common ground. "Americans cannot understand that we came in a time of progress. We came because we didn't have freedoms, not because we didn't have bread," said Stukelman. The disjunction between the Russian and the non-Russian population is especially critical, given that Russians do not form the majority of any district in the country. Singer, who has observed the immigrant influx in the neighborhood for the last twenty-five years, said that she "see[s] too much separatism that's not healthy for a community like Brighton, which is not just Russians. I want us to be one community."

The ethnocentric rhetoric of PRAVO that espouses the necessity of Russian representation and the occasionally distant leadership must converge in order to create change. Russians will not win elections until they broaden their base. Such a goal which will come to fruition as the immigrant community becomes more politically savvy. In the Soviet Union, exclusion was monolithic, and there was no logical reason to get involved. Now, despite many obstacles, Russians can enter the process, and their continued experience in Brighton Beach—though rocky and not without its mishaps—may serve as an example for their activity throughout the whole country.

Inaction and Reaction

Miscommunication and Ignorance Surrounding Russia's HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Jane Mikkelson

With over 300,000 registered cases of people living with HIV/AIDS, Russia is threatened by an impending public health crisis and a near absence of political resolve to forestall it.

In the 1980s, when activists poured into the streets of New York City, when families and friends of the deceased pieced together the AIDS Quilt in San Francisco, and when "Silence = Death" was more of a household term than Reagan's "It's morning in America" slogan, the problem of an AIDS epidemic was the furthest thing from the Russian politician's mind. As of then, there was no epidemic to speak of.

Closed borders and totalitarian restrictions on sexual freedom successfully insulated Russia from the new plague that swept the US, Tanzania, and Haiti in the early eighties. The fall of the Soviet Union, however, was accompanied by an influx of heroin and a surge in drug use, a sharp rise in prostitution and sex trafficking, and a decline in the already under-funded health care system. Such conditions engendered an environment that allowed HIV to thrive.

Today, the numbers are staggering. According to AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW), as of March, there were 304,653 registered cases of people living with HIV/AIDS in Russia, though the actual number, experts say, is probably closer to a million. No longer is this an epidemic of drug users and sex workers: in 2001 only five percent of new infections were from heterosexual sex, but by 2003 that figure quadrupled to twenty percent. The rate at which HIV is spreading has risen dramatically as well; in 2004, according to estimates, the number of HIV-positive Russians grew by 20 percent, a rate exceeding that of Africa. If the statistics continue to progress in this vein, by 2008 there will be 2.5 million Russians living with HIV.

Ignorance is Bliss

Given such alarming figures and the grim prognosis for the near future, it would seem logical for the Russian government to employ every possible resource in order to suppress the epidemic. In the case of Russia's HIV/AIDS problem, however, logic has not proven to be one of the Putin Administration's strongest suits.

According to Vadim Pokrovsky, the director of Russia's Federal AIDS Center, the national budget for 2005 has made plans to expend $4.3 million on HIV/AIDS, a mere two and a half percent of the $161.7 million needed. This complete failure in financial commitment cannot be explained away by budgetary hardships. Russia's federal budget surplus this year is expected to weigh in at $6.23 billion, and Moscow's lawmakers somehow found the means to increase defense spending by forty percent to $2.4 billion.

As financial restrictions do not appear to be an unwieldy burden for the government, the only other possible explanation for the lackluster response to

the HIV/AIDS problem is denial.

"Russian epidemiology is a very reputable branch of science," said Anatoly Zhebrun, director of the St. Petersburg Pasteur Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology. He described the history of the Russian AIDS epidemic in this way: "In the first 10 years, until about 1995, there was no growth in the number of people with HIV; there were a few isolated cases, all of which were registered. It began with homosexuals, then spread to intravenous drug users [IDUs]. The Pasteur Institute was the first to pinpoint the situation, and to find an approach—'needle exchange' programs. A bus drives to the parts of the city where there is the greatest concentration of drug users. They say, 'People, give up your needles!' and [exchange] clean ones free of charge. The used needles are then taken back and examined, and they check the blood. The problem is that [IDUs] are anonymous. They shun contact with health workers and are difficult to treat," said Zhebrun.

IN 2004, ACCORDING TO ESTIMATES, THE NUMBER OF HIV-POSITIVE RUSSIANS GREW BY TWENTY PERCENT, A RATE EXCEEDING THAT OF AFRICA.

"Today, too, this is an epidemic of drug users," he said. When asked if any testing was being done in the general, non-IDU population, Zhebrun said, "Yes, but those numbers are very small, and they are decreasing."

A gynecologist in St. Petersburg was of the same opinion. Reticent from the start, she admitted that there had been a slight increase in the number of positive HIV test results, but was quick to add that the infected were predominantly drug addicts. When asked about treatment and counseling for the HIV-positive, she said, "I don't know. We send them to an AIDS center. It's out of our hands."

Although such attitudes of near indifference from Mr. Zhebrun and the gynecologist are surprising, they seem to reflect a general pattern of thinking among Russian health professionals. "The problem is that people who are supposed to be helping those who are ill are themselves terrified by the disease and therefore are very unlikely to provide any help," said Nikolai Nedzelski, director of the Info Plus information center for people with HIV and AIDS in Moscow and one of the few outspoken critics of the Russian response to the epidemic, in a July 2002 edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Disease Without a Cure

Optimistic as Zhebrun might be, there is still cause for concern. Testing for HIV has fallen considerably since the Russian government transferred the burden of HIV/AIDS funding from federal to regional jurisdiction, and the budgets of many regional governments are already spread too thin. In part as a result of this shift, 2.5 million fewer HIV tests were conducted in 2003 than in 2002. Without an accurate estimate of Russia's HIV/AIDS population, it is impossible to assess the costs of treatment, costs which primarily fall in the lap of regional governments.

Although there is no cure for HIV, researchers continue to make advances in the disease's treatment. Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, when administered in combination, impede the replication of HIV and thereby delay deterioration of the immune system and the onset of AIDS. These drugs increase the span and quality of life, and make an HIV-positive diagnosis less of an automatic death sentence. Since HIV is able to quickly mutate and become resistant to one drug, the combined administration of several different ARV drugs becomes crucial. While taking three or more drugs is more effective, it is also much more costly ($300 - $1200 per annum, according to World Health Organization), mainly because the different drugs are made by competing pharmaceutical companies. Even in the United States, thousands remain on indefinite waiting lists to receive this "triple therapy," and a great stretch of the imagination is not required to divine the state of HIV treatment in Russia.

In the most conservative estimates, a minimum of $91,395,900 would be needed to treat a significant portion of Russia's HIV/AIDS victims. This constitutes a paltry 3.8 percent of Russia's projected defense spending, but overstretches the HIV/AIDS budget by $87 million. Though the ratio of HIV/AIDS funding to defense spending is also

astonishing in many developed nations, this ratio for Russia in combination with the country's depressing AIDS situation points to where the Russian government's priorities lie.

Granted, there are other treatment options. For instance, Russia could invest in "generics"—unpatented drugs chemically equivalent to their brand-name counterparts. Many ARV generics are made in India, Canada, Brazil, and other countries, and the lack of brand-name recognition greatly reduces their cost. One would not be far off in attributing the government's refusal to acquire and distribute generics to Russia's WTO aspirations; Moscow certainly does not wish to stir the waters of the international trade community by acquiring such drugs.

Russia could also choose to cooperate with any one of the many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to provide assistance. The William J. Clinton Presidential Foundation, for example, has brokered deals with pharmaceutical companies, in which the foundation sells ARV generics at a reduced cost to countries particularly ravaged by HIV/AIDS. The Clinton Foundation also managed to convince more prosperous nations to finance the purchase of such drugs. Ireland and Canada have already pledged millions to the cause, and countries such as Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, and South Africa expect to receive the reduced-price drugs by 2008. The Russian Ministry of Health did not respond to the Clinton Foundation when such an offer was made, reported the *Kommersant* (May 17, 2004).

Perhaps it was the prospect of being likened to developing African countries that prompted that refusal. "Everyone thinks that there is such a grave epidemic in Russia," says Zhebrun. "Russia might be among the more seriously affected European countries, but our situation is not comparable to those in African and Asian countries."

Nevertheless, Zhebrun did concede that in 2008, when most of the currently HIV-positive Russians will enter the final stage of the disease, AIDS, Russia will need to rely on outside assistance for medical treatment. "HIV-positive people are not sick," he said, "Only those in the final phase of AIDS are sick." When asked to comment on the Ministry of Health's refusal to accept the Clinton Foundation's proposal, Zhebrun said, "I don't know anything about that. Negotiations are under way."

Health Education

While HIV is currently an incurable disease, it is to a large extent a preventable one—perhaps that is the most frustrating aspect of the HIV crisis in Russia and elsewhere. Widespread misconceptions and miseducation contribute to the epidemic just as much as the drug abuse and unsafe sex practices themselves. Although the Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey led by the University of North Carolina shows that 75 percent of Russians believe that AIDS can be prevented, only 59 percent believe that regular condom use reduces chances of infection.

Lingering Soviet prudishness and a vigorous anti-sex campaign led by the Russian Orthodox Church have contributed to the essential absence of sex education in public schools, which, in turn, fuels common misconceptions among an increasingly sexually active youth. Most Russian women are wary of using the pill, fearing that the hormones will have adverse side effects, and they react with equal skepticism to other forms of contraception. In fact, abortion has been the most common form of birth control since the Soviet Union became the first country in the world to legalize it in 1920, and even today, the average Russian woman has between 4 and 10 abortions in her lifetime.

"Today's discussions of sex education in Russia are conducted at the same level as in the 1950s or even at the end of the 19th century," wrote leading Russian sexologist Igor Kon in an article posted on his website. "Many issues that are openly discussed by youth are not brought up at all and remain taboo in order not to tempt the younger generation," he said.

While polls show that most Russians are in favor of introducing sex education into the school curriculum, the question of who will teach it remains unresolved. A survey conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology revealed that 78 percent of teachers believe sex education should be provided by parents, while only 20 percent of Russian teenagers feel that turning to their parents to discuss issues of sex-

uality is a viable and appropriate option.

This absence of education affects not only the epidemic itself, but the treatment of those who are already HIV-positive. The Russian society of today is not only unaccommodating; it displays outright hostility toward people living with HIV/AIDS. The infected often lose their jobs, are refused basic treatments, and face discrimination on a daily basis. In fact, the stigma associated with being HIV-positive is so great that many do not report their condition at all.

Although Russian legislation guarantees that every Russian citizen has an equal right to receive medical care, "treatment [for HIV/AIDS] is expensive, and it's not provided to active drug users. People have to sign a contract that they will continue to come every month; if they don't, they know they can be taken out of the program. We know all of the people on treatment. We know who can be trusted and who cannot," said Elana Vinogradova, chief doctor at the St. Petersburg AIDS center, in the December 2004 *HIV/AIDS Policy and Law Review*. Andrey, HIV-positive and a drug user, described his personal experience with obtaining treatment. "At the AIDS Centre you have to prove that you are a 'benefit to society' in order to get any treatment, even palliative care," he said.

"TODAY, TOO, THIS IS AN EPIDEMIC OF DRUG USERS."
– ANATOLY ZHEBRUN, DIRECTOR OF THE ST. PETERSBURG PASTEUR INSTITUTE OF EMIDEMIOLOGY AND MICROBIOLOGY

The Growing Tip of the Iceberg

As the Russian federal government largely chooses to close its eyes (or at least its pockets) on the AIDS epidemic, many western NGOs have taken up the fight. Neill McKee, who is currently working with Johns Hopkins University to set up a foundation for HIV/AIDS prevention and care called Healthy Russia 2020, said there has been satisfactory cooperation with the regional governments, specifically in the regions of Saratov, Orenburg, Ivanovo, and Irkutsk. He agreed that denial is a problem, in that HIV/AIDS is still widely regarded as a disease solely of drug users and sex workers, but also pointed out that it is only one of very many health problems to threaten the Russian population.

"A Russian man on average dies at 59 because of alcoholism, poor diet, lack of exercise, heart disease, tuberculosis, suicide, and accidents," said McKee. "The government has a lot on its plate."

Even so, if nothing is done in the way of preventing further spread of the epidemic, Russia's AIDS crisis will reach an unprecedented level. There exists no concerted effort on behalf of the Russian government to comprehend the gravity of the situation. Politicians are content with reassuring statistics from the Ministry of Health which point to an annually decreasing rate of HIV infection, and they do not pause to consider that such figures are based only upon the testing of a handful of IDUs and do not take into account HIV's prevalence in the general population. That in the next decade some 300,000 Russians will die of AIDS is a fact.

Meanwhile, Russia's youth continues to practice unsafe sex and turn to intravenous drugs, not realizing the harm in doing so. A few lucky IDUs receive clean syringes courtesy of the Pasteur Institute—an action akin to placing a band-aid on a bleeding wound. Russian medical officials continue to deny treatment to thousands of HIV-positive Russians, and many HIV-positive Russians lose their jobs, remain ostracized by friends and family, and find that their healthy children are not admitted into schools. The government continually refuses to increase funding for awareness programs, take basic preventative measures, provide adequate and equal treatment or even acknowledge the fact that Russia faces a rapidly growing HIV/AIDS epidemic.

"Ultimately, Russia must ask itself: How many Russians have to die before the Russian government begins to take this seriously?" said Vinay Saldanha, head of the Canada AIDS Russia Project, in an August 2004 edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*. "Russia is the only member of the G-8 that does not provide comprehensive prevention, care, and support for people with HIV and AIDS," he said. Clearly, what is being performed on Russia's political stage is not indicative of the drama behind the scenes.

The Yukos Affair

Rectifying the Past or Polluting the Future?

DAVID SCHOR

Government interference in the market is an old practice in Russia.

"In Russia, we have a bad tradition in this respect. Government intervention, not only in Soviet times, but in empire times, is a traditional Russian policy," said Sergei Dubinin, former head of Russia's Central Bank and the deputy CEO of Gazprom, in an interview with Columbia University Economics Professor Padma Desai.

In the wake of the Yukos affair—during which Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky sat behind bars while his company's largest production field was auctioned off to pay $27 billion in back taxes—it is once again Russian government intervention that has come under fire. And the fire is burning with one big question: what does the Yukos affair mean for Russia, and is Russian President Vladimir Putin placing his country's economy on the fast track to a breakdown?

"A transition has been made to the interventionist trend. This model implies the state's extremely incompetent interference in the economy," said Andrei Illiaronov, former senior economic advisor to the Kremlin. "We used to see street hustlers do this kind of thing, now officials are doing it," he said in reference to the auctioning off of Yukos' largest production field, known as Yuganskchneft, or Yugansk. "[It's] the swindle of the year."

Add Illiaronov's sentiments to the countless scathing criticisms from the international press about the way the seizure of Yugansk threatens property rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the path to market liberalization, and it appears to the world, or more precisely, to the Western community, that the Kremlin has run afoul. In the view of most analysts, the Russian government's 'acquisition' of Yukos spells trouble, and spells out Putin's desire to play marionettes with Russia's natural resource industries. But such a reading of the Yukos affair may be overly simplistic, or perhaps even flat out wrong.

Nobel Laureate and Columbia University Professor of Economics Joseph Stiglitz sticks to another story, and it is one not widely told. To each condemnation of Putin's actions in the press, Stiglitz seems to have a defense, and he presents the Yukos affair in a new and much more positive light. According to Stiglitz, Putin's attack on Yukos is quite justifiable.

In his book, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, Stiglitz laments the illegitimate Yelstin-era privatizations of Russia's state-run industries. During the 1990s, natural resource companies and other state-run conglomerates fell into the hands of Yeltsin's close allies in a variety of illegitimate ways, including the infamous "loans for shares program" and what Stiglitz calls "sham auctions." Because of the illegitimacy of the privatizations, the newfound oligarchs began to shuttle their rubles abroad in order to prevent the Russian government from repossessing the ill-begotten money in the future. Many of the oligarchs invested in the US stock market and other western investment vehicles, and according to Stiglitz, began to strip Russia of its prized assets.

With respect to the alleged politicization behind the government's tax charges against Yukos, Stiglitz takes an uncommon stance: regardless of politics, enforcing tax laws is essential. "Any government, particularly one that has been starving of resource income, needs to enforce the tax law. And if you are going to get confidence in a tax collection system, you can't let your wealthiest party abscond with billions of

dollars without paying taxes," he said.

"One of the concerns has been that it has been selective," said Stiglitz, "but the US does this all the time. You pick out certain targets in the hope that you get higher degrees of compliance among all other tax payers and with less need for strong arm enforcement. Hopefully that will be what will happen." In this way, the jailing of Khodorkovsky calls into question the extent to which Khodorkovsky may have been a highly publicized way for law enforcement to say it means business, and this time, not funny business.

For Stiglitz, much of the justification behind the Yukos affair resides in the Putin Administration's need to rectify the enormous mistakes made during the Yeltsin-era privatizations.

"You had an illegitimate privatization. If you then allow the guy to sell the assets to an American company like Exxon, Exxon pays full market value, and Khodorkovsky takes the money out of country. It becomes at that point virtually impossible to rectify the past mistakes," he said. Indeed, Yukos reached that critical point in 2003 when the company discussed selling stakes of the firm to western companies like ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco. "[Khodorkovsky] forced the issue by threatening the sale," said Stiglitz.

JOSEPH STIGLITZ



Emily Lowry

The goal of rectifying the 1990s is not one that Putin supports without caution. It is clear that Putin does not wish to start an oligarch witch-hunt; Russia's fragile economy cannot afford to send every Russian entrepreneur who was around during the 1990s running for the hills. Thus, with regard to the collecting of back taxes, Putin has now started looking more toward the future and less toward the past.

This March, Putin pledged his support toward a new bill that would shorten the statute of limitations over investigations into the Yeltsin-era privatizations. "This will help the business community look to the future with greater certainty, draw up promising development plans and make new investments, and I hope to reassure entrepreneurs on the security of property rights," said Putin in a March television broadcast.

By burying the hatchet with regard to the rest of the Yeltsin-era privatizations, Putin will officially stamp Khodorkovsky as an example of what his administration will not tolerate, while allowing Russian businessmen to continue their dealings without remaining in a constant state of fear. Hopefully—now that Russian businessmen will constantly bear Khodorkovsky in mind—such dealings will occur in a more transparent manner. At least that's the hope of both Putin and analysts such as Stiglitz.

In the eyes of David Woodruff, a senior fellow at Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian studies, however, the conception of the Yukos affair as a way to repair past mistakes and fix the future is not so obvious. "I think it's a repetition of the 1990s. If it turns out that now Yugansk will be paying much more taxes, and be much more transparent, I'd be very surprised. It's just a transfer from one set of people to another set of people," said Woodruff.

According to Woodruff, based on the process alone, it is dubious to think of the Yukos affair as repudiation. "[Yukos has] been assessed quite implausible tax debts, and those tax debts have been used to auction off the company at what was a very low price, which has not clearly even been paid. So to say that this is rectification of past abuses, is certainly very premature," he said. According to Woodruff and to others who share his opinion, the notion that the Yukos affair can be construed as a force for good is hasty at best.

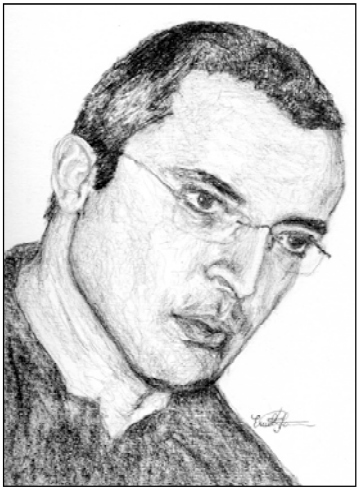
In its 2004 annual report on Russia, The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) claimed that the legal case against the Yukos affair has raised uncertainty about the sanctity of property rights in Russia. Stiglitz disagrees. "Ownership of stolen property, does not carry with it the same rights" as legitimately acquired property, he said.

"The fact that these natural assets were transferred in an illegitimate way to so many private parties means that there cannot be a social commitment to those property rights. To make property rights systems work, there has to be a view that those property rights are legitimate," said Stiglitz. From this viewpoint,

Khodorkovsky's prominence in Russia, as it was founded upon the theft of prized Russian assets, is what truly undermines property rights. "You have to recreate a system of property redistribution that has confidence of legitimacy," he said.

A good number of economic and political analysts disagree with Stiglitz and agree with the ERBD's assertion that Putin is undermining crucial democratic fundamentals, such as the right to own property. "Mr. Putin may honestly believe he is right to restore state control…but his advisors are trying to tell him that by grabbing so much power and stifling so much debate, he is achieving an illusory stability that undermines Russia's long-term development," read a January editorial in the *New York Times*. Even the White House expressed its disapproval of the government's acquisition of Yugansk in December 2004, and still others labeled the action a surefire indication of Putin's authoritarian aspirations.

MIKHAIL KHODORKOVSKY



Emily Lowry

In Stiglitz's view, however, Khodorkovsky is the real threat to democracy, not Putin. "The ability to have a viable democracy is certainly impaired when you have levels of inequality of the magnitude that have emerged in Russia," said Stiglitz. "Khodorkovsky's not a foreigner, but on the other hand, he's not a good citizen. He's not willing to risk his money—to put his money to work for the country," he said.

Sentiment in the western financial press has been that the Yukos affair will chill the foreign investment climate, but in Woodruff's view, international capital flows are determined far more by the "push" theory than the "pull" theory. That is, foreign investment largely stems from rich countries with excess capital, rather than from the attractiveness of certain foreign investment opportunities.

According to Stiglitz, there are two interpretations of what Putin's Kremlin is about. One interpretation is that Putin is trying recover from mistakes made by allowing "market players" to control the nation's assets and reap the benefits of their control in the name of market reform. The other view is that one group reaped the spoils under Yeltsin, and another group wants the spoils now. "I'd like to believe the former, but I think we don't really know, we don't have enough evidence at this point to make a confident judgment. We know that it has done something to stop the kind of massive theft. What is clear [is that] Putin has not been as abusive as Yeltsin. So grading on the curve puts [Putin] in a very positive light."

"The critical issue is the relationship of state and big business in a situation where legal enforcement is very weak. How can state authority create a balanced relationship?" asked Desai. It seems that this tension is what lies at the crux of the Yukos affair, but whether or not the Yukos affair will balance or destabilize that relationship has yet to be answered. Dubinin is not optimistic. "They tried to use the legal system to punish those involved, which can't be a good development for the legal system in Russia," he said.

Something that lies at the heart of the debate about the meaning of the Yukos affair is the inability for analysts in developed countries to escape their own situations and supposed "western" ideals. It is somewhat disingenuous to juxtapose Russia's current situation with mature capitalist economies, and call it legitimate critique. Russia is a country with its own unique history and problems. In addition, this type of criticism, to some extent, requires us to consider developed capitalist systems in an infallible light, which, considering America's scandal-ridden corporate landscape, appears presumptuous, if not unfair.

It seems the Yukos affair is an event that must be digested in a variety of contexts. We should look at it both from the angle of rectifying past mistakes, and as potentially being just business as usual in Russia. But in the broader context, we should see it as another event in the long and murky history of the conflict between big business and the state in post-Soviet Russia. On all accounts, the straightening of the line between business and government lies at the heart of Russia's progress—how that line is to be straightened, as Stiglitz's unconventional views point out, is very much up for debate.

The Politics of Spirituality

Analyzing the Reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church

Natasha Goldvug

Unbeknownst to most New Yorkers, the Upper East Side plays host to a conflict of religion and politics which has spanned decades. The St. Nicholas Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Synod's Cathedral of the Mother of God of the Sign, a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, are situated a mere five blocks apart. The two provide similar liturgical prayers and services, propagate the same ideologies, and utilize comparable hierarchical structures. Indeed, prior to the Russian Revolution there was only the Mother Russian Orthodox Church. The split between the two came with the fall of the Romanovs and the triumph of communism. After nearly ninety years of political strife, the two churches are now negotiating a reciprocal peace.

The Revolution of 1917 changed the role of the Russian Orthodox Church. Saint Tikhon of Moscow was named Patriarch, or head of the Russian Orthodox Church, just two days before the outbreak of the revolution. Before this, Tikhon served as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in America. The communists' rise to power meant the establishment of an atheist state and an attempt to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church. Approximately 35,000 clergymen were executed or imprisoned, and its finest intellects fled westward to England, France, Germany and the United States, among other nations. The surviving bishops were viewed as collaborators. In the 1920s, Tikhon allowed Soviet exiles to establish an independent governing body, known in the Eastern Orthodox Churches as a Synods of Bishops, and émigré Russians who opposed the revolution founded the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The schism between the two sects came about because of political rather than spiritual reasons, and many congregants today do not differentiate between the two churches. Beginning in the 1990s, talks of reunification were encouraged by President Vladimir Putin, who met on several occasions with leaders from both churches. While the churches may have succeeded in what Dr. John Anthony McGuckin, a professor at the Union Theological Seminary, calls "laying down the nightmare of Uncle Joe Stalin," negotiations are still under way, and peace between the two sects is far from certain. According to both sides, the aim of the talks has been to establish a spiritual bond and a Eucharistic communion between the two churches. As McGukin said, "To be Orthodox means to be in communion," or to have a spiritual relationship with other Christians.

In addition to this spiritual factor, the union has other possible ramifications. Hiermonk Joseph Krioukov, spokesperson for the Russian Orthodox Church's United States parishes, suggests that communion between the two churches would unite thousands of parishes and influence dialogues with the Greek, Serb, and Croat Orthodox Churches.

In 2000, the Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow conceded to the valid-





both photographs by Elena Lagoutova

St. Nicholas Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church (above), located on 5th Avenue and 97th street, is just a few blocks away from the Synod's Cathedral of the Mother of God of the Sign (right), a member of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which is located on 93rd street between Madison Avenue and Park Avenue.

ity of other churches and outlined the proper relationship between church and state, stressing cooperation rather than intrusion. The Russian Orthodox Church also canonized new martyrs, primarily the Romanov family. The Church Abroad canonized Czar Nicholas II, his wife Empress Alexandra, and their five children in 1981. This was a major point of contention between the churches, as many bishops in Russia considered the royal family to be martyrs of the counter-revolution rather than of religion. Now that both churches have canonized the Romanovs, the two sects have reached some common ground.

Nonetheless, negotiations have proceeded within the context of an older legacy of mistrust, primarily on the part of members of the Church Abroad. Because people who were persecuted by the Soviets established the Church Abroad, many congregants are still unwilling to lay aside their resentment of the Russian Orthodox Church, which they see as complicit in the atrocities of communism. The Russian Orthodox Church was disbanded in the 1920s and was only revived by Stalin during the World War II to placate, unify, and comfort the people. The result was that many thousands of exiles assumed that this revival meant that they could return to Russia and practice their faith openly. Upon their return, they were imprisoned for treason.

Another reason for distrust was the Moscow Patriarchate's overt involvement with the KGB. The Communist Party virtually controlled many members of the church leadership and the Orthodox Church's leaders had to be approved by the KGB before they were consecrated. The current Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Moscow, Alexy II, had a code name registered with the KGB, as did his predecessors. Members of the Church Abroad argue that they cannot cooperate with those who worked alongside the KGB. Nevertheless, leadership in the Church Abroad tries to downplay this particular antagonism. According to Nicholas Ohotin, Communications Director of the Synod of Bishops of the Church Abroad, "Anywhere from 80 to 90 percent of the bishops in the current [Russian Orthodox] Church were consecrated after the fall of communism."

Congregants of the Church Abroad also worry that the Moscow Patriarchate will seize properties, sacred possessions, and money, but Ohotin describes these as largely unrealistic fears. He says

that "the rule of law safeguards [the Church's property] in 99 percent of the nations" in which it has parishes. Moreover, Father Joseph of the Russian Orthodox Church said, "The Abroad Church has nothing specific that the Russian Church wants; nor is it looking to acquire valuable possessions." Neither Ohotin nor Father Joseph is a staunch opponent of reunification.

Despite such steps of progress, new sources of conflict have also surfaced. In 1997, Patriarch Alexy II asked former head of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat to help the Russian Orthodox Church recover properties it had lost as a result of the revolution. Weeks later, Arafat's troops seized a monastery owned by the Church Abroad in Hebron, a city in the West Bank under Palestinian control. Three years later, Arafat did the same in Jericho, another Palestinian city. In this case, members from the Russian Consulate stood by while militants expelled and physically abused clergy from the Church Abroad. During the conflict, Alexy II wrote a letter to then US President Bill Clinton, in which he expressed his displeasure with the US's condemnation of the seizure. According to Alexy II, the property in question "historically" belonged to Russia.



Elena Lagoutova

"The seizure of the monasteries in Jericho and Hebron through the use of force on the part of the Palestinian Administration under Yassir Arafat was viewed in the Holy Land as a violation of the status quo of holy sites in Palestine," said Ohotin in a recent statement. Thus, there is resistance toward unification within the Church Abroad.

According to McGuckin, the deep-seated traditions of the past explain the current relationship between the two churches. The Russian Orthodox Church must be considered not in terms of years or decades, but in terms of centuries and millennia. The church, he argues, retains influences dating as far back as the second century, and the present political climate must be seen within the context of the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine model relies heavily on Old Testament archetypes both religiously and spiritually, centering on "one empire, one ruler, one church." Such a model is still present in the minds of many adherents.

Much has also been made of President Putin's interest in the reunification of the Russian Orthodox Church. Putin has made a point of meeting with representatives of both sects and has encouraged dialogue. Both Ohotin and Father Joseph attribute this to a genuine faith. "Putin does not wish to enforce any personal opinions in the process of reunification," said Father Joseph. The reunification, however, would also be a great political triumph for Putin and, as McGukin pointed out, "a happy healing of a very traumatic event." By unifying the divide within the church, Putin can symbolically rewrite the history and memory of communism. Unification would recreate the vision of the Russian Empire—a vision which has always been inseparable from the Orthodox Church—and would strengthen what many consider a 'fallen' nation. Both sides argue that any changes sought in these negotiations will be spiritual in nature, rather than political or administrative, because, as Father Joseph said, "The Church cares for every individual." Ohotin, in turn, looks forward to a confederacy between the churches. According to Ohotin, divisions over heresy and politics have for a long time characterized the history of the Orthodox Church. "To overcome these divisions," Ohotin explained, "means to make peace."

Viewpoint From Abroad

Effectual Effigies

The Controversy Over St. Petersburg's Historicized Heroism

David Plotz

On St. Petersburg's Vasilievsky Island, on Bolshoy Prospect, just a short walk from my favorite Indian restaurant, there is a statue of Lenin. There's another one in front of Finland Station on Vyborg Side, across the Neva River from the neighborhood where I go to school. In that neighborhood, within a block of the Smolny Monastery and Institute, one can still find statues of Lenin, Marx, Engels, and, most peculiarly, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the Cheka (later known as the NKVD, and still later as the KGB). A student at Smolny walking after class down Suvorovsky will pass ten consecutive numbered Soviet Streets before reaching Nevsky Prospect, the main thoroughfare of the city that bore Lenin's name for most of the twentieth century.

Of course, now everyone refers to this city by the name of its founder, Peter the Great, who is at least equally well represented by statues and monuments in the central part of town. Peter, who founded this city in an attempt to modernize and westernize Russia, is the focus of one of the most famous monuments in the city, the Bronze Horseman charging forward into the Neva in front of St. Isaac's Cathedral. A recent magazine poll showed that more than half of Russians consider the era of Peter the Great to be the greatest in Russian history.

There are no statues of Stalin anywhere in St. Petersburg, but not for lack of affection for the man who once ruled the Soviet Union as a virtual god. The number of Russians who feel either kindly or ambivalently disposed toward Stalin probably constitutes a slight majority, and many of them are not shy about saying so. The fact that Stalin is nowhere to be seen is the legacy of his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, who cemented his own power in the Communist Party by discrediting and banning all traces of the Stalinist regime he once served. If Khrushchev had left even one statue of Stalin standing, I have a feeling it would still be here today.

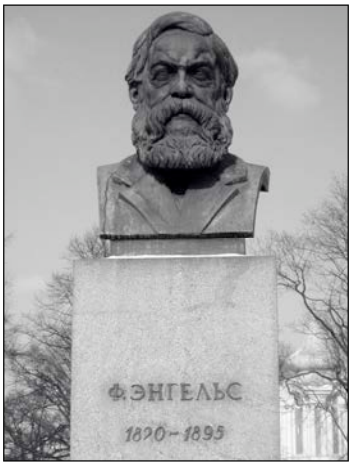
The meaning of these statues was recently the source of a heated debate among the American students at the Smolny Institute. Most students agreed that the memory of Peter the Great ought to be honored, and that the memory of Stalin ought to be shunned, but there was no clear consensus about Lenin. A significant number of students, particularly those of the conservative political persuasion, consider it abominable that Lenin or any other communist continues to be held in the same esteem as Russia's greatest czars or poets. One student, following a terribly predictable line of thought, suggested that it was as bad as if a statue of Hitler still stood in Berlin.

Most Petersburgers today are not particularly fans of Lenin or of communism, but would nonetheless bristle at this comparison. For the older generation, which endured starvation, disease, and bitter cold during a nine-hundred day siege by the Nazis, this city will always be Leningrad. It may be difficult for Americans, who are prone to conflating communism and Nazism into a single evil called totalitarianism, to understand the mentality of a people who sacrificed 25 million lives under the com-

munist banner in order to defeat the Nazis. But regardless, one doesn't have to be a local or a communist to understand that there is a wide gulf separating the crimes of Lenin and the early Bolsheviks from the crimes of Hitler or, for that matter, Stalin.

The real question is whether a similarly wide gulf separates the crimes of Lenin from those of Peter the Great, or any of the other major czars honored in St. Petersburg. This is where the issue of historical memory becomes supplanted by ideology. Many Russians, and many Americans who have devoted their semester to studying Russia, seem to share a highly romantic view of the czars. "Of course Peter the Great should be memorialized," argued one student, "He founded this city and built Russia into a great power." Well, yes, though this overlooks the tens of thousands of lives lost in building a city with slave labor in the middle of a frozen swamp, the highly centralized and oppressive feudal system Peter introduced that outlasted him by a century and a half, and the three centuries of heated controversy in Russian intellectual circles over whether or not Peter's reforms were justified. Imperial czarist was not exactly a benevolent institution; how else to explain the revolution that brought Lenin to power? For my part, I seriously doubt that that my family would even live in America if not for the reign of Tsar Alexander III and the massive pogroms he encouraged, which continued until the Bolsheviks.





David Plotz

Russia is hardly the only country in the world whose national heroes include violent and morally dubious men. Certainly America is not immune from this problem. But removing statuary can be an even more blatantly political statement than erecting it. A statue, after all, is a testimony to the history of a place. To tear a statue down is to attempt to blot out the memory of whatever it represents, much as Stalin himself used to erase purged party members from photographs. In today's St. Petersburg, one can walk alongside statues of Peter and of Lenin, cheerfully ignoring either or both if one wishes. To suddenly remove all the communists while leaving the czars standing would be to pass a sudden judgment on Russia's history, not only demonizing the communist period and the many residents who still have mixed feelings about it, but just as importantly elevating czarism into something more noble and heroic. And Russia's history is far too complex for such a simplistic ideological display.

There is an anecdote that Lenin did not actually want to be commemorated with statues, claiming that "they only gather bird shit." Maybe so, but they also gather memories, and the memory of communism is now as important a part of St. Petersburg's history as the more distant memory of the czars. Russians will not achieve inner peace by editing their own history; they can only hope to learn from it, and ultimately to try to build a better system on the ruins of two older systems that failed. Otherwise, a century from now American students will be traveling eight time zones away from home to argue about whether or not Russians should tear down the statues of Putin.

David Plotz is majoring in history and he is currently studying abroad in St. Petersburg.

Of Legacies and Memories

Interviews With the Relatives of Russian Literary Greats

ELENA MAYAKOVSKY
DAUGHTER, VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

interview by Masha Mafter

Elena Vladimirovna Mayakovsky is the daughter of Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky, who is perhaps Russia's most famous futurist poet. Elena Mayakovsky revealed that she was Mayakovsky's daughter in 1993. Until then, she went under her legal name, Patricia Thompson. She is a professor of philosophy and women's studies at Lehman College, CUNY, and she is a graduate of Barnard College. She is the author of fifteen books, including Mayakovsky in Manhattan, *the story of her mother and father.*

Masha Mafter: Elena Vladimirovna, could you tell me a little more about your family history?

Elena Mayakovsky: My grandfather was quite well-to-do in Russia, and he and his family had to leave or be killed. My mother married an Englishman to get out of Russia. He was in love with her, she was young and beautiful, educated and charming—a11 Russian women are beautiful and charming. They came here and separated, and that was when she met my father. They fell in love and had a very short affair of a few months. Then he had to leave and was never allowed to come back to the United States. We were in Nice when I was about three years old, and it was the only time I saw him. Soon after that he went back to Russia, and soon after that, he died. And my mother loved Mayakovsky till she died. It was the big love of her life.

M.M.: How did you end up writing *Mayakovsky in Manhattan*?

E.M.: My mother felt that she would never want to exploit or capitalize on her association and love for my father. But I thought my mother's story should be told. It was very interesting because I was introduced to a woman in Moscow who had seen my mother and father together. And she remembered them. She said, "In their presence there was a third presence, and that was love."

M.M.: A lot of people were very resistant initially to what you were saying. Why do you think that is?

E.M.: Well, his long-time inamorata Lily Brik created a whole mystique around him, and I don't think that people understood him very well. I think people are often misguided by the external and by the concocted stories. Lily Brik was a good PR person, and I think she promoted a myth of Mayakovsky that was really not the way people who knew him well understood him—and I think my mother knew him very well, they spent every day together that he was in New York after they met. They had a very significant relationship, and my father had to be very careful when talking about me. He had my picture in his office, and Lily Brik went in and took it out after he died. She was unfortunately also an NKVD agent, as well as the wife of a literary critic.

M.M.: Do you feel that she monopolized his image?

E.M.: I think that she certainly benefited from the material side of things—I mean his royalties and his possessions that she took over rather than my grandmother and my two aunts. There had been a biography of Mayakovsky with a chapter in it called "Dotchka," and that had been excised on the orders of Lily Brik, I believe. In Russia I met the woman who had been the editor of that book. She told me that the chapter had been removed from it. It was my father's reflections on not being able to raise his daughter.

And it was she who went to Stalin, and Stalin declared Mayakovsky "the greatest poet of the Revolution, and to dishonor his name is an insult to the Soviet Union." All that crap. But I believe he [was] killed because he was one of the first dissidents. And when he began to be disenchanted with the Bolshevik regime, he couldn't be allowed to live. That's why I think there will be a lot of contemporary scholarship that will be quite different about Mayakovsky.

M.M.: Did you ever meet Lily Brik?

E.M.: No, because if she could have acquiesced my father's death, what would she have done to me? It appears that when she was knowledgeable that something might happen to him, she left – she wasn't in Russia when he was killed. My father was killed, you know. He certainly didn't commit suicide over a woman, as people suggested. It's still very suspicious as to how he died. I think she betrayed him.

M.M.: What would you say to people who say you want to bolster your own image?

E.M.: I would say to them that I am a full tenured professor in the name of Professor Thompson. I've written fifteen books in my own name. I didn't even tell people about this until 1993, when it was my father's centennial. I'm very successful in my own right with no help from him. If anybody said that to me, they'd find out what my temper is like.

M.M.: You only met him once, when you were three. In what way do you love him?

E.M.: He's me. When I read "Cloud in Trousers," I understand completely. I wrote a paper once called "Genetics and Hermeneutics," meaning that I understand Mayakovsky because I am genetically like him. I don't read his texts like a stranger. I really read his texts like an intimate because I read them from the inside out.

M.M.: Generally, what would you like your readers to come away with?

E.M.: Well, I'd like them to understand that a poet's daughter, who is essentially a philosopher, has one thing in common with her father, and that's metaphor. We extend our ideas and our understanding through metaphor. Mayakovsky did it through poetry and I'm trying to do it through philosophy. So I don't think I'm so different from my father. If there's anything that makes me like him, it's that I have very strong convictions, and I try to live according to them. I just feel great sorrow that he didn't live longer, that I didn't know him better. But you know, there were a lot of things I did in my life that were not unlike what he did. And I didn't have his direct influence. That's why I called my paper "Genetics and Hermeneutics," because I think some things are right there on the X chromosome. I once went to a reading in Barnard when Yevtushenko came, and I walked up to him and told him that I was Mayakovsky's daughter. He said, [imitating a Russian accent] "Vere are your documents?" and I said, [pointing to her brow] "These are my documents."

STEPHAN SOLZHENITSYN

SON, ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN

interview by Anna Shlionsky

Stephan Aleksandrovich Solzhenitsyn is the son of Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974. He is most famous for writing One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich *and* The Gulag Archipelago. *The interview was conducted via an e-mail exchange.*

A.S.: Please tell me about your career, hobbies and special interests. How has your father influenced the things that you devote your time to?

S.S.: I am an urban planner by profession. Built and natural environments draw my keen interest and attention. Much of the work centers on the responsible use of environmental and economic resources, which often require trade-offs. My father's influence on my work has been great in the sense of how one approaches work. He has always seen his own work as a service—given the dramatic nature of the Soviet twentieth century, even a duty. I hope some of this attitude has rubbed off on me: that if what you do is of service to people, you will find joy in it, and the rest will fall in place.

A.S.: What are your particular interests in literature? What authors do you enjoy reading?

S.S.: That is a fairly easy list for me, but only because I cannot claim to be a real student of literature or of the arts in general. Of the Russian classics, I find Dostoevsky timeless. This, perhaps least progressive of authors, has the most enduring relevance to modern life. I will more often pick up poetry than prose, and am most likely to be caught reading

Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Tsvetaeva.

A.S.: How would you say your life has been influenced by the two countries you have lived in: the US and Russia? Since they are very different, how has each shaped you and what is your relationship to each?

S.S.: There has definitely been a synthesis, and it evolves continuously. Many universal values have to come to me through the Russian side. For example, I think Russian culture does a bit better job explaining magnanimity, why we act generously. I think about faith, love and friendship more in a Russian than American vocabulary. But having lived in America for much of my life, I have drawn inspiration not only from its physical beauty—my New England in particular—but from the American practice of governance, as well as from the attitude that great things are possible even from the individual. I care deeply about the histories of both lands.

A.S.: Describe your father's career. We know he was involved in many different things besides writing, for instance, television. Where do you believe his greatest successes are?

S.S.: My father is a writer first and foremost. Political considerations always came second—and more importantly he never practiced politics per se, but spilled over into the political from the ethical/moral sphere. It is just that, living in the totalitarian century, the choice for a writer was either to immerse oneself in a fairly narrow aesthetic realm, or to tackle the surrounding world and its issues as well. The insistence of the Soviet regime was not just that authors write about socially relevant issues but that they tow the socialist line in doing so. A natural act of rebellion, therefore, would have been to avoid it altogether, and at least keep one's own internal moral house in order. But my father did better: he bore witness to what he saw in life, truthfully, risking all. He never lost sight of those millions who had already lost their all, and his witness was for them. That is the greatest service of a writer, and his greatest success.

A.S.: Where in your father's life do you find greatest inspiration?

S.S.: As a dad, he has always taught by example, without lecturing. His devotion, his love—to his family, to Russia—have been common facts of his existence. That has been deeply, if not loudly, inspiring.

Marina Ledkovsky

niece, Vladimir Nabokov

interview by Katarzyna Kozanecka

Marina Ledkovsky is the niece of Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, the author of Lolita, Invitation to a Beheading, *and* Pale Fire, among many others. *Ledkovsky is a retired professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at Barnard College.*

Katarzyna Kozanecka: Please tell me a little bit about yourself and your view of Nabokov.

Marina Ledkovsky: I'm just the niece. Vladimir Nabokov was the first cousin of my mother. Their fathers were brothers. My grandfather, Dmitri Dmitrievich, and his father, Vladimir Dmitrievich, were brothers. My grandfather was the oldest son in the family; his father was the third son.

They all—the Nabokovs, my grandfather, Vladimir's father and his brother, Sergey Dmitrievich—they were all courtiers, they were all very involved in court life. The ladies were ladies of the court—my grandmother, Vladmir's mother, but not his grandmother—she did not belong to the nobility. Being monarchists, they wanted to save Russia. Everybody wanted to save Russia.

They all left almost together; the family of my mother and the family of Sergey Dmitrivich left on the first of April, 1919. They were all supposed to leave together but Vladimir Dmitrievich, the father of Uncle Volodya, had to produce a document to prove to the French, who were helping him evacuate, that he was a treasurer for the provisional government. He was detained for a day, so they left on the second of April. My grandparents went first to Constantinople, and then they stayed for awhile in Athens, because everyone thought the Bolshevik government wouldn't last, and that they would return very soon. As they say, *sideli na chemodanach* (they sat on their suitcases). Then they realized it wasn't going to be like that. My family went to Berlin, but the Vladmir Dmitrievich branch of the family went to London. The two boys, Sergei and Volodya, went to Cambridge.

Then he moved to America. I think he liked America very much. He was a very good, dedicated American citizen, which not everybody wants to acknowledge, because oh, America is awful for

everybody who comes here, awful, awful, awful. He was happy, grateful to be here. He thought it was a great country. He was always on the defense when he was pushed by reporters. I wrote a paper on this; it has been published in a Russian Nabokovian review in St. Petersburg: "Nabokov i Amerika." I based it on all his interviews.

Vladimir had a hard time when he came to America, as everybody does. He came here with the help of Aleksandra Lvovna Tolstaya, the granddaughter of Tolstoy. Nowhere does he write about that. Nabokov's son, Dmitri, with whom I stay in touch, is very touchy about things that he doesn't want people to know; for example, his father's first years in America, when he had a hard time getting money. But everybody had this problem, so there's nothing terribly new there.

Aleksandra Lvovna had nothing to offer him. But [he knew] if he had a bicycle, which he had to acquire, [he could] deliver milk around the city. That was the first job that he had, [along with delivering] newspapers. Can you imagine? So she had no feeling that he was a person that should be taken care of differently, not at all. He was just an ordinary person, who had to feed his family. That was in the 1940s. Already then Aleksandra Lvovna was organizing the Tolstoy foundation for refugees, because there were so many refugees coming from Europe, most of them Jewish. Vera [Nabokov's wife] was Jewish; they had to go, because when the Germans invaded it was very dangerous. It was fantastic what Aleksandra Lvovna did, but the attitude was, you work like everybody else.

But eventually Vladimir met people who were interested in him; he was able to publish, *The New Yorker* took his stories, he got positions as a teacher. He adapted very quickly. He was very cosmopolitan. Like the whole family. We went with my mother to his poetry readings at the 92nd Street Y and the Russkii Dom. He was so aristocratic. It was so simple, nobody was screaming. They all scream, the new poets.

Lolita made him famous – *Lolita* was the book that everybody read. The other novels and stories are not so much valued, as this *Lolita*. Of course, there are Nabokov societies, and admirers, but it is a very select kind of readership. He likes to delve into those niceties of the language. He is very selective of language. He forces you to remember, to play the game with him together. People say he is boring. To me this is pleasure. Nabokov is pure art, I don't know another writer like that. I love his commentaries on Pushkin. Again, there are people who complain that he plays games, he likes all these anecdotes. My favorite book is of course *Pnin*, because it's so funny.

I wonder sometimes if he stayed in Russia, if he would have gone into literature. He said himself that he became a writer because there was nothing else for him to do. He had this ease with poetry—you know, everybody in the *serebrianny vek* was a poet—but then Vera persuaded him to write prose instead. Because he was so inventive with language. How can you earn money by writing poetry?

Volodya hated the Soviets. His poems denounced it, proclaimed he would never recognize their rule. But he always kept Russia in his heart. It was a dreamland, a land of his childhood, that he could never forget, this little booklet (*Ten' ruskoj vetki*) brings it out very much. The quotations from his writing. He remembered everything. The paths in the woods, and the river, and the windings. In almost every work he wrote, there is something about Russia; it's brought to you in a different way. "Zembla" and all of that [a reference to Nabokov's *Pale Fire*]…. This person found it all, even Russian translations of English novels. He compiled them into this little book. The end of *Pale Fire*: "History permitting, I may sail back to my recovered kingdom, and with a great sob greet the gray coastline and the gleam of a roof in the rain…".

I read him and I think, if I were able to express my nostalgia [for my childhood], for the happy gatherings, I would do it this way.

Evgeny Pasternak
son, Boris Pasternak

interview & translation by Katerina Vorotova

Evgeny Borisovich Pasternak was born to Evgenia and Boris Pasternak in 1923. He studied physics and engineering, worked as an engineer for the Red Army, and later taught at the Moscow Energy Institute. He has compiled several volumes of his father's writing and is the author of his father's biography, entitled Boris Pasternak: The Tragic Years: 1930-1960. *Boris Pasternak is most famous for being the author of* Doctor Zhivago, *a novel for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1958. Unfortunately, he was forced to decline the award.*

Katerina Vorotova: For the readers of *The Birch*, can you describe the milestones of your life?

Evgeny Pasternak: I've led a fairly ordinary life. I was born in 1923. Until 1931 when I turned seven years old, my parents and I lived together as one family. In 1931, my father divorced my mom and since visited us every week and wrote us letters. There is a book about this, which was translated into English and French, *Boris Pasternak: Letters to Evgenia Pasternak*. This book is my biography. Then I went to school, graduated. During the war, I studied at a military academy, and graduated with an engineering degree in 1946. I was never sent to the front, but I served in the army for twelve years until 1954, I received a PhD and then I began teaching at a technical college, and later at Moscow Energy Institute. This continued until 1974. In my later years, my wife and I decided to work on literary publishing of my father's works and I began writing his biography. Before he passed away in 1960, which was a tremendous loss for us, we were witnessing the last years of his life: the Nobel Prize, the refusal. Then his first books were beginning to be printed, very rarely, about one every ten to fifteen years, and my wife and I were involved in their preparation and publication. My wife, Elena Vladimirovna, is a philologist. At this time we were raising our children and were doing this work.

K.V.: What was it like to grow up while being surrounded by brilliant minds and famous names?

E.P.: My family had a great impact on my childhood. My mom was an artist; I knew closely such artists as Robert Falk, Sarra Lebedeva. Most important to my childhood was my grandfather Leonid Pasternak, who already then lived with my grandmother in Germany. My mom and I twice visited them there. These short trips left a profound impression on me. This gave me a certain degree of freedom, certain feelings of personal self-worth, although the times were dangerous during communism. Even though I was tied to the regime, like my father repeatedly told me, in some respect I never lost my inner freedom, that is, the ability to react to things like a human being.

K.V.: What was the hardest part of writing your father's biography?

E.P.: It was a very long project that involved a lot of tedious work. It was very difficult to write about the latest years in the first and even the second editions, because we did not completely understand what was being done to my father during the years when he received the Nobel Prize, which he was forced to decline. He was persecuted, and he died from a quickly-spreading cancer, which was definitely the result of stress, disappointment and grief which he experienced in his final years. We began to write about these years in the first edition, but it was impossible to write about this, or even *Doctor Zhivago,* in great detail in the first edition. Even in the second edition, we still had no knowledge and only a few documents about his persecution. He did not like to talk about such horrible things. He protected his loved ones, tried not to upset them, was always fairly cheerful, did not talk about his pain. He was a heroic man. These things are not sufficiently reflected. But in the short, more compact version, which came out recently in St. Petersburg as the third edition, titled *Life of Pasternak*, the entire biography is abridged and written more compactly, but these latest years are expanded upon. (Translated into English as *Boris Pasternak: The Tragic Years 1930-60*).

K.V.: What is your fondest memory of your father?

E.P.: My fondest memories are my childhood memories of living together as a family, how my father talked to me, went on walks with me down Moscow streets. This is how I remember Moscow, the Moscow I saw through his eyes. And on the other hand, I remember the last summer of his life in 1959, when we all lived together at our summer estate. We already had our eldest son. My father lived in the house. I talked to him, he worked until late at night. He was writing the play he never managed to finish called *Blind Beauty*. He also wrote to people who sent him letters of consolation from different countries of the world. By the way, Leonard Bernstein, the great composer and conductor, once visited my father then. This was his last summer.

K.V.: How would you describe his personality? Did he joke often? Was he mostly serious? What was his sense of humor like?

E.P.: He did joke. He stood out. Everything that he said had meaning. Everything attracted attention and impressed people. He was an intelligent speaker. When he spoke, he did not say empty words. He joked and he spoke seriously. He said things that people did not expect of him. He was unpredictable in his judgments. It was always a very unique experience

speaking to him.

K.V.: How did Pasternak manage to preserve his poetic voice during times of severe repression and criticism?

E.P.: Well, if you read his poems, some of them were written after these things, then you'll realize…. His poems from 1956 are still light, happy, but such poems as "God's World" and "Nobel Prize" are more tragic. He was cheerful, he had enough emotional strength to react to everything as an artist. When Bernstein visited Pasternak, he was offended by something; the minister of culture criticized Pasternak in the paper. And he came to Pasternak and said, "How can you live with such a minister?" Pasternak answered, "What are you talking about? An artist speaks to God, and God gives him various plots, puts him in various situations, and of course, the artist has to write about them. And this could be a vaudeville or a tragedy." For Pasternak, it was a tragedy, for which he did not have enough physical strength and health. He had lived a fairly difficult 70 years that God gave him to write about.

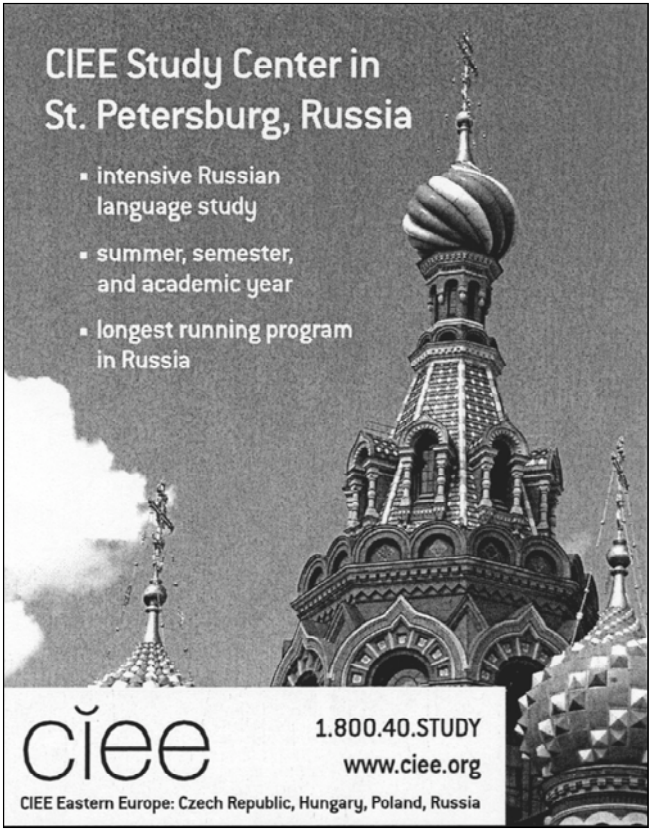
K.V.: How close is *Doctor Zhivago* to Pasternak's life?

E.P.: The plot of *Doctor Zhivago* is close to his life because it takes place during the time of his life. But in general, there are fewer biographical elements in *Doctor Zhivago* than in his other works. He wanted to make his protagonist as free as possible. He made him Russian, a boy from the nobility; he made him a doctor, a physician, rather than a professional writer. He freed him from those things that would hinder Pasternak from expressing what he meant to say, and which would keep the hero from writing evangelical poetry. They are Christian poems, so open and so free—not one poet could write about evangelical events from the first person as if he were a witness.

K.V.: Is there something special you would like to convey to the readers of *The Birch* about your father?

E.P.: I'd like to show what a great artist Boris Pasternak was. Almost all of his poetry and prose is translated into different languages and read all over the world. We tried to collect a third form of his creative production, that is, his letters. Letters during communism played an enormous role, because saying something in print was difficult and dangerous. Father wrote *Doctor Zhivago* without any hope of publishing it. Letters written day by day are defined by the content of what the writer wants to express. This is better than the diaries that some people kept in our time. They had these diaries and reflected in them very few things, distorted and senseless. But letters must be written in such a way that they contain a certain message, otherwise there is no sense in writing them. And Pasternak wrote letters wonderfully. We have over 2,500 of his letters. We published some of them, such as letters to my mom, to his parents and sisters and so on.

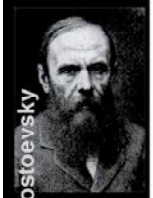
The previous interviews were edited and abridged because of space constraints. We thank all of the family members for their participation.



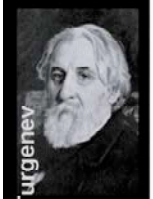
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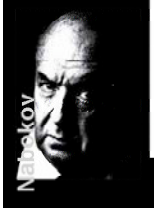

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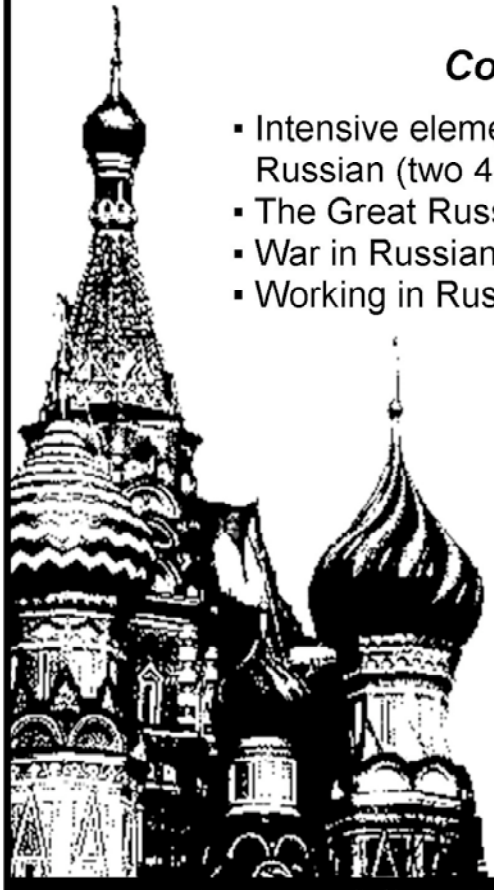
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