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TITLE: NON-RUSSIAN WRITERS OF RUSSIAN  
LITERATURE

AUTHOR: ANTHONY OLCOTT

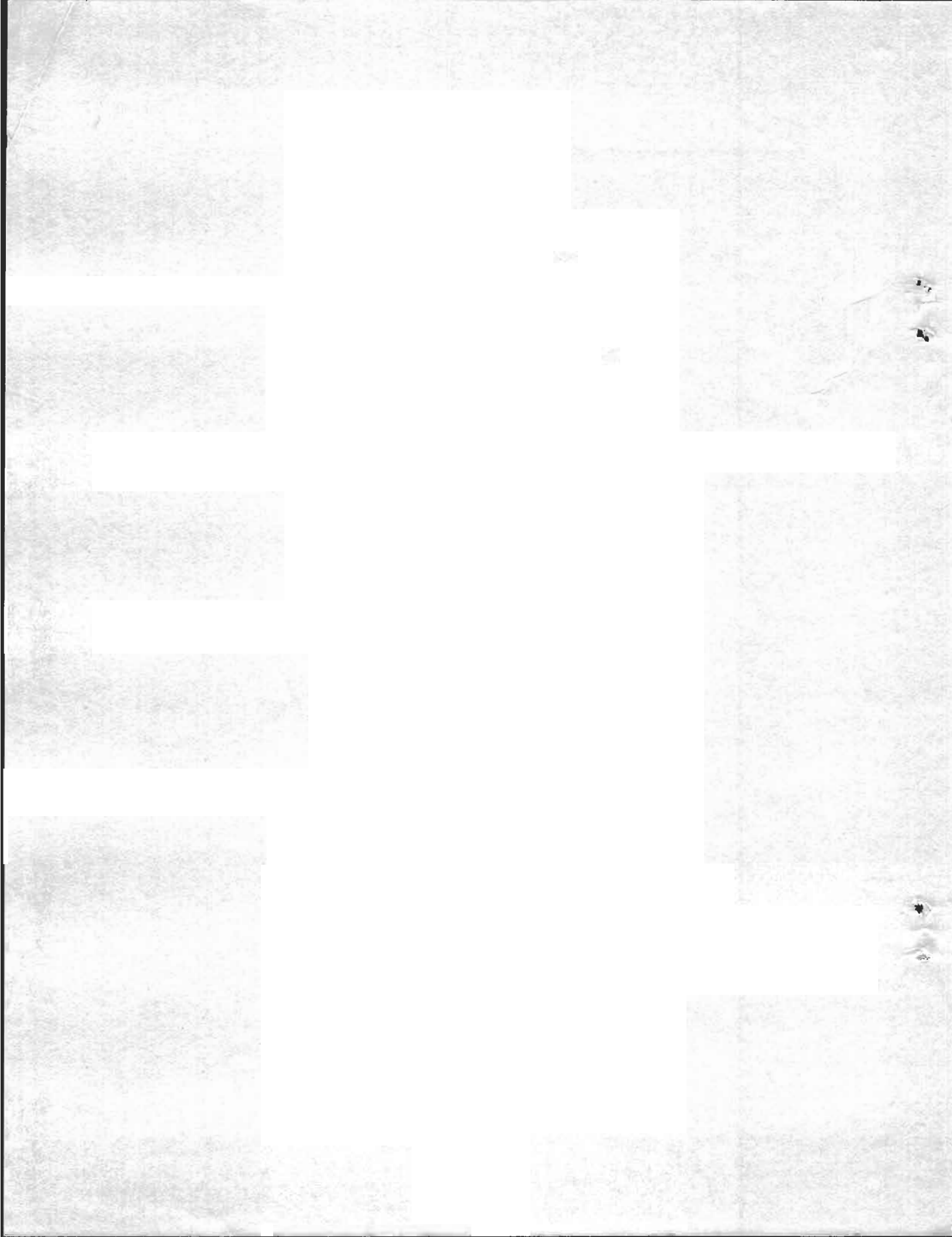
CONTRACTOR: Colgate University

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Anthony Olcott

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## NON-RUSSIAN WRITERS OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

a study by Anthony Olcott

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project undertook, first, to identify as many Soviet writers as possible who are non-Russian by nationality but who write and publish in Russian, and second, to substantiate an initial assumption that the non-Russian cultural backgrounds of such writers, combined with the Soviet experiences which they share with their Russian fellow citizens, would provide a forum for an Aesopian argument over the nature of Soviet society. What prompted this investigation was the suspicion that non-Russian writers, especially those who can compose in Russian, emboldened by a freer literary atmosphere, might soon begin to follow Chingiz Aitmatov's example, using their skills in Russian and their artistic freedom as non-Russians to lecture their Russian readers, addressing the problems of the USSR as a whole. A further suspicion was that the large number of Central Asian writers of Russian would prove especially interesting, because their Muslim heritage would give them a cultural superiority in precisely the areas which most concerned their Russian counterparts, disintegration of the family and alcohol abuse. It was further suspected that Russian writers would not accept this criticism easily, and that the ensuing argument--conducted through the medium of literature--would provide a mechanism by which Russian writers could also undertake re-examination of their own

society, and perhaps provide a forum for discussing the many ills of the USSR.

Conceived in 1986, the study failed to foresee two changes which have had a profound impact upon the execution of the project and, what is obviously more important, upon the Soviet Union. One of those changes, glasnost', has completely altered the nature and significance of literature, indeed of information; the second, khozraschet, is destabilizing a set of relationships which had long been established among writers and republics, Russians and non-Russians. Among the consequences of these two changes is that we are now able to document the old way of publishing, describing the roles, both formal and informal, the non-Russians' work occupied within Russian and Soviet letters; another though is that we can with equal assurance assert that those old relationships are now gone. What is considerably less certain though is what new relationships are forming, and what their impact is likely to be upon the intellectual, and even social atmosphere of the USSR of the near future.

Another consequence of glasnost' is the republication or first publication of works (almost entirely Russian) which have been suppressed, forgotten, or ignored, while even more important has been the development of real journalism and social science. For the first time Soviets and westerners alike are beginning to get firm, usable figures on phenomena, some of which the authorities of the USSR once used to conceal, and many of which these authorities seem not even to have been aware they should be

measuring. As a result, though, fiction has diminished enormously in importance, ceasing to be the forum for examination of society.

Even more important than the changes which glasnost' brought to publishing over the period of the investigation were changes in the ethnic relations among Soviet citizens. Although it was a prediction of this project that Russian nationalism would increase, coming into ever greater conflict with the interests of the non-Russian, all-union writers, the degree to which that has proven true was not anticipated. The degree of racial hatred, and the violence it has caused, appears to have surprised everyone. Many of the non-Russian writers of Russian whom this study identified have fallen silent since glasnost', or have had journalism thrust upon them, having to explain the actions of their fellow nationals to the central reading public. The press of current events also explains some of the disappearance of fiction, since Soviet publishing is both slow and faced with an enormous backlog of materials, but there has without question been a drop in interest in non-Russian writers who write in Russian.

The other of Gorbachev's new policies, khozraschet, or self-financing, will probably change the position of the non-Russian writers of the USSR even more than have glasnost' and Russian nationalism taken together. In conditions of chronic shortages of paper and presses, and of an unquenchable Russian market for certain titles, the effect of khozraschet has been almost to kill the non-Russian publishers, with consequent devastation of the non-Russian writers.

In combination these changes give some grounds for concluding that the non-Russian writers of Russian prose will prove to be relics of the Brezhnev era. However, the results of this study suggest that conclusion may well be erroneous, for several reasons. There is a large number of non-Russian writers who either write exclusively in Russian or in Russian and the language of their people; moreover, many of them have used their national status, in part, to widen the bounds of the permitted for Russian writers. Equally important, these writers as a group offered an integrative model of citizenship in the USSR which, for all the undeniable elements of falseness that glasnost' has revealed beneath the surface of the "brotherhood of peoples", nevertheless reconciled many of the conflicts between nationality and Soviet citizenship which have now come so violently to the surface.

What motivated these writers to undertake the difficult job of learning another language well enough to write in it? The initial assumption of this study, that pecuniary interests were uppermost, was only partly borne out. Although the potential audience, and hence return, for a work in Russian is very much larger than that for a work in any other language, even that of the most populous national groups, evidence suggests that for many writers the switch appears to have been a question of professional survival, to escape the confines of their local writers' unions. It had long been suspected that writers' unions at the republic level exercised extraordinary control over what was published in their domains, but the revelations of the past two years surpass

even the worst suspicions. In addition to all the dangers inherent in a small, closed literary establishment, there now exist huge questions of resources; some of the peoples have virtually no journals, presses, or other outlets for literary production in their language. Perhaps the most striking reason though why many writers move to Russian, and the most surprising, is that many "native" languages appear to be dying out. A number of non-Russian writers have cited countrymen who either know nothing of the language of their nationality, or who have evolved a pidgin of Russian and their native language. Writers are concerned about this linguistic erosion not just out of national pride, but also for pragmatic, self-interested reasons; the potential audience for literature is predominantly urban and educated, which turns out in many republics also to be the group least likely to know their own language, or to be interested in using it if they do. Nor do conditions promise better for the future; many writers have complained that the young seem not to be learning their own language at all. As a result many native-language writers find themselves in a closed circle, their ever-dwindling audience leading to ever-fewer ways of reaching them, resulting in an audience still smaller. In sum, the move from a native language to Russian appears to be much less a financial necessity than an artistic one.

It is widely assumed that this move is easier for non-Russians than for Russians, because of a quota system, the existence of which glasnost' has confirmed, but which khozraschet



is now ending. Literary politics before glasnost' were such that non-Russian writers were published, even if their books had essentially to be written for them; even so though non-Russians who have published in the central press see this as arduous, arbitrary, and, very often, insulting. One basic problem is where to publish, since there is only one journal, Druzhiba narodov, the mandate of which is to publish non-Russians. The overall number of Soviet journals printed has changed little since 1945, while the number of book titles published each year has essentially not grown since the 1960s, so that the number of "slots" for which writers are competing is actually considerably smaller. Since the evidence suggests that publishing at the all-union level is at least as crony-ridden as it is at the republic level, non-Russians are at a considerable disadvantage, which is only exacerbated by simple ignorance, in that no systematic efforts are made to keep abreast of literary developments outside of Moscow. A final trouble for the non-Russians seems to be that the literary market, especially for serious literature, is shrinking, both because Soviets have more leisure-time diversions than they once had and because the long years of publishing boring drivel seems to have killed off a large portion of the potential audience. In other words, the picture which glasnost' presents of publishing practices in the center, and of the audience toward which those publications are directed, suggests that, contrary to what Russian writers have assumed, access to the all-union reader has always been difficult for non-Russian writers, and that the new

conditions of the USSR are likely to make that access even more difficult.

An examination of the non-Russian writers suggests four types of response to the changes brought by glasnost' and khozraschet. Assuming no major reorientations of Soviet policies, the non-Russian writers who would seem to have the least role to play in the future are those who most benefitted from the stagnant conditions of the past, who were published, and indeed who may have had their books written for them, because of their political loyalties, not their talent. Their books have no clear audience; the only readers who would see them would be local Russians, but authors of this sort are of such low quality that reading their books is hard to imagine. Several factors would seem to make future publication of this sort almost impossible: the intense central scrutiny for corruption, especially in Central Asia; increased Russian nationalism (as well as a marked outflow of Russians from many of the republics); and Moscow's substantially greater refusal to underwrite wasteful economic practices (especially outside of Moscow).

A much more complex case arises with those writers who were not just advanced by their republic writers' union, but who also achieved all-union prominence. Most of the writers of this group undeniably have talent, but they also benefited from the active support of their influential fellows, and the nationality-biased publication policies of the Brezhnev era. Although it is perhaps unfair, the major fault of this group is simply that they are

ordinary; deprived of special consideration, and in some cases stigmatized for their earlier cronyism, they will presumably have a much more difficult time competing for publication, without being in any way worse than equally ordinary Russians, because at a time of heightened racial awareness, given the choice between a dull novel by a Russian and dull novel by a non-Russian, the Soviet consumer of the near future seems more likely to choose the former. An obvious route for many of the writers of this sort might be to become more nationalistic, but it also is true that many in this category are so closely identified with the recent past as to undercut any authority they might have enjoyed with their fellow nationals. Even though most of them were enthusiastic supporters of the earlier stages of Gorbachev's "revolution", from Moscow's perspective this group of writers would seem a dangerous element; used to having influence in a system which they wished to improve, not replace, these writers must feel their loss of position acutely.

A third group of writers could prove even more dangerous for Moscow, although they are difficult to document; these are the writers whom this study posited would debate their Russian fellow-citizens in literature, to stake their claim upon the nature of the future USSR. These writers are young and have only begun publishing. Because of schools, the Army, and urban life, they are fluent in Russian, and many appear to be gifted. However, contrary to what this study had initially posited, because of the radical changes of the past three years many of these writers seem

to be turning their backs upon all-union (and hence Russian) culture, to become intensely nationalistic. Some may even be leaving literature entirely.

Though this third group might ultimately prove to have the most political effect, it is a fourth group of writers which will have the most literary and cultural effect. Not numerous, but remarkable for having genuine literary talent, this group has enjoyed several artistic advantages over their Russian counterparts: their words were less watched; they were given advantages in publication; and they were spared participation in the intellectual currents of Russia. With little exception, Russian prose of the 1970s and early 1980s was realistic, straightforward, and boring, creating a shortage of good literature. In most of the central publications the seriatina of the past has been renounced, bringing a huge upswell of subscribers. However, even though Soviet censorship created an enormous backlog of Russian language literature, that fund of once-banned works is being drawn down. Unpublished works remain, of course, but of increasing inappropriateness for a Soviet environment. Translations of world literature are another source of interesting prose, but with obvious problems for ideology; also important is that rights to these works must be paid for in hard currency. The only cheap and reliable source of interesting new literary works in Russian thus is likely to be this small group of talented non-Russians.

This being the case, what will be the place of the non-Russian writers of Russian in Russian culture? Considerable hostility to these non-Russian writers exists, but at the same time Russian literature has a demonstrated ability to absorb talent. The evidence of this study suggests that non-Russian writers of Russian for the most part were a creation of the artificial conditions of the Brezhnev era, and that the greater part of them will either be reduced to a lower, republic level of activity, or will be forced out of literature entirely; some may drop out voluntarily.

At the same time, however, the ending of "affirmative-action" publishing, combined with the on-going necessity of filling journals with literature which subscribers will want to pay for, seems certain to work in the favor of some of the non-Russians. For all of the "seriatina" which some of the non-Russian writers of Russian have produced, others are emerging as the most unusual, most interesting writers in the Soviet Union today. What becomes of them and their work in the USSR of the near future would seem to be an important litmus for whether the Soviet Union can survive as a multi-national entity, or must sunder on its own various nationalisms.

## NON-RUSSIAN WRITERS OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE

### I. THE PROJECT AND CIRCUMSTANCE

This project, the study of works of fiction written in Russian by authors who are Soviet citizens but who are not ethnic Russians, was conceived in 1986, for which reason it may be understandable that it failed to foresee two changes which have had a profound impact upon the execution of the project and, what is obviously more important, upon the Soviet Union. One of those changes, glasnost, has completely altered the nature and significance of literature, indeed of information; the second, khozraschet, is destabilizing a set of relationships which had long been established among writers and republics, Russians and non-Russians. Among the consequences of these two changes is that we are now able to document the nature of relationships in the old way of publishing, where once we only could speculate, to describe the roles, both formal and informal, which the non-Russian writers of Russian once played, and to evaluate the positions their work occupied within Russian and Soviet letters; another though is that we can with equal assurance assert that those old relationships are now gone, probably for good. What is considerably less certain though is what new relationships are forming, and what their impact is likely to be upon the intellectual, and even social, atmosphere of the USSR of the near future.

1986 began with publication of Viktor Astaf'ev's novel Pechal'nyi detektiv, a stunning portrait of social disintegration in a nameless provincial city, with unheard-of portraits of child abuse, drunkenness, and social injustice. There followed another work, Rasputin's Pozhar, which continued the same themes, making a fire in a Siberian logging town into a symbol which suggests that the USSR is indulging in a walpurgisnacht of drunkenness and self-destruction.

Breathtaking as these works seemed against the background of twenty years or more of rosy, upbeat, unreadable works about a Soviet Union that never existed and never would, they were soon outdone by another, Chingiz Aitmatov's Plakha. Beginning publication in Novyi mir in June, that novel not only portrayed in precise, journalistic detail how wild hemp is gathered and distributed to eager Soviet customers, anxious to drug themselves into a stupor, but argued that these youthful addicts had reached their state of degeneracy precisely because of the Soviet system, a deceitful, indifferent state which could offer no future better than the empty dreams of hemp smoke. The only remedy, Aitmatov argued through his hero, is a return to religion, a belief in an up-dated "God-Contemporary" which would answer the needs of these aimless children.

For all their shock value, the ills which Astaf'ev and Rasputin revealed were shocking only in degree of revelation, not in kind; each had brought up similar points before. It was only Aitmatov who revealed a new ill--drug addiction--which had never

been mentioned in print before. Nor was this surprising, that the most shocking revelation about life in the USSR reached an all-union, Russian-language audience through the words of a Kirgiz writer, for Aitmatov already enjoyed a freedom of topic far greater than anything granted his ethnic Russian fellow writers. As early as 1970, in his novella Belyi parakhod, Aitmatov had shown how erosion of traditional religious values and the materialism of Soviet life led a small boy to commit suicide, and in 1973 his play Voskhozhdenie na Fudziamu (co-authored with Kaltai Mukhamedzhanov) had explored the delicate relations of Soviet authorities who had gotten to their present prominence by betraying their fellows.

The book which had really made Aitmatov appear boldly outspoken though was his 1980 novel I dol'she vekha dlitsia den', which argued clearly that Stalinism and the social disintegration of the Brezhnev years were products of the conscious, willful destruction of history by Soviet authorities, which could be countered only by a return to traditional religious and cultural practices. Despite the obvious corollary, that Soviet society could be saved only by purging it of most of that which makes it Soviet, the book was embraced by the Soviet establishment; Georgi Markov, the since-deposed head of the Writers Union, called it a model of socialist realism, and even Leonid Brezhnev, in who knows what sclerotic stupor, singled the book out for public praise. In the cultural wasteland of those years, it is little wonder that Aitmatov's novel was also seized upon by a truth-starved intel-



ligentsia, who saw in the novel a 1980s equivalent of Solzhenitsyn's Denisovich, of Bulgakov's Master and Margarita. Nor did anyone have any illusions about why it was Aitmatov who was given so much leash, when other writers were being jailed for less; had he been Russian, Aitmatov too would have been silenced. Because the USSR of those years was pursuing policies designed to show the wonderful harmony in which the many ethnic groups of the country live and work (as it was then maintained they did), Aitmatov, a Kirgiz, enjoyed a latitude far greater than did his Russian fellow writers, which his ability to write in Russian permitted him to put to socially-useful purposes.

It was Plakha which prompted this investigation, because in that work Aitmatov moved to a new plane of social responsibility. Part of the unspoken bargain of the "affirmative-action" style publishing from which Aitmatov was benefitting was that non-Russian writers could write relatively freely about their home peoples, but not about Russia. Whether such an understanding was ever articulated has not been revealed so far, but certainly all of Aitmatov's works until Plakha were set in Central Asia, which had the function of limiting the applicability of Aitmatov's criticisms, even as it gave him the freedom to make them. That is, Aitmatov and some few other writers were able to be as bold as they were about criticizing society because few readers seemed inclined to generalize those criticisms to society as a whole. The boldest thing about Plakha seemed at the time to be that Aitmatov had broken that understanding, by making his main

character a Russian, thereby making explicit that his criticisms were meant for society as a whole, and not just for Central Asians.

What prompted this investigation was the suspicion that other non-Russian writers, especially those who can compose in Russian, emboldened by Aitmatov's assertion of a right to lecture the Russians and by the apparently freer literary atmosphere (of 1986), might soon begin to follow Aitmatov's example, using their skills in Russian and their freedom as non-Russians to address the problems of the USSR. A further suspicion was that the large number of Central Asian writers of Russian would prove especially interesting, because their cultural milieu of Muslim heritage would give them grounds for an Aesopian literary dialogue with their Russian counterparts; after all, it was precisely the issues which Astaf'ev, Rasputin and others were most critical of in their fellow Russians, disintegration of the family and alcohol abuse, in which the Islamic cultures have an advantage over Russian culture, providing a more stable society than do the Russian cultural norms which have always underlain Soviet society. It was further suspected that Russian writers would not accept this criticism easily, and that the ensuing argument--conducted through the medium of literature--would provide a mechanism by which Russian writers could also undertake re-examination of their own society, and perhaps provide a forum for discussing the many ills of the USSR.

Even that sort of discussion, had it taken place, would have required some degree of glasnost', or the ability of the press to discuss once-taboo subjects; the assumption at the beginning of the investigation, understandably, was that that degree would remain small. Indeed, when the July issue of Novyi mir failed to contain the next segment of Plakha (a lapse still not explained today, incidentally), the natural conclusion was that Plakha had gone too far. After all, even Aitmatov, for all his power and position, had earlier suffered censorship, changing the end of Belyi parakhod after critics found the original too gloomy, and enduring the closing of his play (which also was not published until 1989). It immediately seemed obvious that the limits of this new glasnost' had been reached, and that literature would continue to proceed in the complexities of Aesopian language, concealing its real subjects beneath simpler and more innocuous apparent ones.

Even as the beginning of this study, which followed the methodology outlined in the investigation proposal, was demonstrating that there had indeed been an attempt at such hidden dialogue, at least in the 1970s and early 1980s, glasnost' was changing the literary and cultural arenae of the Soviet Union in 1987, and even more so in 1988, so rapidly that that dialogue was obviously already history, not really relevant to the powerful new realities of Soviet literature, and life. For one thing, glasnost' quickly made Aesopian language unnecessary, because writers increasingly were speaking openly. Since 1986 glasnost' has gone

on to give readers a flood of horrors, confessions, and exposes even the scope of which is difficult to summarize, to say nothing of their impact. At times glasnost' even seems to have no limits, and even if it has, there is no doubt that those limits have passed well beyond any hints by Astaf'ev, Rasputin, and Aitmatov, which after just two years look so faded as to be forgotten.

In many ways, in fact, the most important phenomenon of glasnost' has been the development of real journalism, and the public thirst that has created for improved social sciences, and the firm data that they would provide. For the first time Soviets and westerners alike are beginning to get firm, usable figures on phenomena like suicide, child abuse, poverty, abortion, sexuality, and a wide range of social facts, some of which the authorities of the USSR once used to conceal, and many of which these authorities seem not even to have been aware they should be measuring.

An ironic consequence of this has been that fiction, which first intimated that the USSR is a deeply troubled society, has diminished enormously in importance, many of the functions it once fulfilled at last taken up by journalism and social science (economics and sociology especially). For historical reasons fiction in Russia has always had to perform a variety of functions, since from at least 1825 on only fiction gave any possible scope for discussions (no matter how veiled) of social issues. Writers were crucial to creating the climate of opinion which led to the revolution, and writers have remained widely regarded in the Soviet era as civic consciences, a function which grew

particularly in the 1970s, when the so-called "village" writers began to sound alarms about ecological despoliation and destruction of the traditional Russian countryside. As one critic has suggested, this tradition of writers as public spokesmen reached an apotheosis of sorts at the Sixth Congress of Writers of the RSFSR "which some wags called the Irrigators Congress, since the majority of speeches... really were about the project to turn the northern rivers".<sup>1</sup> However, as the Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov asks, "is it really normal that journalists and writers have to take upon themselves the functions of economists, historians, philosophers, and jurists?"<sup>2</sup> Now that glasnost' has permitted these latter to assume their proper function, the space given to literature, both in print and in the readers' attention span, is accordingly smaller.

Nor is that the only function of glasnost'. Another remarkable feature of the changes in the literary landscape is the republication or first publication of works (almost entirely Russian) which have been suppressed, forgotten, or ignored for as long as sixty years; a companion, though smaller, phenomenon has been the occasional publication of works written abroad by the current emigration. All of this leads one critic to observe sardonically that "the journals still print some modern prose. Not often, but they do print it"<sup>3</sup>.

Even more important than the changes which glasnost' brought to publishing over the period of the investigation were changes in the ethnic relations among Soviet citizens. That the "brotherhood

of nations" which the Soviet Union once claimed itself to be was proven a fiction surprised no one, but the degree of racial hatred, and the violence it has caused, appears to have surprised everyone, even the participants themselves. The past three years have been intensely nationalistic, and nowhere has that been more true than among the Russians themselves. Although it was a prediction of this project that Russian nationalism would increase, coming into ever greater conflict with the interests of the non-Russian, all-union writers, the degree to which that has proven true, and the virulence with which Russian writers themselves would take up issues of their own past, their own culture, was not anticipated. The situation, as the critic V. Sukhnev observes, is such that "the air is particularly thick, like a row in a communal apartment. The little peoples scold the Russians, saying that they are prevented from developing their indigenous cultures, while the Russians scold the non-Russians, saying that our [Russian] national values aren't dear to them."<sup>4</sup> For the non-Russians, one of the most important consequences of this upsurge of nationalism is that the central literary establishment seems almost to have forgotten the non-Russian writers; as Vitautas Kubilius, a Lithuanian, has observed:<sup>5</sup>

Neither contemporary Russian literature nor other national literatures withstood the competition [of publishing Platonov, Bulgakov, and Pasternak]. These latter literatures have almost disappeared from the pages of the central publications... Criticism too has ceased paying attention to these literatures. Their role in the general atmosphere of our spiritual life has been greatly reduced.

The general lack of interest, even derision, which Aitmatov has begun to suffer is emblematic of that change. Aitmatov's sixtieth birthday, in December 1988, was to have been marked with traditional Soviet pomp, but the Armenian earthquake forced cancellation of television interviews, which were not rescheduled.

Aitmatov has long been one of the most powerful writers in the USSR, a member of the directorate of the Union of Writers and on the editorial boards of several major journals; it made some sense that he should have been assigned use of what had been Pasternak's dacha in the writer's colony of Peredelkino. Soon after that though, the outcry forced the Writers' Union to convert the dacha to a museum. Even worse, Aitmatov was made head of the Kirgiz Writers' Union, which has required that he live much more in Kirgizia. Most telling of all, those fragments of his new novel, Bogomater' v snegakh, which recently appeared in Pravda seem to have passed in utter silence, with no critical reaction. Indeed, several writers and editors have been angry about Aitmatov's refusal to permit Nabokov's Lolita to be published in the journal Inostrannaia literatura<sup>6</sup>, and at least one Russian writer has made public ridicule of "the Aitmatization and Gamzatization" of literature<sup>7</sup>, by which he means the publishing practices which brought Aitmatov and the Avar poet Ramsul Gamzatov to national prominence.

Much the same fate has overtaken many of the non-Russian writers of Russian whom this study identified; some seem to have fallen silent, and many seem to have had journalism thrust upon

them, having to explain the actions of their fellow nationals to the central reading public. Armenian and Azeri writers comment upon Karabakh, Uzbek writers explain their Adylovs and Rashidovs, and such Balts as are still willing to appear in Moscow publications explain the positions of their respective national fronts. The press of current events probably explains some of the disappearance of fiction by these writers, since Soviet publishing is both notoriously slow (as much as five or six years from submission to appearance<sup>8</sup>) and is presently faced with an enormous backlog of materials, either previously unpublishable works or the new journalism of the Soviet Union's suddenly active investigative reporters. As the editor of Argun, the Chechen language literary journal, laments, "we already have accumulated enough works that should be published right away to last us for six years"<sup>9</sup>. Still, there has without question been a drop in interest in non-Russian writers who write in Russian; as Kubilius pointed out, the Russian language journals have concentrated upon bringing to their readers Russian writers and works which had accumulated in editorial desk drawers for sixty years. Even the one journal which has as its mandate publication of non-Russian Soviet writers, Druzhba narodov, has increased the space allotted to Russian writers (it was this journal which published A. Rybakov's Deti Arbata and Tridtsat' piatii i drugie gody). Perhaps even more damaging, at the 19th Party Conference, in July 1988, M.S. Gorbachev, seemed formally to abandon the "fusion" of nations as a Party goal, the



policy which once had been the grounds on which writers like Aitmatov were encouraged.

Gorbachev's new policies include a final element which will probably change the position of the non-Russian writers of the USSR more than all these other considerations taken together; this is khozraschet, or self-financing, which requires that state enterprises become more profitable. In the conditions of chronic shortages of paper and presses, and of an unquenchable Russian market for certain titles, the effect of khozraschet upon the non-Russian publishers, and upon non-Russian writers, has been devastating.

In combination these changes give some grounds for concluding that the non-Russian writers of Russian prose will prove to be as much a relic of the Brezhnev era as is the river diversion project or BAM. However, the results of this study suggest that that conclusion may well be erroneous, for several reasons. For one thing, as Feliks Karpov notes with surprise in his address to the March, 1988, Plenum of the Union of Writers, "There is a growing number of writers who, while being non-Russian by birth and, most important, consciously non-Russian, write either exclusively in Russian or in Russian as well as in the language of their people".<sup>10</sup> Karpov names such "bilingual or Russian-speaking writers [as] Ch. Guseinov, Anar, R. and M. Ibragimbekov... Ch. Aitmatov, V. Bykov, I. Drutse, A. Adamovich, T. Pulatov, A. Abanoidze, O. Suleimenov, R. Farkhadi, Y. Shestalov, [and] V. Sangi". The names which Karpov mentions are only the most promi-

ment, writers who have achieved all-union notoriety not just for their artistic works, but for their public activities as well. Aitmatov, for example, has been explained; Ion Drutse is the new head of the Moldavian Writers Union; Anar is head of the Azerbaidzhani Writers Union; Timur Pulatov is secretary of the Uzbek Writers Union; and Olzhas Suleimenov is head of the Kazakh Writers Union. Though no statistics have been released<sup>11</sup>, Karpov's list could be much longer, if he were to include less well-known writers, and would be even longer still, if he wished to distinguish among degrees of usage of Russian. There are, for example, writers who may compose in their native language, but then translate themselves into Russian, and an even larger number who continue to write their fiction or poetry in the language of their national group, but who write newspaper articles and other non-artistic prose in Russian. There is another group of writers who publish in what they call "authorized" translations; since this phrase distinguishes these translations from ordinary Soviet translations, it can only be assumed that these translations have been prepared in consultation with and by consent of the original author. Though not strictly Russian written by non-Russians, these works nevertheless suggest a greater-than-average concern on the part of the author for the Russian version of his work. It is important to note too that distinctions between these degrees of Russian usage do not remain fixed, and that indeed they might be viewed as a kind of "ladder" which many writers ascend over their careers. Though Suleimenov, Anar, and others, have no need of the

ladder, publishing in Russian from the beginning of their careers, Aitmatov, for example, has moved from translations, to co-translation, to self-translation, before finally coming to compose in Russian.

More important than their sheer numbers is the role these non-Russian writers have performed in the development of Russian and Soviet culture. The results of this study suggest that the non-Russian writers in general, and especially those like Aitmatov and Fazil Iskander who compose in Russian and who have been widely published, have used their national status, in part, to write about the past of their peoples without raising (or at least without raising as immediately as would a Russian) the specter of "bourgeois nationalism", and so have widened the bounds of the permitted for Russian writers. It was such non-Russians as Grant Matevosian who first elaborated the concept of "the little Motherland and the great Motherland", which in the recent past permitted writers to concentrate upon the history, traditions, practices, and cultures of their peoples without having to seem to deny "the great Motherland" of the USSR. In claiming that same privilege for themselves, Russian writers were first able to speak openly of the traditional Russian values and practices against which the Revolution had been directed.

Equally important, these writers as a group offered an integrative model of citizenship in the USSR which, for all the undeniable elements of falseness that glasnost' has revealed beneath the surface of the "brotherhood of peoples", nevertheless

reconciled many of the conflicts between nationality and Soviet citizenship which have now come so violently to the surface. The ability to function at an all-union level, through the medium of Russian, was an important inducement to participation in the Soviet Union as a whole, one which khozraschet appears seriously to have endangered. Virtually all of Gorbachev's policies, when viewed from the republics, appear to favor Russians at the expense of non-Russians, and Russian ethnic intolerance obviously grows worse in the USSR. The activities of Pamiat' and other Russian nationalist groups have been particularly alarming, bordering as they do upon the xenophobic; in one example, the Leningrad division of the RSFSR Writers Union has recently been petitioned by V. Pikul' and thirteen other Russian writers, who argue that:<sup>12</sup>

it is necessary to establish independent of the Leningrad Writers' Organization a separate writer's association, "Sodruzhestvo", which will be joined by writers united by the closeness of their ideological-creative principles, who will undertake their work primarily from the necessity of developing the traditions of patriotic culture.

Although the exclusivity of this proposal is more than clear in the letter, the discussion which the letter occasioned at the Leningrad Writers' Organization was even less ambiguous, when spokesmen for the letter writers declared that most of the Leningrad writers are "cosmopolitans", and that members of this new group wished to associate solely with Russians.<sup>13</sup>

Though similar xenophobia also is growing more common among non-Russians, especially in the Baltics, this large body of non-Russian writers of Russian would seem to be an important brake

upon that process of ethnic fragmentation. For one thing, many of these writers, such as those Karpov names, are prominent, powerful people who it is naive to suppose will acquiesce to silence, or to "returning" to their native cultures. In fact, it is possible that some of them may not even be wholly literate, or at least artistically literate, in the language of their nominal nationality; Suleimenov, for example, has complained that "When I entered first grade, Alma Ata did not have a single school which taught in Kazakh"<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, many of these writers effectively have no native-language audience; Vladimir Sangi, for example, is a Nivkh, of whom there exist a total of about 4,000<sup>15</sup>, while Atner Khuzangai, a Chuvash, concedes that for all intents and purposes his people have no literary language.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, since literature will presumably continue to play an important propagandistic role in the USSR (in the words of a literary sociologist, "it is characteristic of our cultural policies as a whole that the user of book production (the reader or buyer) is not viewed as an independent and sovereign subject of culture, but only as an object to be educated, his taste developed, his level raised, and so on"<sup>17</sup>), the presence of this large, articulate, and influential group of non-Russian writers will exert significant pressure upon the future literary culture of the Soviet Union. Put more simply, these writers were brought into existence by the Soviet system of the past, were rewarded and advanced, only now to find that, for the most part, they are unwanted, their voices unheeded. Many indeed achieved their

prominence because they were critical, and often because they were effective champions of the interests of their peoples, making it doubly naive to assume that these writers will now agree to silence, or to some circumscribed role at the republic, or lower, level. However, as the results of this study suggest, the nature of their likely response depends upon several factors--their nominal nationality, their route into Russian literature, and ultimately, their individual talent.

## II. FROM NON-RUSSIAN TO RUSSIAN

The concept of nationality as understood in the Soviet context is alien to most westerners, so that a foreign observer runs certain risks in making assumptions about the national identity of Soviet citizens. It was assumed for purposes of this investigation that in the absence of other information the most reliable indicator of a writer's nationality is his name. This works rather well in the case of nationalities remote from Russian culture, such as the various Central Asian or Caucasian peoples, but works considerably less well in the cases of writers from peoples more assimilated into Russian culture, such as the Ukrainians and Belorussians, and is also of little use in dealing with peoples from the Far North, many of whom have taken Russian-style names. Nor does this method address another difficulty, that of discerning a particular writer's ethnic self-identifica-

tion. Again, in the instances of Turkic, Persian, Baltic, and Caucasian peoples the name is usually a good indicator of self-identification, but often is wholly misleading for writers who may bear Ukrainian, Belorussian, or other "foreign" names, but who identify entirely with Russian culture, and in turn are accepted by it. Russian literature abounds with "foreigners"--the octoroon Pushkin, Ukrainian Gogol, and one-fourth Scottish Lermontov are classic examples. Examples from the present might include Bulat Okudzhava, whose name indicates he is North Caucasian, but whose work gives no indication whatever that the writer and singer conceives of himself as other than a Russian intellectual. The most obvious problems arise though in the case of the Russian Jews, who by Soviet understanding are not Russian, yet who in many instances are not only entirely of Russian culture, but have made important contributions to that culture; many of them moreover have no connection whatever to Jewish or Hebrew culture, and continue to be considered Jews only because of the nature of Soviet nationality policies. Osip Mandelstam, Isaac Babel, and Joseph Brodsky are examples, to one degree or another, of this phenomenon. Since it is not for the outsider to decide a person's cultural orientation, and since Soviet history already includes the ugly precedent of writers being "unmasked", their "true" names (generally Jewish) given in parentheses after their writing names, it has generally been the practice in this investigation to concentrate upon those writers of Russian whose backgrounds and

native cultures are clearly remote from that of the people whose language they have adopted.

What is it that has motivated so many writers to undertake the difficult job of learning another language well enough to write in it? Since the few examples which English literature offers of this transition (Nabokov and Conrad, a few poems by Brodsky) came about because of financial need, the initial assumption of this study was that, as Armenian writer Gevorg Emin observed, "it is of course very important in what language a writer creates, in the language of international communication, understandable for all the peoples of the USSR, or in one of the national languages" since, as he says, "both Chingiz Aitmatov and Vasil Bykov have proved to be among the most widely read authors not just because of their large talents, the sharpness and contemporaneity of their works, but also because they either write in Russian or often are published in Russian in good translations."<sup>18</sup> In other words, the potential audience for a work in Russian is very much larger than that for a work in any other language, even that of the most populous national groups, which means that the potential rewards, both tangible and intangible, are also greater.

Discussion in the recent press suggests however that while such considerations often do motivate a writer to undertake to write in Russian, there are other reasons as well. In fact, for many writers the switch appears to have been a question of professional survival, in that the only chance they had for being



published at all was to escape the confines of their local writers' unions. Chingiz Guseinov, an Azerbaidzhani novelist who writes in both Russian and Azeri, has said of his novel Magomed, Mamed, Mamish that "There were positive responses in the central press, but in Azerbaidzhan, just silence. For a long time I wasn't able even to publish the book 'in my native Azeri'"<sup>19</sup>, while of his novel Semeinye tainy (written in Russian) there were "here in Moscow both articles and republication. In Azerbaidzhan no one writes about it and no one publishes it. My countrymen tell me it is not possible even to mention this work, that in print it simply doesn't exist."<sup>20</sup> As Guseinov concludes, "Some writers go to Russian... thanks to the necessities of the situation. If I hadn't known Russian, then the novel Semeinye tainy wouldn't exist."<sup>21</sup>

Of course, it had long been suspected that writers' unions at the republic level exercised extraordinary control over what was published in their domains, but the revelations of the past two years surpass even the worst suspicions. Worst of all may have been Uzbekistan, which for many years was administered by Rashidov, who fancied himself a novelist, and who enjoyed what seems to have been almost literally a power of life and death over literature; the writer Kakhkhar is now described as having been hounded to death, for his opposition to a Rashidov novel being nominated for a Lenin Prize.<sup>22</sup> Although Rashidov did not exercise direct control, entrusting the 'writer's union and the publishing houses

to his fellow writers<sup>23</sup>, the situation was such that, in the words of Narbai Khudaiberganov:<sup>24</sup>

We in Uzbekistan (is it only among us?) had (and still have) a certain "official view" of life and literature, which elevates certain writers, leaving others in the shade, pushing them to the last row with all possible truths and untruths. In this "view" writer #1 in Uzbekistan was of course Rashidov, who gathered about himself a particular group of writers who in essence led the literary parade, defined the creative weather in the republic, getting generous rewards for their selfless service and devotion to the "father of the nation"

The frequency of articles in Literaturnaia gazeta describing problems in the various writers' unions suggest though that Uzbekistan's problems were of degree, not kind; among the republics criticized have been Georgia<sup>25</sup>, Lithuania<sup>26</sup>, Estonia<sup>27</sup>, Tartaria<sup>28</sup>, Tadzhikistan<sup>29</sup>, and Turkmenia<sup>30</sup>, all of them for the kind of autonomy about which Guseinov and Khudaiberganov complain.

Naturally this literary exclusivity had another side, as well, advancing the careers of those writers who pleased the local authorities. One sign of this is the acute inflation of reputations from which the republic and lower writers' unions suffer; as Turkmen writer Akmukhamed Vel'saparov has pointed out, "Many of our critics are (or consider themselves) also to be prose writers. As soon as one of them puts his latest 'chef d'oeuvre' out, his colleagues elevate it to the skies", which probably explains the corollary, that of the 140 members of the Turkmen Writers' Union, 28 have advanced university degrees, 17 have honorary titles, 28 are laureates of the [Turkmen] Makhtumkuli Prize, and 10 have been given the title of People's Writer.<sup>31</sup>

Even more destructive was a practice that, again, was rumored, but never confirmed, that many 'writers' never did more than give orders that their books should be written:<sup>32</sup>

In the 1970s among the practices and rituals came the tradition of writing books, articles, and scientific papers with the help of secret talents. It was hard to find a boss who didn't write.

Among these "writers" was Leonid Brezhnev<sup>33</sup> and even Rashidov himself.<sup>34</sup>

The situation for writers of languages whose speakers are too few to constitute a people numerous enough to have been granted a republic may in some ways be even worse. In addition to all the dangers inherent in a small, closed literary establishment, there exists the simple question of resources; some of the smaller peoples have virtually no journals, presses, or other outlets for literary production in their language. The Chechen and the Ingush, for example, each have just one literary journal (Argun and Utro gor, respectively), both begun in 1957, each restricted to 200 pages in length, and each appearing only quarterly. Moreover the journals are sold by subscription only, not through newspaper stands, and recent requests for an enlarged printing were refused, because of demands for paper and presses caused by the recent journalism "boom" in Russia.<sup>35</sup> A similar "diversion" occurred in Estonia, where Goskomizdat ordered the publishing firm Eesti Raamat to undertake the supplemental publication of high-demand Russian books, rather than continue to publish the books for which it had been established, translations of contemporary Estonian literature into Russian.<sup>36</sup> For the still smaller

peoples, the problems are even more basic; Kazakhstan, which has the largest Korean population of the USSR, possesses only one printing press capable of printing Korean.<sup>37</sup> In a Soviet Union where more than 60% of all the printing presses are more than 60 years old,<sup>38</sup> that situation seems unlikely to improve, especially since the unrestricted subscription policies for newspapers and magazines means sharply increased competition for already inadequate resources; Literaturnaia gazeta, for example, has nearly doubled its 1988 circulation for 1989, to almost seven million copies.<sup>39</sup> As one Chechen critic observes angrily, "So this means that one place there's a boom, and another place the same old dams to hold back the development of national literature, artistic and socio-political thought?"<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the most striking reason why many writers have had to move to Russian, and the most surprising, is that many "native" languages appear to be dying out. When Olzhas Suleimenov spoke of the lack of Korean printing presses for Kazakhstan, he went on to say that this might not be so great a problem for the Soviet Koreans, since most of them don't know Korean.<sup>41</sup> Though linguistic assimilation might have been expected in cases like that of the Koreans, who were never large in number and who were forcibly evacuated to Kazakhstan in the 1940s, one of the remarkable revelations of glasnost' has been the documentation of how widespread this type of linguistic death has become, not just among the little peoples, but even among peoples numerous enough to possess their own republics. The March 1988 plenum of the

Soviet Writers' Union heard speaker after speaker complain of the lack of native-language instruction in Belorussia, the Ukraine, Turkmenia, Azerbaïdzhan, and others. A number of non-Russian writers have further cited cases of their countrymen who either know nothing of the language of their nationality<sup>42</sup>, or, what seems to disturb these writers even more deeply, who have evolved a pidgin of Russian and their native language. Even in so ancient and jealously guarded a language as Armenian:<sup>43</sup>

In practice it turns out that a significant part of the urban residents, including the intelligentsia, use some mix of Russian and their native languages, which in no way is healthy for the normal development of their native tongue. Meanwhile the tendency to send children to the more prestigious Russian [language] schools facilitates further the elimination of literary language from daily life... the littering of [Armenian] speech with foreign words and constructions is great enough, especially in the cities, that it can't fail to make us worry that in the future this will also affect the literary language.

Writers are concerned about this linguistic erosion not just for reasons of national pride, but also for pragmatic, self-interested reasons; the potential audience for literature is predominantly urban and educated, which turns out in many republics also to be the group least likely to know their own language, or to be interested in using it if they do. The result has been put well by the Belorussian writer Ales' Astashonok:<sup>44</sup>

Of twenty eight Belorussian-language writers of the 1950s and 1960s only three (!) were born in the city. And two of the "city" writers also write in Russian... Who are Belorussian writers writing for...? Books which are printed in laughably tiny quantities lie in the stores like so much dead weight--even the works of the leading writers are almost never bought out. Many Belorussians no longer know how to read in their native language... And many don't wish to, either.

Nor do conditions promise better for the future. Many writers have complained that the young seem not to be learning their own language at all. In the North Caucasus, for example:<sup>45</sup>

in the last 30-40 years [native-language] instruction in the schools has been incredibly poor. In the urban schools it is not taught at all, there is not even one special school where people could study their native language. Thus in the Karachai region the Karachai language is not taught... Our mountain youth today, how bitter it is to say, largely knows nothing about the past of their own people.

Again, the situation seems even to be worse in Uzbekistan, where in addition to poor education in both Uzbek and in Russian, the demands of cotton culture require that the children spend about half the school year in the fields, instead of at their desks.<sup>46</sup> The result of this type of education has been effectively rendered in the story, "Vse budet khorosho" by Kamil Ikramov, in which the main hero knows neither the language of his race, Uzbek, nor Russian, and so effectively has no language.<sup>47</sup> The result of this linguistic erosion is that many native-language writers often find themselves in a closed circle, their ever-dwindling audience leading to ever-fewer ways of reaching them, resulting in an audience still smaller. In Gorno-Altai, for example, existing publishing outlets were merged into one entity, in which the 23 members of the Altai writers' union are allotted only four titles.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, although some of the native-language literary journals increased their readership in the 1980s, the majority shrank, by as much as 40% in Belorussia, and 51% in the Ukraine.<sup>49</sup>

Though both these republics seem to have especially acute problems with native-language instruction, it is of course naive to conclude that the sole reason for a drop in readership is that there are fewer readers; especially in the period now called "zastoi" (stagnation) another significant contributor to lack of readers was the lack of interesting reading material. Even today the republic journals have generally embraced glasnost' with noticeable reluctance, which exacerbates those pressures cited above. As one Ukrainian writer has complained:<sup>50</sup>

But here's the curious thing, that a Ukrainian writer could enjoy his right to glasnost' only in the [Latvian] journal Iurmala, which is published far from the banks of the Dnepr... It makes you think that probably there are two glasnost's, one that has been confirmed someplace on the side and one--alas!--that's ours, home-grown.

A Chuvash writer has said very much the same thing of his home, that "perestroika, they say that's there, in Moscow, but here, either it doesn't reach us at all, or arrives completely maimed,"<sup>51</sup> one consequence of which is that, as before, what is publishable in Moscow, or even in the neighboring republic, may well still be forbidden in a writer's home republic. The writer Akhmad Iasavi is well-known and loved in Kazakhstan, and forbidden to mention in Uzbekistan, just as those poems which Fitrat wrote in Tadzhik are published in Dushanbe, while his Uzbek-language ones are still suppressed in Tashkent.<sup>52</sup>

The result of all this is that republic-level publication tends definitionally to be provincial. In the analysis of the critic L. Novichenko:<sup>53</sup>

Provincialism is noticeable now in even some phenomena of Russian or other highly developed literatures. In order to see it in phenomena of high contrast, you might compare, for example, contemporary Georgian cinematography, on the one hand, and Ukrainian on the other..., contemporary Lithuanian and contemporary Ukrainian theater... And if there has been a "levelling", then it has been a sad one, first because it is to some lower level, and second because it is oriented towards impersonality. And here I see not one but at least two reasons for this provincialism. The first everybody knows, self-satisfied "jingoism" [khutorianstvo], local and national narrowness, limitation of the cultural horizon. The second I would call a legacy of the psychology of levelling, what might be called an automatic rejection of national--and all other--uniqueness of a creative, artistic person.

All this taken into consideration, the decision to move from a native language to Russian appears to be much less a financial necessity than an artistic one, so it is not surprising that, in the somewhat condescending words of one Russian critic "ambitious provincials sooner or later make their way to Moscow."<sup>54</sup>

### III. MAKING IT IN MOSCOW

It is widely assumed that this 'journey', from the provinces to Moscow, is easier for non-Russians than for Russians, because of a quota system requiring the publication of non-Russians. Before glasnost' the existence of a quota was presumed but not documented; now Sergei Baruzdin, editor of Druzhba narodov, confirmed in his March 1988 Plenum speech that in the publishing house Sovetskii pisatel' only 60% of the titles may be by Russians, while 40% are reserved for republic writers.<sup>55</sup> Though it



might be argued that those percentages still gave Russians greater representation than their relative size of the population, this advantage has been widely resented by Russian writers, both by itself and because it often has been combined with another practice, the existence of which is confirmed by the Karakalpak writer Tulepbergen Kaipbergenov:<sup>56</sup>

you can't replace literature with lists; at some point you have to present the thing itself. You have to show it to the experienced all-union reader, who has something with which to compare it, which means you have to translate it into the language of international communication, Russian... And this is where the main point begins. A significant number of the texts prove to be impossible to translate adequately--otherwise simply no one would publish it in Russian, so the translators, willingly or unwillingly, begin to rewrite, to finish writing, to "draw out" the book. Not of course to the level of a masterpiece, just to an "all right", middling level, but still in doing so inserting not just their own literary professionalism, but a great deal from their own experiential and artistic reserves. In other words, here begins what has for a long time been accurately named "giving blood".

In other words, literary politics before glasnost' were such that non-Russian writers were published, even if their books had essentially to be written for them, which probably is the main reason why publishers have been enthusiastic about ending it. For all that supposed advantage though, non-Russians who have published in the central press describe this move to the center as arduous, arbitrary, and, very often, insulting, as the Lithuanian writer Vitautas Kubilius suggests:<sup>57</sup>

Apparently the idea, established in the post-war years, still has not dispersed, that the literature of the fraternal Soviet republics is a grey, monotonous peripheral literature in which you can find 'local color' but you won't find contents which will move mankind at large. The official paternalistic attitude to the national literatures hasn't disappeared either,

cold compliments and a calculation which conceals the hard conviction that only great nations make a great literature.

Even if he overcomes his aversion to this sort of condescension, the non-Russian writer looking to be published in Moscow still has problems to surmount. A basic one is where he should attempt to publish, since, as the Lithuanian writer Imant Ziedonis points out:<sup>58</sup>

Just the one journal Druzhba narodov tries to assist all of us [non-Russian writers], who are so different, who live in this one enormous country, to hear and understand one another. But how can this journal alone catch all of our voices?

In addition, as has been pointed out, Druzhba narodov has had an inconsistent policy as to how the most numerous people of the USSR, the Russians, should be regarded; recent issues have shown an increase in space given to works by Russian authors. Nor is there a particularly large choice of other journals or other publishing outlets, as the assistant editor of Druzhba narodov complains:<sup>59</sup>

the majority of the periodicals of the Union of Writers of the USSR are "all-union" only in a formal sense, in their titular designation. As a rule their interests are almost entirely concentrated on Russian prose, poetry, and journalism... our national criticism is in the worst situation. It is represented in an extremely miserly way on the pages of the "fat journals" of Moscow and Leningrad.

What is worse, as the literary sociologists L. Gudkov and B. Dubin have documented, there has been virtually no change in the number of Soviet journals printed since 1945; even more striking, where Imperial Russia published 846 journals in 1911, the Soviet Union in 1985 offered only 1524, of which only 1301 are distributed by

subscription.<sup>60</sup> Nor is the situation much better in book publication, where these same researchers have demonstrated that the total number of titles published each year has essentially not grown since the 1960s, while the audience of 'potential readers' (a construct they do not explain) has enlarged greatly; according to their figures, where in 1932 the USSR published 53.5 thousand titles for 10-12 million 'potential readers', they could in 1985 manage only 84 thousand for a potential audience of 161.2 million people, so that "on the whole the measure of variety of publishing production--the number of titles published per 1 million population--in fact remains now at the level of 1913".<sup>61</sup> Since these figures include all publications throughout the USSR, both those offered for sale and those promulgated through the myriad institutions, the number of "slots" for which writers are competing is actually considerably smaller.

Not surprisingly, there is considerable dissension about how those scant resources of paper and ink are dispersed. A number of writers have complained that the principles by which the writers who are published, in Druzhba narodov and other journals, are selected is unclear, if not wholly arbitrary. As Gevorg Emin puts it:<sup>62</sup>

The works of national writers (not just prose, but even poetry, which is easier to fit into newspapers and journals) are mostly printed haphazardly, either through 'friendly connections', through the particular persistence of the author or the translator, or on the jubilees marking the beginning of Soviet power in this or that republic, or on their Literary Days (while poetesses are always published in the third issue of the journals, for March 8 [International Woman's Day]...)

In fact, a comment by A. Puzikov, editor-in-chief of the publishing house *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, makes plain the principle by which many of the non-Russians are chosen; when asked to explain how the house selects non-Russian books for publication, he replied that they rely entirely on the recommendations of the republic-level writers unions.<sup>63</sup>

Another observer points out that the principle Puzikov reveals is modified by another consideration:<sup>64</sup>

The constant literary practice among us is strictly one writer for each people, or even republic. Say: Dagestan! You'll get the answer: Rasul Gamzatov! Kalmykia--David Kugultinov; Kabarda--Alim Keshokov; Balkaria--Kaison Kuliev... Checheno-Ingushetiia--Raisa Akhmatova.

What these complaints suggest is that the publishing industry at the all-union level is at least as crony-ridden and arbitrary as it is at the republic level. Recent statistics show an incredible concentration of resources devoted to a small handful of writers; one source puts the number of 'best-selling' authors of the 1970s and early 1980s at about 10.<sup>65</sup> Iurii Bondarev, for example, enjoyed fifty different printings of his works in the period between 1981 and 1985, for total availability of millions of copies.<sup>66</sup> Concentration of another sort may be seen publication of the Russian classics; Pushkin, for example, who has been printed in nearly 340 million copies since 1948, is now further to be given the first unrestricted, open-subscription printing in Soviet literary practice.<sup>67</sup> For comparison, a Dagestani poet has recently complained that translations of two of his countrymen for

whom he has high regard were given printings of five thousand copies each.<sup>68</sup>

The criticisms of writers attacking this literary monopoly make quite plain the causes for such discrepancies:<sup>69</sup>

Having a monopoly on the printing and sales of books, Goskomizdat [the state publishing organ] could with the assistance of those whom it fed and who, in their turn, supported it over the past decades absolutely freely, uncontrolled and unpunished, manipulate book policies, publishing some people and not publishing others, creating deficits, constantly raising the prices of books, and so forth... Life itself created the "nourishing broth" for the spread of Mafia-like relations: you review my book for this publisher, and I'll review yours for another; you give the word so that I am included in the plan [of publication], and in return I'll see to it that you are included in the list... You give me a bigger printing, and I'll get you published in this journal.

If anything, this kind of concentration has been even more true in the case of the literary journals, where until very recently there has been almost no change in the upper echelons, where even today Inostrannaia literatura has five main editors who have been in their seats for more than twenty years, and Moskva has six. Similarly, eleven of the thirteen chief editors of the leading critical journal, Voprosy literatury, are over the age of 60.<sup>70</sup>

Not surprisingly, the next problem which confronts many non-Russian writers as they seek to publish in the center, translation, also appears to be a closed circle:<sup>71</sup>

the translators prefer to work with writers who have high positions, who have been given prizes. This is understandable, since even today these still enjoy an enormous power of 'access', unlimited opportunities to move their things forward in the central presses. There has long been a particular 'clan' of translators. It is easy to translate the literary 'generals', and to

publish them too. Conversely, to work with the young and unknown is both trouble and unprofitable.

The existence of this 'clan' is the reason many writers have given to explain how it is that, as one put it, "these 'activists' [of translation] serve local authors [by] herding towards the journals and the publishers lightly corrected literal translations... of works which don't exist in the original!"<sup>72</sup> Most comments on this type of "heavy-industrial translation"<sup>73</sup> assume that these practices are a legacy of an earlier literary atmosphere, but some writers have pointed out that cronyism only explains part of the sketchy view which the central press offers of republic literary history; some of the cause is also simple ignorance, that no systematic efforts are made to keep abreast of literary developments outside of Moscow. As L. Terokopian, assistant editor of Druzhba narodov complained in one round-table:<sup>74</sup>

Try to propose a work [to a publisher] on contemporary Kazakh or Uzbek prose. Even a brilliant work. It isn't going to cause any enthusiasm. A whole flood of doubts, more likely--will it sell? Will it make a profit?... Take the contemporary prose of Turkmenia. Do we have any clear idea at all about its tendencies and the problems of its development? How about Kirgiz prose? Sure, there's Aitmatov... but isn't it alarming that this one figure has left an entire pleiad of writers in the shade?

The same point is made in a more metaphoric vein by the young Uzbek poet Mukhammad Salikh: "From the remove of our national republics, literary Moscow looks like Narcissus, staring into the Patriarch's Ponds".<sup>75</sup>

What Terokopian and Salikh are referring to might be defined as the final resource for which writers, Russian and non-Russian

alike, must struggle, the readers which the existence of a literature presupposes. It is true that in the past, for a variety of reasons, the need to find readers was reduced to what must be a theoretical financial minimum, in that publishers, authors, librarians and booksellers had absolutely no responsibility for seeing their product, their books, reach an audience. Even now, after the introduction of khozraschet, authors are still paid for the number of books printed, not those sold; as many critics have pointed out, those numbers, the tirazh, may be the most arbitrary, unscientific aspect of the whole Soviet publishing industry. One critic has discovered, for example, that a very common print run is 115,000 copies, because the honorarium for that quantity is the same as for 200,000, thus permitting a publisher to reward a crony and save the house paper at the same time.<sup>76</sup> Just as booksellers and publishers reaped no additional benefits for extra sales, they also bore no responsibility for unsold wares; one publisher in Tadzhikistan, for example had an inventory of 200,000 unsold copies in 1987, but continued to publish 70-80 titles a year, knowing that some of them would go entirely unsold.<sup>77</sup> In much the same vein, another writer notes that of the 700 million new books received by Soviet libraries between 1976 and 1980, 500 million were later discarded without ever having been read.<sup>78</sup>

It is of course a mistake to assume that these books are ignored because there are no readers; the parallel existence of a thriving black market in books is a well-documented fact of Soviet

life, clearly indicating that part of the reason for so much dead inventory is that unnecessary, uninteresting, unwanted books continue to be printed. Nevertheless, several critics have noted that this unending flood of what has been termed "seriatina", greyness, has had an effect upon the Soviet audience, and especially upon the young. In a world in which "in book stores more than half of the buyer's requests regularly are unsatisfied" and "96% [of the customers] have encountered one form or another of 'difficulty in acquiring a needed book'"<sup>79</sup>, it is understandable that some people give up the search. As L. Anninskii observed:<sup>80</sup>

'People ignore literature'? Well, and why not, if in their understanding it is the same as what they get from television and in discotheques, except that in a book this is tangled in an endless web of words that takes hours to untangle, sitting with the book in hand as though at a work bench--break-dancing is better, isn't it?... what is a man to read of the new artistic literature, when the old, pressed into a BVL [a Soviet book series] of some two hundred volumes, already occupies just about one-fourth of his reading life.

Doesn't it seem in the light of this arithmetic that this overcrowded "wall of prestige" symbolizes for the average man the volume limit of his possibilities as a reader, which is already overburdened to the limit... what is a man to do? Books keep coming out and coming out. A flood of words.

Man reacts with the natural absolutism of self-preservation: he refuses to read.

Anninskii is a critic, not a sociologist, so his comment might be dismissed as the sort of subjective railing to which literary people are given, were it not that a professional librarian writing for Literaturnaia gazeta has made the same observation:<sup>81</sup>



Based on my experience, I would say that our literate readers as a whole do not try to read talented books--they require thinking. That's not true of the literary mass market, which our journals have been offering for years; there everything is simple and accessible... but just try to offer a reader (even a serious, experienced one) O. Chiladze's excellent novel Zheleznyi teatr and immediately there are groans and sighs--Akh, he's hard to read.

It must be pointed out, in contradiction to this, that a list of the most popular literary works of 1987 suggests a much more active readership; according to one pair of sociologists, the most requested books of the year were, in order, Deti Arbata, by Anatolii Rybakov, Sobach'e serdtse, by Bulgakov, Rekviem, by Akhmatova, Po pravu pamiati, by Tvardovskii, Novoe naznachenie, by Bek, Belye odezhdy, by Dudintsev, Zubr, by Granin, Doktor Zhivago, by Pasternak, and Kotlovan, by Platonov.<sup>82</sup> This list stands in sharp contrast to the list from the previous year, which with minor variation might have been the list from the mid-1970s on--Pikul', Semenov, A. Ivanov, Val. Ivanov, and P. Proskurin;<sup>83</sup> these writers flourished in the absence of information and excitement which marked the years of stagnation, purveying as they do salacious history or thrillers which claim to be thinly fictionalized "inside dope".

At the same time though, it must also be pointed out that none of the popular works of 1987 were new, that about half had the benefit of long having had the fame of scandal (Zhivago being the best example), and that all of these works, for all their undoubted literary merits, also have a sensational, topical aspect. Nor does the list for 1988 look to be significantly

different--Grossman's Zhizn' i sud'ba, Pasternak, Vysotskii, science fiction, and Akhmatova occupy the top five slots.<sup>84</sup> The appearance of Vysotskii, the science fiction, and, somewhat lower, detective fiction, Astaf'ev, Bondarev, and other stalwarts of the past, speak to another phenomenon of Soviet publishing, the existence of a large and unsophisticated audience. V. Malukhin, editor of the extremely conservative Roman-gazeta, which publishes favored authors in booklet form, in huge numbers, explained why his list for 1989 is still turgid with writers from the period of stagnation (none of them non-Russian, and many identified with Pamiat') by saying that his publishing house had "studied demand" and they were publishing what their audience seemed to want. Malukhin went on to speculate that years of seriatina, bland literature, must have created a demand precisely for easy, accessible, reassuring works.<sup>85</sup> Obviously this speculation is disingenuous, but it is not contradicted by Iulian Semenov, who not only has succeeded in creating one of the first joint-venture publishing houses, but who used it to print five and a half million copies of his new novel, Reporter, which are sold through newsstands throughout the country. Since Semenov plans to use the profits from his publishing venture to finance construction of a resort hotel in the Crimea,<sup>86</sup> he obviously is convinced he can sell so large a printing.

A survey of available literature makes it difficult not to agree with the Belorussian writer Vasil' Bykov, in his observation that:<sup>87</sup>

many people today not only do not aspire to true culture but often flaunt their lack of it. Hence the widespread and apparently harmless vulgarity which is widespread not only among the masses, but also at all levels of the bureaucracy. At the same time you see the almost ritualized passion for clean collars, carefully furnished offices, Japanese goods, academic titles...

This is not discordant with the observation by the Uzbek writer Timur Pulatov that "the majority of my readers seem to be the elderly, old intellectual ladies who are grieving for some lost ideal," and that "I am absolutely convinced that today almost no one reads Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy."<sup>88</sup>

In other words, the picture which glasnost' presents of publishing practices in the center, and of the audience toward which those publications are directed, suggests that, contrary to what Russian writers have assumed, access to the all-union reader has always been difficult for non-Russian writers, and that the new conditions of the USSR are likely to make that access even more difficult. As the Chuvash poet Atner Khuzangai has complained, "when national elements have no access to the larger world and are identified with provincialism... there arises a closed circle for the young writer."<sup>89</sup>

#### IV. STRATEGIES OF RESPONSE

For all their differences, there are at least four discernible strains among the non-Russian writers of Russian, each of

which would appear to have a different response to the new cultural situation of the Soviet Union.

Assuming no major reorientations of Soviet policies, the non-Russian writers who would seem to have the least role to play in the future are those who most benefitted from the stagnant conditions of the past, who were published, and indeed who may have had their books written for them, because of their political loyalties, not their talent. Despite the number of exposes of past abuses, there has been surprisingly little naming of names, so that determining which writers fit this category is largely guess-work; nevertheless it is difficult to imagine writers like the Uzbek Akmal Akramov or Evnei Buketov or Engel's Gabbasov, both Kazakh, ever playing prominent roles in all-union culture. Akramov's Polpred respubliki is a biography in fictional form of the Uzbek Bolshevik Sabirdzhan Iusupov, Buketov's Grani tvor- chestva are essays about prominent Kazakhs, and Gabbasov's Oдно derevo na vsiu step' is a thoroughly standard account of agricultural difficulties, eventually overcome. Books like these have no clear audience; published at the local level, the only readers who would seem to have access to them would be local Russian speakers, but what reasons they might have for reading these books are hard to imagine. For one thing, the group which would seem most likely to follow the cultural happenings of the center is precisely Russian intelligentsia out in the provinces; this is even more true in those areas where the native populations are growing more hostile to the Russians. In many areas, in fact, publishing since

glasnost' appears to have bifurcated, the local-language press conveying one set of concerns, the Russian-language one another; as a Latvian writer points out, "the flows of information are directed each to its own audience; they don't intersect. For example a significant portion of the Russian population hasn't the slightest idea of the passions surrounding the Daugavpils hydroelectric station".<sup>90</sup> Conceivably the motivation for such books might have been to acquaint local Russians with local cultural values; another writer, again Latvian, has said that "we must help the Russians to value the uniqueness of Latvians as a nation, before we accuse them of nationalism."<sup>91</sup> As a rule however books by authors of this sort are of such low quality that their effect, if anything, would seem to be the opposite. It is easy, in sum, to suspect that many of these works indeed were never meant to have readers, that the point was rather to publish, and so reward, flatter, or otherwise impress favored allies. Several factors would seem to make future publication of this sort almost impossible: the intense central scrutiny for corruption, especially in Central Asia; increased Russian nationalism (as well as a marked outflow of Russians from many of the republics); and Moscow's substantially greater refusal to underwrite wasteful economic practices (especially outside of Moscow).

A much more complex case arises with those writers who were not just advanced by their republic writers' union, but who also achieved all-union prominence. Most of the writers of this group undeniably have talent, but they also benefited from the active

support of their influential fellows, and the nationality-biased publication policies of the Brezhnev era. Although none of these writers has joined Iurii Bondarev and the other conservatives in their attack on glasnost,<sup>92</sup> it is tempting to wonder whether some of these writers might not share Bondarev's complaints, since, like Bondarev, they were much more prominent before the loosening of publication restrictions and the introduction of khozraschet. Aitmatov in some senses is an example of this group, because although he has real talent, he can not be considered a stylistic innovator or a particularly exciting writer. His strength instead is topicality, honesty, and good, workman-like prose which is the equal of that of most Russian-national Soviet writers; what distinguished him from them originally was his nationality, which at the time he began to publish gave him an indisputable advantage for publication. Once he had achieved a certain prominence, Aitmatov further benefited because he was championed by the national 'bosses' of Central Asia, largely out of racial pride; it has been revealed that Rashidov was his active patron for a time, despite the fact that Aitmatov is Kirgiz and Rashidov Uzbek.<sup>93</sup>

More typical of this group though are figures like the Kazakhs Anuar Alimzhanov, who composes in Russian, or Rollan Seisenbaev, who writes in Kazakh, then translates himself. Other examples include Rachim Esenov, a Turkmen, Rustem Kutui, a Tatar, and Kamil Ikramov, an Uzbek. All of these men published with some regularity under the old rules, though more often in republic-level presses than in central ones. They were interviewed, spoke

at writers' conferences, and were generally held up as examples of Soviet multi-nationalism, but never really established an identity at the all-union level. If so broad a generalization may be made about their works, all of these writers seem to have followed the literary fashions dominant in Russia, without transforming them in any way. Thus, for example, Alimzhanov's Vozvrashchenie uchitelia and Ikramov's Pekhotnyi kapitan are historical novels, the first about Al-Farabi, the second about a Russian officer who was a prisoner in Khiva in the 1830s. Both subjects are interesting and exotic, and the books are competently done, but neither is distinguished in any way. Once again, the question of audience arises, because if the point of the works is to enhance national pride, then the national language would have seemed a more logical choice; if the point was somehow to convince Russians of the value of an alien culture, then a less workman-like, more compelling treatment would seem to have been more convincing. The criticism is in a sense unfair, because the major fault of writers in this group is simply that they are ordinary; deprived of special consideration, and in some cases stigmatized for their earlier cronyism, they will presumably have a much more difficult time competing for publication, without being in any way worse than other equally ordinary, and equally clannish writers, but who don't however bear the onus of being non-Russian. In some sense writers of this group are victims of the Russocentric assumptions of Soviet culture of the past, in that they have pursued literary forms--the novel, short stories, plays--which grow out of Russian,

European culture, and though they have done no worse at these than most of the Russians who practice this art, at a time of heightened racial awareness, they will be the first to become irrelevant. In other words, given the choice between a dull novel by a Russian and dull novel by a non-Russian, the Soviet consumer of the near future seems more likely to choose the former (if indeed he takes either). An obvious route for many of these writers might be to address themselves much more to their fellow nationals; in fact, the bitterness that they might be assumed to feel at having had the old rules of literature changed would make them more likely to be nationalistic. However, as indicated, that local audience is likely to be shrinking, and even if it is not, the resources for satisfying it are; as Mukhammad Salikh points out, "publishing policies today don't satisfy either writers or readers. Uzbekistan is in some strange fashion going backward in book publishing. The number of readers is rising, and correspondingly, so is demand for books in Uzbek, while the number of books coming out goes down."<sup>94</sup>

Also true is that many of the writers in this category are closely identified with practices and personalities of the past which have now been revealed as corrupt, undercutting any authority they might have enjoyed with readers. It is true that there has not been much public recrimination about specific writers who once enjoyed favored status, but it may be assumed that in the small worlds of republic-level publishing there is no need to name names; most readers must know who was protected by whom. Equally



this naming of names may work against writers who in fact were not especially corrupt, but simply successful; the revelations of the past two years make it particularly easy to assume that prominent writers became so because of blat, not talent; an example of this is the rumors circulating about Aitmatov, that many of his works were ghost-written.<sup>95</sup> Assuming that such rumors are unfounded, Aitmatov, and the more talented of the non-Russian writers who like him are essentially conventional, will presumably continue to publish, but it seems highly unlikely they will have the audience they once did, and then probably only if they are serving journalistic ends, not artistic ones; again, the indifference with which the fragment of Aitmatov's new novel, the hero of which is a Russian, was met suggests that greater indifference, and perhaps even hostility, awaits. From the perspective of Moscow, or at least that portion of the capital which supports reform, this group of writers would seem a dangerous element, even though most of them were enthusiastic supporters of the earlier stages of Gorbachev's "revolution", because conditions have far surpassed them. Used to having influence and reward, used to a system which they wished to improve but not remove, these writers of the older generation must feel their loss of position acutely, and would be prepared to make common cause with Russian conservatives like Bondarev, Proskurin, and Pikul; the irony of glasnost, and the greatest ally that Moscow has, is that these Russian writers, it appears, won't have them.

There is a third group of writers which may prove even more dangerous for Moscow, which makes it doubly regrettable that they are so difficult to document. These are in a sense the writers whom this study posited would undertake debate with their Russian fellow-citizens, to stake their claim upon the nature of the future USSR. Although somewhat older and unquestionably more Russified than most of the writers of this group, Olzhas Suleimenov is probably the best representative of this type of response. Suleimenov, a Kazakh poet who writes in Russian and who, as was said, may not even know Kazakh, is also an ardent nationalist, primarily concerned with the interests of his own people. In the Brezhnev era Suleimenov brought the collective wrath of the Russian intelligentsia, personified by Academic Likhachev, down upon his head, by arguing in Az i Ia that the Russian national epic, Slovo o polku Igoreve, might also be read from the viewpoint of the people whom Igor' fought, who were Suleimenov's forebears. Later Suleimenov distinguished himself for continuing publicly to support D.A. Kunaev, former First Secretary of Kazakhstan, even after he was forced from office, for which, it has been rumored, Suleimenov was even jailed briefly. In today's rising tide of Russian nationalism Suleimenov has, paradoxically, become a spokesman for multi-nationalism; unlike many of these spokesmen who have recently been pressed into print though, Suleimenov understands that multi-nationalism is the only protection the non-Russians now have against growing Russian demands. As he pointed out in an interview, "How can two Moscow schoolboys, Russian Vasia

and Tatar Akhmet, deal with each other when, sitting at the same desk, they read [the lines from Alexander Blok's poem "Na pole Kulikovom"]: 'And cut the head from the Tatar's broad shoulders'?"<sup>96</sup>

Like Suleimenov, the writers of this group are young, and in many instances have only begun publishing; indeed, there may be some who will not publish, because the beginning of their careers coincided with the radical changes of the past three years. Because of schools, the Army, and urban life, they are fluent in Russian, and many appear to be gifted. However, contrary to what this study had initially posited, many of these writers seem to be turning their backs upon all-union (and hence Russian) culture, to become intensely nationalistic. Many, in fact, may be leaving literature entirely (though whether temporarily or forever is unclear), serving broader national goals. In a sense these writers might be called drop-outs, in that the only evidence we may find of them in all-union culture is their first books and the interviews they give in the central press, which are remarkable for the hostility they express. Examples include the Latvian Zigmund Skuin', who in an interview claimed that no one knows anything about Latvian writers, and that Latvians don't read anyone but themselves<sup>97</sup>, and the Uzbek poet Mukhammad Salikh, who though he began publishing in Russian has now returned to Uzbek, and is reputed to have become actively involved in Islam.<sup>98</sup>

Though it conceivably is this group which might have the most political effect, it is a fourth group of writers which will have

the most literary and cultural effect. The politically-inspired publication policies of the Brezhnev years also helped them to achieve all-union recognition, but in this case not with the assistance of the republic-level writers' unions, but in spite of them. Writers like Timur Pulatov, Anatolii Kim, Chingiz Guseinov, and Fazil Iskander tend to be younger than the writers in the first two groups, and though slightly older than those of the third, like them they have enjoyed far greater exposure to the Russianized culture of Soviet institutions, especially those of higher education. Many of these writers, for example, studied cinematography in Moscow in the 1960s;<sup>99</sup> equally important was the Institute of World Literature. It is difficult to tell whether these writers came to study in Moscow because they felt at odds with their native environment, or whether their exposure to a wider world led them to become alienated when faced with the need to return home, but there is no question that the writers in this group owe their prominence to having been championed by Moscow presses, rather than by regional ones. As indicated above, some, such as Guseinov and Pulatov, were virtually banned in their home republics, while others, such as Kim, a Korean, did not even have home constituencies. Unlike the case of the writers above though, "affirmative action" literary policies seem to have promoted this group not so much because of their nationality as because of their talent. Though they may well have been published solely because of their nationalities, the writers of this group made much better use of this advantage than did their more conventional fellow non-

Russians, experimenting and extending a Russian-language literature which censorship was making ever deader and more dull.

Why they were able to do so is a matter for speculation; perhaps no one cared very much what the non-Russians were writing or perhaps the potential impact of anything they might be saying was automatically discounted. It may even be in some cases that alert Moscow editors were deliberately using the quotas of reverse discrimination to justify publishing more daring, unusual works. Whatever the reason though, this group enjoyed several artistic advantages over their Russian counterparts, and not simply that their words were considered less important, and thus were less watched. The non-Russians were also definitionally outside the intellectual currents of Russia, and thus were spared many of the debates over Russian culture which Brezhnev's censorship had forced into literature. In the 1970s and 1980s Russian fiction took up a surprisingly small number of themes--destruction of the village, urban ills, more World War II, and retreads of socialist realism. With very little exception, prose by Russian writers had become realistic, straightforward, and, as the flood of complaints about it which glasnost' evoked will testify, boring. In retrospect most of the literary "events" of this period were either works from the past (Master and Margarita being the best example), translations (especially of the South Americans), and works by non-Russians.

There were not many of these last, but their impact was large. Aitmatov may be considered one of them, though, as noted,

his impact was more topical than artistic. Much more representative is Fazil Iskander, an Abkhaz who specializes in cunning, apparently rambling tales about his boyhood or his family which turn into biting satires of Soviet life. Although his stories are either specifically set in Abkhazia or are allegorical, and are almost openly critical of Russians and Russian policies (thinly veiled under the name "Endurtsy"), Iskander has been one of the most important writers of the new literary era. A good deal of what he has published are old stories which were partially or completely unprintable before, but, unlike many authors, he has also produced new works, and has been active in screenwriting as well. In addition, Iskander has taken active social positions, in some cases so ardently that he would seem to be endangering the distance which satire requires.

Given that Iskander's satire is topical, and hence benefits from current interest in evils of the day, Anatolii Kim may be an even better example yet of this group of writers. Kim became relatively well-known among professional literary people in the late 1970s, has been written about by prominent critics, and has developed a small following. Unlike Iskander, Kim is not at all topical; his "Solov'inoe ekho", for example, is a lyrical, highly patterned account of a journey by a young German merchant to the Far East at the turn of the century, where he meets and marries a Korean girl. The story is told in a variety of voices, includes magical or surreal events, and possesses a wit of language that is unusual for Soviet prose, especially of the pre-glasnost' period.

Much the same might be said of Timur Pulatov's language, though the stories have more of the atmosphere of Iskander than they do of Kim. Pulatov's Stroptivyi bukharets, an amusing account of growing up in the multicultural pressures of modern Uzbekistan, got him in serious trouble in Rashidov's Uzbekistan, but failed to gain him the all-union audience that Iskander achieved. Given the similarity in spirit between the works of the two writers, this difference in reputation might be seen as a demonstration of the relatively greater hostility Russians feel to Central Asians than they do to Caucasians (even though Iskander too is of Muslim background); certainly at least Pulatov, unlike Iskander, has been publicly attacked for remarks he had made in the central press.<sup>100</sup>

The most interesting of this group of writers though is Chingiz Guseinov, who in the conditions of zastoi seems to have gone almost wholly unnoticed. Though it is difficult to speculate why this was the case, the most tempting explanation for Guseinov's obscurity is that central readers dismissed him because of his name; Guseinov's work combines much of the topicality of Aitmatov's with an innovative, exploring style very unlike anything being written by Russians. His book Semeinye tainy, forbidden publication in Azerbaidzhan, was among the first to raise the issue of republic-level corruption, and his Magomed, Mamed, Mamish took up questions of identity and self in a way which now seem prescient, in light of subsequent events in Azerbaidzhan. The most unusual of his books though was Fatal'nyi Fatali, which when it came out in 1983 ought to have found a very

wide readership, if only for the liveliness and wit of Guseinov's prose. The novel is a complex interweaving of voices and styles, attempting to convey the internal life of the Azeri poet and writer Akhundov, while also reproducing life in 19th century Paris, Tbilisi, Persia, Turkey, and Russia. Set against other novels from 1983, Guseinov's book has a stylistic freedom and an intellectual breadth which is distinctive even today. Moreover, there is clear evidence that Guseinov is continuing to have difficulties with the local authorities in Azerbaidzhan; Anar, head of the Azeri Writer's Union, has recently accused Magomed, Mamed, Mamish of defaming traditional Azeri values,<sup>101</sup> which obviously suggests that Guseinov, if he is to publish, will have to do so at the national level. Given the enthusiastic response of one critic, that "Fatal'nyi Fatali is a work of complex poetics, a novel which synthesizes multifaceted forms of artistic story-telling... This novel, just as Chingiz Guseinov's work as a whole, with its linguistic riches and innovative form and the realization of its devices, is still awaiting study,"<sup>102</sup> there is reason to hope that conditions of glasnost' and khozraschet might actually work in Guseinov's favor.

#### V. NON-RUSSIANS IN RUSSIAN CULTURE

As indicated above, these two Gorbachev policies, combined with an enormous upswing of Russian self-preoccupation, may well



force most non-Russians out of the central literary and cultural establishments; at the same time though, other forces work in favor of their inclusion. Some are simply pragmatic, that men like Aitmatov will not be easy to deny. Others though are more positive, in the sense that Russian Soviet culture would seem to be coming up on a crisis which it so far has not recognized, a shortage of good literature. In most of the central publications at least, the seriatina of the past has been renounced, and a huge upswell of subscribers has been gained by publishing interesting, topical, unusual works. In conditions of khozraschet this boom of readership cannot be ignored, as increases in circulation like 433% for Druzhba narodov, 135% for Novyi mir, and 90% for Neva<sup>103</sup> will suggest. However, a corresponding readership drop of 17.5% for Inostrannaia literatura (once popular as one of the few sources for unusual prose) also suggests that such upsurges arise precisely because of what the now-popular journals are publishing; Druzhba narodov, after all, was until recently considered a dead-end publication which the writers dubbed "the brotherly grave".<sup>104</sup>

As western scholars have long been aware, Soviet censorship practices have created an enormous backlog of Russian language literature which either could not be published or once had been published and was now forgotten, while a smaller, but also significant body of work was produced abroad, by emigres of the first and third waves. It is from this warehouse that the most talked-about works of the past few years have been drawn, feeding the readership boom. An analogy might be drawn to the movie

industry, which immediately after the easing of censorship had a stockpile of banned works with which to entice and shock viewers; soon though those reserves were exhausted, and there was a noticeable lag, until current production caught up.

It seems likely that literary publishing will soon come upon a similar "deficit", although one more complex and more difficult to remedy. The fund of once-banned works which obviously should be published would seem to be drawn down; Pasternak, Bulgakov, Nabokov, Nadezhda Mandelstam, Evgeniia Ginzburg, and many other pariahs are now "Soviet" writers. Unpublished works remain, of course, but many of them are more questionable; the continued hostility to Solzhenitsyn and Aksenov are cases in point. Difficulties of another sort are raised by the emigres, especially of the third wave, most of whom are still active; despite publication of a few pages of Shkola dlia durakoy in Iunost', Sasha Sokolov seems an unlikely candidate for broad distribution in the USSR, as do Limonov, Alezhkovskii, or Ageev.

Translations of world literature are another source of interesting prose for the publishers of the USSR, which many journals have used; translations of Stephen King, Mario Puzo, George Simenon, John LeCarre, Robert Ludlum, and Frederick Forsyth have or will appear, and there are thousands of others from which editors might draw. Once again though, there are obvious problems, of ideology, of purpose, and of responsibilities which the publishers incur by sponsoring a writer whom they will not be able to control; one consideration, that rights to these works must be

paid for in hard currency, would seem especially significant under khozraschet.

There is of course another source of interesting new literary works in Russian--Soviet Russian-national writers. However, one of the most striking features of the post-glasnost' world is how few new works the Russians have produced, and how few of those have been popular for their artistry, rather than their topicality. Some new names and styles have appeared (T. Tolstaia being the most obvious example), but there remains little published evidence to contradict Chingiz Guseinov's observation that:<sup>105</sup>

translations of twentieth century writers--Hesse, Faulkner, Marquez, Cortazar, and so forth--play a significantly greater role in enriching stylistic means that does contemporary Russian literature itself. Russian language as an intermediary [emphasis added--AO] demonstrates extremely broad possibilities. It seems to me that a situation has come about today that descriptive inertia [inertsiiia opisatel'nosti] does not help the future development of Russian literature...

Guseinov's conclusion, that "Nowadays the national literatures are demonstrating very interesting stylistic possibilities", suggests precisely the opening that talented non-Russian writers of Russian may find in the future. The non-Russians, in the words of Mukhammad Salikh, have the advantage of "having the opportunity to observe, and not be observed. In our field of vision there is not just ourselves, but other republics as well, Moscow among them."<sup>106</sup> Guseinov goes even further, to say that "Russian language literature in the national republics has enormous significance in the general cultural situation, but in literature is only a mediator."<sup>107</sup>

This being the case, the question arises, of the relation of the non-Russian writers of Russian to Russian culture. Feliks Karpov, addressing the Union of Writers, gave an unambiguous answer: "Who are these [non-Russian] writers [of Russian]? Let us give a clear answer--in our view the vast majority are children of the culture and literature of the 'indigenous' nationality".<sup>108</sup> In the same speech though Karpov also said that "Russian writers in the republics (not just using Russian, but actual Russians)... undoubtedly... are part of modern Russian literature."

There are only two possible solutions to this apparent paradox; either there is some quality of innate "Russianness" which Aitmatov, Suleimenov, Drotse, and the others will never achieve, or the Russian in which they write is obviously inferior to that of their Russian-native colleagues. It in fact is widely accepted that, in the words of a Ukrainian writer:<sup>109</sup>

Many honest Russian writers and Russian intellectuals today speak bitterly of how in addition to the genuine, beautiful, and rich Russian language there also exists and inexorably encroaches upon it some sort of language surrogate, which people speak and in which they even "write", within Russia and beyond it.

The difficulty with such an observation is that, within certain obvious bounds of grammar, the decision as to which of these two 'Russians' a given work is written in would be highly subjective, and so open to considerations of nationalism. Looked at soberly, it has to be concluded that such considerations are going to become more important in the USSR of the near future, not less; it has further to be concluded that literature seems to be losing importance in the USSR, and that readership shows clear signs both

of shrinking and of bifurcating, with the greater part oriented to mysteries, science fiction, and other products of mass culture.

As literary sociologists point out, "in recent years the number of literary titles is falling (10,431 in 1984, 10,371 in 1985), the average tirazh is growing (98.6 thousand in 1984, 101.9 thousand in 1985), and readers' tastes, preferences and interests are ever more differentiated."<sup>110</sup> From January 1986 to July 1987 the central journals of Moscow and Leningrad published 2025 new literary works, of which only 178 were ever reviewed,<sup>111</sup> no doubt because "critics and the mass reader today are living on different literary floors. The part of literature which is reviewed generally doesn't exceed 10-15% of published production".<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, as another sociologist explains, "readers and book-buyers, their tastes, demands, and cultural interests are terra incognita for publishers and (true, to a lesser extent) scientists."<sup>113</sup> All of these factors, as explained above, are going to work against the interests of the non-Russian writers of Russian.

At the same time, however, the experience of Iskander, of Kim, and of some few other writers suggests that Russian literature has a capacity to absorb talent; indeed, the creation of a real readership will demand the emergence of talent, which in the current conditions of the USSR, many of the non-Russian writers of Russian seem uniquely able to supply. Indeed, as Timur Pulatov has argued, that talent in large part is a product of the richer culture which comes from bilingualism:<sup>114</sup>

The characteristic artistic trait of the great minds and talents of Central Asia was literary bilingualism. They

freely wrote in Turkish and Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Avicenna also read works in Greek and Latin... In general Central Asia as a cultural region has historically always been bilingual. I mean not everyday, conversational bilingualism as much as scientific, artistic bilingualism, which was a result of the long development of everyday bilingualism.

The evidence of this study suggests that non-Russian writers of Russian for the most part were a creation of the artificial conditions of the Brezhnev era, and that the greater part of them will either be reduced to a lower, republic level of activity, or will be forced out of literature entirely. Some, unable to cope with the paradox articulated by the Uzbek poet Erkin Vakhidov, may drop out voluntarily:<sup>115</sup>

Be careful! Or else the knights of the empty word  
Will hang a label of shame about your neck.  
Study a foreign language, they'll call you a cosmopolitan,  
Say a word in your own, and you'll be a nationalist!

At the same time, however, the ending of "affirmative-action" publishing, combined with the on-going necessity of filling journals with literature which subscribers will want to pay for, seems certain to work in the favor of the smaller part of the non-Russians. One of the most influential of the Russian critics, Natal'ia Ivanova, has written:<sup>116</sup>

historically it is absolutely clear, that the best of that which is written in Russian somehow or other flows into Russian literature. I don't understand why the pale grey murk of some one of our fellow-citizen half-graphomaniacs is a fact of Russian literature, while the beautiful poems of Iosif Brodskii, one of the best poets writing today in Russian, is not a fact of this literature. The time has come to soberly evaluate the existing situation and to learn at last how to separate a work which possesses objective aesthetic value from the fate of its creator.

It is uncertain whether Ivanova would stand by her words if they were extended to Guseinov, to Kim, to Pulatov, or Iskander, but the principle she elaborates seems sound. For all of the "seriatina" which some of the non-Russian writers of Russian have produced, others are emerging as the most unusual, most interesting writers in the Soviet Union today. What becomes of them and their work in the USSR of the near future would seem to be an important litmus for whether the Soviet Union can survive as a multi-national entity, or must sunder on its own various nationalisms.

## NOTES

1. V. Sukhnev, Literaturnaia Rossiia, 13 January 1989, p. 5.
2. Pravda, 27 January, 1989, p. 4.
3. V. Sukhnev, "Okopavshiesia v tylu", Literaturnaia Rossiia, 13 January 1989, p. 5.
4. Ibid.
5. "V chem sekret uspekha: (anketa)", Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3.
6. Evening in honor of Anna Akhmatova, Herzen House, Union of Writers, Moscow, 25 December 1988. It was also revealed there that Aitmatov has agreed to let the work be published as a supplement to the journal.
7. Literaturnaia Rossiia, #52, 1988, p. 7.
8. Tset Kallas, "Ne budet knig nenapisannykh", Literaturnaia gazeta, 24 June 1987, p. 5.
9. N. Startseva, "O 'natsional'nykh doblestiakh' podlinnykh i mnimykh", Literaturnaia gazeta, 8 August 1988, p. 3.
10. Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 March 1988, p. 2.
11. The closest we might come is a 1981 count from the Sixth Congress of Writers which lists the language of composition of the all-union writers' union (excluding the various republic-level unions, but including many overlapping memberships). Those figures showed 641 Ukrainian-language writers, 294 Georgians, 265 Armenians, 258 Azerbaidzhanis, 221 Belorussians, 218 Kazakhs, 152 Uzbeks, 147 Latvians, 130 Lithuanians, 111 Kirghiz, 110 Estonians, 95 Moldavians, 94 Tadzhiks, 80 Turkmens, 744 other non-Russian languages, and



3448 publishing in Russian. Cited from Paul A. Goble, "Readers, Writers, and Republics", an unpublished paper.

12. Moskovskii literator, 13 January 1989, p. 1.
13. Description by participant.
14. O. Suleimenov, "Korni", Komsomol'skaia pravda, 3 June 1988, p. 2.
15. Ibid.
16. Literaturnaia Rossiia, 29 May 1987, p. 14.
17. Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia, #6, 1988, p. 42.
18. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3.
19. N. Ivanovna, "Anatomiia pererozhdeniia", Druzhba narodov, #8, 1987, p. 236.
20. Ibid., p. 242.
21. Ibid., p. 245.
22. Ogonek, #44, 1988, p. 26.
23. Sergei Brynskikh, "Makhallia", Zvezda vostoka, #2, 1988.
24. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3.
25. "Spros i predlozhenie," Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 September 1987, p. 4.
26. "V poiske", Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 August 1987, p. 4.
27. "'Siri ia vazar' vchera i segodnia", ibid., p. 2.
28. "Remont", Literaturnaia gazeta, 24 June 1987, p. 3.
29. "Serost' na potoke", Literaturnaia gazeta, 29 July 1987, p. 3.
30. "Mirazh", Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 December 1987, p. 3.
31. Ibid.
32. Viktor Likhonosov, "V nachale bylo slovo", Sovetskaia kul'tura, 22 October 1988, p. 5.
33. F. Snegirev, Ogonek, #4, 1988. That this great Lenin Prize winner had not written (and many said had not even read) his masterpieces gave rise to a number of first-rate jokes, among

the best of which was the observation one critic made when one of the Moscow theaters staged Slovo o polku Igoreve (the Russian national epic) and Malaia zemlia (Brezhnev's account of his defense of Novorossisk in World War II). "Absolutely correct!" said someone "The authors of both the one and the other are unknown!" (Sovetskaia kul'tura, 22 October 1988, p. 5).

34. Timur Pulatov, Ogonek, #44, 1988, p. 29.
35. N. Startseva, "O 'natsional'nykh doblestiakh' podlinnykh i mnimyykh", op. cit., p. 3.
36. Tset Kallas, "Ne budet knig nenapisannykh", Literaturnaia gazeta, 24 June 1987, p. 5.
37. O. Suleimenov, "Korni", op. cit.
38. Druzhba narodov, n. 2, 1988, p. 173.
39. Literaturnaia gazeta, n. 1, 1989, p. 1.
40. Startseva, op. cit.
41. Suleimenov, "Korni", op. cit.
42. See for example Fazil Iskander, Literaturnaia Rossiia, 19 Feb 1988, p. 7-8.
43. K. Katanian, "Dvuiazychie i mezhnatsional'nye problemy", Sovetskaia kul'tura, 22 December 1988, p. 3.
44. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #11, 1988, p. 14.
45. Khalimat Bairamukova, "Dolgi nashi", Literaturnoe obozrenie, #4, 1988, p. 15.
46. Druzhba narodov, #12, 1987, p. 235.
47. Zvezda vostoka, #5, 1988.
48. Boris Ukachin, Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 March 1988, p. 9.
49. M. Gurevich, "Chto my chitaem", Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 96.
50. Sergei Grechaniuk, Literaturnaia gazeta, 26 October 1988, p. 3.
51. Literaturnaia Rossiia, #22, 1987, p. 14.

52. Literaturnaia gazeta, #37, 1988, p. 3.
53. Druzhba narodov, #11, 1987, p. 247.
54. Gennadii Kuznetsov, "S tochki zreniia 'neofita'", Literaturnoe obozrenie, n. 8, 1988, p. 96.
55. Sergei Baruzdin, speech at Plenum of KPSS, Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 March 1988, p. 4.
56. T. Kaipbergenov, "Otdacha dukha i izhdivenchestvo dushi", Sovetskaia kul'tura, 25 August 1988, p. 3.
57. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3
58. "Ia balansiruiu na grebne", Literaturnoe obozrenie, #2, 1988, p. 3.
59. Druzhba narodov, #11, 1987, p. 248.
60. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 96.
61. Druzhba narodov, #2, 1988, p. 177-178.
62. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3.
63. E. Kuz'min, Literaturnaia gazeta, 25 February 1987, p. 7.
64. Literaturnaia gazeta, 8 August 1988, p. 3.
65. Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia, #6, 1988, p. 61.
66. V. Vigilianskii, "'Grazhdanskaia voina' v literature", Ogonek, #43, 1988, p. 7.
67. Druzhba narodov, #2, 1988, p. 175.
68. Literaturnaia gazeta, 1 February 1989, p. 3.
69. Vigilianskii, Ogonek, op. cit.
70. Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 March 1988, p. 10.
71. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3.
72. Literaturnaia gazeta, 1 February 1989, p. 3.
73. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 October 1988, p. 3.
74. Druzhba narodov, #11, 1987, p. 249-250.
75. Literaturnaia gazeta, 29 June 1988, p. 10.

76. Ogonek #43, 1988, p. 8.
77. Literaturnaia gazeta, 29 July 1987, p. 3.
78. Literaturnaia Rossiia, #19, 1986, p. 16.
79. Druzhba narodov, #2, 1988, p. 170.
80. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #11, 1987, p. 95-96.
81. Literaturnaia gazeta, 24 July 1987, p. 3.
82. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 94.
83. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 94.
84. Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia, #6, 1988, p. 48.
85. Izvestiia, 26 June 1988, p. 6.
86. Economist, 21-27 January 1989, p. 48.
87. Izvestiia, 10 March 1988, p. 6.
88. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 38.
89. Literaturnaia Rossiia, 29 May 1987, p. 14.
90. Sovetskaia molodezh', 8 June 1988, p. 3.
91. Ibid.
92. Reference is to the increasingly bitter disputes between the two literary factions of Russian writers, the conservative side of which has many writers, like Bondarev, who have not been published as widely since glasnost' as they were before. See for example Ogonek #43, 1988, pp. 7-8, and Pravda, 18 January 1989, p. 6.
93. Ogonek, Pulatov, op. cit.
94. Literaturnaia gazeta, 29 June 1988, p. 10.
95. Impossible to substantiate but intriguing, this rumor was widely current in Moscow literary circles during my stay December 1988-January 1989.
96. Komsomol'skaia pravda, 3 June 1988, p. 2.
97. Literaturnaia gazeta, 1 February 1989, p. 3.
98. Private correspondence.

99. Pulatov, for example, said he studied with Andrei Bitov, Grant Matevosian, and V. Makanin. (Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 40).
100. Komsomol'skaia pravda, 1 April 1988, p. 4.
101. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #8, 1988, p. 69.
102. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #12, 1988, p. 19.
103. Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia, #6, 1988, p. 61.
104. Speech by Sergei Baruzdin, Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 March 1988, p. 4.
105. Druzhba narodov, #8, 1987, p. 243.
106. Literaturnaia gazeta, 29 June 1988, p. 10.
107. Druzhba narodov, #8, 1987, p. 245.
108. Literaturnaia gazeta, 9 March 1988, p. 2.
109. Druzhba narodov, #12, 1987, p. 221.
110. Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia, #6, 1988, p.43.
111. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #1, 1988, p. 93.
112. Druzhba narodov, #2, 1988, p. 176.
113. Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia, #6, 1988, p. 44.
114. Literaturnaia gazeta, #37, 1988, p. 3.
115. As quoted by Mukhammad Salikh, in Druzhba narodov, n. 12, 1987, p. 233.
116. Literaturnoe obozrenie, #4, 1988, p. 100.