Popular Image of the New Russians: 
Seen Through Class, Darkly

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"Russia is a feudal society ruled by a corrupt elite."

St. Petersburg Times

"The country suffers from economic immunodeficiency."

Obshchaia gazeta

"...the flashy, Mercedes-driving, Rolex-wearing, Riviera-sunning, casino-playing, gold-chained nouveaux riches of the post-Soviet years who never ask the price—unless to make a show of paying more."

Christian Science Monitor

Summary

With a glimpse at the stereotype of the "New Russian" and a nod toward the corroded respect for rule of law within Russian society, this paper examines the decadent image of the new class of extremely wealthy Russians, who gained their affluence abruptly after the demise of the Soviet Union. As noted in anecdotes and statistics, the New Russians tend to project the veneer of wealth through conspicuous extravagance.

Yet, such extravagance contrasts sharply with the economic suffering of those around them. For instance, Moscow Mayor Iurii Luzhkov threw a lavish party celebrating the 850th anniversary of Moscow, replete with a mammoth image of the Virgin Mary hovering in the sky, while ignoring Moscow's crumbling infrastructure and growing wage arrears. The standard of the New Russians, of which Luzhkov serves as a visible, concrete example, clearly embraces pretension.

Additionally, Russian culture has cast a philosophical link between crime and dividends in solid steel. Even if at times the flash of the New Russians with their mafia connections and weapons does not reflect reality, the Russian population increasingly associates corruption with profit. Accordingly, the emblem of the New Russians can be summarized as: bodyguards and name brands.

Finally, this paper regards two distinct social groups that are floundering in the tide of capitalism; the former intellectual intelligentsia and the women previously of the nomenklatura and now, in essence, the dependents of the New Russians. The intelligentsia are trying to find a place in a Russian society that does not share their traditional emphasis on morality and the humanities. Most women associated with the New Russians resemble a Victorian caste, living an opulent lifestyle with fundamentally no practical purpose.


2 Nikolai Petrakov. "Putting a Brave Face on a Sorry Business." Obshchaia gazeta 45 (November 13-19, 1997). Petrakov notes that Russian production of television sets, for instance, stands at 5 percent of the 1991 level, that of washing machines at 10 percent, that of tractors at 8 percent, and of knitwear and footwear at 10 percent.


4 The NCEEER staff composed the summary.
Understanding Russian popular stereotypes is a step toward understanding Russian popular culture. Meanwhile, Russian popular culture, as noted in the policies of Mayor Luzhkov, influences political decisionmaking and economic prospects. Simply put, this paper examines the manner in which the New Russian stereotype, particularly notable in an ethic that glorifies crime, manifests itself in evolving political and cultural perceptions within Russian society. Future papers will explore the longevity of such trends.

Birth of "The New Russians":

The emergence of a swiftly expanding group of businessmen created by Russia's program of privatization and concomitant eco-sociopolitical changes revived heated debate about Russian entrepreneurship in the 1990s. As in the Gospels, so during the "post-Gos" euphoria, in the beginning was the Word: after more than seventy years of state ownership, the sheer novelty of private enterprise necessitated a brand new vocabulary for virtually all aspects of modern Western-style economic transactions. A heterogeneous business-speak gradually evolved, in which neologisms jostled with wholesale borrowings from Western market discourse (e.g., "voucher") and terms exhumed from Russia's pre-Revolutionary past (e.g., "aktsia"). During this Klondike era, the newspaper Kommersant daily (1992) published a ground-breaking sociological report on the "suddenly wealthy" by a group of scholars who coined the appellation "the New Russians."

Once launched, the term instantly overran the Russian and Western press, despite vagueness and lack of consensus as to who precisely constituted these arrivistes. Read broadly, the label potentially referred to post-Soviet Russians (i.e., the entire population of the former Russian republic!), but in practice it attached to those "happy few" for whom desovietization meant socio-economic opportunities explored or exploited to the maximum.

According to sociologist Olga Kryshtanovskaya, Head of the Department of Elite Studies at the Institute of Sociology under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences, 61 percent of today's affluent Russians come from the former Soviet nomenklatura, whose political positions during initial privatization enabled their economic rise.  

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5 Anders Aslund categorically rejects this scenario, arguing that the three new sources accounting for new wealth are subsidized credits, implicit export subsidies, and import subsidies: "These routes to enrichment opened up in 1988 with the partial deregulation of the socialist economy and took on enormous dimensions in 1991, when the Soviet economy collapsed." Aslund indignantly defends "poor Mr. Chubais" as unjustly held responsible for the society's inequalities in wealth.
Since the commercial sector lacked an effective legal infrastructure that would safeguard the contracts and profits garnered by Russian businessmen, they either marshaled their own security forces (drawn largely from the former KGB and government organs) or hired mafia groups for protection. This state-created financial elite, which amassed huge fortunes through preferential access to the privatization of government assets, comprises the wealthiest stratum in Russia but maintains an inconspicuous profile (Kryshtanovskaia). In fact, moguls of the "corporatist oligarchy" exert every possible effort to downplay their wealth, while aggressively wielding it behind the scenes as political and economic leverage. Exemplars of this new elite are the overly spotlighted bankers and industrialists among the Group of Seven: the high-profile 52-year-old Boris Berezovsky, major shareholder in the auto distribution company LogoVaz, the oil giant SibNeft. ORT (the state television network), the daily Nezavisimaia gazeta, and the weekly Ogonek, Chubais ally and financier Vladimir Potanin, aged 36, president of Oneximbank and the financial power behind not only the dailies Izvestiia and Komsomol'skaia pravda, but also Norilsk Nickel and the telephone company Svyazinvest: tycoon Vladimir Gusinsky, 45, president of the MOST media and banking conglomerate—encompassing the daily Segodnia and Itogi magazine, published in conjunction with Newsweek, and NTV television station. As Kryshtanovskaia sagely cautions, one should not confuse this contingent with the New Russians, who in Russia and, consequently, abroad have a reputation as flashy, uneducated vulgarians who flaunt their allegedly ill-gotten baksy through conspicuous

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2. Some believe that today Berezovsky also controls Rosneft. See Anisimov.
3. According to the British business publication Forbes, Berezovsky is the eighth richest man in the world. For more on Berezovsky's career, see Stanley (14 June 1997) and Jebali (31 July 1997).
4. Norilsk Nickel controls 30% of the world's nickel reserve. For an incisive portrait of Potanin's career, see Kranz (24 November 1997). Almost as informative is the item by Paul Klebnikov in Forbes (1 December 1997).
5. The other four are 33-year-old Mikhail Fridman and Pyotr Aven of Alfa-bank, Aleksandr Smolensky of Stolichny Bank, and Mikhail Khordakovsky of Bank Menatep. For an acerbic portrait of the group's members, see Taibbi. Aleksandr Vasilenko, the leading light of Russia's largest petroleum company, Lukoil, and a major shareholder (41%) in IZV, is also a key player in this financial power game.
consumption. Whereas the politically empowered mega-rich, consisting largely of the former nomenklatura,
cover their dollar-tracks as best they can, the New Russians vigorously advertise theirs.¹¹

Anekdoty Fame:

The stark image of the New Russian that crystallized in the early 1990s rapidly infiltrated all spheres of
Russian culture: journalism, film, literature, pulp fiction, and multiple forms of urban folklore. Indeed, the
phenomenon of the New Russians revivified the hardy oral genre of the joke (anekdot), which had flourished
during the Soviet era, generating entire cycles devoted to Chapayev, Stirlitz, the Jews, Radio Armenia, and
Chukchi, but had virtually died out with desovietization. In the 1990s, the only anekdoty extensively circulated
in Moscow and St. Petersburg, published in collections, and printed in Russian émigré papers have featured the
New Russians.¹² For, in the eyes of their compatriots, they represent “perhaps the most colorful social group in
the country today, perhaps the most visible to the eye of the researcher, sociologist, historian, or journalist”
(Dutkina 86). As a legible sign of everything reprehensible about the new socio-political-economic order, the
New Russian acquired instant recognizability—and elicited unmitigated hostility. In its characteristically satiric
condensation of key defining traits, the anekdot eloquently limned a reductive image that other cultural genres
reproduced in more mediated, verbose, and shaded form. What is the precise nature of that image?

The accelerated affluence that presumably distinguishes the New Russian from the rest of the populace
accounts for the perception of the “type” as above all fabulously and fatuously rich, “wantonly spending several
times a typical citizen’s monthly salary on a single purchase” (vanden Heuvel), wagering “huge fortunes at
casinos, throwing money around left and right, buying priceless fur coats, diamonds, real estate, and firms
abroad” (Dutkina 87). At the Swiss-managed Sadko Arcade on the banks of the Moscow River, where security
guards with walkie-talkies screen customers, in 1996 a three-foot Christmas tree cost over $500, while hand-

¹¹ Taibbi, among others, considers Berezovskiy at the start of his career “the prototypical ‘New Russian’ businessman.” See Taibbi.

¹² Anekdoty about New Russians are not only narrated during informal encounters, but also have been collected in
several volumes published in St. Petersburg. They appear semi-regularly in Russian newspapers and magazines (e.g.,
Ogonek), as well as the émigré Panorama and Novoe Russkoe Slovo.
crafted miniature ornaments sold for $80 each, a pine wreath for approximately $300, and imported towels from Switzerland for $300. According to one of its salesgirls, whose most profligate client paid $20,000 for bed linens, most of the store's customers are criminals, lacking in education and grammar, accompanied by bodyguards and wads of cash (Fisher Dec. 22 1996).

In short, New Russians.

Not only extraordinary wealth, but a philistine faith in its omnipotence and a lurid compulsion to spend it flamboyantly are central to the stereotype. Some of the most frequently repeated anekdoty vividly illustrate how both acquiring money and indiscriminately wasting it through colorful gestures or staggering ignorance define the New Russian's purported sense of identity:

"What's the New Russians' favorite erotic position?"
"Bent over on all fours over wads of money."

Two New Russians meet, and one asks:
"Hey, Vasia, where'd you get your neat tie?"
"At the Valentino store. Cost me $2000."
"Hah!" the other one says with contempt. "I know a place where you can get exactly the same tie for $5000!"

Two New Russians come into a car sales store. They ask to see the latest Mercedes model. After perusing the car, they decide to buy it. One of them reaches for his wallet and produces the exact sum needed to pay for it.
"Hey, man, let's pay fifty-fifty," his buddy protests.
"C'mon, buddy, you paid for the cab!"

A New Russian comes to a car dealer and asks for a silver Mercedes 600SEL. The salesman shows him the car, receives the appropriate payment, then asks curiously:
"Excuse me, sir, but didn't you buy exactly the same car three days ago?"
"You bet," the New Russian retorts, "But in that one the ashtray was already full!"

Pulp fiction, too, identifies New Russians with knee-jerk extravagance and ostentatious acquisition of outrageously priced items that the average Russian can only dream about. Just how hackneyed the
image of the New Russians has become may be deduced from the murder mysteries of the
unprecedentedly popular authors Viktor Dotsenko, Nikolai Leonov, Aleksandra Marinina, and Danil
Koretsky. Merely the mention of one or two details, such as the make of automobile, fashion label,
location of dwelling, neanderthal behavior, or a set of physical traits suffices to signal the presence of New
Russian elements, as immediately established by a passage in Dotsenko's bestseller The Return of
Beshenyi (Vozvrat Beshenogo), which dominated the top-ten hardcover book list in 1995 and paperback
bestsellers the following year:

At that moment a tan Mercedes pulled up next door, which disgorged four muscular fellows.
Their grim faces and unceremonious mode of behavior—as they headed for the booth, a couple of
times they pushed aside passersby who didn't get out of their way in time—made the potential
customers quickly leave the dangerous spot. (Dotsenko 8)

Despite a more differentiated view of the New Russians, Marinina similarly portrays their "typical"
representatives as shady pragmatists with mafia connections or as egotistic self-seekers enamored of
overpriced commodities and flashy comfort. Her wildly popular Stylist (Stilist, 1997) emphasizes how
"by their possessions you will know them":

Who basically lived in these expensive houses? "New Russians," of course. Old ones couldn't
afford them. But when the "New" ones moved to the spacious brick "cottages, more often than
not they left their parents in their city apartments. (Stylist 14)

Her brother wouldn't hesitate to pay any sum when it was
a question of his wife or little son. He was a successful
young entrepreneur, a very well-to-do man, and he firmly
believed that money could solve all problems. (Stylist 77)

Marinina makes an effort to distinguish among various "types" of New Russians, who densely
populate the casts of her mysteries. As one of her high-ranking policemen remarks, contemporary
entrepreneurs have excelled in business "precisely because they have a normal psychology and a clear
head. They're very good at calculating, and not only money" (Combination of Circumstances
[Stechenie obstoijatel'stv] 345). Her Death and Little Bit of Love (Smert' i nemnozhko liubvi, 1997) shows
that purported rare exception—a principled New Russian—in Alexander, the policewoman-heroine's
younger half-brother, an affluent entrepreneur who nurtures an ideal romantic love for his wife Dasha. He helps out his family, and brandishes his wealth infrequently. The same novel contrasts this near-paragon with the cold, avaricious, and vulgar New Russians, personified in the unrelievedly repellent Tamila Bartosh, owner of the large firm Blue Dunay, and her former lover Marat.

Both have no scruples about manipulating anyone or eliminating any obstacle on route to financial gain. In a rare moment in Death’s Radiant Countenance (Svetlyi lik smerti, 1997), Marinina unambiguously and at length ventriloquizes her own attitude toward the New Russians through her protagonist, the investigator Anastasia (Nastya) Kamenetskaya:

Beautiful foreign cars drove past Nastia, with beautiful young men at the wheel, and beautiful young women beside them. As always in such cases, she experienced a sharp pang of pity for them—the young, beautiful, and as a rule, foolish. In the last two or three years she'd more than once had occasion to see such flashy cars, from which the bodies of beautiful young drivers shot at pointblank range were pulled out. Sometimes the drivers' girlfriends were in the cars too, also dead because they'd been hit by a chance bullet or the car had lost control and crashed. And each time Nastia imagined the scene ten or even five minutes prior to the tragedy: the beautiful car driving along the street, with the beautiful man behind the wheel and the sumptuous, long-legged young woman beside him. That's just how it looked, and it aroused envy and the decidedly destructive urge to acquire precisely the same thing... to have just such a great bod beside you... be in such a flashy foreign car... Fools... One should pity them, not envy them. Because all that's been bought for “fast” money, and wherever there's fast money, that's where you'll find crime. If you're young and very rich, that means you manipulated money too fast, and if that's the case, then you had to sort out too many things that accumulated around this money for you to remain long in this world. In our country today to be very young and very rich means to belong to a high risk group. The very young and very rich don’t live long in our country today. (134-35)

Leonov's crime novels likewise teem with entrepreneurs enslaved by Mamon, embroiled in criminal activities, and cynically indifferent to ethics and national interests. They have no political conscience (Jackals [Shakaly], 1997), feed off others' weaknesses, and unhesitatingly trade in arms at others' expense (Gurov's Defense [Zashchita Gurova], 1997). Eduard Topol, who similarly links politics with business, savors exposing the sleazy brutality of both government personnel and large-scale entrepreneurship, which, in the sweeping black and white strokes of caricature, he repeatedly and directly connects with crime and lavish habits (China Lane [Kitaiskii proezd], 1997). A few relatively shaded portraits aside,
pulp fiction in general and narratives about crime in particular equate a mania for power, money, and/or flamboyant epic-scale displays of wealth with the typical New Russian.\footnote{Other murder mysteries and thrillers with derogatory depictions of New Russians include Valery Barabashov's \textit{Krestnaya mat} and Dmitry Stakhov's \textit{Stukach} (1995). Few works by Leonov and Marinina are free of New Russians' presence.}

\textbf{PR for NR: Moscow's Market Mayor:}

From this perspective, the "free-spending, opportunistic" Mayor Iurii Luzhkov (Bennett) is the supreme New Russian writ large, with all of Moscow as his oyster.\footnote{Gareth Jones accurately characterizes the dome-headed mayor as "an intriguing blend of old-style Soviet apparatchik and entrepreneurial New Russian." In addition to maintaining a dictatorial control over the city's finances, politics, and business interests, Luzhkov also exerts power over the media (he runs his own TV channel) and enjoys the distinction of having a "maso" male cologne, "Mer/Mayor" named after him. See Lowe. The image of the mafia boss Denisov in several of Marinina's murder mysteries bears an uncanny resemblance to Luzhkov. He thinks, above all, that he must "protect" and rule an entire city.} A crowd-pleaser who carried the 1996 mayoral election with a sweeping 90 percent vote, Luzhkov skillfully juggles contradictory images so as to garner support from the broadest possible constituency. On the five-year anniversary of his mayoralship, the magazine \textit{Business in Russia} (\textit{Delovye liudi}) complimented Luzhkov on improving the circumstances of Moscow's less well-to-do, even as it singled out the impetus he has given to the creation of a new middle class (No. 79, July 1997). While New Russians proudly display their luxuriously remodeled bathrooms and apartments to visitors,\footnote{Psychologists doubtless would have some fascinating explanation for the widespread focus on specifically the bathroom as the New Russians' "jewel in the crown." Intriguingly, Michael Specter (or his photographer, Lisa Sarfati), seems to have imitated or collaborated in this curious tendency when he interviewed the spectacularly successful real-estate developer Chalva Tchigirinsky, who rents a Moscow apartment for $10,000 per month. Specter (June 1, 1997): 51.} the ambitious, canny Luzhkov showcases the stylish upgrading of his domain—the entire city. The greatest coup of his exhibition career transpired on September 5-7, 1997, which he arbitrarily declared Moscow's official 850th anniversary. That elaborate show required three years of preparation, necessitated one of the most elaborate urban facelifts in history, and temporarily turned the world's attention on what formerly had impressed visitors as a provincial,
moribund capital. Although the sums invested in Moscow's stunning visual transformation remain a closely guarded secret, the estimated cost of the internationally media-hyped three-day extravaganza totaled somewhere between $50 million and $60 million.¹⁶

Amidst copious flags, bunting, balloons, fountains, gardens, spruced up famous landmarks and hastily completed structures—such as the Manezh Square shopping mall, the gaudy Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow's largest railway station, Kazansky Vokzal, and statues of Peter the Great,¹⁷ Dostoevsky,¹⁸ and Prince Daniel of Moscow—the pseudo-populist "Moscow Mussolini" (vanden Heuvel) treated the maddening crowds of Russians and foreign visitors to parades, picnics, dances, fireworks, a fire-breathing dragon in a drama titled "Our Ancient Moscow," produced by the film director Andrei Konchalovsky (Gordon), star performances by the likes of Luciano Pavarotti, a cornucopia of tricks by the illusionist David Copperfield, a laser-technology sound-and-light demonstration by Jean-Michel Jarre, culminating in a projected mammoth image of the Virgin Mary in the sky (without diamonds!), and the spectacle of Luzhkov himself inside a gigantic champagne glass. An ex-KGB cabdriver with sour astuteness summed up the event as "Luzhkov's little party," and quoted $40,000,000 as the rumored bill for the relentlessly promoted bash (Durden-Smith),¹⁹ which ended in near-catastrophe, as access to streets was blocked, the

¹⁶ Almost a third of the funds, Luzhkov claims, came from private sponsorship (Jones)—chiefly banks, businesses, and Western aid organizations (Gordon). The approximate sum underwriting the gala has been variously hypothesized as $30 million, $50 million, and $60 million. According to one Western journalist, the city's Hydro-Meteorological Service spent $500,000 to operate six cloud-seeding airplanes and helicopters in a technique of controlling nature inherited from the Soviet era. A parallel attempt to curb a different form of nature entailed the relocation of the city's prostitutes for the duration of the festivities (Gordon).

¹⁷ The colossal statue by Zurab Tsereteli has aroused such controversy that the government for a while contemplated holding a referendum to decide its fate. That action was abandoned when a poll of citizens' opinions showed only 14% of Muscovites favoring a dismantling of the monument. Tsereteli's detractors have decried not only his taste but also his stranglehold on contracts for prestigious official "artworks" throughout Moscow.

¹⁸ The statue, by the sculptor Mikhail Posokhin, measuring 3.7 meters and costing $1.4 million, was erected outside the Lenin Library in Moscow, as a companion piece to the one unveiled in St. Petersburg earlier in the year.

¹⁹ Durden-Smith accurately notes Luzhkov's ubiquitous presence throughout the city, concretized in the reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Savior ($176 million), the renovated stadium at Luzhniki, and the WWII memorial park on Kutuzovsky Prospect, boasting a huge obelisk tipped by a five-ton Goddess of Victory. Massive construction and renovation throughout Moscow has altered the most traveled parts of the city, especially the area around Red Square and along Tverskaia Boulevard. Vanden Heuvel justly argues that the city's
subways closed down, and a railroad bridge almost collapsed when tides of weary revelers struggled to
return home from city center.

While Luzhkov trumpeted, "The jubilee is a wonderful, glorious date for us all." inasmuch as "the
history of Moscow is the history of Russia." Westerners largely concurred that self-promotion and the
desire to attract investment to the city motivated the grandiose spectacle. Some spectators and
journalists discerned two sets of festivities: "one for the inner circle and another for the masses" (Gordon),
noting "the omission of average Russians from the main events" (Williams). Luzhkov's mode of
refurbishing the city, in fact, wholeheartedly embraced the twinned New Russian principles of "the best
for the most moneyed" and utmost visibility liberally seasoned with vulgarity. As one journalist,
tabulating the city's deluge of plastic plants, huge, garish animals, and over-decorated exteriors, mourns,
"for sheer bad taste [...] five years of capitalism have outdone three-quarters of a century of communism"
(Martin 6 Nov. 1997). Indeed, some owners of establishments complained of being pressured by the city's
officials, at the risk of otherwise incurring a fine, to "beautify" the entrances to their emporia with tacky
plastic greenery to the tune of several hundred dollars as cosmetic touch-ups for the anniversary jamboree.
Rather than confirming Moscow's role as representative of the entire country, the event underscored its
status as a unique and highly privileged exception. Whatever the nationalist tenor of the kitschy

facelift "has less to do with municipal services [...] than the national political ambitions" of the mayor. For a brief but
eloquent glance at Luzhkov's prerogatives and achievements, see Durden-Smith. For ironic, useful coverage of the
850th anniversary festivities, see Jones, Koshkareva, Martin, Weir.

20 See Gordon, Lowe, Taibbi, vanden Heuvel, Williams. It is difficult to imagine how medical personnel, miners, teachers, and other professionals in the provinces who had not received wages for months could identify with this supremely Muscovite brand of civic and national fervor. In
general, Luzhkov persistently confuses his fiefdom, Moscow, with the entire country. In his interview with Nezavisimaja gazeta, he asserted, "if we missed this event (the 850th anniversary), it would be a loss for all of Russia. By celebrating the birthday of the capital, Russia is saying that we're sure that we're building a better life" (2 September 1997).

21 For Luzhkov's self-contradictory and bragging viewpoint on the event, see the interview in Trud (September 5, 1997). For a trenchant analysis of Luzhkov's control over the city and its unique status, see Fossato (12 September 1997). Fossato cites a recent New York Times report that Inteko, a thriving plastic-manufacturing company run by Luzhkov's wife, Elena Baturina, "won a million-dollar contract to manufacture plastic seats for the huge Luzhniki stadium."
anniversary, it ultimately advertised Moscow as a dynamic international metropolis, wired to a modern
technology, yet blessed with an ancient pedigree, boasting both the mad money to splurge on a Disneyland
Walpurgisnight and a Master/Magician who exercises impeccable control over this displayable
kingdom.22

Events have demonstrated and politicians, sociologists, journalists, and commentators tirelessly have
observed how from the outset ubiquitous illegality and a meteoric rise in crime have blighted Russia's
lurch to capitalism. A report submitted to the government by the Ministry of the Interior in early
December 1997 cites approximately 60,000 members of organized criminal groups currently active in
Russia.23 Law enforcement officers have identified 176,000 economic crimes in 1997, which cost the
state more than 10 trillion rubles in losses (Interfax 3 Dec. 1997). Fear of takeovers by criminal gangs
has led businesses to seek protection from security agencies, which in turn have proliferated as high-profit
enterprises, while simultaneously enriching the Russian language: whereas previously "krysha" literally
denoted the roof of an edifice, it now also means protection against organized crime, whether in the form
of a licensed private security company or a group of "free-lance thugs" (Mendenhall). For instance,
Vladimir Maruchenko, a former high-ranking KGB official, now collects a huge salary as the director of a
10,500-strong security force at the natural gas monopoly, Gazprom (Mendenhall).24

The strategy of *tu quoque*--accusations of criminal activity or wrongdoing by and against personnel
from the highest national level of government to the lowest local cadres--has "regularized" mutual

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22 Several Russians and especially Western commentators wondered whether some of the funds might have been
more sensibly (but less flamboyantly) invested in paying off wage arrears, funding education, medicine, and science,
and salvaging the city's transportation system. Work on extending one of the Moscow's metro branches was halted
"for lack of funds" in late summer 1997; the number of trams operating in the city has diminished by approximately 35
percent since the 1980s, and half of those remaining will become obsolete in the near future; the city's trolleys are
expected to last for only three more years. *Russian Life* (October 1997): 4.

23 Louise Shelley, a law professor specializing in Russia, contends that criminal organizations seized control of 40
percent of the economy through the privatization program.

24 For additional information on how security functions in today's Moscow, see Mendenhall.
recriminations followed by legal proceedings for defamation as a way of political life in Moscow. Rule of law seems most conspicuously lacking when huge sums of money are at stake: the unabating parade of investigations, dismissals, and scandals around suspect or blatantly dishonest transactions (especially surreptitious quid pro quos) has made soap-opera villains of such influential operators as Berezovsky, Potanin, Kokh, and, most recently, the Western favorite roundly despised by Russians of all persuasions: Anatoly Chubais. Such a social climate, combined with Russia's long-standing distrust of substantial wealth acquired by any means other than inheritance, as well as the relentlessly spotlighted, unchecked efflorescence of the mafia, largely explains why today's average Russian automatically views accelerated prosperity/enrichment as inevitably implicated in disreputable dealings ("They're all

25 For a survey of the media's role in these scenarios, see Jonas Bernstein, who deplores the fact that "many of Russia's media outlets seem to have become hired guns for the various politicized financial groups that own them." He catalogue some of this year's charges, counter-charges, and smear campaigns among members of battling financial-political clans (12 September 1997).

26 As reward for supporting Yeltsin's confrontation with Parliament in 1993, Luzhkov was permitted to "opt out" of the national program and administer the city's privatization himself. In effect, Luzhkov acquired absolute control over 70 percent of the city's real estate and enabled him to make countless profitable deals and oversee shareholding in everything from the Russian Bistro fast food chain to the Zil and Moskvich car factories, not to mention banks, hotels, construction companies, food production plants, media firms, and so forth (Durden-Smith).

27 The press has milked dry the story of the "book scandal," which involved First Deputy Premier Chubais and four of his aides. Each received $90,000 from Segodnia Press (51% of which was subsequently acquired by Chubais's ally, Potanin) for an as yet unpublished volume on the history of privatization. Chubais, to unanimous skepticism, announced that he would donate his fee to Yegor Gaidar's phantom Russian Private Property Defense Fund. Such exorbitant sums for a volume-in-the-making have universally been interpreted as a clumsy payoff for favors rendered. Revelation of this incident, which cost three key Chubais aides their jobs and Chubais himself the position of Finance Minister, is widely viewed as Berezovsky's move to discredit Chubais as revenge for his own dismissal a few months earlier from the Security Council.

One of the officials in the book scandal, Pyotr Mostovoi, was dismissed from his post as Federal Bankruptcy Administration chairman, but soon thereafter was promoted to first vice president of the diamond monopoly Almazy Rossiya-Sakha (Alrosa) RFE/RL, 16 December 1997). Former State Property Minister Maksim Boiko, sacked for his part in the affair, has also landed on his feet, as the general director of the Video-International advertising firm, which has close ties with the Kremlin and produced the TV commercials for Yeltsin's 1996 reelection campaign (RFE/RL Newsline, Vol. 1, No. 187, 30 Dec. 1997).

28 Russia's interior ministry in Moscow cites the expansion of the country's mafia in the last six years as the nation's most pressing problem. An estimated 9,000 gangs operate within Russia, and their activities spill over into forty other countries. Franchetti, 30 November 1997.
That stigma attaches, above all, to the New Russians, reflected in their portrayal as thugs flanked by the bodyguards whose presence they have made necessary in a society earlier comparatively innocent of non-political crime. For many, mafia and New Russian are synonyms in a corrupt, bullet-ridden new world of "anything goes"; hence the ubiquitous motifs of imprisonment, guns, contract-hits, and armed confrontations in New Russian anekdoty:

Advertisement in newspaper: "New Russian will buy a spacious 5-room apartment. Guarantees order and cleanliness in the region."

A traffic cop stops a New Russian, opens his car, and finds a Kalashnikov automatic rifle.
"What the hell's this supposed to be?" the cop asks.
"It's a calculator," the New Russian replies.
"Gimme a break," the cop retorts, pulling a calculator from his pocket. "Now, here's a calculator..."
"Different models," the New Russian explains. "Yours is for settling preliminary accounts, mine's for settling final ones."

Many of the new glossy magazines for men (Medved', Makhaon, Dzhentl'men) contain articles on firearms as part of a "real man's" accessories. Throughout the year 1997, which marked the 50th anniversary of the Kalashnikov rifle, several publications in Russia and the West (e.g. the New York Times, Russia Review [Dec. 1 1997]) carried items on its inventor, Mikhail Kalashnikov from Izhevsk. Intended by Kalashnikov

29 Russia's indefensibly brutal tax laws also account for much of not only its businessmen's, but also ordinary citizens', involvement in illegal actions. Aleksandr Yakovlev, chairman of the Russian Social Democratic Party, among others, has argued that "insane taxes" largely account for the expansion of the "shadow sector" of Russia's economy (Rossiiskie vesti, Oct. 22, 1997).

A recent poll conducted in Moscow showed 52.4 percent of Muscovites believing that honesty is a liability instead of an asset in business and 15.3 percent perceive businessmen as unscrupulous, dishonest, and unreliable. RIA Novosti (February 14, 1997).

30 Such a notion of the average Soviet citizen is, of course, blinkered, for combating the lunatic aspects of the system turned virtually everyone into a petty criminal operating on an individual basis: everyone "stole" hours from work to stand in lines for goods, used work hours and facilities for personal matters, filled questionnaires with nonsensical untruths, etc. Since the discrepancy between official claims and published laws bore no relation to the harsh conditions of everyday experience, Soviet citizens viewed the government not as the guarantor of rights, but as a dark, unpredictable, inimical power to be feared and avoided at all costs. Outwitting the inhuman aspects of officiadom through "dishonest" small-scale acts was deemed not only necessary for survival, but legitimate and desirable. The universal petty criminality of the average 'decent' Russian under Soviet rule facilitated the slide into dishonesty on a larger scale once the benefits of such 'lapses' increased.
for "the glory of the Soviet army," in the 1990s that weapon, like other arms, has acquired new and troubling associations.

For the majority of urban Russians, armed men still evoke the events of 1991 and 1993, when police and soldiers carrying guns suddenly became an omnipresent element on Moscow's city streets, at GAI (official automobile) stations, and in the subway. That unsettling spectacle had its roots in perestroika—a period of impassioned meetings—when city police patrolling public demonstrations started carrying imported rubber truncheons, which the ironic populace instantly christened "democratizers."

A symbol of the times, the truncheons presaged the large-scale armaments that followed in 1991, when Muscovites greeted tanks and armored personnel carriers in the city center by forming a live cordon around the White House to defend Yeltsin and others within the building. Possession of arms escalated in the ensuing months, and after the events of 1993, when the majority on both sides of the barricades bore weapons, heavily armed soldiers became a common sight on all forms of transportation and along the streets; armored vehicles stood at crossroads along major routes to Moscow; and gun-toting guards became a fixture in the foyers of offices and agencies.

During the war in Chechnia, Moscow became thoroughly militarized and the chief players in the flourishing arms trade that ensued were not the New Russians, but the army and the police. The militia provoked considerably more nervousness among the population than did the occasional shootouts among criminals settling scores among themselves. The largely fanciful image of the New Russians as hoodlums "armed to the teeth" was spawned by a reader-hungry press and such pseudo-Hemingwayesque advocates of virility as Alexander Kabakov.

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31 Even in a country that for decades greeted its passengers at Sheremetievo Airport with rifle-bearing soldiers stationed at presumably strategic posts throughout the area, the appearance of armed militia in the subways was startling.

32 Soviet police often went unarmed, and in general were not authorized to shoot at suspects. With the boom in crime, they suffered the consequences.
In the inaugural issue of the puerilely macho magazine *Makhaon* (1995), Kabakov summoned Russian males to visible displays of manhood: "It's time to be a real man--with cars, BABKI, weapons, and women." As the prestige of the army declined and the police busied itself with bribe-taking as a way of professional life, the image of the tough, gun-flashing New Russian took hold. The media frenzy around the image of the New Russians has obscured the fact, reported by a Western sociologist, that in 1993 the number of women killed by their spouses or "male partners" (14,500) exceeding more than half of the total number of recorded murders in the country and far exceeding the media-hyped mafia killings (Attwood 99).

Along with crass materialism and criminality, perhaps the third major black mark against New Russians is lack of taste and brains. According to one journalist, "they order designer apartments consisting of only a pool, bedroom, and kitchen, then buy expensive seasoned oak furniture and have it painted white [...] spend money recklessly, drinking rare wines like bottles of juice, and cavorting on television programs for rich people of howlingly bad taste" (Dutkina 87). Lack of breeding, sophistication, style--culture, in short--figures derided prominently not only in articles and conversations, but also in *anekdoty* highlighting their boorishness and laughable ignorance:

A New Russian invites a friend over. They're sitting in the kitchen, drinking cognac, and talking about this and that. Suddenly the friend notices two reproductions of the Mona Lisa on the wall.

"Say, how come you've got two Mona Lisas hanging on the wall? One's enough for me."
"Well, you've got a Mona Lisa. I've got Stereo."

A New Russian and his son are strolling around a public garden. At the exit a painter is drawing a sketch. The New Russian points to the artist.
"See how a person without a Polaroid has to slave away!"

A New Russian's secretary reproaches him:
"You always come to the office in the morning and right away order, Take your clothes off!" Never any talk about

33 Military and police forces are the chief suppliers of weapons for bodyguards of the New Russians and constitute the major pool from which the newly rich select their personal protection.
art, about literature..."
"Fine! Have you read [sic] Rembrandt?"
"No, why?"
"Then take your clothes off!"

In fact, the immaculate idiocy of the New Russians as ridiculed in contemporary anekdady recalls the fabled witlessness of the Chukchi celebrated in the genre during the Soviet era.

Accordingly, the New Russian parades his vulgarity through "wearing the loudest and most expensive of everything, preferably with the price tag still showing," as one journalist phrased it (Phelps). The dress code favors a garish cranberry-colored jacket, "enhanced" by a Rolex or Cartier watch, sunglasses, and gold chains -- callow stabs at drawing attention to the wearer. His favorite designer is the "colorful" Versace and, more recently, the media-hungry Yudashkin, and his bathroom in his ostentatious new house or wholly redesigned apartment (Euro-style) is Italian. Armed with a cellular telephone, he travels in a (frequently chauffered) Mercedes 600, Rolls Royce, or BMW, and flies only first-class, his crude, overbearing behavior embarrassing and revolting both the airline personnel and all those fellow-passengers who are not also New Russians. At exclusive restaurants, he gorges himself on gourmet cuisine he cannot genuinely appreciate, loses fantastic sums at garish casinos, and buys up expensive artworks beyond his comprehension only because they are expensive. Purchasing power is the earmark of his status, and the obligatory commodities he flaunts include nubile, eye-catchingly dressed young mistresses, brazenly passed off as secretaries or assistants.

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34 In Russian, the hue is called raspberry (malinovyi), and for the educated Russian, it grotesquely evokes Aleksandr Pushkin's famous 19th-century novel in verse, Eugene Onegin, where the heroine appears in a "raspberry-colored beret."

35 The gold chain is a traditional Russian insignia of criminality. According to the primitive values of this milieu, the bigger the chain, the more virile the man.

36 For an analysis of the New Russians' dress code, see Ol'ga Vainshtein.
A New Russian hired a new secretary. It turned out she couldn't type or take shorthand.

"So what can you do? What do you have going for you?"

"I never get pregnant."

A New Russian's three secretaries are confiding secrets to one another about their recent nasty deeds. The first says: "I spanked my little sister."

The second says: "I found contraceptives/rubbers in our boss's drawer and made holes in all of them with a fine needle."

The third ... fell in a dead faint.

While having dinner at home, the wife of a New Russian asks him: "I hear you've got a new secretary."

"Yeah."

So, how is she?"

"The usual."

"Pretty?"

"A woman just like any other."

"Well, how does she dress?"

"Very quickly!"

A young woman came to a New Russian's office.

"I've come about work, in response to the ad..."

The New Russian took a bikini out of his desk drawer and said: "Fill out this [service] form."

Although wives of New Russians likewise reflect the latter's standing, they play a peripheral role in the men's busy, stressful regimen of relentless profiteering and high living. Among Russians, these women have elicited either resentful contempt as pragmatists and uncontrollable shoppers or condescending compassion as myopic victims. They evoke the familial patterns of the Victorian era, insofar as their chief duty is the pursuit of far niente amidst an opulence attesting to the "liberating" advantages of their husbands' colossal earnings or ill-gotten gains. According to several reports, for many wives of New Russians, "who represent less than 1 percent of the population" (Stanley 1)37, wealth has brought depressing isolation. A New York Times item and studies by such sociologists as Olga

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37 No studies have specified with any certainty the exact number of New Russians. As the economist Paul Gregory notes, however, "if they constitute 3 percent of the Russian population, they would number about five million." Gregory 51.
Zdravomyslova recount with sympathy the boredom, anxiety, and loneliness of women who abandoned jobs to enhance the prestige of their suddenly wealthy spouses by staying at home as ladies of leisure.  

Often sequestered in high-security compounds in the suburbs and chauffeured everywhere by bodyguards, these women seek "companionship" or respite from solitude in beauty and hairdresser salons or shopping malls, which welcome them as familiar clients. True to Russian traditions, until very recently wives did not normally accompany husbands to business dinners or conferences and meetings out of town; nor did they typically attend social events on their own. The strain of constant security maintenance and a sense of aimlessness have driven such women to seek aid and reassurance from psychologists, psychics, and massage therapists.

A leading psychologist, Sergei Agrachev, who charges $60 per hour to cater to these "victims of wealth," deplores their reliance on Valium and other tranquilizers as a mode of coping with stress and solitude (Stanley 4). Perhaps these costly desperate measures to combat tension, tedium, and alienation account more than anything else for the unsympathetic perception of New Russians' wives as spendthrifts indifferent to everything but their husbands' money.

Wife of New Russian: "I've given you the best years of my life!"
New Russian: "But, then, you got the best pages of my check book in exchange!"

The wife of a New Russian heaves a sigh:
"I'm so sick and tired of everything! I'd like to do something extraordinary and strange, something I've never done before in my life..."
"Cool!" the New Russian responds. "Here, darn my socks."

Two New Russians are in a Christian Dior boutique. "Why are you buying your wife a new dress? I thought you were getting ready to divorce her?"
"Y'know, bro, there's no way I can get her to come to court in an old one!"

Although some wives of New Russians supplement buying sprees with running an enterprise underwritten by their husbands' money, others concentrate full-time on unrestrained shopping. A case in

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38 Dutkina detects a "strange tendency among women of all sectors of society from the intelligentsia to the working class": "they are increasingly willing to sit at home and leave their jobs" (181). She simultaneously admits that women constitute the majority of the involuntarily unemployed. The government's concern has focused on the psychological effects of unemployment on the male half of the population.
point is Galina Grishena, a plastic blonde in her early twenties married to a computer and high-tech importer whose income enables her to drop $8,000 on a single visit to the stores. Their provincial background—the couple grew up in an industrial town outside of Moscow—accounts for much of Grishena's taste: Versace as the ideal designer, leather, inviolable color-coordination, chauffeured silver Mercedes C280, and the self-conscious admission, "I don't want to be lost in the crowd" (Singer 352).

Another, less gaudy high-flyer is Olga Sloutsker, the thirty-something president of the World Fitness Corporation, which owns Russia's trendiest gyms, married to the oil tycoon Vladimir Sloutsker. A former member of the Soviet national fencing team, Sloutsker, who now collects "Russian paintings, antiques, and Empire furnishings," travels abroad to do her shopping. Aware of the New Russians' reputation for tacky glitz, she ingenuously acknowledges, "Maybe sometimes we look cheap and not stylish and we don't know how to communicate, but we are learning and I think maybe in ten years we will be quite sophisticated" (Singer 355).

Elena Kopyl, a former model and "personal shopper" for the "rich and famous," not only flies to Paris half a dozen times a year to purchase ensembles for her clients (frequently spending up to $15,000 per person), but attempts to educate them away from overstatement toward understated elegance. In some cases, it is a losing battle, for Moscow's glitterati dress code still favors vivid over muted (Singer 353). And with money presenting no obstacles, wives or mistresses of New Russians can freely glitter in designer outfits that proclaim their men's wealth in clubs, restaurants, gyms, and boutiques at home and abroad.

Children of the New Russians, in the popular view, similarly conceive of their father as cash cows, but replicate them in miniature as spoiled, brainless, brutish pragmatists: "[These] children go to private schools in bullet-proof automobiles, eat only organic food, and get $100 a day for pocket money" (Dutkina 87). Cushioned by wealth from quotidian reality, these "chips off the old block" have no concept of the average Russian's living circumstances.
The daughter of a New Russian returned home from the lycée, where she'd written a story on the assigned topic of a poor family. She wrote: "Once upon a time there was a very poor family. The Mom and Dad were poor, their chauffeur was even poorer, the gardener was very poor, and the house servant was the poorest of all..."

There’s not a single mistake in your assignment!" the teacher tells the son of a New Russian. "Tell me honestly, did someone help your father write it?"

In much of today's pulp fiction (e.g. Marinina's Death's Radiant Countenance), offspring of the New Russians appear as irredeemable weaklings dependent on drugs or gambling, presumably crushed or metaphorically castrated by the immense wealth and power wielded by their fathers.

Russians have come a long way since the controversial advertisement for a jaunt to the Canary Islands first loomed over Red Square in 1991, beckoning a population who lacked the language to read the sign and the money to follow through on its invitation to relax and frolic on balmy beaches. Although trips abroad by Russians of all classes have increased astronomically in the 1990s, the New Russians' predilection for certain vacation spots has identified them with sunny, expensive resorts, such as the French Riviera, Majorca, and particularly the Bahamas. Their unsavory reputations have traveled with them, though the tourism of some locations has benefited substantially from their presence.

A recent article in the British Times speculating about the rumors that through an international property consortium Boris Yeltsin has bought the magnificent Château de la Garoupe on the Côte d'Azur—with a twenty-five-acre garden—for almost $6 million prompted an official denial three days later by presidential spokesman Sergey Yastrzhembsky. As one Russian journalist claims:

Our new rich folks are filling the most fashionable hotels of Europe, Asia, and America, spending huge fortunes

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39 During the summer of 1997, approximately 6 percent of adult Russians stated an intention of vacationing abroad. Russian Life (September 1997): 5. In parts of Italy, Spain, and other countries, Russian has become a common language, for commercial establishments are eager to please Russian clients who purchase in bulk without questioning prices.

40 For the circumstances leading to the rumors and for a concise summary of Russians' acquisition of real estate in the French Riviera, see Macintyre. According to Macintyre's sources, the Russian "Nouveaux Emirs" at the Côte d'Azur have been welcomed because of their unrestrained extravagance. For Yeltsin's denial, see "Yastrzhembsky..."

The Russian government's recent purchase of luxury yachts, to the tune of $490,000, for the use of top officials, including Yeltsin, likewise has elicited ironic commentary from the Western press, particularly in light of the parlous state of the underfed, unpaid, ailing military. See Reeves and O'Hagan.
at casinos, throwing money around left and right, buying priceless fur coats, diamonds, real estate, and firms abroad. They are the favorite clients of the hotel porters, who affectionately call them the "sheiks from the North." (Dutkina 87)

The physicist Zhores Medvedev, among others, has lamented the transformation of Cyprus into a little Russia, where New Russians visiting or residing in palatial villas have enlivened the economy by establishing branches of their business companies. Medvedev reports that by the end of 1994 $1 billion per month flowed from Russia to Cypriot banks, and in 1996 the number of Russian companies there had grown to 16,000.41 The island’s regular publication of four newspapers in Russian suggests the Russians’ importance to the area’s financial growth (Medvedev).

Curiously, but predictably, in light of Russia’s immemorial logocentrism, a constantly satirized feature of the New Russians is their staggering ignorance of the Russian language. Some note errors in their attempts to use standard Russian: “They speak Russian with the stresses in the wrong place and write with spelling errors” (Dutkina 87). Entire articles lambaste their illiteracy and denounce their reliance on sub-standard, semi-criminal jargon. The endlessly evoked words "bratva" ("brotherhood"/"clan") and "bratan" ("bro"), evocative of the Italian mafia, semantically empty ejaculations such as "blin" (literally, "pancake," but in conversation used as a euphemism for "blia" [whore]), and barbarisms (e.g., "v nature" for "really"), as well as a strong dose of neologisms (e.g., "ruchnik" for a cellular telephone), have solidified as the distinguishing traits of the New Russians’ "insider" speech. A number of linguists have bemoaned the incomprehensibility of New Russians’ idioms to any native speaker of normative Russian: “Pochem tverdysh?” for "Skol’ko stoit dollar?"; "triapichnye kopii [ne berem]" for "plokhie videokopii, sniaye s ekrana videokameroi"; “Uzh tam ia nozdri vykinu” for "Vdovol’ nadyshus’ svezhi vozdukhom."

41 According to TASS, the net outflow of private capital from Russian in the first quarter of 1997 was $3.5 billion, against a total outflow of $20.6 billion in 1996. TASS, 16 June 1997.
Likening New Russians to the NEP-men of the 1920s, who took advantage of the free enterprise conditions temporarily sanctioned by the Soviet government, these analysts pronounce both groups incapable of articulating their thoughts, hence given to substituting gesture for verbal expression. The two most popular code gestures among New Russians are the criminal "koza" (goat), with the small finger of the hand extended, and the "pal'sy veerom" (fingers fanned out), both signaling membership in "the clan." In fact, these hand movements, which encourage a linguistic and cultural image of the New Russian as a grunting cave-dweller able to communicate only with kindred primitives, now function as shorthand references to New Russians and decorate the covers of anthologies of New Russian anekdoty.

Image-makers: The Intelligentsia:

The undifferentiated negative perception of the New Russians as tawdry social flotsam awash in luxuries, and kept afloat through criminal ties, has been fostered above all by the intelligentsia. By dismissing the New Russians as anti-intellectual petty crooks with more money than brains and finesse, the intelligentsia perpetuates the hallowed traditions of its currently alienated class, even as it remains the chief spokesman for "Russian opinion" in the printed media. With the failure of the National Idea Commission appointed by Yeltsin to forge a comprehensive national concept in place of the Communist "radiant future," Sergei Filatov\textsuperscript{44} has resorted to time-sanctioned strategies by enlisting the intelligentsia's aid in creating a unifying inspirational concept. He convened a two-day congress of the intelligentsia (December 10-11, 1997), issuing invitations to approximately 1,000 representatives of this formerly prestigious social group, which has fallen on hard times (Lally, 8 Dec. 1997).

\textsuperscript{42} The contempt for the New Russians as semi-human creatures emerges clearly in the analysts' reference to them as the New Shanskovs, a pluralization of the repellent humanoid created by a violent operation on a mongrel in Mikhail Bulgakov's satirical novel \textit{Heart of a Dog} (1925). "Staraia feniia novoi bratvy," \textit{Argumenty i fakty} 39 (September 1996).

\textsuperscript{43} With the introduction of opinion polls into post-Soviet Russia, the intelligentsia's voice has become one of several. Newspapers, however, continue to consult "experts" from the intelligentsia, and journalists certainly belong to that group.

\textsuperscript{44} Filatov is Yeltsin's former chief of staff.
Although passionately held opinions and sweeping concepts historically have been the intelligentsia's stock in trade, Russia's wholesale disillusionment with any ideology and the intelligentsia's current disorientation militate against the success of Filatov's anachronistic stratagem. Yegor Yakovlev, a former editor of Moscow News during the heady years of glasnost who now edits Obshchaya gazeta, rejected Filatov's invitation for the simple reason that he has no ideas and believes that "[t]he role of the intelligentsia is very close to zero today" (Lally, 8 Dec. 1997). Skepticism regarding the intelligentsia's usefulness in the Russia of the 1990s plagues many of its members, who have voiced their uncertainties in the press and at symposia and conferences have debated the seeming demise of the intelligentsia as a social category.45

Inheriting its touted 19th-century identity as the "conscience" of the nation and as critically thinking individuals committed to social amelioration for the "common people" (narod), the Soviet intelligentsia constituted an enclave of self-proclaimed "chosen" seers, saints, and prophets, epitomized by such figures as Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Andrey Sakharov.46 As one journalist floridly rhapsodizes, "for many centuries it [the intelligentsia] played a special role in the spiritual life of Russia--its angel, its sacrificial lamb, deliberately giving itself up to the slaughter for the sake of the triumph of good and justice [...] full of human dignity, rejecting lackeystdom and slavery, living according to conscience" (Dutkina 90-91).

In fact, the intelligentsia dealt almost exclusively in words, producing ideas, theories (often utterly divorced from everyday existence), and, above all, ideologies to counter the dominant state ideology. To

45 See, for example, the volume of essays in Studencheskii, which contains papers read at a conference by the same title in Moscow in September 1995.

46 Within the intelligentsia, the previously sanctified persona of the dissident-hero now seems a superfluous remnant of a distant past. A Western journalist notes that Solzhenitsyn is "widely regarded as a prime example of the shrinking fortunes of the dissidents." Solzhenitsyn's weekly television show lasted only a short while because his moralistic harangues lacked an interested audience. Ironically, the dissident Valeria Novodvorskaya speaks of the public's indifference to dissidents with a bitter disdain and in terms that many might find applicable to the intelligentsia: "the people [...] are slaves who put up with everything to get a few perks" (Williams A23). For an ironic commentary on Solzhenitsyn's show, see Tolstaya.
varying degrees the government tolerated the intelligentsia's activities and even found it politically expedient to reward such "official rebels" as Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Andrei Voznesensky. In a quintessentially Russian paradox, the intelligentsia nurtured, and prided itself on, its role as influential moral opposition and disinterested critic of the Soviet system, while thriving as that system's major unacknowledged beneficiary. Although a minority of extreme, outspoken, or careless individuals among its ranks underwent exile and imprisonment for stubbornly maintaining an aesthetic or political stance at odds with official mandates, collectively the intelligentsia enjoyed myriad state subsidies unparalleled among intellectuals of any other nation.

The Soviet regime not only fully financed the journals and publishing houses that printed the intelligentsia's works, but also maintained a huge network of state-supported research and creative institutions where a brief weekly visit sufficed to fulfill one's "professional" obligation; professional unions protected members' interests and disbursed a wide range of perquisites: special housing, summer homes, fully funded trips, and monthly access to provisions and commodities inaccessible to other social groups.

Auditoriums and stadiums, including the Lenin Stadium, provided a venue for poets and bards, who performed to audiences of thousands, thereby reinforcing Russia's propagandized reputation as the premier nation of culture-lovers. The official press crowned Russians "the most readerly people" in the world, a cliché discredited by desovietization and no longer invoked in the 1990s, which ushered in the pop culture that quickly seduced the populace away from the "creative masterpieces" it had been force fed under monopolistic conditions. During the Soviet era, however, the intelligentsia received not only practical benefits from the state, but also confirmation of its superiority to the rest of the population, basking in the prestige accorded its purportedly fastidious cultural and ethical standards.

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47 For a brief commentary on the intelligentsia's privileged position in Soviet culture, see the fourth of the eight articles on Russia in The Economist (July 12-18, 1997): "Some do eat cake. Quite a lot, even."
While brandishing intellectual independence and stringent moral criteria as its badge of honor, on a daily basis the intelligentsia depended on the state not only for its livelihood, but also for a favored treatment second only to that accorded the government nomenklatura (Pokrovskii 35). Like the Soviet nomenklatura, the intelligentsia was supremely elitist, having little knowledge of and even less regard for the "masses" in whose interests it allegedly spoke out and suffered. As masters of abstractions and "the word," the intelligentsia at best condescended to non-intellectual labor and at worst despised it. As a sociologist from Moscow State University specializing in the intelligentsia recently declared, the Soviet regime's "support of its [i.e., the intelligentsia's] activity, strictly speaking, was unnecessary, not dictated by market needs" (Pokrovskii 10).

The intelligentsia's philosophy of noble self-sacrifice and its cult of the spiritual (accompanied by a specious either/or rhetoric of hostility to material concerns), however, suited the administrators of a country singularly devoid of salable goods, conveniences, and the basic amenities of life. After all, the government likewise publicly denounced "bourgeois materialism" and dealt primarily in words, and its ideological opponent, the intelligentsia, was the only partner capable of responding in kind.

In a recent elegiac meditation on the intelligentsia, Andrei Sinyavsky notes that because under Soviet rule "all interesting and useful [sic] work, all access to science, art, publishing, and education were in the hands of the state," "the choice was either death or adapting to the demands of authority." In a startling, presumptive denial of mixed (and especially self-interested) motives, he argues that adaptation "was chosen for the most sincere of reasons--a wish to serve the people," but proceeds to admit that adaptation led "to the decline of the intelligentsia" (Sinyavsky). To elucidate his disillusionment with the social segment to which he belonged, Sinyavsky cites from a series of articles and letters signed by writers with

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48 Pre-Revolutionary precedents for the abyss yawning between "thinkers/creators," on the one hand, and "laborers/makers," on the other, abound. Probably the most extreme examples of rarified "thinkers" utterly divorced from everyday concerns are the Symbolists, such as Belyi, Merezhkovsky, and the poet Zinaida Gippius, incapable of even boiling an egg, yet commented authoritatively on "the world." It was partly to combat the discrepancy between the quotidian and the artistic that Vladimir Mayakovsky and other futurists placed their talents at the service of slogans and commercials, selling not only Soviet ideology, but also pasta and boot polish.
an unblemished reputation for honor and political "purity" advocating extermination of "enemies of the people" during the Soviet era, and, more recently, endorsing Yeltsin's armed attack on the White House in October 1993. His disenchantment notwithstanding, Sinyavsky, like the journalist Masha Gessen and other liberal intellectuals writing about themselves, pinpoints localized flaws, but cannot abandon the hoary iconization of the intelligentsia as preservers of unassailable human values.

With the collapse of the Soviet structure and the official transition to a market economy, the intelligentsia has suffered a demise perhaps comparable only to that of the military. After its brief euphoria as the chief beneficiary of glasnost, the intelligentsia found itself cast out into the cold, deprived of its material benefits, venerated social standing, and identity as messianic teacher of values (Pokrovskii 35). It became superannuated as soon as pragmatic enterprise and material reality supplanted ideology, rendering "weighty words" a product marginal, if not irrelevant, to the times.

Supported for decades by the Soviet regime, employees in the fields of research, education, creativity, and traditional culture now find themselves free, independent, and in parlous state owing to a withdrawal of subsidies. As the journalist Galina Dutkina tellingly complains:

University professors [...] and government ministers [earlier] received 500 to 600 rubles per month, and enjoyed an entirely comfortable, almost luxurious social life, taking off on foreign trips every year and inviting a full house of guests to their homes every week. Their housing was practically free, along with health care and education—the quality wasn't important. [...] Now the pyramid has been turned upside down. and those

49 Among those endorsing Yeltsin's summary measures Sinyavsky names Bella Akhmadulina, Bulat Okudzhava, Marietta Chudakova, and Sergei Averintsev. Sinyavsky is also clear-sighted enough to detect a contempt for "the people" among such renowned members of the intelligentsia as Vassily Aksyonov, Academician Yuri Ryzhov, and the Dostoevsky scholar Yuri Kariakin (Sinyavsky).

50 For an astute review of Gessen's recent monograph on the intelligentsia, as well as a short, pithy statement about the intelligentsia's pretensions and their lives under Soviet rule, see Shlapentokh.

51 In Steven Miner's trenchant summary, "the once-vaunted Soviet Army is now a hollow shell, sustaining more than 500 suicides a year, more than 1,000 recruits killed annually in brutal hazings and soldiers starving to death in distant outposts."
who were on top suddenly find themselves on the bottom. Students who never graduated from college, working part-time in commercial firms, get up to $200 a month for "petty expenses" (almost double the country’s average wages). Meanwhile their parents, employed at state-subsidized organizations, do not collect their wages for months at a time due to the cash shortage. (138)

In that respect the nomenklatura has proved more resilient, quickly adjusting to conditions that simulate capitalism and reaping the ample rewards. Various celebrities among the intelligentsia, such as Nikita Mikhalkov, Yevgeny Evtushenko, and Viktor Yerofeev, in their vigorous self-promotion and orientation toward profit, might be said to represent the New Russians within the arts. But these are a minority; as a group the intelligentsia feels disoriented, cheated, and alienated from post-Soviet priorities. It is extremely unlikely, therefore, that the monolithic image of the New Russians primarily shaped by "idealists" publicly contemptuous of money and entrepreneurship, whom, moreover, the New Russians have supplanted as forces influencing developments within the new social order, suffers from an excess of objectivity.52

Mixed and Matched:

In approximately the last two years a few scholars and journalists have insisted on the diversity of the New Russians in both origin and social status. For instance, at a round table at the English Club in Moscow devoted specifically to the psychology of the contemporary new Russian businessman (October 1997), Professor Aleksey Kara-Murza attributed the rampant stereotype-riddled notions of entrepreneurship to Russia’s long-standing perception of the bourgeoisie as a quintessentially Western phenomenon. Accordingly, two inflexible convictions obtain: that all aspects of Russian business, including its practitioners, should duplicate the Western model, and that such a mirroring will never eventuate. He juxtaposed the Protestant ethic underpinning Western entrepreneurship and the Japanese

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52 It must be both economically reassuring yet psychologically galling for the Russian intelligentsia that the creative professions now rely on financing from precisely those whom they disdain. Although criticized for their reluctance to fund cultural enrichment projects and charity organizations, some of Russian’s magnates are underwriting the maintenance of cultural institutions. In the last month, Oneximbank has contracted to sponsor the beleaguered Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, where personnel unpaid for months finally quit and where the holdings are imperiled by the buildings’ state of disrepair. Moscow’s Lenin Library, like numerous research institutions, theaters, and museums, also lacks adequate funding to continue functioning as before.
Samurai ethic shaping Eastern taxation practices with the ethic of Russia's Old Believers, who constituted 2% of the country's population but 80% of its millionaires. As a new business class emerges in the new Russia, the contemporary analogue for West European feudal lords, maintains Kara-Murza, is the nomenklatura.

At the same event, Professor Pyotr Shikhiryov proposed a tripartite classification of New Russians' backgrounds, with chronology as the defining principle of differentiation: in the first wave of entrepreneurs preponderated cooperative administrators and "geneviki"—representatives of businesses prohibited during the Soviet era, whom desovietization enabled to legalize their enterprises. The second wave consisted of former komsomol personnel or those employed at youth technical centers. And the majority of the third wave are former directors and deputy directors of plants, i.e., a refurbished nomenklatura, whom Shikhiryov considers genuine professionals with sufficient education and work experience to invite comparison with the best graduates from Western business schools. Unlike the latter, however, who prefer to deal with their fellow countrymen, Russians would sooner negotiate with any foreigner. Shikhiryov places his hopes for Russia's economic future on a synthesis of Western individualism and Eastern collectivism, as exampled in the Korean and Japanese model—a successful merging of operative styles already achieved, he contends, by large international companies.

The psychologist Sergey Yenikolopov dwelled on problems of identity among young Russian businessmen, observing that those in their thirties are psychologically much older than their physical age. Indeed, Russian businessmen after forty become ageless. Moreover, fear verging on clinically diagnosed phobia figures hugely in businessmen's lives, with the government and not the mafia viewed as the racketeer.53

In short, a small minority in Russia and abroad refuse to reduce the New Russians to comicbook villainous vulgarians. Without harboring pastel illusions, they acknowledge energy, readiness to take risks, and organizational skills as essential and positive characteristics among New Russians, traits that

53 For more information on the round table at the Club, see Azhgikhina, "Finansist, titan, stoik."
bode well for the country's future stability. An opinion poll conducted in Moscow in February of 1997 indicated that more than 52 percent of respondents deem honesty a "liability" in Russian business today, and nearly 15.3 percent consider private businessmen unscrupulous, dishonest, and unreliable. Yet almost 40 percent commend their energy, ingenuity, and resourcefulness. Paul Gregory, an American professor who has studied and interviewed New Russians as a socio-economic phenomenon, likewise underscores that some of them are, quite simply, "honest and skillful business operators" who, moreover, have removed the stigma of being Russian in establishments that formerly catered exclusively to foreigners: luxurious hotels, chic restaurants, and exclusive shops (Gregory 51, 55).

Although the first wave of New Russians (1991-95) tended to be middle-aged bureaucrats allegedly implicated in nomenklatura network schemes, in the last couple of years the number of successful entrepreneurs in their twenties and thirties has increased so dramatically that commentators increasingly identify new business executives with the young generation. Indeed, Western analysts concur that "the young are the biggest group of winners" in the shift to private enterprise. Unlike the older generation, whom a Soviet upbringing trained to resent bosses with substantially higher salaries and the perquisites attached to executive status, today's young "starters" readily accept wage inequality in the conviction that with time and well-invested effort they, too, will attain such rewards (Barmina 3). Whereas the Soviet system privileged age, the post-Soviet business environment seems a treasure trove of opportunities for advancement to those born in the 1970s. According to the Russian Market Research Company, 73 percent of those aged 16-24 and 60 percent of those aged 25-34 believe that life improved in 1996, in contrast to 67 percent of the over-65 age group, who claim a substantial worsening in their living conditions.54

As a recent article noted, quite a few under-30 Russian males occupy eminent positions in the country's major companies: Yevgeny Yuriev, the 26-year-old owner of the investment company Aton,

54 The fourth article in the 8-part series on Russia, The Economist (July 12-18, 1997).
which he formed six years ago, now the Russian partner of the J. Mark Mobius's Templeton Group; Yuly Koloyev, who at twenty is both a senior at the Moscow Economics and Statistics Institute and the deputy director of development at Pioneer Bank; Ruben Vardanian, who at 23 became head of Troika Dialog bank, "one of the country's most successful investment institutions" (Gubsky 9-10). Whereas political allegiances determined opinion during the Soviet era, age plays a more critical role in forming viewpoints today. It therefore comes as no surprise that the younger members of the intelligentsia have more in common with the young New Russians than with intelligents who matured under Stalinism. Symptomatic of this tentative alliance across cultural boundaries is the case of Viacheslav Kuritsyn, the prolific Moscow-based literary critic from Ekaterinburg, who instead of dismissing the New Russians as hoodlums, emphasizes their vitality and its salutary trickle effect throughout Russian society:

The New Russians are those who became rich very rapidly—by means of pure talent and animal instinct—on the wave of the primary accumulation of capital. [...] One didn't have to think, only to act quickly, shrewdly, and intelligently. You had to be smart, but not necessarily reflective or cultured. The New Russians acquired piles of money, but not the appropriate cultural concepts. Among the New Russians there were many talented people; otherwise, they couldn't have achieved what they did. Some of them are now settling down and thinking about having children; therefore, they're starting to think about culture. [...] This audience [of readers] has a future, and it is necessary to work with them and influence them because many are receptive to new ideas. ("Transgressing..." 13)

One of the most popular Russian films of 1997, Villen Novak's comedy Princess on a Hill of Beans (Printessa na bobakh), tackles, with humor and sympathy, the dilemma of the New Russian, his aspirations, and the discrepancy between his travestied popular image and the "sensitive heart" beating beneath his immaculate suit. The film's uncomplicated fairy tale plot has a solid basis in current reality:

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55 J. Mark Mobius is the president of Templeton Developing Markets Trust.

56 For additional examples, see Gubsky 8-11 and Gregory 54-59.

57 Amid the current financial difficulties plaguing Russian filmmakers, it took more than three years to produce the film, even though Marina Mareyeva's script won the "Nadezhda" prize in Yalta in 1993. TV Center, which invested approximately $150 thousand in the production, owed the rights to its premiere, and NTV purchased rights to subsequent small-screen showings. The renowned Russian actress Elena Safonova, known to Western viewers primarily for her excellent acting in The Accompanist, plays the title's "princess," while the role of Pupkov is skillfully realized by Sergei Zhigunov, the owner of the studio Chance (Shans). See VideoAudio Biznes 15 (17) (August 1997): 11.

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the spectacularly successful businessman Dima Pupkov wishes to enhance his respectability and alter his ludicrous surname by contracting a marriage "in name only" with a descendant of Russia's former aristocracy. His choice is Nina, a dishwasher at the chic restaurant he frequents, who happens to be an impoverished scion of the famous Sheremetiev family. The film traces Dima's persistent, cash-strewn campaign to cajole Nina into marriage so as to embellish his reputation. Wooing her with money and persistence, Pupkov eventually falls in love with her, while her haughty resistance, correspondingly, melts into sympathetic attraction. Caught between Pupkov and pauper, at film's end Nina—perched on an escalator that visually installs her "superiority" to the nouveau riche staring at her from below—opts to remain with her intelligentsia family, but now, presumably, without her former prejudices against the Pupkovs of this world.

Novak lends weight to this frothy Cinderella reprise by placing in hackneyed and sentimental situations characters who exemplify the strengths and shortcomings of their social groups: Nina's demoralized "cultured" husband, who lolls reading on a couch all day while she frantically juggles several demeaning and physically exhausting jobs in order to support their four-member family, embodies the paralysis of the contemporary male: intelligent, unable to adjust to a changing social order that has rendered his genteel pursuits superfluous. Nina epitomizes not only the refinement, pride, and reflexive contempt for material well-being integral to the intelligentsia's elitist sense of self, but also the disastrous readiness of Soviet women to play self-immolating mothers and servants to their ineffectual spouses. And Pupkov's condensed biography and metamorphosis from buffoon to suave and tender suitor charts, in accelerated and optimistic form, the course of the New Russians' development after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. During one of their meetings, Pupkov passionately protests Nina's patronizing assumption that he facilely acquired his immense wealth at the cost of morality and humaneness. A self-made man, he earned his fortune through tireless labor, aided by the fortuitous circumstances that he turned to his advantage.

58 The silly surname Pupkov conflates the Russian word for "belly button" (pup) with the euphemistic term for bottom (popka). The film's title similarly engages in an untranslatable wordplay, while evoking the tale "The Princess and the Pea" (to which a scene from the film alludes), it alters the pea to beans but simultaneously incorporates the expression "left holding the bag" or "left with nothing" (ostat'siana bobakh).
While amusingly entertaining, the film makes an eloquent plea for a more enlightened and differentiated perception of the New Russians. As projected in Pupkov, the new entrepreneur may lack the fabled culture and finesse of the intelligentsia (indeed, Pupkov initially reinforces the slapstick cliché of the thick-headed, booze-swilling, womanizing boor), but he possesses drive, vitality, compassion, and a belated zeal for self-improvement. His love for the aloof, noble dishwasher transforms him into a man of immeasurably greater sensitivity and thoughtfulness than ever manifested by her vapid, self-pitying intellectual husband. Audiences flocked to the film and responded enthusiastically, no doubt partly because of its clever blend of comic lightness and pointed commentary on a currently vital problem.

Romanticism versus Respectability:

Novak's film captures the fast-growing desire of New Russians to supplement crass money with class style. This concern with public perception is partly a reaction to the monolithic, derisive image of the New Russians constructed mainly by the contemporary intelligentsia. During the early 1990s Russians' traditional tolerance of criminality, which often bordered on a romantic glamorization of crooks as swashbuckling "free spirits," made for an atmosphere of permissiveness regarding illicit activities. As the criminalization of Russian business escalated, that leniency gradually ceded to resentful and anxious hostility among various segments of the population.

Age has proved a major factor in the modification of attitudes toward illegality: acceptance and approval of illicitness now surface almost exclusively among adolescents, many of whom glamorize criminals as icons of visible success. Whereas during the Soviet era, boys' heroes tended to be cosmonauts and scientists, a recent informal survey of teenagers in the Russian Far East revealed that 27 percent of the males now wished to become racketeers, 25 percent of the females targeted prostitution.

59 This romance with the "zone," as one critic called it, found most vivid expression in popular songs about the underworld, especially the "blatnye pesni" of the 1920s in Odessa, where musicians "cranked out songs about Odessa thieves and jailbirds" (Stites 48). During the 1990s various popular groups have reprised aspects of this tradition, most notably Liube, which, in addition to adopting a macho stance and reworking old favorites, released a video, Liube Zone (1994), of its performance staged in a fictional prison. On Liube, see M. Ivanov. On Russia's long-standing fascination with the criminal milieu, see Titov 143-44.
their career goal, while 9 percent of all respondents had their hearts set on working as contract killers (Interfax, Dec. 7, 1997). Seniors at Moscow schools queried about which professions they deemed most prestigious overwhelmingly cited accounting, law, and banking, and, in a complete reversal of Soviet hierarchies, favored killing and crime over science, research, college teaching, engineering, religion, and space exploration (Reeves, 19 Oct. 1997). A new Internet site created in the second half of 1997 by webmaster Andrei Kuzmin functions as an information base and opinion exchange not for literati, but for local mafiosi. It can be accessed by any youth curious about slang, jokes, nudes, makes of cars, and travel routes favored by criminals (Borisova). The staggering success of Aleksei Balabanov's grade B Russian film Brother (Brat), produced by STV company and released in May 1997, reveals sympathy and reverence for criminals among a sizable portion of Russia's youth.

Brother, of which 400,000 video cassettes sold in five months, centers on the amoral, introverted hero Danila, who upon his military discharge joins his elder brother, a mafia hitman, in St. Petersburg. Paid by his sibling to eliminate one target, Danila—stimulated by the precedent of Robin Hood, as one Western journalist perceives it—proceeds to kill eight people, then coolly departs for a new life in Moscow. Anyone seeking cultural precedents for Danila would find them in the infinitely more complex solitary protagonists of Dostoevsky's novels, who, like Danila, wander the streets of St. Petersburg, have "meaningful" encounters with drunks and prostitutes, ruminating on justice, and "eliminate life's vermin," as Raskolnikov puts it in Crime and Punishment. Whereas Dostoevsky's religious convictions required that murder be followed by punishment, however, Danila has no compunction whatever about taking human life—a trait that apparently constitutes part of his charismatic appeal for entranced fans. An article in Ogonyok about the film proudly commends Russians for admitting that they admire a "perfect killer," whose behavior "coincides with the way our folklore heroes acted." And Sergei Bodrov, the actor who

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60 The website provides links to sites of other companies, such as BMW, the cellular phone company Fora Communications, Izhmash, the Siberian enterprise that manufactures Kalashnikov machine guns. For more on the site <http://www.mafia.spb.ru> and on its webmaster, Kuzmin, at <boss@mafia.spb.ru>, see Borisova.

61 On Brother and similar crime-fixated films of recent years, see Varoli.
plays Danila, maintains: "It is good if our hero is popular because he has a different image [from] that of a killer. It is far better if such a hero—a man who protects women and the old—influences the minds of teenagers" (Reeves 19 Oct. 1997). The film's cult status among Russia's youth, results of various opinion polls, and reports on teenagers' career plans confirm that their receptivity to criminality far outweighs that of Russian adults.

To deny that criminality and racketeering pervade business in Russia is to cling to Pollyanism in the midst of what some have labeled Al Capone times. Yet, amid the mayhem and murders that have accompanied the rise of a specifically Russian brand of capitalism in Russia, the mid-1990s have witnessed the growth of small businesses and the expansion of what, with some reservations, one may cautiously call an aspiring middle class. Indeed, several Western commentators believe that in Moscow the formation of a strong middle class, which Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov has publicly proclaimed as his goal, received its start in 1995 (Shama; Balzer). Several developments in the last two or three years suggest that once New Russians amassed their fortunes and started raising families, their priorities shifted or expanded. Moreover, the second generation of entrepreneurs entered a socio-economic arena in which private business already had a lucrative foothold, with the rudiments of an infrastructure, so their task was sooner assimilation into a system—however flawed—rather than pioneering in a void. These and other contributing circumstances have prompted New Russians' growing concern with social acceptance and stability.

The search for a counter-image has taken multiple forms, most of which may be subsumed under the rubric of education in the most general sense of the word. In addition to enrolling their offspring in schools, universities, and institutes abroad—both for safety and to improve their chances for professional success in the future—the New Russians have embarked on a program of self-education. Future reports will examine the public institutions that educate New Russians in an etiquette deemed commensurate with

62 For comments about the middle class by Professor Avi Shama, a specialist in the Russian economy at the University of New Mexico School of Management, see Frank Reynolds at Voice of America, 30 December 1997 (reported on JRL #1454, 31 December 1997); for a more detailed and differentiated analysis, see Balzer 1997.
their financial status. They will assess the degree to which the image they cultivate through specific rituals, learned tastes, and *modus vivendi* engages and strives to overturn the hyperbolic, negative persona of the New Russian propagated by the media.