TITLE: Russian Nationalism as a Medium of Revolution

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Executive Summary

The central claim of the following paper is that Russian political development (including the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the anti-Communist revolution of recent years) is a function of Russian nationalism. In the present context, "nationalism" should be understood not in the usual sense as aggressive or chauvinistic sentiments, set on political aggrandizement, but as a shared framework of consciousness, which, obviously, may imply -- or, under certain conditions, even take the form of -- such sentiments, but is not limited to them.

Russian nationalism exerts its influence on politics chiefly, though not exclusively, through the Russian social and cultural elite -- the intelligentsia. Nationalism determines the attitudes and the conduct of the intelligentsia because, for reasons that have to do with the origins and evolution of both nationalism and the intelligentsia in Russia, national identity forms the core of the intelligentsia's group (or class) identity and, therefore, its interests. It is this triple connection between Russian nationalism, the intelligentsia, and political development that forms the focus of the paper. Since the intelligentsia is the group that has traditionally articulated and shaped Russian national consciousness, its interests may be expected to influence the attitudes of other groups in society and, in a modified form, be reflected in their conduct as well.

Paramount among the intelligentsia's group interests is their aspiration for social status and political authority, to which they consider themselves entitled because of their belief (embedded in Russian national consciousness) that culture is the supreme expression of the national spirit and the foundation of Russia's international prestige. The inevitable frustration of this aspiration under the conditions of the Russian and Soviet political systems has been the chief stimulant of political unrest, the revolutionary and, later, dissident movements providing ways to escape this frustration and offering alternative means of self-realization for the intelligentsia.

Three things, at least, follow from this. First, as long as Russian national identity remains fundamentally unchanged, the development of democracy in Russia is highly unlikely. Second, communism in Russia also had nationalism at its root. And third, the right-wing, extreme nationalism the rise of which accompanied the anti-Communist revolution from the very start, and which turned from a pro-reform, anti-Communist (progressive as it was called here) force into the ideology of the anti-democratic opposition to reform, is but a specific, extreme expression of a general phenomenon, and is for this reason far more significant and dangerous than it would be in its own right.

The arguments presented in this paper will be further developed in the book I am currently writing, based on interviews with members of the intelligentsia (including certain active and influential participants in the democratic reform) and on historical research using published...
materials from the period 1840-1993. The paper includes some excerpts from the interviews, pertaining to the coup of 1991 (which might be of interest to government readers). It concentrates, however, on the pre-revolutionary period, which provides an historical background for later developments. A discussion of certain aspects of these developments and the current situation was presented to the Council at an earlier point in a paper titled "The End of the Russian Revolution," which was distributed by the National Council in October 1992 and a short version of which was published in The New Republic in September 1992.
Russian Nationalism as a Medium of Revolution
Liah Greenfeld

The problem this paper attempts to address is the relationship between nationalism and political change in Russia. Its central argument is captured in the title. It proposes that nationalism -- defined, for the purpose of this discussion, as a particular framework of consciousness -- has been the medium of the revolutionary movement in Russia, providing the framework in which one lived, which shaped one's interests, and which determined what one regarded as problems and possible solutions.

This interpretation was inspired by the recent Russian revolution, the "Soviet" revolution as some have called it to distinguish it from the Russian Revolution of 1917,1 or the anti-Communist revolution. But an examination of the connection between nationalism and political unrest in this case led me to consider it in a wider historical context. The specific problem or puzzle in the anti-Communist revolution is the unaccountable (from the perspective of our initial interpretation of this event) behavior of its participants. According to this initial interpretation, the anti-Communist revolution in Russia was a dramatic step in the process and the direction of democratization. It was the desire for democracy which, as we supposed, moved the Russians to abandon their 70-year-old order. The abandonment of Communism, however, was from the very start accompanied by a resurgence in national sentiment, and nationalism represented an anomaly for this interpretation, even though at the outset we viewed it in a positive light as yet another powerful -- perhaps too powerful -- wedge undermining the regime. It was an anomaly not only or chiefly because we believed that 70 years of Communism had extinguished nationalism (which might have been the reason for our initial surprise at its ubiquity and vigor), but because nationalism -- especially in its traditional Russian form -- had so little in common with the universalistic spirit of liberal democracy. The type of post-Communist nationalism in Russia on which Western attention focused was that of the right-wing opposition to reform,2 the nationalism of the so-called "hard-line communists" of our evening news. But the issue of national identity has been at least as salient among the mainstream and originally pro-reform public; the place of Russia vis-a-vis the West on the one hand and Asia on the other, the Russian "idea," the Russian "mission" are discussed incessantly in the "democratic" press.

This extraordinary salience of nationalism and the connection between it and the anti-Communist revolution seems intriguing enough to make one want to account for it and explore this relationship beyond the assumption that, well, when you take the lid off the social

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1For example, by Anatol Lieven in The Baltic Revolution, Yale University Press, 1993.

2The most important recent analysis of this variety of Russian nationalism is Walter Laqueur's Black Hundred, Harper-Collins, 1993.
pot, ideological steam naturally escapes. It is not necessarily natural that seventy years of
cooking did not transform this steam; there is a need to explain how -- in which structures --
nationalism was preserved intact, despite the obvious contradiction between it and the official
internationalist ideology, which could have suppressed it at least as easily as it did suppress
religion, but for some reason did not; and why it was preserved intact, i.e., whose interests did it
serve. Furthermore, given that nationalism evidently was not suppressed during 70 years of
Communism, and given its extraordinary salience from the very outset of the anti-Communist
revolution, couldn't it be possible that this revolution was in some way inspired by nationalism
and not by the desire for democracy? This proposition may seem far-fetched, but one should
explore it just in case.

What makes me think that it is not as far-fetched as it may seem is another aspect of the
behavior of the participants in the anti-Communist revolution or, rather, a dramatic transforma-
tion in their behavior as recently as in the last 2-2½ years. That this behavior did change could
be observed during the coup, or as it is now called "rebellion," of September-October 1993; just
how dramatically it has changed may be gauged by comparing this behavior with the behavior of
the same people during the coup of August 1991.

For the purpose of my present research, I visited Russia twice, the first time in June and
July of 1992, and again a little more than a year later, in August and September of 1993, leaving
one day before the outbreak of the "rebellion." My original intention was to explore the changes
in the Russian national consciousness which, I presumed, the abandonment of Communism
presupposed, and the implications of the Russians' new self-definition for the prospects of
Russia's democratization. The most dramatic discovery I made during my first visit was that
Russian national consciousness had not changed: not only was it not different from what I
remembered of it twenty-something years ago, when I left Russia, but, in its values, preoccupa-
tions, and the very terms in which it was expressed, it was practically indistinguishable from the
national thought of the beginning of the century and even the middle of the century before. The
focus of my research thus had to be reconsidered. It made little sense to study the implications
of the old national consciousness for the prospects of Russia's democratization: these implica-
tions had already been made explicit. Instead, it became pertinent to account for the resilience of
this consciousness in the face of profound social change and two revolutions, and its place or
impact, if any, in these two revolutions.

However, it was only later that I began reorienting my project; I spent June and July of
1992 listening. I interviewed members of the top, or second to the top, echelon of the Russian
intelligentsia -- people directly engaged in shaping and articulating modes of thought, able to
exert influence on the consciousness of others in their society: journalists, editors of major
publications and presses in Moscow and St. Petersburg, poets and writers of fiction, university professors, historians, sociologists, psychologists, ethnographers. The sector of the intelligentsia on which I focused in 1992 was identified as "pro-reform," and many of my interlocutors were at that time active -- and influential -- in politics. Several of them were members of the Supreme Soviet, others -- members of the two municipal councils, leaders of various democratic parties, one briefly served as the deputy foreign minister and another as the Minister of Nationalities. A couple were active in business.

I did not have the chance to observe the excitement which apparently, according to the Western as well as the Soviet press, characterized the first years of perestroika. In the summer of 1992, those heady days of the revolution were already over, and the disappointment had begun to set in. The people to whom I talked were preoccupied and depressed; they did not like what they saw around them. Yet it was clear that they had not given up on the revolution; they still participated or took active interest in it, and were proud of their participation. Many of them wanted to talk to me about the coup of 1991: although I did not ask, it came up almost in every interview.

After all that has happened since then, the events of August 1991 -- with their heroism and exhilaration -- seem ancient history, hardly relevant to the understanding of today's Russia (Russia of 1994, gloomy and apathetic after the burning of the White House and the elections of December 1993, in which 20% voted for a fascist party). Still, these stories deserve to be told, for they put in sharper focus the change that took place in the minds and moods of Russian anti-communists and help to explain why they were anti-communists to begin with.

In August 1991, most of those with whom I would talk ten months later were, or wished they were, on the square in front of the White House, among those who defied the coup and whose image on TV screens convinced the West of Russia's conversion to democracy. Their presence on the square was largely symbolic. They knew that they could offer no substantial resistance to the troops under the command of the Emergency Committee, and that, if the leaders of the coup wanted, the crowd in front of the White House could be dispersed in minutes.

They were driven to the square by fear, which in the privacy of their apartments they found unbearable. Their reactions to the news were very similar. They felt "the breath of death." An elderly woman, an historian of Central Asia, whom I'll call Irina Andreevna, recounted her experience: "Our son called us in the morning and said: 'There was a coup, sit at home, go nowhere, call no one -- all the telephones are bugged. Turn on the radio and the TV, don't dare to go out, and wait for a Jewish pogrom.'" Irina Andreevna’s husband was Jewish, so,

3Most of my respondents, though willing to be interviewed, requested me not to mention their real names in accounts prepared for publication; all names are therefore modified.
she said: "It was a terrible horror. Of course, we turned on the TV [and heard] funeral marches, "The Swan Lake," and from time to time some gibberish about a new government taking power. I sobbed -- I was hysterical."

Naturally, people were afraid of the physical violence (such as a Jewish pogrom) and arrests. Yet for many the first feeling was that of an insult, "as if someone for no reason at all slapped one on the face." An editor of a famous progressive journal (Znamia) remembered: "The fear that I felt was of this kind: I was very afraid to be killed, and that my family could be killed. I was very afraid to be arrested, and that my family could be arrested. But what I feared most -- with a kind of mad, animal fear -- was that they would win, and we'd have to live again as before, which was more frightening than [prison-]camps.... I felt this for the first time in my life: this was the first time in my life, when I understood that to live that way would be more terrible than in the camps, than anything at all."

On the square the fear disappeared. It did not matter that they were no match for the G.K.Ch.P.; their action was expressive, not instrumental. They came to affirm their dignity and affirmed it by the very fact that they dared to do so, publicly, among and in front of their friends. It was, for many, the proudest moment of their lives. "It did not matter what would happen next," a member of the (since-then-disbanded) Supreme Soviet told me. "The August days were exhilarating because we faced them." Irina Andreevna sobbed for a day and a night; the next morning, however, a friend rang her up and asked: "So, Irka, did you cook something?" -- meaning a dinner for "the defenders of the White House." Irina Andreevna improvised a meal and, "as the maddest madwoman" went to the square. At the metro station closest to the White House she joined a large crowd, all moving in the same direction, and she thought that "if the new government only wanted, they could shoot or catch all of [us] there.... [I]t was such a bottleneck," but people went on, and when they reached the square "that feeling of horror, of our doom, disappeared entirely." "I never saw anything like that," she remembered. "It was a wonderful self-organization of the nation...." Interestingly, it reminded her of the Decembrists -- the aristocratic rebels of the early 19th century, from one of whom she descended. "All they thought of was that they had to die beautifully. The night before the uprising they said: 'Ah, brothers, how beautifully we shall die!'" On the square people happily went about their business. Young women carried medicines; others, like Irina and her friend, brought soups and other food. "From time to time Yeltsin came out and spoke to the people. At one point a car drove close, with Rutskoi.... He was wonderful at that moment, calm, joyous; [he said:] 'we'll do our job.'"

"Now," Irina Andreevna said in June 1992, "all of us are very disappointed in him, but then he was in the right place..., joked with someone, pointed something to someone else, shook somebody's hand.... And then for the first time in my life I saw our Russian flag -- the tricol-
or.... It was wonderful -- we had the feeling that this was our flag. And we defended.... I cannot tell you -- I burst into tears when I saw this flag; I understood then, why we were here. We were here for free Russia."

The fear that drove them to the square was replaced by "the sense of a holiday, of a national unity and meaningful existence." They were proud to be Russian, to be in Russia. "A tremendous impression on the Russians [sic] on the square was made by Rostropovich, when he came onto the balcony. Rostropovich came from Paris to die on his motherland." "I cried -- I was drowning in tears," recounted Irina Andreevna, "when I learned that he came in order to die in Russia; of course this made a huge impression on us. And Rostropovich said then that he is proud to be in Russia. And that day I was proud to be Russian, and that I have such a wonderful people." The editor of Znamia felt proud too, because, she said, "I understood that I am more afraid to live like before than to accept martyrdom -- this first of all -- and also because I understood that there was no way back, that this was no longer conceivable."

They knew that there were very few of them, that they did not represent the people, that the people, of whom in those August days they were so proud to be a part, wanted no part in and, as a mass, was at best indifferent to the confrontation which for them carried such personal significance. Natasha, an ethnographer, learned of the coup on a train and remembered the joy with which it was met by her fellow passengers. Yes, they said, Gorbachev should have been hanged long ago: things were good under Khrushchev, and even under Brezhnev one could still find sausage in the stores, it was Gorbachev who destroyed the country. Democracy meant nothing but disorder, and people wanted order, which the coup leaders promised. Of course, order implied that one was expected to come to work on time, and this was unfortunate. But the possibility that the leadership would distribute apartments counterbalanced this minor inconvenience. Women discussed possible prices under the new regime: for groceries, furniture, video-equipment. Foreign travel would become impossible again; they thought this followed from G.K.Ch.P.'s declaration that a Russian person felt a second-class citizen abroad, and that one had to give Russians back their dignity. But they did not mind, so long as life was back to normal at home. Natasha cried. Two men in her compartment asked what was the matter. What did they mean what was the matter, she sobbed, THIS! People would be arrested, her friends.... "Your friends are meddling in affairs that are none of their business," responded the men, "and women should have altogether different preoccupations."4

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4Ten months later, in June 1992, as I had an opportunity to witness, the coup still provoked strong sentiments, at least among some of "the people." When I was sufficiently impressed (and depressed) by Moscow’s public transportation and could take it no longer, I resigned to the fate of a foreigner and allowed myself to be driven to my appointments in a black Volga — formerly the official car of an air-force colonel. The colonel
The majority, though not all, of the "defenders of the White House" and their counterparts in Leningrad were members of the intelligentsia, whose sentiments differed dramatically from those of the rest of the population. Immediately after the coup a public opinion poll was carried out by the Institute of Sociology in Moscow, in which the respondents were asked to describe their reactions to the news of the events on August 19. Of those asked, 34% reported experiencing indignation upon hearing the news of the coup (the distinguishing characteristic of this group was a higher level of education); 45% described their reaction as anxiety: they were anxious to convince the new (old-style) rulers of their political correctness; 8.5% remained indifferent; the rest (12.5%) confessed they met the news with joy.

Mikhail Chernysh was among the sociologists who carried the study out. Chernysh's memory of his own feelings took his car into retirement and was making a living as its driver. He was an earnest, intelligent man in his early fifties, a friend of Rutskoi, he said, and, like the latter, a veteran of Afghanistan. My rides with him were guided tours, which he supplemented with running political commentary, acid but careful -- I could not make out what he thought about the reforms -- and with stories about the war, in regard to which he was clearly bitter, even though also reserved. When we had spare time, he would choose a roundabout route and show me places which he believed to be of particular interest and which I would not otherwise visit. One such sight was the prison where the leaders of the coup were kept -- Matrosskaia Tishina. We never talked about the coup before, because I wanted him to tell me what was on his mind, rather than to respond to my queries, but, as he stopped the car to allow me a better look, I decided to ask an innocent question. "Do you think," I asked, "that the situation in the country would necessarily be worse if they managed to carry the coup through?" My colonel lost his reserve. He turned to me, his face turning red with rage, and yelled: "If they managed to carry the coup through, you say?! I would have them all shot and hanged for not managing to carry it through!!!"

5 The groups who resisted the return of the old order were represented by the three dead among the Moscow demonstrators -- all killed unintentionally, as the New York Times reported, crushed in the general confusion between barricades and retreating tanks. One of them, the oldest, was a poet, a Jew; another a history student; but the third one, a young man of 22-23 years was a member of "the new class" of "cooperators" or businessmen. The "new class" had good reasons to oppose the return of the old order: a businessman -- a physicist turned businessman -- who was among the resisters in Leningrad described the crowd there as anyone "from pankist adolescents to cooperators who came in their Mercedeses, parked them, took out handguns, and said: 'well, guys, we'll have to stand for this government' -- mafia sort of people." The reaction to the coup of these "cooperators" must have been similar to his own. He heard the news on the way to his own company, which he founded and officially registered only in June, and his first two thoughts were: "This is what you get for not leaving this place when you still had the chance, idiot!" and then, "What a pity, I have just started!" As to the pankist adolescents, they might have had no thoughts at all; for them, apparently, this was "a holiday of freedom." Natasha, who amidst all the excitement and collective effervescence of those heady days kept her ethnographer's head about her, analyzed their behavior. "They supported the struggle with G.K.Ch.P. without pondering the ideological premises behind its actions or behind the actions of those who opposed it. During speeches they left the square, but they came back at night, lit bonfires, sang songs and wrote the lyrics on walls, and in general romped and had fun, because it was a carnival.... It is wrong to think that all this was some ideological struggle."

remained untarnished by his knowledge. "I felt very gratified to be a Russian," he remem-
bered. "To know that Russia had leaders who felt citizens. It was very gratifying, of course,
because Russia had been a country that did not know citizenship. We felt citizens -- we were
defending our citizenship. I know that there were very few such people, that the majority did not
feel that way. I did some sociological studies after the coup, so I know...."

In late summer of 1993, I talked again to most of the people I had interviewed a year
before. They no longer recalled the coup with the same fond sentiments and, it appeared,
preferred not to be reminded of it at all. Yeltsin's popularity was at its all-time low: the intelli-
gentsia in particular held him in contempt. This did not imply the popularity of anyone else
though, only a profound disaffection from the political process. The 'intelligenty' no longer
watched TV (to which two years ago they were glued); they no longer subscribed to the fat
journals.\footnote{Laqueur, in \textit{Black Hundred}, mentions "a palpable decline in all Russian newspapers and periodicals in
1992" and provides some dramatic figures for \textit{Nash Sovremennik} and \textit{Molodaya Gvardia}, pp. 301-303.} They had lost interest. When asked what they thought about the then on-going brawl
between Yeltsin and the parliament -- led by his erstwhile best friends -- many would respond:
"I don't know: I don't read newspapers." The general feeling was that the conflict was nothing
but a struggle for personal power, of no relevance whatsoever for people's daily lives, which in
the meantime grew harder, and that the conduct of both sides was shameless and unworthy of the
representatives of a great power.

When the conflict came to a head in the last days of September 1993, the behavior of the
intelligentsia presented a striking contrast to their actions and attitudes in 1991. This time, like
the rest of the population, they remained completely apathetic. They did not respond to Gaidar's
call to come onto the streets and oppose the parlamenteurs (now it was Gaidar's turn, rather than
Rutskoi's or Khasbulatov's, who did so in 1991, to call upon the "people" to defend democracy
and Yeltsin as its representative -- against Rutskoi and Khasbulatov). Those who came onto the
streets, came to look. One of my interviewees, Vera, a psychologist, whom I called, among
others, to get the latest news, was one of those curious. She confirmed the reports of Western
observers: life seemed to go on as usual. Only, she said, it was very quiet. The atmosphere
reminded her of the days of Pretender Dmitri, as described by Pushkin (Russian reality still
resembles fiction): "The people remained silent."

Unlike in 1991, the confrontation between the parliament and Yeltsin was not perceived
as a conflict between right and wrong. Neither of the parties had moral appeal in the eyes of the
intelligentsia. The position of some was decided by the likely implications of parlamenteurs'
victory for them personally: a lonely old Jew not far from the besieged White House held up a
poster which read: "Yeltsin, the Jews support you." The majority had no position at all. They
sat at home -- and those who could, at their dachas -- and waited. Come what may, they knew 
they would adjust to it. They did not care about the outcome and had no fear: they went 
through this in 1991, said Vera, and became immune. After Yeltsin proved victorious, a TV poll 
showed that 70% of Moscow population supported him. Vera would support him too: people 
are afraid of chaos, she explained: "We support him against our hearts: any tsar is better than 
nothing." Since order was exactly what the parliamentary faction claimed to defend against 
Yeltsin's policies, it is likely that, had Rutskoi and Khasbulatov triumphed, 70% of Moscow's 
population would ("against their hearts") have supported them.

In 1991, the intelligentsia -- in contrast to the rest of the population -- opposed the party 
of order. They preferred chaos, they preferred martyrdom -- anything to giving back the little 
freedom they had won. They did not want a tsar, they were proud to feel citizens. What 
happened in between and made them change their minds?

It is this change in the behavior of the intelligentsia -- which supplied most of the revolu-
tionaries in this case and was chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the transformation into a 
revolution of what began as far-reaching and yet essentially conservative reforms, intended to 
strengthen the Soviet system -- that I find so interesting. I believe that this change -- this disa-
fection from the anti-Communist revolution -- is related to the nature of Russian nationalism and 
may throw light not only on its present salience, but also on its role in the Communist revolution 
of 1917; the subsequent disaffection from it; and the development of the anti-Communist senti-
ment, which eventually resulted in the anti-Communist revolution of recent years. By implica-
tion, this interpretation of the change of heart among the intelligentsia may also help to account 
for the appeal of Vladimir Zhirinovsky among the Russian population. Like the widespread 
disaffection from the "democratic" process on the part of those strata that had been active 
participants in it, the massive vote for Zhirinovsky in the recent elections may be proof of the 
vitality of the Russian nationalist tradition, which should and can only be understood in relation 
to it.

Political -- revolutionary -- change may be affected by identity for two reasons: because 
identity changes, or because it does not change. Specifically, nationalism may contribute to 
political change (in fact, induce it) at the moment that such nationalism emerges or comes of age. 
In this case, a revolution jolts the old society into conformity with a new identity, which implies 
a new, revolutionary indeed, image of social order. Whatever brings it about in the first place, a 
change of consciousness -- and this is what the emergence of a new identity means -- brings 
about through revolution a corresponding change in reality. Such was, for example, the relation-
ship between nationalism and the French Revolution. I would not claim, of course, that the former was the sole cause of the latter: there was to begin with the structural situation, itself a product of many factors, to which both nationalism and revolution were responses, and the fiscal crisis that served as a trigger and without which the revolution might not have happened. At the same time, the emergent but already articulate, self-assertive -- and frustrated -- nationalism did provide the inspiration for the revolution and was to a significant degree responsible, if not for its fact and timing, at least for its nature and the course it took. Neither the revolutionary war nor such key events as the (self-)abolition of the nobility by the Constituent Assembly or the trial and execution of Louis XVI, as well as any number of actions and decisions of lesser but still great importance (the change in the form of collective ritual or the establishment of the revolutionary calendar, for instance) could be explained without reference to the changing definition of the political community and the emergence of national identity.

But nationalism can also affect political change decades and centuries after its birth, in societies long defined as nations and unable to conceive of themselves in any other way. In this case, the change in reality may be demanded (and claimed in a revolution), paradoxically, because the consciousness remains unchanged. National identity, under these circumstances, in contrast to emergent nationalism, serves not as a direct inspiration for the revolution, but rather as the cognitive medium in which stimuli are refracted and interpreted, and which shapes one’s perception of reality and, as a result, its experience. While in the former case, a revolution may be seen as an act of adolescent rebellion -- nationalism’s self-assertion; in the latter, it is rather a mid-life crisis -- a corrective measure, intended to make reality conform more closely to nationalism’s imperatives, and the less successful is the initial fit between identity and reality, the more often such drastic corrective measures may be attempted. This, I believe, is the story of the relationship between nationalism and revolution in Russia.

The intelligentsia’s change of heart between 1991 and 1993, I believe, is explained by the realization that democracy and -- perhaps to a lesser extent -- a market society are antithetical to its class, or group, interests. Members of the intelligentsia did not know this before, because they never gave democracy and market society any thought, they simply saw them as symbols of anti-communism. Indeed, the intelligentsia was for a long time anti-communist. This was because communism did not serve these class interests either. And neither did the tsarist regime which communism replaced, which was the reason for the adoption of communism. In other words: the Russian intelligentsia, which, incidentally, was the revolutionary class at every stage

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of Russian history in the past 200 years, became disillusioned with the Soviet regime for the very same reasons which explain their disillusionment with the tsarist regime. And the reasons for their disillusionment with their new -- anti-Communist -- revolution are identical with the reasons for their disillusionment with the Bolshevik revolution, which led them to their anti-Communism in the first place.

These group or class interests of the intelligentsia, which have been frustrated so many times and the frustration of which has been the stimulus of so many dramatic changes in Russian history (indeed a major revolutionary force) are an implication of the Russian national identity. The paramount among them -- the interest which reflects the intelligentsia's self-image -- is the interest in the status of leadership in society, the recognition of its authority which it claims by virtue of being the personification of Russian culture. It is this aspiration (perhaps a more appropriate word in this context, than "interest") which in a sense constitutes the Russian intelligentsia as a group, forming the basis of its specific ethos, its class identity. As such the aspiration emerges simultaneously with the intelligentsia whose roots are indeed intertwined with the roots of Russian nationalism.

Russian nationalism evolved initially as a response to the situation of another class (or, if you will, stratum) singularly preoccupied with status: the nobility. The Russian nobility in the 18th century, as a result of the reforms of Peter the Great, suffered from an acute sense of status-inconsistency. On the one hand, it was encouraged to and did develop a far sharper sense of dignity and self-respect than before, coming to see itself as comparable to the aristocracies of Europe, and a representative of a powerful and magnificent state, admired by the entire world. On the other hand, it was denied the corporate rights which aristocracies of Europe enjoyed; it had no power, which was, by definition, entirely in the hands of the autocrat; and, above all, the status of every individual nobleman depended on rank achieved in service and was never secure. Noble birth or noble identity -- being a nobleman -- saddled one with a taste for and expectations of social status it could not guarantee. The loss of status, or simply lack of success in achieving it, was always distinctly possible and implied a loss of identity. Defining oneself as a nobleman thus meant a life of constant, unrelenting anxiety, and was psychologically untenable.

Members of the nobility did not want to give up their expectations of status, corresponding to their exalted sense of dignity, but they needed guarantees that these expectations would be

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9There is a growing body of literature subscribing to this view. It includes, among other works, Martin Malia's classic essay "What is the Intelligentsia?" in Daedalus (Summer 1960); Tibor Szamuely's The Russian Tradition (Secker and Warburg, 1974), and most recently Richard Pipes' Russian Revolution (Vintage Books, 1990).

10On this point see Greenfeld, "The Scythian Rome: Russia," in Nationalism, op. cit.
realized. In the search for such guarantees, the nobility exchanged its estate identity for two new identities, both of which implied the right to superior status, which in Russia noble birth as such did not imply: the identity of a cultural elite (or, as it was later renamed, the intelligentsia)\(^{11}\) on the one hand, and a national identity on the other. The former tied status to one’s level of culture, making it essentially a function of education. The latter, national identity, elevated every member of the national community to the dignity of an elite, guaranteeing against the loss of status. In addition, the Russian national identity was defined in a way that made culture, particularly literature, both the supreme expression of the national soul and the foundation of the Russian nation’s claim to greatness. Culture was sacralized, those who partook in it (the consumers of culture) were the keepers of the very spirit of the nation, its priests; and those who contributed to its glory, the creators of culture, were far more than priests, they shared in its divinity. The nobility of the early 19th century saw itself as “the cultured” or “the enlightened class,” and it was very nationalistic. Even though the nature of noble status in Russia left the decision to grant it or take it away to the discretion of the autocrat, to deprive the cultured class of a position in society commensurate with its exalted role became, in the framework of Russian nationalism, illegitimate.

The Russian autocratic tsars encouraged the development of national sentiment and thinking among their subjects, first perhaps for their own reasons, but then simply because they too came to see the world as naturally divided into nations and thought a healthy measure of nationalism a reflection, as well as a buttress, of a healthy state. But, not unexpectedly, their nationalism differed from the nationalism of the nobility and later intelligentsia. The Russian tsars identified the Russian nation with the Russian state, rather than with culture, and saw the autocracy -- and themselves -- as the supreme expression of its spirit, as well as the guarantor of its glory and well-being.\(^{12}\) The ideas of the Russian tsars became Russian political reality. Thus, from the outset, a contradiction existed between the actual political constitution of the Russian nation and its ideal image in the minds of the elite stratum of the Russian society.

The tsars treated the nationalists of the “cultured class” with suspicion and condescension. The nobility and the intelligentsia answered with disloyalty. The less respect the tsars showed the “cultured class,” the more openly disloyal it became, and the more disloyal it became, the less ready were the tsars to show it respect. The 19th century was one of escalating hostility --

\(^{11}\)On the connection between the nobility and the intelligentsia in Russia see Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia*, Harcourt, Brace, 1966.

contained only during the especially repressive regime of Nicholas I -- between the Russian state (personified in the tzars and the top echelons of the bureaucracy) and the upper class of the Russian society, and punctuated by rebellions, beginning with the Decembrist revolt of 1825 and ending only with the revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

During this time, the upper class both grew in numbers and changed its composition. More and more of its members were commoners by birth. The redefined nobility was a very open class and welcomed and embraced these newcomers. This was, paradoxically, also helped by the open policy of ennoblement through service, instituted by the tzars and vehemently opposed by the old nobility of the 18th century. School, beyond the elementary, counted as service, and a university degree conferred on its holder a noble status. But the promise of social superiority which Russian nationalism held out for the educated irrespective of degrees served as a much more powerful stimulus, and the indelible image of the hungry and rugged "eternal student" is a testimony to the pull of this promise of upward mobility. Still, it was not until the nobility had lost its social foundation and been finally emptied of meaning by the reforms of 1861 that it was replaced by the intelligentsia as the upper class category. The emergence of the term "intelligentsia" at that time attests, if not to the decisive break with the noble identity, at least to a shift of collective allegiance away from it. Only then did the members of the stratum really need a new conceptual roof to gather under; only then did they decisively redefine themselves. The nobility was no longer worth preserving, noble dignity no longer worth defending. From that point on, dignity resided elsewhere; it had migrated.

Due to the circumstances of its birth and genetic makeup, so to speak, the identity of the Russian intelligentsia bore a dual aspect: it was simultaneously a class and a national identity. This inevitably affected the nature of the Russian national identity which was articulated by the intelligentsia. Moreover it meant that one could not share in this class identity -- namely consider oneself a member of the Russian intelligentsia -- without subscribing to the values of Russian nationalism. The opposite did not hold true, because other groups in Russian society had their separate class identities which sometimes reinforced and sometimes worked at cross-purposes with the demands of national identity. It was conceivable for a Russian peasant or industrial laborer, for example, to emigrate, change nationality, and yet remain a peasant or an industrial

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13 Maxim Sokolov, "Barin i Muzhik," Stolitsa, 1:1993, p. 6; "Dvorianstvo," Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', Brokhaus and Evfiron, vol. X, pp. 203-218. Thus one could not be, officially, an educated person without being a nobleman. The members of the intelligentsia who were not noblemen were those who could not complete their education, more often than not because they were expelled from high school or university for academic or disciplinary reasons. This group formed the core of the radical revolutionaries. Incidentally, Lenin was a hereditary nobleman, for his father, though a son of a serf, earned hereditary nobility in service. See Szamuely, op. cit., p. 147.
laborer. But for a member of the Russian intelligentsia it was impossible to wean oneself from the values of Russian nationalism without renouncing at the same time one's class identity as well. This explains why Russian intellectuals, who so often found themselves expatriates, made such poor (that is, unsuccessful) emigrants: they were tied to their original nationality by a double bond which could be severed only at the risk of the heaviest damage to their personality.

The nationalism of the intelligentsia appealed to the ambitious and bred an army of missionaries, ever ready to spread its message. As it served the interests of an influential and growing social stratum, it became self-perpetuating. The official or state nationalism of the tzars, on the other hand, was a dead letter which came alive only when upheld by and geared to the interests of the intelligentsia. This did happen repeatedly, producing a recessive but persistent variant within the tradition of Russian nationalist thought, which combined elements of the two original types. However, the self-perpetuating character and permanent attraction of the (unofficial) intelligentsia’s nationalism -- whether containing elements of the state variant or not -- condemned those who embraced it, under conditions of autocracy, to constant frustration. Rebellion was one way to cope with this frustration. But in between rebellions, which after all did not happen so often, the intelligentsia had to create for itself a way of life that would take out the sting and prevent this frustration from becoming psychologically destructive -- a way of life that, in other words, would provide an alternative outlet for their social desires, particularly the desire for authority, which in the existing political system could not be realized. The intelligentsia found such a way of life in literary activity and in the revolutionary movement.

The standing of literature -- poetry, fiction, and, significantly, literary criticism -- in Russian culture knows no parallels in other societies. In Russia, a creative writer holds the place of a prophet, endowed with a supreme authority to rule on matters of importance for the community. Works of literature -- from epic novels to lyrical verses -- are believed to have (and thus acquire) social and political significance, whether or not intended by their authors, and to bespeak the Truth. In Russia, one might say, Dichtung ist Wahrheit. It reveals the real meaning of apparent existence. There is nothing further from fiction, to the Russian mind, than what we call "fiction"; therefore, it is not called that in the Russian language, which reserves for it the admire appellation of "artistic literature."

It is the Russian national consciousness -- Russian nationalism -- which puts literature and its creators on this pedestal, and it is the intelligentsia as a whole which keeps them there. The intelligentsia’s veneration for the best in its midst is, among other things, a form of vicarious self-veneration, and its never-diminishing enthusiasm is, therefore, to some extent, motivated by self-interest. But the authorities -- the rulers of Russia and their bureaucrats -- who are but lesser Russians after all -- participate in this literature-worship too. In pre-1917 Russia, the intelligen-
tsia supported its literary elite materially, as well as spiritually; that was a market society of sorts, in which book sales affected the well-being of the authors. But during the 70 years of triumphant socialism, the writers were kept (I use this word advisedly) by the state. The inherent value of literature, its moral authority transcending and yet dependent on its literary merit, was never questioned either before or after 1917. Even efforts at state control of literature (imposition of "socialist realism," persecution of individual writers and poets -- as writers and poets) gave testimony to the recognition and fear of the authority of literature on the part of political power. Given the way the nation was defined, literature -- above all, aesthetically superior literature -- was the Holy Scriptures of the nation.

The social position of the literary elite, as a group, came closest to the image of what the intelligentsia considered its rightful place, but writers were not satisfied with it. They believed that the recognition of their significance did not reach deep enough into the mass of the people and dreamt of the time when a muzhik would go to the market and come back with works of literary criticism instead of cheap foreign novels. "The poet of the intelligentsia," Nekrasov, wrote in Who Lives Well in Rus:

When will those happy days be here?
The time of dream will come, it will,
When a Muzhik from market-place
Not silliness of some mylord --
Belinsky's works and Gogol's works
Will carry home instead.

Judging by the context in which he placed these memorable lines, the development of such discerning literary taste would signal the arrival of the new, happy and just, Russian society.

The literary elite also wanted to be recognized as Russia's natural leaders, because being writers implied for them that they were more than writers. Appreciated -- even worshipped -- for their literary talents, they felt they were not fully appreciated. A mouthpiece of their nation's spirit, they aspired to a complete parity with the government in temporal and spiritual matters alike, and, because in fact they believed themselves superior to statesmen who were not also literary figures, demanded to be called upon and deferred to as councilors on matters of state policy and moral arbiters. However exalted was the laymen's image of the writers' importance, the writers' own image of it was more exalted. Acclaimed "rulers of the minds" of their people, they believed themselves the rightful rulers of their destinies as well, and since this role was (as

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14 Some telling evidence regarding the privileged and kept status of the Soviet literary elite may be found in Nadezhda Mandelstam's memoirs (especially, Vtoraya Kniga, Moscow 1990, pp. 59, 74, 160, 162).
they were firmly convinced) usurped by the state, they felt excluded. Their status in society was very high. But it was nevertheless and of necessity discrepant with the inflated notion of the respect due to literature, which followed from the basic principles of the Russian national consciousness.

Time after time did the best Russian authors claim the prerogatives of political leadership, to which they believed themselves entitled by right of being Russian authors. In 1826, Pushkin, in the famous "Stanzas" ("I look to happy days ahead/ Without weariness or fear..."), admonished the Emperor Nicholas, fresh and angry from suppressing the Decembrist uprising, in which many of Pushkin's friends were involved (some of them excellent poets themselves), and called him to follow in the footsteps of his ancestor Peter the Great. Specifically, the poet recommended that Nicholas should "draw hearts of men with truth," "tame customs with science," use his "autocratic hand" to sow enlightenment, and "recognize the destiny of his nation." Pushkin was 27 years old at the time, had no experience in politics, and felt confident to proffer advice to the Autocrat of All the Russias. As late as 1993, as I learned, some still considered this address a betrayal: the poet, they thought, should have been above talking to a tsar. But in 1931 Boris Pasternak understood the temptation of his illustrious predecessor. He wrote on the subject his own "Stanzas" -- built around several lines borrowed from Pushkin's; he also felt excluded and unfulfilled, if left to the satisfactions of his solitary literary labor.

A century had passed and yet
The old temptation is still here
To look to happy days ahead
Without weariness or fear.

To labor alongside the state....

Pasternak's "Stanzas," however, were an expression of a wish, rather than an advice: writing under Stalin, whose authority was more formidable than that of a tsar, he had less confidence in his own ability to serve as a councillor to rulers.

At times celebrated authors lost sight of their priorities. In one of his poems, written during his not-so-brief love affair with the state, Vladimir Mayakovsky declared: "I could not care less that I am a poet." (He then constructed a beautiful verse around this line which, given this context, appears somewhat self-contradictory.) This great poet lived under the illusion that the Bolshevik Revolution, to which he referred as "My revolution," ended the opposition between art and political power, replacing it with their cooperation, as equal partners, in the business (or, rather, labor) of socialist nation-building. Poetry was a major participant in the revolutionary effort, an army in its own right, of which Mayakovsky appointed himself a commander, and
which he considered to be at least as important as any conventional army. He even mused, in another poem, that it might be useful for Comrade Stalin to address the Politburo, from time to time, with a speech on "the work of verses."

Among the countless discussions of the nature of the intelligentsia and its relations with the "people," on the one hand, and "powers," on the other, there appeared on July 18, 1993 (the anniversary of Mayakovsky's birth), in the "Moscow News" an essay on him, entitled "The Unrealized Parity." The author argued that it was Mayakovsky's investment in the idea of the equal partnership between literature and political power and his realization that such partnership did not exist that broke him and ultimately led to his suicide. The author of another essay in the same issue reflected, quoting from Mayakovsky's poems: "Mayakovsky sincerely believed himself 'requisitioned' by the Bolsheviks, 'mobilized and called by the Revolution'... he rejoiced: 'I am happy to be a part of this power'.... We should understand Mayakovsky: we too experienced happiness of this sort, when we stood, holding hands, at the walls of the White House during the nights of August 1991." It is no wonder, indeed, that Mayakovsky's heartbreak is interpreted as having a significance far beyond the personal and his tragedy seen as a reflection of a common fate: "This was not the suicide of a poet -- but of a nation... persistently, systematically rejecting its best, most talented children, those whom it, the nation itself, needed most, its teachers and providers." Contemporary Russian authors can identify with a poet who died 60 -- or 160 -- years ago, for they share in their predecessors' predicament.

Because of the significance with which Russian nationalism invested literature, its creators could not find fulfillment in literature alone. Yet literature itself provided them with an outlet for their other ambitions. Every literary form in Russia (criticism, lyrical poem, short story, novel, drama) has doubled, explicitly, as social commentary. And political authorities, from Catherine II on, perceived literature in such terms. Alexander Radishchev's "Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow" in the late 18th century opened the long list of literary works interpreted as interference in the affairs of the state, which in our time included Akhmatova's lyrics, Zoshchenko's comic stories, Pasternak's Dr. Zhivago, and so on and on, ending with the writers-dissidents of the "period of stagnation" in the 1970s and 80s. Political commentary was equally expected from literary critics or scholars, who served as mediators between creative writers and their audience and were considered the leaders of the intelligentsia. Such commentary was even perceived where authors never intended it. It is not coincidental, for instance, that "the period of stagnation" was announced in an essay of a classical philologist, Mikhail Gasparov, which dealt with

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16Maria Chegodayeva, "Po Mandatu Dolga," ibid.
Horace's poetry. The author was quite unaware of the impact the essay made and, when told of it, was surprised. One cannot help wondering, however, whether his edition of Horace -- published, as was the rule in Russia, in hundreds of thousands of copies -- would have sold out within months of publication, had it not been for this (mis)interpretation.

According to Lenin, history's choice of Russia as the site of the first communist revolution was justified by the glories of Russian literature, which, by implication, made the revolution the realization of the latter's purpose. Lenin spent minimal effort developing his argument, evidently believing that a simple reminder would suffice. "Let the reader recall such predecessors of Russian Social-Democracy as Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky," he wrote in What Is To Be Done, "...let him ponder over the world significance which Russian literature is now acquiring, let him... but be that enough!" The literary and revolutionary movements, with their respective circles and organizations, indeed very often overlapped in their preoccupations as well as personnel, which contributed to the political significance of Russian literature and made Russian politics so literary. Literature, however, was not open to all. It offered a possibility of self-realization, 100% sanctioned by the national consciousness, and carried immense prestige; it even, to an extent, satisfied the specifically political urges of the literary elite. But it required talent. Those members of the intelligentsia who did not have it, or did not have it in a sufficient measure -- that is, the majority -- were doomed to frustration. They could not hope to attain a position commensurable with their self-image as representatives of Russian culture. Condemned to insignificance, they felt they were denied "real," that is meaningful, existence.

Peter Struve expressed a rather common sentiment when he wrote: "It is remarkable that our national literature remains the sphere which the [revolutionary] intelligentsia cannot conquer. Great writers -- Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov -- do not bear the mark of the intelligentsia." This was so because the writers (and, more generally, all creative professionals) represented within the intelligentsia a special, privileged stratum, to the realization of whose interests the revolutionary movement could contribute only marginally. The others, it appears, in Russian conditions did not have an alternative. They could not find self-realization as professionals, because self-realization very specifically meant the realization of one's status aspirations, rather than free development of one's abilities. For that reason, as Isgoiev noticed in regard to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but as is certainly the case today, "an average, mass, intelligent in Russia, by and large, has no love for his profession and does not

17V.I. Lenin, "What is to Be Done?"

know it." People with strong natural proclivities in one or another field of intellectual endeavor, driven by curiosity or artistic passion, would be, obviously, less preoccupied with status, less frustrated by the inability to achieve it (passion has its own rewards), and at the same time more likely to find their social aspirations fulfilled. Therefore, there occurred a natural selection: "As a rule," wrote Isgoev, "almost all active, intelligent youths with decent, admirable intentions, but without exceptional creative abilities, inevitably go through adolescent revolutionary circles.... Nature's especially gifted, poets, artists, musicians, technical inventors, and so on, somehow are not drawn [too deeply] into these circles.... Until the recent revolutionary years, creative, gifted people in Russia somehow shunned the revolutionary intelligentsia, having little tolerance for its haughtiness and despotism."19

The revolutionary movement offered the possibility of self-realization for the "average intelligent." It was the alternative social sphere in which he (or she, as the case often was) found "real" life, for it implied parity -- if only as adversaries -- with political power, and therefore the desired status. Depending on the situation, the revolutionary movement escalated or waned, broke out in terrorist activity or retreated into sullen and silent opposition. In our time, it was called the "dissident movement." But, through all of its long history, the motives behind it remained the same, and these motives did much to determine its nature.

The revolutionary movement was, essentially, a response to the intelligentsia's sense of status-inconsistency, which resulted from the discrepancy between the superior, authoritative position of culture in the Russian national consciousness and the auxiliary, at best decorative, role to which its representatives were relegated by the nature of Russia's political structure. Behind the revolutionary movement, in other words, stood Russian nationalism. Nationalism, the expectations it necessarily bred, and the specific distress their frustration created from early 19th century to this day, were the immediate cause of the intelligentsia's opposition to the government.

But the impact of nationalism was not limited to sowing the seed. Though often from a distance and in disguise, it has directed and shaped every movement of the offspring it sired. One might even say (to continue the analogy) that nationalism "genetically programmed" the revolutionary movement, for none of the fundamental aspects of the latter can be adequately understood without reference to the elements of the former.

This makes an analysis of the nature of Russian nationalism indispensable for the understanding of the Russian revolutions. As mentioned earlier, Russian nationalism attributed exceptional importance to high secular culture and its creators. This was so because of the circumstances in which this national consciousness was born, and was directly related to the definition

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The nation was defined in unitary terms, as a collective body animated by a unique spirit, or soul, of which high secular culture, and in particular literature, was the essential expression.

Such definition had several implications. First of all, it implied an unequal relationship between those through whom the nation revealed itself -- the cultured classes -- and those to whom it revealed itself through them -- the masses of the Russian people. It implied, in other words, an aristocratic social structure and an authoritarian political structure.

Second, it implied the social preeminence (and, therefore, greater appeal) of cultural professions over other types of activity, such as military or civil service, and especially economic occupations. Wealth could never buy status in Russia. For that one had to "live nobly," meaning that a wealthy person who wanted prestige had to insinuate himself into the intelligentsia through making contributions, keeping an open house for authors, aiding struggling artists, establishing galleries and concert halls -- or supporting the intelligentsia's subversive activity. Several of the richest Russian merchants secured their place in history this way, but even they were kept at arm's length. As Russian national consciousness developed, more elaborate reasons were found for the contempt in which economic pursuits were held since its earliest days, but the original reason for it was the direct transfer of status from the nobility to the intelligentsia.

Perhaps most importantly, this definition of the nation implied emphasis on the community at the expense of the individual, and the related emphasis on enthusiasm at the expense of reason. Spontaneous emotion, whatever its consequences, has always been considered as more honest than, thus preferable to, deliberation, and this fundamental attitude was reflected in every sphere of social existence, from intimate personal relations to the peculiar (mis)understanding of the rule of law, which combined a passion for justice with complete indifference, if not scorn for, legality.

The central feature of Russian nationalism, however, was the worship of "the people." Given what has been said so far, this may appear paradoxical, but in fact it is not. In the early nationalist discourse, the word "people" (narod) in Russian, as in other European languages, had two meanings: it was both the synonym of the word "nation" (thus referring to the entire population of a polity) and had the connotation of plebs, referring specifically to the lower classes. In the former sense, the term carried all the semantic baggage of the idea of the nation, and signified the locus of sovereignty, the object of supreme loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity. As a vernacular term, "narod" was preferred to "natsia" -- the Russian rendition of "nation" -- which was easily recognizable as a word of foreign derivation. Its own derivatives,
"narodnyi," "narodnost'," were commonly used to denote "national" and "nationality," whose Russian equivalents, "natsional'nyi" and "natsional'nost'" never acquired the same emotional significance. In this context, the worship of "the people" was not different from nation-worship in other nationalisms, it was in fact nationalist self-worship par excellence. (The interchangeability of the terms "narod" and "natsia," incidentally, made the term "narodnichestvo," the name of the revolutionary movement in the 1870s, which is invariably translated as "populism," the most accurate Russian rendition of the word "nationalism.")

In the framework of Russian nationalism, however, "the people" in the second sense, that of plebs, the lower classes, became an object of a particular cult. This cult was related to the essential anti-individualist and anti-rationalist orientation of Russian national consciousness and resulted from the search for an appropriate repository of the alleged national virtues: spontaneity, communal spirit, aversion to reasoning, and so forth. The lower classes of Russian society, the peasantry -- of whose real virtues (or vices) the educated creators of Russian nationalism were quite unaware -- got the part, most likely, exactly for that reason, or possibly because all other candidates fell so evidently short of the required standard. As a result of their imagined commun(al)ism and irrationality, the lower classes were defined as the most Russian Russians, the group closest to the springs of the Russian nationality, the purest embodiment of the national soul. This soul, nonetheless, still spoke through the intelligentsia. It was assumed that the people was a thing in itself and needed an interpreter to develop self-consciousness.

Whether it denoted the nation as a whole or the lower classes, "the people" in the Russian national consciousness was a cognitive construct, an abstraction. It referred to an ideal image, rather than any concrete group, and for this reason the worship of the "people" was consistent with complete indifference to the people's actual woes. That is why the struggle with autocracy (a matter of direct concern for the intelligentsia) had priority over the struggle with serfdom: it took an autocratic tsar to abolish the latter in Russia. Closer to our time, that was also why atrocities, such as collectivization, perpetrated by the friends of "the people" for the good of "the people," did not appear so atrocious. The image of "the people" was too radiant to allow its identification with starving peasants, who ate grass and gnawed on trees, like rodents, causing embarrassment to the builders of socialism.

It is customary to trace the origins of the systematic discussion of the question of national identity (namely self-conscious nationalism) in Russia to the controversy between Slavophils and Westernizers in the 1840s. The controversy began as an argument between friends, young men of good birth at the University of Moscow, and resulted in a dual tradition that henceforth

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21Anna Geifman (in Thou Shalt Kill, Princeton University Press, 1993) leaves little place to doubt that the concern for the people's well-being was, indeed, among the least of the revolutionary intelligentsia's concerns.
supplied the terms of the nationalist discourse. After the controversy, ostensibly, there were two Russian nationalisms, not one, but, as Alexander Herzen, commented,\textsuperscript{22} the parties had much in common and differed, essentially, in regard to strategies. Both positions were reactions to the perceived superiority of the West, the main stimulant of the Russian national sentiment as such, and animated by anti-Western resentment, which waxed and waned in proportion to the confidence that Russia could prove itself equal to, or -- preferably -- better than its competition.\textsuperscript{23} The Westernist nationalism, on the whole, was the more confident of the two. For that reason, it was also more activist and less focused on ideas. It produced its revolutionaries, not philosophers. The people who articulated Westernist nationalism did this among other things, in the time they took off from their professional responsibilities, so to speak. Not unexpectedly, its authoritative expression is to be found in the works of literary critics, whose professional responsibilities were broadly defined and who, therefore, often took time off from whatever it was they were involved in directly.

In 1847, the greatest of them all, Vissarion Belinsky, published an essay which became a Westernist classic. Titled dryly "A View on the Russian Literature for the Year 1846" and ostensibly a literary review, it did not touch on literature for the first 30 of its 52 pages. Its central subject was the essence of Russian nationality. The choice of topic was justified by the fact that, in 1846, according to Belinsky, nationality was the central preoccupation of the Russian authors. "Look, listen carefully," he invited his readers, "what is it that is most discussed in our journals? -- Nationality, reality... the question of "nationality" especially became the all-important question...." (p. 390).\textsuperscript{24} This question, wrote Belinsky, was approached in two ways: "all our literature, and with it a part of, if not the entire, public, divided into two camps": "Slavophils and non-Slavophils" (p. 382). The division was provoked by the Slavophils, who advanced an argument, which the non-Slavophils then challenged. Belinsky's essay articulated the challenge, in the process providing an assessment of the Slavophil position. The "positive side" of Slavophilism, Belinsky thought, "consisted in some cloudy mystical presentiments of the triumph of the East over the West," which he dismissed, but its "negative side" deserved attention. It did, because Slavophil criticism of Russians' unreflective imitation of Europe -- the order of the day since late 18th century -- challenged them to turn inward and examine themselves. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23}Regarding anti-Western resentment as a stimulant of Russian nationalism see Greenfeld, "The Scythian Rome...," op. cit.
\item \textsuperscript{24}All references are to V.G. Belinsky, \textit{Izbrannoe}, pp. 370-422.
\end{itemize}
greatest achievement of the Slavophils was in destroying the fantasy that Russia was essentially a European nation. Which led the Russians to ask: what kind of a nation were they in fact? As a result, wrote Belinsky (and his words could not ring more up-to-date) "never was the study of Russian history as serious, as it became of late. We question and interrogate the past, so that it would explain to us our present and hint at our future. We as if became concerned for our life, for our significance, for our past and future and want quickly to resolve the question: to be or not to be? [we want to know] does any organic idea run through our history, and if it does, what idea is it; what is our relationship to our past, from which we seem to be cut off, and to the West, with which we appear to be connected."

Belinsky’s answer to these questions, though non-Slavophil, was by no means anti-Slavophil. He believed that everything that was "vital, beautiful, and sensible" in Russia of his day (including literature) was a result of the westernizing reforms of Peter the Great, which the Slavophils considered the source of all evil. Russia was simply no longer conceivable outside of Europe and could only develop as a European society. This, however, did not imply that it lost its national character: in fact, membership in the European community was the only way for it to acquire and become fully conscious of its nationality. National consciousness was a reflection of a higher stage of social development, the one Russia had only reached as a result of its Europeanization; before Petrine reforms the Russian reality was that of a tribe, rather than a nation, and its consciousness was an adequate reflection of "the limited contents of a tribal, natural, immediate, semipatriarchal existence." (p. 379.) Westernization was thus a natural stage of Russia’s own development, Russia’s European identity an essential element of its national identity.

In its progressive -- and as inevitable as it was beneficial -- Europeanization Russia did not borrow, but creatively assimilated the European habits of thought and behavior, transforming them into its own, national, ones, in the same way in which food was transformed into one’s flesh and blood. ("Who but theorists and fantasists could say today that for the best, namely the most educated [nota bene], part of the Russian society the European clothes and customs have not become national?" asked Belinsky, p. 377) This assimilation was not mindless imitation: Russia, at least ideally, was attracted by what was human in the European achievement, and rejected the elements that were European without being human.

Moreover, having assimilated the many achievements of humanity that they found in the West, Russians no longer needed to turn to the West for guidance. In fact, Russia could not follow the examples of old European states, because it was young (like North America), and its greatness lay ahead of it, in its future, rather than in the past. The youthfulness of the Russian nation meant that it was not yet as self-conscious as the French, the English, and the Germans,
who were "so national each in their own way, as to become unable to understand each other any more" (p. 386). The incomplete development of Russian (national) self-consciousness had two implications. It meant that Russians could understand and appreciate other nations: "the sociability of a Frenchman, the practical activity of an Englishman, the misty philosophy of a German [were] equally accessible to a Russian" (ibid.). It also meant that their own national identity was an enigma to them. "Undoubtedly," wrote Belinsky, "it is easier for a Russian to assimilate the point of view of a Frenchman, an Englishman, or a German, than to think independently as a Russian... in regard to himself he is still a puzzle, because still a puzzle for him are the significance and the destiny of his nation, where everything is embryonic, emerging, and nothing definite, developed, crystallized. Of course, there is something sad in this, but then how much that is also comforting! An oak grows slowly, but lives for centuries" (ibid.).

Belinsky did not believe that a mighty state, such as Russia obviously was, could have any foundation other than nationality and thought it silly to doubt the existence of a distinct Russian national character. What it was, was as yet unclear, but he was not worried. "Yes, there is national life in us," he wrote, "we are destined to bring our message, our idea to the world; but what is this message, what idea -- it is too early for us to be concerned about that" (p. 387).

Nationality was a very important attribute for a society. Relative to the idea of humanity, it was the same as personality relative to a human being. It was the expression of the society's "loftiest and most noble reality" -- its spirituality, the equivalent of a person's "feeling, intellect, will, which reflect his eternal, unchanging, necessary essence" (pp. 396, 393). Without nationalities humanity would be spiritually dead and uninteresting, in this regard Belinsky admitted he would rather take the side of the Slavophils than "humanistic cosmopolitans" who argued with them. Nationality was rooted in natural kinship and could not be artificially created, but it developed only with the liberation of the people from nature, in proportion to the development of their culture.

The proof of Russian nationality was in the Russian national literature. The proof that Russian literature was national, expressive of the unique Russian national character, was in the interest foreigners had in it: some stories by Gogol were translated into French and Belinsky exclaimed jubilantly: "we have seen, at last, all Europe focus its attention on Russian literature" (p. 379). The writings of Russian authors could be interesting for foreigners, he believed, only

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25"We do not propose as incontestable that the Russian people is destined to express in its nationality the richest and most varied content and that this is the reason for its amazing ability to comprehend and assimilate everything foreign," Belinsky added in this context, "but we dare to think that such a thought, as a supposition, uttered without self-complacency and fanaticism, is not without foundation...." (p. 388).
because they appeared "unlike the works of their own literatures, therefore original, unique, namely nationally Russian" (ibid.). No longer could one ask, as one did before, whether there was literature in Russia, not to mention answering this question in the negative. Russian literature was a vehicle of self-consciousness and the echo of reality (pp. 381, 390); it reflected the national, civic awakening of the society and its "noble and lawful aspiration" to understand itself. Pushkin was the first "national" poet of Russia, the beginning of the national literature. He was a genius, and a genius was, by definition, as national as the people, for he was a genius because he represented the people. "What lives in the people unconsciously, as a potentiality," wrote Belinsky, "is expressed in genius as a realization, as reality. The people is related to its great individuals, as the soil is to the plants to which it gives birth" (p. 400). Being a genius implied the right to influence the destiny of the nation (it was the nation acting on itself through its very best), and for a poet (or writer) there was no greater honor than to be national, for that meant he was a genius.

Russian literature in 1846, according to Belinsky, was already a national literature, which implied that it was a creation of geniuses, and that it not only reflected the "eternal, unchanging, and necessary essence" of the nation, but that it had the right to affect its destiny. Interestingly, the rather brief discussion of actual publications for the year 1846 in the remaining portion of the essay referred not only to original poetry and fiction, but to translations of classics, memoirs, and works of scholarly character in a variety of areas, from history to natural philosophy and agriculture -- in short, Russian letters, rather than literature per se, or, in terms of the later period, the work of the entire "creative intelligentsia."

The essential characteristics of Westernist nationalism, evident already in this early essay, have been the emphasis on the European identity of Russia, a belief in Russia's future greatness, a belief in the centrality of the intelligentsia in realizing Russia's potential, and vagueness in regard to what constituted the essence of Russian nationality and Russian national character. This was filled in by the Slavophils and their numerous followers. In distinction to Westernists, Slavophils were thinkers rather than doers, philosophers rather than revolutionaries. The self-image -- the national identity -- of an average intelligent, however Westernist (and the average intelligent was Westernist), was a product of the Slavophil thinking to a far greater extent than of Westernism. It was the Slavophils who developed the ideas of Russia's uniqueness, its sobor-

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26P. 373. It is interesting that the question that preoccupied American intellectuals at about the same time was "Who reads an American book?"

27Sergei Bulgakov (in "Geroism i Podvizhnichestvo", Vekhi, op. cit.) emphasized the Slavophil thinking of the Westernist revolutionary intelligentsia.
nost' or "communism," its spirituality which expressed itself in the capacity for feeling among its people and their aversion to calculation, so characteristic of the West, whether in personal or in business relationships, and in the indifference towards, even contempt for, the mundane, the material, whether it was sex or money. (How remarkable that the most fanatical materialism in human history grew out of this ethereal soil!)

In the end, the differences between Westernists and Slavophils boiled down to differences in temperament (in a way, they corresponded to the differences between the literary elite and the rank and file of the intelligentsia: those who could, wrote; those who could not, found solace in collective action). Westernists did not object to the Slavophil definition of the Russian national character and shared their opponents' sympathies and antipathies. Moreover, they contributed to the articulation of the national identity by opposition, through their criticism of the qualities of Western nations, to the "bourgeois" mores and spirit, Western rationalism and individualism -- which placed them in complete agreement with the Slavophil position and reinforced it. The real argument was about the moment of Russia's national self-realization -- which the Slavophils saw in the past, and the Westernists, ever optimistic, in the future -- and about whether Russia, as it was, was essentially European or not. The problem which lay at the basis of both traditions, as I mentioned, was the perception of Russia's inferiority vis-a-vis the West. The Slavophils resolved this problem by declaring that Russia was better than the West because it was different. Westernists felt uneasy unless they were satisfied that it was both better than the West and yet Western, more Western than the West, in fact -- truly Western. They both needed more than the Slavophils and believed that more was possible. And they dedicated their lives to proving themselves right. While Slavophils polished their disquisitions, Westernists attempted to make reality conform to them. It is their collective effort that is known to us as the Russian revolutionary movement.

The Westernist project was informed by Slavophil ideals -- among other things, because Westernists were too busy and too impatient to develop ideals of their own. But the division of labor between the doers and the thinkers obscured the identity of their aspirations. Because the articulation of the national idea became associated exclusively with the Slavophil tradition, and dissociated from Westernist nationalism, the latter was no longer perceived as nationalism at all. The revolutionary movement, with its adoration of the abstract "people" and its obsessive preoccupation with Russia's international reputation, could appear as a development independent of the national identity and consciousness of its participants. The Russian language itself perpetuated this misconception, hiding identical notions behind differences of terminology. While the Slavophils operated with the concept "nation" and its derivatives, the Westernists appropriated "narod." They used different words, but it only seemed that they spoke of different things. And
all the while national consciousness, which was Westernist and Slavophil at the same time, channelled and shaped the revolutionary movement; nationalism was the source and the inspiration of the revolution, and made it possible.

The goal of the revolutionary movement was national self-realization, but the way Russian national consciousness developed and its very language allowed its definition in terms of social and even internationalist concerns, ostensibly indifferent to nationalism. Combined with the contradictory perceptions of the identity of the intelligentsia -- the revolutionary class -- this attracted to the revolutionary movement those otherwise defined as non-Russian, particularly Jews. Participation in the revolutionary movement obscured the latter's marginality in Russian society, while reinforcing and adding significance to their identity as members of the intelligentsia. Remarkably, there were Jews among the "narodniks," but -- because of its explicit dismissal of nationality, which liberated them from the burden of their own (under Russian conditions insupportable) national identity -- the appeal of Marxism was, probably, stronger than that of other revolutionary currents.28

The transformation of "narodnichestvo" into Marxism -- as some contemporaries, at least, were well aware29 -- was largely a matter of semantics. The idea of the "proletariat" replaced the idea of the (Russian) "people," that of "capital" supplanted both the West and the autocracy, acting simultaneously as a national and a class enemy. The objective of the revolutionary effort, however, remained the same: it was the triumph of the nation over the state, of Russia over the West. And before the inner logic could allow Russian Marxism to wander too far off its nationalist foundations, Lenin's theory of imperialism brought it back home.

As nationalism determined the goals of the revolutionary movement, so it shaped the means to achieve them. The immediate function of the movement, quite unrelated to its success or failure, was to provide an opportunity of self-realization for the intelligentsia. Revolutionary activity was service to the nation -- as solid a basis of status in the framework of nationalism as there could be -- and in it the intelligentsia constructed for itself a system of stratification apart from that of the official society which denied them the recognition they craved. In this system achievement did not matter; all that counted was the effort. Success was measured not by the result of an action, but by the magnitude of sacrifice and dedication it reflected. This explained the preference of Russian revolutionaries for violent tactics, which often endangered their own

28 On the nationalist underpinnings of Marxism and its appeal see Greenfeld, "Nationalism and Class Struggle: Two Forces or One?" in Survey, Fall 1986; and "Transcending the Nation's Worth" in Daedalus, Summer 1993.

29 For example, N. A. Berdiaev. See his "Filosofskaya istina i intelligentskaja pravda" in Vekhi, op. cit.
lives almost as much as they did those against whom their activity was directed.\textsuperscript{30} Such risky behavior carried its own rewards. It offered immediate gratification, delivered instant prestige. It made one a hero. Martyrdom was consummate heroism, and so revolutionaries willingly -- eagerly -- went to the gallows. To die for the cause brought ultimate recognition: one simply could not do better in life. This behavior fit well with the alleged attributes of the Russian national character and the values hallowed by Russian nationalism: aversion to rational action, disregard for material self-interest and consequences in general, impetuosity, spontaneity, passion.

Like every social formation, the revolutionary movement had its virtuosi and its rank and file. The majority were unable to make the supreme sacrifice; they settled for a lower status, their prestige was reflected, acquired by association. They found their self-realization in admiring the heroes, supporting them in small ways, in taking little risks. For this majority, the revolutionary movement was a way of life which they expected to be long and into which they could settle with relative comfort. It was a self-sustaining, enduring social world with stringent standards of political correctness which made it exclusive; a world that was cohesive, suspicious of those who did not belong, and confident of its superiority. Membership in it made one feel one's life was real: meaningful, not wasted -- an enjoyable life, in fact, for all the hardship and danger it implied.

The Revolution put an end to all this.

Having spared no effort to convince the old order of its insolvency, the intelligentsia was taken aback when it gave up. The autocracy was toppled -- the goal achieved.\ldots Only a few realized that this was a Pyrrhic victory. The majority of the intelligentsia, even when dismayed by the form the Revolution took, accepted it. Some, like Mayakovskv, believed that it was, after all, theirs: the revolution of the intelligentsia that would assure the intelligentsia its rightful place at the helm of the nation. Others, who saw that it would not, were nevertheless convinced that it was in the national interest and offered their cooperation as a matter of patriotic duty.

It would take another forty pages to survey, in however minimal detail, the development of political unrest under Communism.\textsuperscript{31} The pattern should by now be clear. Within years of the realization of its century-long dream the intelligentsia found itself again in the old situation of status-inconsistency and more powerless vis-a-vis the state than it ever was under the tsars. The

\textsuperscript{30}On the relationship between status and violence among the revolutionary intelligentsia see Isgoev and Bulgakov, quoted above.

\textsuperscript{31}Some discussion of its development in the post-Khrushchev period may be found in Greenfeld, "Kitchen Debate: Russia's Anti-Democratic Intellectuals," The New Republic, September 1992.
first twenty years after the revolution of 1917 were the years of intelligentsia in power, even though, obviously, we are speaking only about a certain minority group within the intelligentsia and though for most of them this turned out to be not at all what they dreamt of. In the purges of the late 1930s all this revolutionary Bolshevik intelligentsia was wiped out, and with it much of the intelligentsia that was neither Bolshevik nor, less often, revolutionary. The dream was over. The nightmare of Stalinist years made tsarist oppression look like a dream, but most did not reflect on it. One concentrated on survival. Then came the Khrushchev's "thaw" and intelligentsia began to dream again.

The "thaw" revived the hope of parity between the intellectuals and the powers, which was the traditional aspiration of the Russian intelligentsia, deeply embedded in Russian national consciousness and never extinguished. The "stagnation," which followed the "thaw" dashed this hope -- again! -- creating an unbridgeable gap between the position the intelligentsia believed it was entitled to and the one it was allowed to occupy. This inconsistency, which in different degrees existed among all the sectors of the intelligentsia, fed its resentment and alienated it from the regime. When the Soviet "era of good feeling" of the late 1950s and early 1960s was over, the dissident movement grew and the intelligentsia in its mass began turning anti-Communist.

As before, it was Russian national consciousness and the dual identity of the intelligentsia that stood behind its disaffection, although these were modified in several respects. First, a new kind of Westernism was developing. It was anti-Marxist and favorably disposed to capitalism and democracy, which the old Westernism rejected. It was animated more by resentment of the Marxist usurpers within Russia, than by resentment of the West. In fact it was somewhat, not wholeheartedly and within limits, sympathetic to the West. Second, the specifically national aspect of the intelligentsia's consciousness (the ideas about Russian national character, Russia's place in history, its mission, the essence of Russian culture) were becoming explicitly Slavophil. Like Western democracy and capitalism, Slavophilism was validated by its opposition to the revolutionary movement, the disastrous results of the latter's triumph for the intelligentsia, and the growing disaffection from the regime. It acquired new legitimacy. In their united opposition to the new old order, the two currents of Russian national consciousness, Westernism and Slavophilism, merged, obliterating the much stressed differences between them. In contrast to its predecessor (the revolutionary movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries), the dissident movement in the period of late Communism was a movement of writers more than anyone else. The traditional distinction between the doers and the thinkers did not exist, because no one was allowed -- or dared -- to do anything. Thinking -- and thinking expressed in talking and writing -- took the place of doing. Thus the argument between Westernism and Slavophilism again became a conversation between friends. Finally, and for very similar reasons, that mark of
Russian nationalism, the worship of the "people" defined specifically as the lower classes, gave way to open contempt for the masses. The official glorification of the "proletariat" at the expense of the intelligentsia could not fail to antagonize the latter. In fact, insistence on its social superiority became an important expression of the intelligentsia’s opposition to the state. Linguistic usage reflected this change of attitude: in recent years a common designation for the "people" was "seroye bydlo" -- "gray cattle," an expression conjuring the image of a mindless, animal mass -- low life, indeed rabble one would hardly confuse with the nation whose soul revealed itself in one of the world’s greatest cultures.

The intelligentsia’s support for democracy was a function of its anti-Communism. But the anti-Communism of the Russian intelligentsia was fuelled by sentiments that were anything but democratic. In 1909, Sergei Bulgakov noticed the anti-egalitarian spirit of the Russian intelligentsia. He wrote: "Our intelligentsia, almost without exception striving after collectivism, the possible sobornost' of the human existence, represents, by its very nature, something anti-collectivist, because it carries within the disuniting element of heroic self-assertion. A hero is, to some extent, a superman, who assumes in the face of his fellow men the proud and challenging posture of a savior, and for all its professed democratism, the intelligentsia is but a species of spiritual aristocratism. . . ." It has not changed since then; it still craved status, and the ideal of equality, so central to democracy, could have no appeal to it. The intelligentsia sided with democratic reform out of spite for the old regime, but was quick to realize that democracy was antithetical to its interests, that in a democratic society, the fulfillment, the self-realization, of its members was far less feasible than under Communism or autocracy, with both of which it so valiantly fought.

It is not surprising, therefore, that it took Russian "democrats" two years to turn about; what is surprising, perhaps, is that it took them that long. The class interests of the Russian intelligentsia, and the frustrations that motivated their actions for almost two centuries were given in the nature of their national identity. Until they change this identity -- as members of the intelligentsia and as Russians -- they are bound to remain, socially and politically, in a time-warp. Unfortunately, because it implies social superiority, this identity is not likely to change any time soon.

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32Bulgakov, op. cit., p. 58.