

**THE SEARCH FOR A NEW
RUSSIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY:
RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES**

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AND

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INTRODUCTION

by James H. Billington

This work combines and condenses the final reports on three colloquia I held in Russia with Dr. Kathleen Parthé on the search for a Russian national identity in the post-Soviet era. The colloquia, as well as two seminars at the Library of Congress in 1996 and 1997 that involved primarily American experts on Russia, were conducted under the auspices of my grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

My idea was to survey the Western, primarily American, perspective on the topic and then to conduct some intense, in-depth meetings in Russia with small groups of high-level Russian politicians and thinkers. The outcome, I hoped, would help Western observers better to understand some of the key issues and options facing the Russian people as they attempt to forge a post-Soviet national identity and political legitimacy.

The first colloquium for this project was held in June 1998 in Istra, Russia, at the newly renovated New Jerusalem Monastery—itsself a symbol of Russian transformation and renewal. Dr. Parthé, my chief partner in this project, and I surveyed a broad group of American thinkers to identify the most creative Russian politicians and thinkers. We then selected ten from this pool for the Istra meetings. After an exhaustive reading of the current literature on this subject, we prepared three central questions and several corollary topics in both English and Russian versions, and gave them to the participants in advance of the colloquium so they could prepare talking points to use in the discussions.

The second colloquium took place on November 5-6, 1998, in Tomsk, Siberia, at the American Center and at Tomsk State University. We brought together high-level Russians from Tomsk and Novosibirsk to try to gain a regional perspective. To the three main questions from the Istra meeting we added several questions that were formulated to elicit more specifically a Siberian point of view on Russian national identity.

The Institute for World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow was the site for the Third Colloquium, which was held on December 3, 1999. The discussions there examined national identity in the context not just of Russia, but of contemporary culture. Questions on these topics were again distributed to participants in advance of our meeting.

The colloquia discussions have been masterfully condensed, translated, and presented here by Dr. Parthé. She has done outstanding work on this volume. She has brought to this project a rich background of writing and reflection on Russian thinkers often overlooked by Western observers: the village writers of the late Soviet period and the variegated nationalists of

post-Communist Russia. In the afterward to this report, she draws on her own research in briefly summarizing and interpreting the major ideas presented by the colloquia participants. She has properly left out transitions and conversations that took place during breaks. Thus, the connections between subjects discussed may at times seem surprising. For instance, my own improvisations on religion and American identity¹ were in response to repeated requests by the Russians to say something about these subjects.

The Russians who participated in these conversations generally shared two basic beliefs: that Russia's painful transition from Communism to democracy was worth supporting; but that, at the same time, Russia could and should sustain its own uniqueness. As the discussions clearly reveal, it is very difficult to say either how this transition will work out or what remains unique about Russia. Just as Soviet totalitarianism was in many ways an unprecedented phenomenon in human history, so is the decompression from it.

Russia has become for the first time in history a nation rather than an empire, and Russians are now living in a pluralistic society without an established ideology. Yet the Russian Federation is a far more ethnically monolithic state than the Soviet Union. Citizens of the Federation had to accept the exclusion of 25 million ethnic Russians from their new nation-state and the removal from their obligatory reading list of books that had put them at the center of world history. Add to all of this a decade of crime and corruption in which life expectancy and living standards have fallen and great military, cultural, and academic establishments have lost most of their subsidies. The wonder is not that there is not a clear sense of national identity, but that there has been so little social violence or extremist polarization.

What has taken place is one of the most wide-ranging and many-voiced discussions about national identity and political legitimacy in modern times. In broad outline Russia is struggling between its authoritarian tradition and its new freedoms; and Russians are experiencing an inner conflict between the material and the spiritual imperatives that have been freed up within individuals. It is a highly idiosyncratic discussion conducted in a chaotic, distinctively Russian way. Yet it is full of insights and outlooks on the future that are often of universal interest. This discussion involves more people in Russia than any previous intellectual debate—yet it has been less noticed, let alone studied, in the West than almost any other aspect of the current Russian scene.

I originally expected to complete my project on the search for a post-Soviet, post-communist Russian national identity with a long introductory essay to this report. But the importance and the complexity of the debate that is suggested by the three discussions presented here—along with my study of the extraordinarily rich literature on this subject that has by now been published in Russia—have prompted me to write a separate book on Russia in search of itself. In my book I describe the broader debate taking place in Russia, the different approaches to its resolution, and my own conclusions. With its publication in late 2003, I will bring this long-labored project to a conclusion.

THE FIRST COLLOQUIUM

The New Jerusalem Monastery, Istra, Russia

Opening Session²

*Dr. Billington³ welcomed participants to the colloquium on the future of Russian national identity in the 21st century. He gave a brief history of this project, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, and mentioned the recently-completed three-part television series **The Face of Russia**—and the book he wrote to accompany it—which is scheduled to be shown on public broadcasting stations in the United States beginning June 17. After two seminars held at the Library of Congress in October 1996 and March 1997, it was decided that the next step would be a small colloquium in Russia that would allow for a deep discussion of this topic with Russians. The final report of these talks could help Western observers better understand Russia's effort to develop a post-Soviet national identity and legitimacy. After explaining the basic format—concrete questions the first day and a more general exploration of the topic the second day—Dr. Billington introduced the American Ambassador.*

Ambassador Jim Collins has graciously agreed to join us and make some opening remarks. Ambassador Collins was sworn in as Ambassador to the Russian Federation on September 2, 1997. A career diplomat with extensive experience in Russian affairs, Ambassador Collins returned to Moscow for the fourth time following a Washington assignment as Senior Coordinator and then Ambassador-at-large and Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Newly Independent States. Mr. Collins twice before served at the American Embassy in Moscow: from 1990-1993 as deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires and from 1973 to 1975 as Second Secretary. Academic study and research brought Ambassador Collins to Moscow for the first time from 1965-1966 as an exchange fellow at the History Faculty of Moscow University.

I think that most of you know Ambassador Collins and appreciate his dedication to strengthening Russian-American ties and understanding. I have known him for nearly 40 years, since he was a student in my Russian history course in 1959. And I had the privilege to see his outstanding performance during the fateful days in August 1991 when he was in charge of the American Embassy.

Ambassador Collins said that he was pleased to join the group for the morning session and honored to work with Russians at a time of a revolution that was transforming all aspects of life.

The changes have been going on for ten years already, but this is still the first stage and it is interesting to consider how the population will react to the alteration of everyday life, and where all these changes might lead. This revolution and these changes are taking place in a world that is quite different from the world of the past century and the time of the last revolution. Now the international context in which changes are taking place is even more important than earlier. This colloquium is an example of the kind of inside-outside view of the process of

change in Russia, which includes the all-important increased use of computers and the Internet. The United States supports the policy of open ties between our governments, as well as between our citizens, and a close working relationship with Russia as an evolving civil society. And as habits of openness take hold, one can see how Russians at all levels of society are linking up with counterparts in other societies. The Colloquium on Russian National Identity is a striking example of this phenomenon.

Session 1: Russia in 2020: Predictions/Hard Reality

1. What do you think Russia will be like in 2020? How will the country differ from Russia today—geographically, politically, economically, and in the area of culture—and what will the main differences be?

Aleksandr Yakovlev: It is good that this is a small group, and one can speak frankly. History is moving so fast that it's impossible to say what will happen this fall. Fascism? Some sort of crisis? This is a transitional Russia (*perekhodnaia Rossiia*). We don't know, for instance, whether everything will continue to be directed from Moscow, or whether the regions will be given some freedom. The term *identity* puts you on your guard. There clearly is a Russian national identity, which, thank God, has a future and hopefully will not move very much in the direction of universalism. But another branch exists, a kind of nationalism that can lead to fascism. We must overcome our imperial feelings (*imperskoe chuvstvo*). At the basis of the national idea—although I am very much against the search for such an idea—is our thousand-year-old poverty (*nishcheta*), which we must eliminate, and our *bespravie* (lack of rights, lawlessness). We have our Stenka Razin and Pugachev. . . ; it's all *volia, volia, volia* (elemental freedom). We must move from the condition of *volia* to *svoboda* (civic freedom, guaranteed by custom or law) before we can talk about the future. So far we have developed democratic procedures, but not *svoboda* in its fullest sense. I agree with Ambassador Collins on the importance of globalization. We still don't fully understand how we will live with others. Globalization will be wonderful in financial, even political, matters, but I fear the possible damage to our culture (*udar po kul'ture*).

Yuri Kariakin: Dostoevsky said that our weakest point is our self-consciousness. . . . As for the intelligentsia, they have been busy since the beginning of *glasnost*, enlightening, commenting on, and praising themselves (*samoprosveshchenie, samokommentarie, samovoskhvalenie*), and they developed a cynical attitude during the communist period. It's impossible to make predictions (*zadacha nerazreshima*). In 1990 it was hard to predict the events of 1991. . . . We're one of the richest countries in the world, at least potentially, but this rich country has become a very poor one. . . .

Viktor Aksiuichits: The Russian people is a collective organism with a collective personality and soul, and a unique historical fate. This was a Russian Orthodox civilization, an empire. The 1917 catastrophe led to an idea-driven regime (*ideokratiia*), a virus that could have killed the organism, but the organism survived. We went from unconsciousness (*bespamiatstvo*) to

consciousness (*samosoznanie*), and just when this civilization had achieved its maturity, there was a break (*izlom*) and the organism began fighting for its existence. Two possible variants lie ahead: (1) a kind of “soft,” “mild,” authoritarianism (*miagkii avtoritarizm*). Problems can be solved under such a system; it would have a constitution, and by 2020 we could see a revived country (*vozhrozhdennaia strana*); or, (2) a crueller, rougher form of authoritarianism–fascism. . . if Russia breaks down into provinces. As a regime, it would solve some problems but bring others and delay stability—we wouldn’t have attained it by 2020. Then it would be an additional 20 years before we have a really stable period.

Lev Anninsky: Four hundred years ago we had a Time of Troubles (*smuta*) that set our consciousness for hundreds of years afterward. . . . We are now in such a period, when you have a bifurcation in important areas of life. For my generation, the break-up of the USSR was a tragedy. Geographically, the regions are distancing themselves from the center. Americans, with their memories of Texas and the South, can understand this. Economically, the center and the regions are acting separately, trying lots of different things, and individuals are playing leapfrog, moving from one job to another. Politically, a prediction of what Russia will be like twenty years from now would still be very mixed. Culture is in a critical condition, but this is not all bad. In the future there will be less of a division into things that are completely positive or completely negative. It will be Russian, in the Russian language, but more attuned to pre-Christian folk culture, more ecumenical and less completely Orthodox.

Georgy Satarov: Two very different possibilities in political, economic, and cultural areas exist: the negative variant is the most probable, given the economic and social problems, and the backlash by the left (*levyi revansh*), which would bring the Communist Party to power, and a reaction to that threat with a right-wing coup (*pravyi perevorot*) as in Spain and Chile, and a right dictatorship led by a general. Maybe a new figure from the provinces, someone we don’t know yet, will appear on the scene. And there is a threat that Russia will not be preserved as an intact state and government because it is weak in a federative sense. It is a faith-based country (*konfessional’naia strana*), and a primitive ideology can be attractive. Of course, this is dangerous because it would be not just a large territory falling apart, but a nuclear power. These are the possible negative scenarios. Later I will talk about the positive variants that could occur.

Aleksandr Rubtsov: If there is too much negativism and bleakness (*surovost’*) about the future, this will spread and wind up influencing that future. It’s impossible to say exactly what will happen, because the world changes. We could make predictions in the past, but we can’t now. This is a particular kind of prediction (*osobyi rod predskazaniia*), a black box.⁴ It’s not clear what’s going on inside, and in principle it’s impossible to say. There may be a bifurcation, there are dangers, and it could turn out in a negative or positive way. Much depends on the spiritual state of society, on its consciousness (*sostoianie dukha, soznanie obshchestva*). What is important is the interrelation (*vzaimootnoshenie*) with reality: do we understand and correctly assess what is happening around us?

There are powerful myths, like the idea that Russia has always had a very strong central government. Everything is exaggerated, hypertrophied to the limit: we had a Party and a government (*gosudarstvo*). The Party left power and the government turned out not to function

very well. Why would it have, since it wasn't allowed to in the past? After the Party left power, it was like having a prosthesis, there was an empty feeling. Culturally, the supposed communal spirit (*obshchinnost'*) of society during the Soviet period masked what was actually the fragmentation of society (*atomizatsiia obshchestva*). . . . So what was hypertrophied and exaggerated turned out to be an empty category. This has always been an ideological country. Now we need to understand ourselves, to see reality. We need the right frame of mind (*umonastroenie*) and sense of moderation. The intelligentsia know what is going on and what to do, but still can't act. There are: (1) people who live worse than before and don't support change; (2) people who live better and support change; (3) people who live worse but still support change; and (4) people who live better, but feel worse—they buy a lot but they don't feel good. Ordinary ideological methods don't help here in finding out what the core values (*kliuchevye tsennosti*) are.

Natalia Ivanova: One reaction to the artificial enthusiasm of the early years of perestroika and its image of re-building is that the anti-utopia became popular. As a society, we're not thinking about the future right now, but what are possible scenarios? There could be a further disintegration of Russia. We found out in 1979 in Afghanistan that the USSR could not grow larger, and that led to the demise of the country (*krakh SSSR*). [Andrei] Amalrik, in his book *Will the Soviet Union Last Until 1984?*, was right: Russia is disintegrating at the edges (*na kraiaxh*) and in places like Tatarstan. . . . Moscow is very nicely decorated, but it is *gnilaia* (rotten, corrupt), and it takes all the money. . . . Economically, there are difficult times ahead—even more than now—as things have become very complicated. Culturally, there has been a decline, but there could be local developments (*mestnichestvo*). Other scenarios are possible. . . . There is a possibility of restoring the USSR.

Nikolai Shmelev: A prognosis isn't so much a question of logic as of faith or the absence of faith. For the upheaval that began under Gorbachev, two generations are needed, a period of upheaval (*konvul'sivnyi period*) of forty years, to carry out and to absorb such big changes . . . maybe more than two generations, but what will we see in twenty years? Politically, we may have a modified authoritarian regime, and the country will not fall apart. Chechnya is a separate case, an insane asylum (*sumasshedshii dom*). The central government is weak, yet it wants all the resources while provinces are demanding more for themselves. Increased tariffs are a case of genuine stupidity (*superglupost'*), and it will take several years of bargaining to achieve some sort of balance. There will be three parties in twenty years: the left (Social Democrats), the right, and the nationalists. I agree with Solzhenitsyn on the importance of local self-government, which we had been developing in the second half of the 19th century. So far we have democracy just on the top and not below. A civil society (*grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*) will develop.

Economically, what is Moscow? Luzhkov. The problems and their solutions will not depend, as they do now, on who is in power. There will be a market solution (*rynochnoe reshenie*) and everyone except Viktor Anpilov⁵ understands this. In seventy years we built an enormous industrial society, and yet much of what was built up is now completely unnecessary. At least two-thirds should either be changed radically or closed down, and we need at least twenty years to solve this. No one has a plan for the countryside, and small plots are growing a lot of the food that's available now, but this won't be solved in one or two generations. One third

of the workers are not needed, but what will we give them to do? The government is making it hard for the small middle class to succeed. In twenty years, we will go from semi-paralysis to some sort of movement.

Under the Bolsheviks, the government was the number one criminal, and we had a criminal system. Things will be a little easier for the next generation; there will be an instinct for self-preservation and some balance. . . . The interest in religion now is in part a reaction to all the years of repression, but some of it is not organic to Russia.

. . . We suffered a terrible genetic loss (*geneticheskii ushcherb*) as 60,000,000 young people, the best in the country (*zolotaia molodezh'*) perished during the Soviet period, and it will take five generations, until 2150, for that to be made up (*geneticheskoe vyzdorovlenie*). Internationally, the former republics will achieve some sort of unity, some coming together (*priblizhenie*), after the experience of a civilized–or uncivilized–divorce. In the Caucasus, Armenia has no hope of an independent existence; for Georgia there is some hope, but the entire nation cannot live on the profits from an oil pipeline. . . . Azerbaijan is being supported by the U.S. as an oil reserve, and it will do well if there is a demand for oil.

Valerii Tishkov: Futurology is very weak methodologically and is not a serious undertaking (*delo*) when such radical changes are taking place. . . . In twenty years the present borders may have changed as a result of willfulness or coercion (*volia, nasilie*). The disintegration of the USSR was a trauma and there will be a second round of integration. Territorial questions are very important: for Russia, Sevastopol and the Crimea are more a part of national consciousness (*mental'nost'*) than Alaska and Hawaii are part of American consciousness. The northern Caucasus may break away. . . . And there is the exclave of Kaliningrad, as well as the diaspora, but territories will not be transferred.

How will a civil society mature, and at what point can we begin to have ambitions? It won't develop from Moscow outwards. Demographically, the population is growing in the European part and in the south; Russia isn't in the worst position in Europe, and there is immigration [into Russia], but the growth won't be in the Russian regions as much as in the south, in Dagestan. But Russians will keep their majority, which now stands at 70%. It is still more prestigious to be Russian, and people who are the product of mixed marriages count themselves as Russians.

Spatially (*prostranstvenno*), there is a lot of empty territory near China. This is a complex state, an ethnic society without much national sense of self. Economically, there have been a lot of positive developments in recent years, a lot of construction including in the countryside, a lot of progress and choice. There are private interests which are not politically well-organized. Culturally, the intelligentsia are reading [Aleksandra] Marinina [a former police officer with a law degree, whose crime novels are best sellers], but the cultural resources are immense.

Anninsky: The foundations of the Russian mentality (*russkoi mental'nosti*) lie in two ideas of culture, one based on the Russian language, and the other based on Russian Orthodoxy.

Tishkov: . . . There is *russkii* (ethnically and/or linguistically Russian) and *rossiiskii* (a citizen of the Russian state). When people come from a mixed background, why does there need to be only one identity?

Amb. Collins: In twenty years, people who are now 18-23 will be running everything. How will they want to live? What will they think? How are they preparing for their future? Knowing this will give us the most concrete possible idea of what things will be like in twenty years.

Tishkov: According to statistics, 70% of the population feel some level of xenophobia. . . . Education is still a very high priority. . . . Socially, divorces are at the same level as during the Soviet period. Religiosity is minimal and Russia is still an atheistic country. There is less alcohol abuse than before—so maybe we will be able to avoid at least one big social problem—because more people are driving cars [and the laws are strict], even though it is easier to buy alcohol than 10 years ago. . . . In twenty years youth will be more political. . . .

Billington: I'm interested in hearing more about the people who are living better than before, but feeling worse. It's really an interesting question. Is it everyone's impression that this group exists and that it is fairly large?

. . . ⁶**Tishkov:** Young people are now helping to support their parents, which wasn't the case in the past. My friends complain that their kids have better jobs than they do, and the parents are nostalgic.

Amb. Collins: What can be said about the younger generation as a whole?

Kariakin: I still teach literature in high school, and I see changes each year. I feel that I am taught by my students these days.

. . . **Satarov:** There have been lots of surveys over the past few years, ones that ask about the population's mood during the past week. So I have recent examples of that kind of survey: 8% of the people surveyed felt very positive; 46% said that they felt calm, so more than half the population is feeling more or less okay (*normal'no*). Approximately 29% felt a little anxious, while about 12% admitted to being fearful, which is a drop. The number of people feeling calm (*spokoistvie*) is significantly higher than in 1995, for instance. In assessing current problems, 25% of the population feel that there is a moral and cultural crisis: 15% say that the main problem is in the country's further development (*razvitie strany*). 86% say that the world of their parents is dissolving, and 80% say that no one believes in anything these days. When asked about their faith in government and social institutions, 6% said that they had faith in the military, even fewer said they had faith in the church.

. . . When asked about important ideas shaping Russian society, 5% said they looked to communism. 8% mentioned socialism, 2.5% religious ideas, 6% the idea of democracy, 4.5% the idea of Russian originality (*samobytnost'*), and 35% supported the idea of Russia being a major world power (*velikaia derzhava*). When asked about their attitudes towards political leaders throughout the CIS, no Russian leaders received even 1% support from among those polled—Zyuganov did best with 0.4%, while Lukashenka [Belarus'] and Nazarbaev [Kazakhstan] each received 20%.

Aksiuchits: This generation focuses on day-to-day concerns (*zhiznennyi interes*), and looks to see which leaders have similar interests. Yeltsin is seen negatively, as a bulldozer, by those being pushed out of the way. What Russians want is historical development that is not destructive (*razrushitel'nyi*), but constructive (*sozidatel'nyi*). With Chernomyrdin, there was a sense that aggression was possible, maybe a putsch. The younger generation of leaders, Nemtsov, Kirienko, do not yet play a direct role in Russian history. There are new directions and tendencies, and new rules of the game. People understand they have to look out for themselves.

... **Rubtsov:** Getting back to the question of why some people are doing well but feeling bad, it depends on who's speaking and who's listening. People can be eating a good dinner, but the conversation will include complaints about hunger [in Russia]. For so long people couldn't speak negatively in public and now we can, but we don't yet have the words and the *muzhestvo* (courage, backbone) to speak positively in public. There is a certain artificiality (*iskusstvennost'*, *navedennost'*) to the information we get. In the West, people evaluate life based on how they themselves are doing; here we judge how life really is from television, from the collective life of society (*zhizn' obshchestva, sobornaia zhizn'*).

Ivanova: The media is seen as the culprit with all the negative stuff that was not publicized in the past. . . . Young people are developing political feelings. In 1991 I was at the White House with my 16-year-old daughter. . . .who saw that her freedom was at stake. In 1993 those same young people saw that the people who caused the trouble were amnestied. . . . As an editor, I see the style of the regime's politics, and young people don't like this style. They feel de-ideologized, but they are more tolerant than the older generation.

Aksiuchits: It's true that much was hidden in the past, but now news of various mishaps is exaggerated.

Ivanova: Catastrophic feelings were worse a few years ago; now they are declining.

Kariakin: The social movements of the past thirteen years have not included young people. First they went to work in kiosks, now they see the need for an education as a means of getting a good job.

Yakovlev: . . .The general population (*narod, naselenie*) never was involved in the formation of politics, so we're talking about the elite. I don't know what people mean by this word *narod*. . . . The *narod* were involved in wartime to the extent that were told where to go and they went. There is no *narod* as Tolstoy saw it. The classics—Gogol, Chekhov—all described the word *narod* in negative terms. Only Esenin saw that the people were sad and depressed (*narod tosuet*). Bulgakov gave us Sharikov [the hero of *Heart of a Dog*], and Erofeev saw them all as alcoholics. In our attempt to analyze and make a prognosis, we have to think about whose consciousness we are discussing, the intelligentsia or the people.

Session 2: Russia in 2020: Ideal Visions

2. What kind of Russia would you like to see in 2020? What must be done, what must be changed, where must attention be directed, so that your vision of Russia could be realized?

Shmelev: We need to free ourselves from this historical sense of exceptionalism and messianism, and the idea that we have a third way (*iskliuchitel'nost'*, *messianstvo*, *tretii put'*). Every one is guilty of this except Pushkin. We are actually neither better nor worse than others, neither stupider nor smarter, and not even all that violent (*buinyi*). We do have exceptional cultural wealth. Yakovlev and I have worked together, and once I asked him about the fact that the Americans isolated themselves for 150 years, and only then got involved in world affairs. Of course Russia needs to develop and maintain commercial ties and interests with other countries, with no limits, but we really need to focus inward for a while as we change and develop, not to be involved in Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and certainly not with Iran.

Ivanova: What are the important differences about Russia? It's not the number of rockets, industry, or agriculture, nor the type of government, but in the great culture (*velikaia kul'tura*). . . . Some of its functions have changed, and there is a lot of new activity, including 2,000 new publishing houses in Moscow, even though they have small editions. There are also 140 right-wing publications, and one wonders where they get their money. In [Dostoevsky's novel] *Demons*, the question is asked whether Russia should place a higher value on having Raphael or "boots." Well, we can see what "boots" led to. As a people, we need to agree on what sorts of things we would like to happen. To develop a civil society, we must move from a presidential representative government to a parliamentary representative government, and to a confederation.

. . . **Satarov:** The government resembles a machine, the citizen-state (*grazhdanin-gosudarstvo*), so we need to pay attention to having a well-built machine that will move in a better direction. We need working ideals (*idealy ustroistva*), knowing the mistakes to avoid. We need to know what complexes operate in our society. The messianic complex isn't the most important aspect of our social consciousness (*obshchestvennoe samosoznanie*), but the inferiority complex out of which messianic feelings come (*istekaet*) is important. For years we told our neighbors how to construct their lives. We couldn't do it ourselves in the present, but we were telling others how to live in the future. We restructured what was around us and not what was within us. . . .

Tishkov: The building of a state goes on every day (*gosudarstvo stroitsia kazhdyi den'*), so 145,000,000 people will be doing this. It is hard to say what they will want twenty years from now, but the government must fulfill two functions: (1) provide better social conditions and (2) help establish order (*poriadok*). . . . What do we have to do to bring this about? Normal, productive, economic (*khoziaistvennyi*) activity must flourish, and we need to take personal responsibility for our selves and our fate. We have to learn how responsible citizens behave, and young people need to think more when they vote and be better informed. And (3) we need to stop worrying about the manipulation of information in the media—what's more important is getting people to read it in the first place.

Anninsky: We have to stop trying to save Russia and just live in a proper, dignified way (*nado perestat' Rossiu spatat', i zhit' dostoino*), and we need local, personal projects more than grand ones.

Aksiuchits: The best people suffered. We must try to complete some of the older, unfinished projects, to restore monasteries and their values. We have Russian culture, both secular and Orthodox, and natural resources to aid in our renewal and growth. We need to develop our work ethic (*trudoliubie*). Nothing great will be built without that. To be long-suffering (*dolgoterpelivyi*) has its negative sides, and we could go over the edge, into the abyss. We should try to avoid complete imitation of the West, and avoid making the same mistakes they did. We're different, and we need to defend our own identity.

Kariakin: Think of a paper with iron filings on top and a magnet below [that can pull the filings in a number of different directions]. There are magnets for class struggle, religion, nationalism, but up till now, no magnet for life and death. The people have lived as if they're immortal [a reference to the Soviet myths about victory over nature and history, and the cult of the deathless Lenin] and they need to realize they are mortal. The concept of mortality has to be taught to children. It's hard to do but only then will people understand the need to take care of themselves (*samozashchita*). We now have a national, not a human, self-consciousness.

Yakovlev: As Russian writers have said, we need to get rid of our slave soul (*rabskaia dusha*). We still place our hopes on governors and other local administrators, and we give them power to rule over us as they wish. Yes, we're an artistic nation, but we need to learn how to work. We have to unite these two qualities. Human rights are very important, but we also must exercise the right to take personal responsibility (*pravo na otvetstvennost'*). People must learn to decide for themselves and by themselves. We haven't demonstrated this sense of responsibility in our history. We allowed ourselves to be led through history by whomever had power.

Billington: What is the content behind the national idea?

Yakovlev: This is always something concocted by the state (*vlast'*) in its own interests.

Aksiuchits: Russian self-consciousness was formed over the great expanse of land as it was acquired (*prostranstvo, kak usvoili*). Some parts of the country are more European, others more Russian. With Siberia's severe (*surovyi*) climate and the rigorous life people lead there, they've developed a strong (*sil'nyi*) character. The country's true capital is Novosibirsk.

Tishkov: Siberia could be developed. If people could get land cheap they would become homesteaders, like they did in America.

Session 3: Russia in 2020: History's Values

3. If you were to write an introduction to a textbook on Russian history and culture for schoolchildren, what institutions, problems, and achievements would you especially stress in order to help the next generation create the kind of Russia that you would like to see in the year 2020?

Yakovlev: I would want to stress in a textbook one simple thought: you have to learn to answer for yourself, and not just rely on others. That should be in all textbooks, whoever they're for—the responsibility of a person for himself.

Tishkov: And to be responsible citizens.

Aksiuchits: . . . We can talk about the people as long as we aren't too theoretical. There is something we call the meaning of history (*smysl istorii*). There are various functions in the collective organism that we call the people, such as the monks, the gentry, the intelligentsia (*chernoe monashestvo, soslovie dvorianstva, soslovie intelligentsii*). We need the intelligentsia—and not just writers—to have self-awareness and to lead. . . . We are moving from unconsciousness into consciousness (*iz bespamiatstva v pamiat'*), and we are acquiring a national identity, a memory, and a will to act (*volia*). We are in the midst of this process and of a revival of the Russian national idea (*vosstanovlenie russkoi idei*). But we need not just to find a Russian idea, but to organize our own consciousness. . . .and to find life-organizing ideas (*zhizn'-organizuiushchie idei*). . . . What are the alternatives, the historical choices? We can see all the varieties of political movements now, from nationalism to socialism, and all different kinds of power structures, all the way up to a fascist dictatorship.

The spiritual illness of the state had to do with freedom, memory, and the sense of loss (*volia, pamiat', ideia traty*). In our national consciousness, our memory was not healthy (*v soznanii bol'na pamiat'*). All other problems followed from this, economic, political, every kind of craziness (*pomeshatel'stvo*), not just psychological, but spiritual. . . . We've had a loss of memory, a spiritual illness, our memory was sick. We had the destructive idea of communism. Socialism offered fictitious pseudo-values (*fiktivnye psevdotsennosti*); everything about socialism was false. It is a lesser form of spiritual illness than communism (*bole miagkaia forma dushevnogo zabolvaniia*). Now political groups try to exploit the country's problems (*problematika*) to their advantage, What would we call the stage we're in now? This is a moment of temporary clarity (*zazor*), when we have to decide how we are to live in the future (*zhit' dal'she*). This is a time of delayed choice (*period otlozhennogo vybora*).

Tishkov: . . . When you talk about the rehabilitation (*vosstanovlenie*) of national identity, what do you mean? What norms do you have in mind? When is the moment that it begins to restore itself?

Aksiuchits: National identity is a given set of characteristics of the Russian people that can be described. Of course it isn't possible to come up with an exact moment when a person realizes that this rehabilitation has taken place.

Rubtsov: I've worked on this question in connection with the Soros Foundation's competition for new textbooks. What ideas do we want in these new textbooks, that's the question? . . . Books that talk about democracy are using the same command style, the same forced march, that we used to declaim about communism. We are always declaiming. I did a study of textbooks and they were mostly filled with violent events; 98% of the events in these books are wars, uprisings, or someone getting killed. We need to demilitarize our textbooks. We need to think about history on a different level, in different ways.

Billington: I just finished a three-hour television series about Russia, and I purposely kept the focus on topics other than people being killed. So it is possible.

Shmelev: You know, Jim, I took your question literally (*za chistuiu monetu*), and tried to come up with a list of institutions that should be discussed—or at least mentioned—in these textbooks. The *zemstvo* (local, elected councils) or whatever name you want to give the idea of local self-government, the judicial system under the tsars⁷, the prison system, and the co-existence of different faiths (*konfessii*), because before the Revolution—with the exception of anti-Semitism—it is completely untrue that every group was at odds with every other group. And I would like to see the Stolypin reforms discussed seriously.

It's important to understand in our economy the ruling principle of registration (*registratsionnyi vopros*) as opposed to the principle of permission (*razreshitel'nyi vopros*). Today, with our democracy, market economy, and private property, the tyranny (*gospodstvo*) of the registration system is allowing all kinds of corruption and putting the brakes on (*tormozit*) economic growth. Let's say I want to open my own brickworks, or a small workshop for making wallpaper (*oboinaia masterskaia*). I've found a small basement, and I have the money for the utilities and everything else, and so I go to register my business. . . . I'll need a minimum of about a hundred signatures: the fire department, police, the health department, and the devil knows what else. I'm not even talking about the criminal rackets—that's a separate matter. And I have to handle this all by myself. This discourages the great majority of potential entrepreneurs. So I would discuss separating the principle of permission and the principle of registration, because the pyramid of corruption stands on this principle.

What would I take from the Soviet and post-Soviet period for these textbooks? Well, there are some things it isn't sensible or economical to get rid of, like the mix between free public and paid private education, free health care and paid health care, fixed and other kinds of pensions—this is normal in many European countries. I would keep the best elements of social democracy. Politically, I would save the multi-party system (*mnogopartiinost'*) we have developed and the parliament, and all the elements of civil society that have evolved so far. . . . We need to support and save the scientific complexes where all our research takes place. We have to save our brainpower (*mozgi*)—even if it's not economically viable now—for the future, or else it's going to disappear in the next century. . . .

I can never figure out why we decided to compete militarily with the U.S., instead of following the French model. General DeGaulle, with his weapons program in the early 1960s, said he couldn't beat the Soviet Union, but he could guarantee the safety of ten key cities. We cannot defend everything, but we could be in a position to defend the most important locations in

Russia. We have to support the things that will guarantee our self-preservation (*samosokhranenie*).

Ivanova: For the study of literature, we'll need completely new books in the 21st century. For the past ten or more years we've been thinking about what we should pass down about our literature. I remember all these discussions. First, we thought we should talk about *Novyi mir*⁸, and other subjects like that in detail, with separate books on important writers. Then we decided that we should cover important movements like Village Prose, liberal prose, war literature. We need to talk about the center and the periphery, and about the nostalgia we feel. Soviet films seem better than we thought they were. . . . There is a series [by Ivanova] in *Druzhiba narodov* that is covering the literary world year by year. We should mention Anna Akhmatova, because she teaches us strategies for survival, Nadezhda Mandelstam, Tvardovsky [the best-known editor of *Novyi mir*], even Fadeev is worth studying. It's important that diaries are being published, like those of [Mikhail] Prishvin. Let's not exclude anything from these textbooks: Tvardovsky, Akhmatova, Socialist Realism, everything of interest. In 2020, we will be more objective.

Satarov: It depends on the purpose of the textbook. . . . It's hard to fit everything that should be included: travelers' accounts, information about the tsars. The people have no roots, no history, and we have to restore that history, but we should not include values. We need to demythologize history: each succeeding winner wants to have its point of view in the textbooks, including its myths. This is repeated time after time. . . . There should be several choices, rather than one kind of textbook with a *nadpis'* (an official endorsement), one completely 'correct' view of history.

Tishkov: The new textbooks produced with help from abroad sometimes repeat the old ones to a depressing degree (*do obeskurazhivaniia*). . . . We need more professionalism and greater use of the archival material that is now available. . . . There are some things, like chronology, that most people can agree on. What is it about Russian history that's valuable and necessary to include in future textbooks? There is the approach based on values, which we don't have enough of at present. Textbooks are a litmus test of society's values. We need to talk about things like repression, fascism, deportations, as well as the achievements (*dostizheniia*), about what was built in peaceful times. . . . This is also the story of rich cultural activity; we need to talk about that. This sort of material doesn't show up much in present textbooks, and yet it is very typical of our life. And the participation of various cultures and people in the life of the country as a whole (*obshcherossiiskaia zhizn' strany*). We don't want to have what you see in some of the former republics, a national history that leaves a lot out, or is written against another national history, against Russian history. So we should include the Armenians and the others and discuss contemporary chauvinism.

Anninsky: One optimistic point is that in 2020 we are more likely to write not just *russkaia* (ethnic Russian) but *rossiiskaia* (imperial, multi-national Russian) history, and not just talk about Moscow. Twenty years ago that wouldn't have been possible. Perhaps we can talk about some of the provincial cities, Mozhaik, for example. And include the classic Russian historians like Kliuchevsky and Soloviev. We need to figure out what it is about reality today that should be

passed on to people in 2020, not just as the history of the mistakes that were made, but the wealth of experience (*nakoplenie opyta*). The Bolsheviks came in and got us out of an impasse (*tupik*), when we were in the midst of a bloody world war and Nicholas II wasn't doing such a great job. Some of these things will have to be discussed twenty years from now in textbooks.

We now have freer publication, but at the same time a decline in interest in literature. And we have choice (*vybornost'*), which in politics means that we can choose any one of three fools (*iz trekh durakov odnogo*). . . . We have unresolved problems, among them: (1) drunkenness; (2) poverty; (3) how to make a living off ideas (*kak zhit' ideiami*), especially for the intelligentsia and writers, and it's not clear how that one's going to be solved; and (4) funding education. If we don't solve these last two problems, the best people are going to leave, and that will be a national tragedy.

Yakovlev: Of course it's very important to write about the Soviet period, and the first stage is to say what was a lie (*vran'e*). Our International Democracy Foundation has started publication of an extensive series of collections of documents—88 volumes in all—and, among other projects, is working on a multi-volume history of Russia in the 20th century. It says first of all what the facts were, and then shows how they were described in history books, and what ideological reasons were behind the various treatments—the whole historical machine (*mashina istorii*), and the myths.

There is a wealth of material from the Soviet period that can now be printed, for instance, about peasant uprisings in Siberia before the Revolution, which nobody knows about, so we have to simply restore (*vosstanovit'*) the factual side of the event. And about how in 1917 we acquired—through a counter-revolution against the regime that had come to power in February 1917—a criminal regime (*ugolovnoe gosudarstvo*). The civil war was a criminal act, the repressions, industrialization [the way it was brought about] was a crime, and the insufficient preparation for the war that led to so many people being lost in just three months. So we created (*sozdali*) a criminal government, and that has to be said openly. To say that the organism was sick is not a strong enough expression.

A lot of people put down as insufficient what happened in 1985, but I don't agree, and it's not just because I was part of the perestroika process—we all were. It was a major achievement: 1) to end repression; 2) to gain freedom of creation, of the written and spoken word; 3) the end of the cold war; 4) the end of the war in Afghanistan; and, 5) the beginning of the demilitarization of the country. And even if the electoral system has us choosing between fools, it is a choice we get to make. We've gone from non-freedom to freedom (*ot nesvobody k svobode*). . . .

Aksiuchits: There is a lot of talk about what we have been through as therapy. Now there are all kinds of therapy, some rougher and some easier, but textbooks are advanced therapy. We need to understand what kind of history was written by Karamzin and Kliuchevsky. We want a historical narrative that is not just about wars and destruction (*razrushenie*), but also about creation (*sozidanie*), the history of culture, of literature. We should look at the role of the Russian church in government, and of religious consciousness in life. The Internet could really stimulate the exchange of information that is necessary.

Rubtsov: We need to correct the historical narrative [that we had before 1985], to say what was a lie. This is an important idea: a person with a past (*chelovek s proshlym*) does not act

impulsively. . . . People have to understand that there are many different histories, and learn how to orient themselves and navigate among these different histories.

Kariakin: No country was warned so much about the dangers they would face in the future, none was more deaf to these warnings, and no country more forgetful about what they went through in the past. That should give a theme to the textbooks. It's up to us to get kids properly oriented before they're 15, because after that they don't really change radically (*v korne*). We need various kinds of books—I tell them to read [Dostoevsky's] *Demons* and Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, the first a warning of what was to come, and the other what it was like. . . . These books are a vaccination against communism, and against fascism, and the awful coming together of the two in national chauvinism.

Tishkov: . . . We need a history of the Russian church, and there is no private history (*chastnaia istoriia*), no history of private life (*istorii chastnoi zhizni net*). It was not a completely frozen society (*ne zamorozhennoe obshchestvo*). Everyone has a story to tell: there are all the stories of people who were released from prison and their families' stories as well, how people carried on with their lives. . . .the moral life (*nравственност'*) of that period.

Billington: What can foreigners do to help Russia in these tasks? Give us your advice, informally, on what does and does not work. America and Western Europe may not be doing enough to help, may seem to be sitting indifferently on the sidelines, and it's sad because the outcome of this is important for the whole world. America is playing a role in increasing access to the Internet, that's one of the Soros projects, to connect provincial universities. There could be more going on with Siberia and other areas. I won't exaggerate my own influence in Washington, but I do come into contact with people who make policy, and I am sure there would be interest in your thinking about what is meaningful help from outside the country.

Shmelev: Let me talk a little about some of the sensitive questions being debated. . . . This is a fragile society, and to do provocative things at such a complex moment. . . .so the expansion of NATO is happening. But there are very dangerous areas for Russia today, like the Kurile Islands. Of course we need to give them back, to sell them off, but things should not be rushed. The question of the Baltic countries and NATO should not be forced through so quickly (*ne nado forsirovat'*). The disintegration of Russia would be dangerous for the USA and Europe. America's position on some international matters is a bit near-sighted. At times America acts as if, for instance, Iran's behavior is the most important thing in the world. There are some problems that it's better not to get involved in (*ne podtalkivat'*).

Billington: What should we be doing now? What would help?

Shmelev: . . . It's paradoxical to talk about the need for financial aid when at the same time it is Russia that is financing the rest of the world as money flows out of this country. Maybe that's problem number one for us. We do need help fighting crime, and common projects are a very good thing. It's remarkable to see them. . . . This is an important psychological moment. In the past decade, the population has come to feel deeply humiliated (*gluboko obizhenno*) about the

double standards that are applied. On the NATO question: I asked Gorbachev directly, and he confirmed that he had an oral agreement with the Germans and Americans that NATO would not expand eastward, but this wasn't put down on paper.⁹ You have to understand that for centuries this country had a siege mentality.

Billington: I understand this and have written about it myself. But what concrete steps can we take now to help?

Shmelev: Help us keep our money from flowing out of the country. All sorts of help in organizing humanitarian activities is wonderful, and joint projects also. And George Soros is wonderful—Natasha Ivanova and I will be grateful to him all our lives.

Satarov: . . . How should the U.S. spend money on helping Russia? Judge us as you would a child: we are taking our first little steps (*pervye shazhki*) in democracy. Financial credits are not the point; what we need are collaboration and cooperation (*sotrudnichestvo*). There aren't enough serious joint projects (*u nas ne khvataet ser'eznykh sovместnykh proektov*). The 20th century was the century of totalitarianism; and there may be more ahead, who knows where, maybe in France. We need to find a vaccine against it, we must make a serious study of how the bacilli enter and infect the organism. There are memoirs from the totalitarian period, letters, diaries, which, if we can trust them, could be even more useful than archives. We need the “underclothes” (*nizhnee bel'e*) from the totalitarian years, and this kind of study has already begun.

. . . **Tishkov:** At the level of policy-makers and academic experts, westerners need to stop focusing on the defeat of communism and looking at the former USSR with designs, as a *tabula rasa*, full of natural resources. There should be no more support for separatist movements, and the NATO-Russia agreement shouldn't have been signed without a statement from the U.S. on the territorial integrity (*territorial'naia tsel'nost'*) of Russia. When the president of Chechnya is received at a high level in the State Department, this is a violation of the United States' own rules about not supporting terrorism. The U.S. needs to get away from the image of Russia as having gone from being an evil empire (*imperiiia zla*) to being called a mini-empire and a criminal state. There should be support for those in the U.S. who have been studying Russia for many years, who know it well, not for the army of neophytes who show up and tend to be well-funded, who manipulate the information they get, and talk more to fringe groups than anyone else.

Friday, June 12, 1998

Session 4

On the second day of the colloquium, the participants' remarks frequently addressed more than one of the questions listed below at a time.

4. Does the concept of “national identity” have in fact historical or contemporary meaning?
5. Which other nations and cultures, or minority groups within Russia itself, are likely to influence Russia’s conception of itself in the future, and in what ways?
6. One of the ways that a nation affirms its identity is through public monuments and national holidays. Which of the Soviet statues that were taken down and the post-Soviet ones that were erected are the most significant signs of a change in values? What about Soviet and post-Soviet holidays? Was the 850th anniversary of Moscow celebrated in a meaningful way? Will the burial of Nicholas II in July 1998, and the bicentenary of Pushkin’s birth in 1999, serve as unifying events for the Russian people?

Supplementary Questions (*most of these were addressed at least briefly*)

1. Would you characterize Russia as a “Christian” nation? Do you think that the Orthodox Church, and Orthodoxy among the people, will grow stronger over the next twenty years? Will other religions exercise more influence over Russians, or will religion simply play less of a role in Russian life?
2. In Central and Eastern European countries special laws have been passed to bar some former communist-era officials from further participation in government, a process known as *lustration*. In Russia there were calls after 1985 for repentance (*pokaianie*) from certain groups—more than individuals—but in general, significant numbers of Soviet-era officials are still in office. What explains this difference? The length of time the regime was in power? A different religious tradition? A different sense of how a nation achieves justice and finds truth?
3. Which post-Stalinist writers do you think will still be read widely in 2020? Are there writers and works that you used to value that no longer seem so important?
4. The period since 1985 has been called post-totalitarian, post-communist, post-Soviet, post-imperial, post-perestroika, *mezhvremen’e* [lit. ‘between time periods’], and *bezvremen’e* [lit. ‘without time,’ but has the added meaning of a period of stagnation, non-movement, when time appears to stand still]. When do you expect Russia to arrive at a new era that can be named and judged in its own right? With a greater focus on the present, will the traditional cultural emphasis on remembering the past and making utopian schemes for the future fade?
5. Are the forces that unite the population of Russia stronger than the forces which divide them?
6. What do American specialists on Russia fail to understand about the state of the nation today, and about the direction and pace in which Russia is moving?

Billington: We have quite a few questions to cover, and they're all interesting, so each person doesn't have to speak at length to each question. The first question is: how can we characterize the present? A lot of names and slogans have been given to this period. Since you're living through it, what do you think?

Aksiuchits: There have been a number of stages (*etapy*). From 1990-92 we had a capitalism that can be characterized as *bandit* or *nomenklatura*. Then it became an *oligarchic* capitalism, linked to banking and the natural monopolies. The government [in the name of the people] must take control or officials will just do whatever they want. They've already taken so much for themselves—it's unbelievable, and yet I've seen how it happened. For example, [Rem] Vyakhryev got half of Gazprom by means of a decree that has no legality and yet was still acted upon. When Yeltsin was shown this by Nemtsov he said: "Put them in prison (*sazhat*)," but Nemtsov explained to him that if he did that, then everyone would have to be arrested. This all took place last year. It shouldn't even be called criminal capitalism, but bureaucratic capitalism. We need to achieve some level of conformity with law, some norms (*zakonomernosti*). Nemtsov is sincere in his actions, he's a friend, and in 1990 he was a member of my movement [the Christian Democratic Alliance].

We need a popular capitalism, a capitalism for the people as a whole (*narodnyi kapitalizm*), with property for the middle class, and small proprietors (*sobstvennost' dlia srednego klassa, melkie sobstvenniki*). It isn't clear yet whether Russia will continue to have oligarchic capitalism. What we need is for each owner and proprietor (*sobstvennik*) to exercise control over his property, his behavior, and his fate.

Ivanova: George Soros would agree with that analysis, that we have a predatory kind of capitalism (*grabitel'skii kapitalizm*), and that if we don't change the rules of the game, we have a very scary time ahead of us.

Parthé: You're saying that the worst is yet to come?

Tishkov: This is really a time of trouble (*smutnoe vremia*, which here has the literal meaning of 'vague, confused'). . . . This is a time of transformation, a revolution of double negatives (*revoliutsiia dvojnogo otritsaniia*): 1) a negation of the Soviet system; then, 2) a negation of the state system (*otritsanie gosudarstvennosti*) as a whole. There were other options, for instance, letting the Baltics go, then reforming the USSR, and allowing a freer type of federation. We are experiencing an identity crisis (*krizis identichnosti*), and a social crisis, and yet the period as a whole is a positive one and there has been substantial material progress.

Shmelev: . . . Democracy is a noble goal, and yet the government is the number one criminal. So shabby criminal means are being used to bring about an absolutely noble goal. The goal was the liberalization of prices, and the elimination of the deficit, and towards that end Gaidar's policies robbed the people in a way that hadn't happened to that degree since 1917. Even Stalin never allowed himself that kind of theft; his banking changes in 1947 only took 50% of people's

savings. In 1992 people were robbed of virtually all their life savings, just like in 1917. There was a law passed by parliament about compensation. It was a law, but the government didn't observe it.

We're moving too fast. Take privatization, for example. In the early 1990s, privatization amounted to either giving enterprises away or the theatrical spectacle of the voucher system, at the end of which factories wound up in the hands of their directors. Some bizarre new phrases have entered the language, for example, "I was appointed a billionaire" (*ia byl naznachen milliarderom*), and all the ways this worked were criminal. . . .

We have two bandit groups: an Afghan veterans group and the National Sports Foundation—they represent neither veterans nor athletes, and they kill each other over these [business] matters. They were granted lucrative concessions on imports, and I am sorry to say the Orthodox Church was also. This is serious money, much more than the annual budget of the entire Academy of Sciences. You know, I asked Chubais at the beginning of privatization why they were giving away the whole country, and he said that "This isn't important."

In 1995, the situation with the tariffs began to be a little awkward, and the Duma voted on liquidating these privileges, but only six people out of some 400 were willing to go on record as voting to end them. A lot of votes to keep the privileges were bought. Money has been taken from the state budget to help out the banks. There was a significant attempt to cut down on vodka sales, which have always provided a significant percentage of state income, with the result that the underworld has gotten involved in alcohol sales.

. . . **Ivanova:** We are still at a post-Soviet stage of development.

Anninsky: We've gone from being an evil empire to being an evil democracy (*ot imperiia zla do demokratii zla*).

Rubtsov: Could things have gone differently? We call what is going on a revolution, but what do we mean by "revolution"? What we have now is all extremely repulsive (*vse eto kraine otvratitel'no*). What did we want to have happen? Actually, we deserved worse. And how will it turn out? Remember what John Kennedy's father was like. Our tough guys (*krutye*), well, their children will need a civilized country where people aren't shooting at each other. We want a "normal" government, but we've never really had one, we've just gone from one criminal regime to another.

Shmelev: In 1992-93, 80% of the GNP was stolen. Now the rate is about 15%. The Bolsheviks stole about 12-13% of the GNP, so what we have now is *a normal Russian level of theft*.

Aksiuchits: Listen, there were no other *kadry* available at the time. The system could not have produced any other type of reformers. Our Bolshevik-type reformers rushed to create a new social class, and the result are the New Russians. They have children. What could happen, what are the alternatives? (1) There could be the possibility of gaining unlimited riches without any guarantee (*bespredel'noe bogatstvo bez garantii*) that you can keep it or give it to your children. Or, (2) no extraordinary level of profit (*sverkhpribyli*), but with civilized rules of the game

(*pravda bor'by i igry*), and guarantees about keeping and passing on what you earn, a more popular (*narodnyi*) kind of capitalism, and the creation of a middle class.

Shmelev: And how long will this take to come about?

Rubtsov: There was a moment when there were other possibilities, when things could have turned out differently [he uses the word 'zazor,' which participants defined as a brief, critical moment, a very small window of opportunity].

Aksiuchits: There were other models. There were ways to create a middle class without having an oligarchy first.

Ivanova: The absence of a middle class is one of our biggest problems historically. Our capitalism isn't producing anything, that's the most dangerous thing of all.

Billington: Is a middle class appearing or not?

Ivanova: A middle class is slowly growing, but the government isn't coming up with any policies to help and support this development. We are thinking about selling shares in [the journal] *Znamia*, but we don't know where this will lead—it's all very complicated. . . .

Shmelev: A well-known physicist recently joked that what we were told about Communism was false, but what was said about capitalism turned out to be true.

Anninsky: I don't understand a great deal about economics. . . ., but I understand a bit more about politics. You know, we have the Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party, but it is all the same Manilovs and Sobakeviches [characters in Gogol's novel *Dead Souls*]. When we talk about theft (*vorovstvo*), how are we to understand the concept of theft of property, when for seventy years there was no property (*ne bylo sobstvennosti*), and yet there was no uprising (*ne bylo bunta*). . . . We don't have the type of entrepreneur now that you find in Gorky's works. The attempts to have a middle class in rural areas are not working. There are those who envy the neighboring farmer if he's doing well, and as a result they set his place on fire. . . .

Parthé: Do you think that your daughter. . . believes that she is taking part in creating a different kind of society, and that she is part of something larger than herself?

Anninsky: There shouldn't be any talk of building or planning a society or creating a future; we've had too much of that in the past, and now we need just to live our daily lives. She is simply working and living in her own epoch. . . .

Tishkov: We really don't have a conceptual category for national identity (*net poniatii natsional'nogo samosoznaniia*), and we don't have a national civil society. A symbolic system is very important, but it comes into being with difficulty (*sistema simvolov trudno rozhdaetsia*). In 1991 the White House as a symbol was borrowed from America. As far as a national symbol

(*gerb*), we have a choice of either improvising, or using the Byzantine two-headed eagle, which doesn't meet our needs and doesn't correspond to the reality of Russia today (*ne dostatochno, ne sootvetstvuet real'nosti*).

Billington: What symbols and holidays do have meaning for Russians? What about today?

Ivanova: It's an absolutely artificial holiday.

Tishkov: . . . There was a debate in 1990 about whether to call the country simply Russia (*Rossiiia*) or the Russian Federation (*Rossiiskaia Federatsiia*). The problem with the former is that *Rossiiia* is associated with the center, with Moscow. You can hear people say on television and on radio "Here in Russia" (*A u nas v Rossii...*). There's *Rossiiia* plus its edges, the regions. There's a territorial identity. And there are some mutually exclusive loyalties. With our relatively weak state (*gosudarstvo*), the projection of *Rossiiia* as the center—as against the regions thinking about autonomy—is a serious matter. . . .

Ivanova: What's been lost is the concept, the identity of being Soviet (*utracheno poniatie, identichnost' sovetskogo cheloveka*). It's left a vacuum. The derogatory term *sovok* (a person who continues to affect Soviet-era official mannerisms) that you hear is a sign of an inferiority complex. No one talks about being a citizen of Russia (*rossiiianin*). Patriotism is in the hands of the ultra-nationalists and fascists—the intelligentsia doesn't have a vocabulary to talk about patriotism. How do the millions [of Russians] who now live outside the country in places like Latvia and Kazakhstan. . . . relate to Russia? The whole terminology is changing for how to discuss these questions.

Parthé: And if some of these former republics, the Baltics first of all, join NATO, will that make the situation for Russians living there better or worse?

Ivanova: It will be worse.

Anninsky: Yes, much worse. The Russian intelligentsia shouted about freedom, but they didn't think about what that might mean to people in the Baltics. *Rus'* [the first East Slavic state] is something inclusive ..., a universal term that is now being turned into something ethnic.

Ivanova: Chechnya is small, but it has a strong identity, and it is fighting against a large country with a confused identity. We wind up with "I am a Russian—that means I must repent" (*ia russkii—nado kaiat'sia*).

Anninsky: A super-idea (*sverkh-ideia*) no longer works. As far as flags go, the tri-color flag was a commercial symbol in the past. There was another imperial flag, and the two-headed eagle that looks both East and West came from the Byzantine emperor. We need our own flag.

Aksiuchits: The Russian state (*rossiiskoe gosudarstvo*) was created by the Russian people for the sake of many different groups and religions. There is no other base for the rebirth of Russian

national identity. We need a government for the people of *Rossiiia*. Utopian ideas are artificial and wreak havoc on reality (*razrushaet real'nost'*). A *Belorussian* people is a fiction. And the *Ukrainian* people and their language—all this was declared to be a separate entity after 1917. I am Belorussian, I was born in a poor Belorussian village, but Russian identity is the only one I could have. There has been an artificial division of *Rossiiia* into three parts. Russian national identity will be found in uniting a strong central government with either positive or negative forms of nationalism. Our identity will emerge in a large confederation.

. . . **Billington:** When we talk about “Russian identity,” are we talking about an ethnic group, a language, or a kind of spirituality?

Tishkov: We’re in a transitional period from the ethno-nationalism that was part of Soviet doctrine to a liberal civic nationalism. The internal passport says “Russian” but there have been complaints about that designation, *rossiianin*. As for the question of rituals (*ritualy*) and holidays, there are traditional ones from the religious tradition, both Russian Orthodox and non-Russian Orthodox, like Easter, Christmas—which is celebrated after January 1—and they were preserved. Some of the old holidays have been renamed and reclassified, like November 7-8, which is now the Day of Reconciliation and Accord (*den' primireniia i soglasiia*), and May 1, which is now the Day of Peace and Labor (*den' mira i truda*). Some dates are related to important historical events and myths, like May 8-9. Today, June 12, Independence Day (*den' nezavisimosti*), is in imitation of the American holiday. . . . Then there are the monuments and the process of renaming (*pereimenovanie*) cities, streets. . . . The past is eliminated, cast out.

Billington: Does the concept of *sobornost'* (spiritual collectivity) have any meaning now?

Anninsky: In the West you have the idea of *korporativnost'* (corporate identity).

Tishkov: *Sobornost'* is more personal, more local, but it doesn't mean a whole lot now.

Billington: Would you characterize Russia as an Orthodox country?

Tishkov: It's an atheistic country. Daghestan is the most religious place. Everything depends on whether the Russian Orthodox church reforms itself and is able to nurture parish life. And for that to happen, they have to make a greater effort with young people, to attract them to parishes, and they need to simplify the liturgy.

Ivanova: There are formal and informal kinds of religiosity. At the informal level, Christian culture is part of our consciousness, or subconsciousness. . . . The Orthodox church doesn't have the influence it could have had, but there is the question of ties with the KGB and the government. But there's a new generation, and the new clergy are better educated, and they can create a different context.

Aksiuchits: Changes in religion will be more substantial in the next century. . . . Religiosity is growing, as you can see from the number of active churches, monasteries, and church-related

communities (*votserkovlennye obshchiny*). We see people who are believers, but not yet formally part of the church. Then there are the many other sects. And we see a genuine Russian Orthodox interest in the intelligentsia and among the reading public, the beginnings of belief. The Russian Orthodox church has not fulfilled its missionary role—it was to be a preaching and missionary church. Government atheism destroyed people, leaders, the system. The church was weakened by repression. Baptists sent help [to their people here], but not the Orthodox who live abroad. There is a lot of proselytism by other groups, but not by Russian Orthodoxy. . . . Other Christian churches seem to be taking advantage of the weakness of Russian Orthodoxy, instead of helping the church get back on its feet.

. . . **Billington:** What about the lustration laws in Eastern Europe, which you don't find in Russia?

Shmelev: Repentance (*pokaianie*) is spiritual, moral, personal, and it is a process, not just one act (*dukhovnoe, moral'noe, lichnoe, i protsess, ne odin akt*). Even Germany wasn't able to do it completely. Lustration would be really stupid, since one in ten people were in the Party, and one in ten or fifteen was working with the *organy* (organs of state security).

Aksiuchits: . . . In the Baltics, repentance is what Russians are expected to do.

Tishkov: Why of all the fifteen republics should Russia be the only one to apologize? The Baltics haven't apologized to the Jews. There are various elements to repentance. There have been acts passed that express regret for and annul deportations, that rehabilitate and offer compensation for victims of political repression; there is a memorial plaque on Kropotkinskaia Street to the Anti-Fascist Committee and to [Solomon] Mikhoels.

Billington: Will there be a Russian variant of capitalism and democracy, and what will the principal differences be?

Anninsky: There will be a very clever (*lukavyi*) variant.

Billington: I've been thinking about this a lot for the television series and book I just finished. There has been a three-step process in the past: (1) imitation of foreign models, as in Kievan art; (2) then the stage where you see originality, suddenly there is Rublev; (3) then the tradition is demolished. That's what happened in the mid-17th century, when the naturalistic approach to painting began to appear. More recently Gaidar, for instance, was for a rapid repetition of Western models. In music, something Russian began to appear in the 1860s. Verdi was invited to St. Petersburg and wrote *La Forza del Destino*, and Wagner came, and then you have the Mighty Five [the Russian composers Cui, Balakirev, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Musorgsky].

Rubtsov: Capitalism and democracy will have the special characteristics of the people of each country. What will it be like here? How will it form? In 1991, it was more like the West. There was talk of simply copying, but in the early 1990s there was hunger, and there had to be

variations. It only seems like we are copying the West, but there is less of a move to capitalism than there was in tsarist Russia. The Soviet influence is still great. There has been a lot of change in the center and some of the regions, but it has to get out to the rest of the country.

Billington: Would you like a Russian version? The phrase popular capitalism (*narodnyi kapitalizm*) was used here.

Rubtsov: You know we can't use words ending in *-ism* publicly. The people don't want to hear about any more *-isms*.

Shmelev: We can use *-shchina* [a suffix that denotes a trend more than an organized movement].

Billington: What is it that American experts don't understand?

Rubtsov: They were not able to see everything falling apart.

Anninsky: They don't see that there is more socialism [in the sense of social safety nets] in the U.S. than here. You are trying to use logic with us, but we don't use logic on ourselves. We ourselves don't understand what's going on. We're just acting instinctively.

Ivanova: U.S. Slavists have such a narrow focus. They pay lots of attention to writers like Prigov, Sorokin, Pelevin, whom no one is reading here. We call it Literature for Slavists. . . . Many lines of Russian culture aren't seen in the West.

Shmelev: Very little is understood about economics. The Western specialists, the super-theoreticians, put the patient on the operating table and started operating, and it turned out there was a different kind of anatomy, and we didn't know what was happening to us.

Aksiuchits: What interests are Americans coming here with?

At this point, Grigory Yavlinsky arrives, explaining that he was delayed by the investigation into the murder of a Yabloko party activist in Ingushetia, but that he didn't want to miss what was clearly going to be an unusual gathering. Because of the late hour, he is given the floor.

Yavlinsky: The question concerns the Russian variants of democracy and capitalism. What is taking shape here (*chto u nas skladyvaetsia*)? Isn't it a semi-criminal, monopolistic, oligarchic system (*polukriminal'naia, oligarkhicheskaia, korporativnaia sistema*)? It's incestuous, and not much better than what there was before. It's like Indonesia, where Suharto killed off the Communist Party and established a crony capitalism that's been around for thirty years. The shadow economy here amounts to 40% of the GNP. The other 60% can be shown. There's no separation between business, money, and power, and between them and the means of mass information. Everything is in the same hands, like the old Soviet monopolies.

In what direction are things going? There have been many positive developments, a lot of self-organization (*samoorganizatsiia*) in society, and self-management (*samoupravlenie*) going

on a low level. The first step is to neither offer nor accept bribes. The first political parties are appearing. Children have wider horizons and possibilities and a different set of values. There are two elements to the struggle that is going on now, a criminal tradition that is a thousand years old, and the new directions in which we are moving. Will Russia be preserved as a distinct kind of identity (*sokhranitsia li Rossiia kak samosoznanie*)?

My constituents ask me whether things will get better. Have we really changed the paradigms? There is a paternalistic habit that was strengthened during the Soviet period. In 1990 we kept these paradigms. We voted in different leaders, but we wanted to know what they would do for the people. In our thinking process we are pessimists, but in the way we act freely we are optimists (*pessimizm mysli, optimizm voli*). I am tempted to use the English phrase “Just do it!” to help them get moving.

Russia could break apart, just like the Soviet Union, but in a more dangerous way. So what will the Russian variant be? I am reminded of the fairy tale where a knight comes up to a boulder on which are written three different directions. If you go to the left, you lose your head, if you go to the middle or to the right, other things will happen because there are dangers in each direction. But before Russia can choose one of three directions we need to learn how to walk. It's early to talk about what variants [of democracy and capitalism] we will have. We need to focus on fundamentals and take small steps. What can you do with bricks? You can make them into an old Russian palace, or the Cologne Cathedral. There will be a Russian variant; we just don't know yet what it will be. We don't have to be Bolsheviks. Chubais looks at the goals as everything and thinks the means aren't important. But Russia will not accept that kind of reform. The Russian government asks the IMF what we must do to get the money, but that is the wrong process.

America has exhibited contradictory behavior towards Russia. It has not acted with complete sincerity and at times has deceived us. America says that Russian reforms, the development of democracy, and the election of a president are all fine, and turns around and expands NATO on the excuse that there needs to be a strong hand in the world. This is contradictory. Don't give us advice and don't give us money. We are doing a lot of investing outside of Russia. And it is a bad idea for Russian politics to become an issue in the U.S. presidential campaign. Russia has its own ideas. The U.S. needs to understand that it should not give advice that America itself wouldn't follow. So first there is support for Yeltsin, and now highly-placed officials meet with Lebed'. There is too much of a focus on one person at a time. The American officials need to meet with a wider range of people.

Billington: There have been quite a few exchanges involving Russians coming to the United States and Americans going to Russia to work on joint projects. Some people think that substantial U.S. help to Siberia is a good idea, and I myself have suggested this when I speak to groups of businessmen, as I did recently in Texas. What would you like to see happen?

Yavlinsky: I think we should proceed gradually. You need a president who understands what's going on and doesn't make Russian policy part of U.S. politics. Clinton tries to reassure us that NATO rockets will not be aimed at us. I understand that there is a gap between what people in the U.S. feel towards Russia, and how U.S. politicians act. (1) There needs to be a new U.S. president and a new set of people creating policy, and these advisors and policy-makers need to

talk to Shmelev and others. (2) There must be a change in strategy. Before 1990, representatives of the U.S. talked to a wide range of Russians. [Jack] Matlock's embassy was like a club and everyone was invited, and Russians of very different opinions were seated next to each other purposely. These kinds of channels closed down in 1991, and the U.S. began to focus on just a few people—Yeltsin, Gaidar, Kozyrev—as if Russia were like Switzerland or Germany, where a couple of people can be said to represent the nation for the most part. They are developed societies. We need 20-50 years before we will have a president who is really representative, before there is a national identity that could be represented by one, two, or three people in the government. In the meantime, the U.S. should talk to a wide range of people at lower levels as well. Talk to Lebed' by all means, but not as a leading contender for the presidency.

Parthé: It's clear that the NATO question is very important for Russia, and that most U.S. experts on Russia don't favor expansion either. But in a sense, the reason that expansion may have passed through Congress so easily is precisely because it isn't seen as being such a big deal, or as a way of deliberately provoking Russia.

Yavlinsky: Symbols count for the East and the West, but they count differently for each side. The U.S. must be more honest with us about why NATO is being expanded. When Russia becomes less stable, then you'll understand. Mrs. Albright talks about NATO tanks as if they are really friendly things. And I talk to my constituents about these friendly, rose-colored, flower-strewn tanks, but if there is one thing a Russian understands, it's a tank aimed at our country. What is needed is a pragmatic, straightforward, anti-ideological approach. The U.S. should send the message: we will not deal with crony capitalism—as Camdessus has said [about the IMF] to the Russian-American Business Council—or with the semi-criminal aspects of the system. Help us figure out how to fight the robber barons. Yes, you had robber barons at one point in your history, but they invested in America, while ours invest outside of Russia. We need to develop anti-trust laws. We need to develop a capitalism that isn't just for the benefit of a narrow group of people with limited interests.

Lunch and Concluding Discussion

It wasn't possible to capture the entire lunchtime discussion, but Yavlinsky continued to be the dominant figure and his comments are summarized below.

Yavlinsky: How can we characterize this stage? It might be (1) the conclusion of the period when the former ways came to an end, or (2) the beginning of new things, or (3) the end of the new developments, or (4) the beginning of the end for the old ways (*konets kontsa, nachalo nachala, konets nachala, ili nachalo kontsa*).¹⁰

We have Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and they're all different, but they are all part of Russian identity (*russkoe samosoznanie*). It's not just one thing, but includes the territory, the government, and culture.

I don't know if there is a particularly Russian path (*osobyi russkii put'*) to the future. There are things that are common to all people, like human rights. There are things that we need to do the way they are done in Europe.

Let's take today, Independence Day. The rubles that were spent promoting this holiday could have served more practical needs. I grew up in this country, and I would like to know: who are we now independent from? We were already independent. We need to attend to simpler matters, to help people do what they need to do. We have to make mass information more effective and more competent.

When Russia can explain itself to itself, then we will be making progress. It's too soon for there to be a clear Russian identity. We have a Politburo identity and a criminal identity in government and society. And we had a velvet revolution, which kept us from really examining ourselves. The president who is behind the burial of the tsar is the same person who once ordered the house where they were killed in Yekaterinburg to be demolished.

Dr. Billington is a person who has seriously followed developments in Russia and has supported Russians. Americans and Russians have to understand each other before one side can offer help to the other. Russia has its own (*sobstvennyye*) interests, and in the world today there are no permanent (*postoiannyye*) enemies and friends. We are the largest country [in the world] in terms of territory. We have a lot of problems—the suicide of the head of a nuclear research facility is indicative, and there are ecological problems, and the question of nuclear weapons.

The romantic period in the relationship between the U.S.A. and Russia is over. Europe doesn't understand us either. Our histories are different, but we are part of a single civilization. Yes, you have a foreign policy person [Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott] who turns out to be a specialist on Tiutchev [a highly-regarded, nationalistic, 19th century poet], but we have Tiutchev himself. You know, when people start talking about a special path for Russia, that's actually a good sign. When you love something, it becomes special.

THE SECOND COLLOQUIUM

The American Center, Tomsk, Russia

Thursday, November 5, 1998

Opening Session

Dr. Billington welcomed participants to the second colloquium on the topic of Russian national identity in the 21st century. In describing his ongoing work on this topic, he referred to his three-part public television series “The Face of Russia” and his book of the same name, and the conferences he organized on this question in Washington in October 1996 and March 1997), and in Istra in June 1998. Dr. Billington then introduced Dr. John Brown, the Cultural Attaché at the American Embassy in Moscow.

John Brown began by saying that he had just arrived in Russia after an absence of 25 years. Looking back on his experience as a graduate student in Leningrad, it was no small measure of the many positive changes that had taken place in this country that a representative of the American Embassy could openly take part in a discussion about Russia, in Russia, and with Russians. The difficult economic situation was occupying the country’s attention, but at a time of major historical change in Russia, questions about national identity were of tremendous significance.

Dr. Billington was my adviser at Princeton University, where I wrote my dissertation under his direction. . . . *The Icon and The Axe*, his magisterial book, is one of the works that introduced me to Russian culture One of his greatest merits as a scholar is that he has been able to communicate to audiences larger than just academic groups. By speaking with him and Dr. Parthé, therefore, you will be exchanging views with interlocutors who in the near future will pass your thoughts and opinions on to a broad spectrum of Americans eager to find out more about Russia. By speaking with them, you will in many ways be speaking to the American people. This fact, I believe, gives added importance to a conference that is already dealing with an important topic.

Dr. Billington explained the format for the two-day symposium. After brief and direct answers to the question guiding each session, there would be ample time to broaden the discussion. There would also be a general discussion to determine where there is complete agreement, and where opinions are diametrically opposed to one another.

Russia in 2020: Predictions

1. What do you think Russia will be like in 2020? How will the country differ from Russia today—geographically, politically, economically, and in the area of culture—and what will the main differences be?

Vladimir Alekseev: . . . This is a very Gogolian question. We all remember what Gogol said: “Russia, where are you headed? . . . everything is rushing by.”¹¹ I will try to answer that question, because it is one that we always face, since we are forever being carried off in one direction or another. I see on the surface two possible directions as we approach the year 2020. . .

At present there are two factors at work: (1) those political forces that are directed more towards the Communist past, and (2) the new democratic tendency. . . . As we look more deeply they have a great resemblance, despite all the differences in their economic and political declarations. Each of them seems to make only a minimal effort to take into consideration the facts of our past, our historical and cultural experience. The October Revolution carried off not just the social and economic structures; it caused a temporary break (*proryv*) in the consciousness of the Russian people which was brought about (*obuslovlén*) by a complete rejection of all the traditions that had been worked out over a thousand years of Russia’s development. This is very easy to illustrate: just think of the first decrees of the new government in 1917 when they repudiated the obligations of the previous government, and when they abolished all the former institutions and annulled the entire legal system. Changes on this scale cannot be brought about violently, in an instant. It has to be the result of a lengthy process. But this has been our history: a series of changes, each forcibly introduced, and each new one rejecting past structures. . . .

The contemporary democratic variant also asks that we forget a great many of our cultural values and much of our historical experience. If the people bringing about all these changes in our country had even minimally taken into account our past experience, then I am sure that the things we were striving for could have taken a different form, proceeded at a different pace and in a more civilized fashion, and could have come about less painfully.

Billington: And what would your prediction be?

Alekseev: . . . I believe that we will find and follow a third path of development (*tretii put’*). This term means different things to different people and has no set definition, but today’s *realia* dictate the need for this third path. Many of the molds and patterns we are using on the way to democratization and greater stability just repeat what is done in the West, which may not be possible here.

Leonid Yanovich: I agree about the importance of looking at our historiography and culture, and working to restore knowledge of our past. This has been the primary goal of my publishing house since it was founded in Akademgorodok in 1991.¹² In the near future, I see two tendencies dominating a significant part of consciousness as they do today: (1) the geopolitical emphasis, focusing on the dissolution of the imperial state (*imperskaia derzhava*) and the trouble this will cause for Russia, and (2) the attempts, especially by representatives in the Duma, to try to bring about some kind of union that includes Belarus’, Serbia, and parts of Russia, including Siberia. One of the reasons for the present crisis is that national consciousness (*obshchestvennoe soznanie*) is still caught up in the old ways and has not recognized its past, has not come up with a new set of stereotypes, and has not recognized the new political culture, by which I mean the

relationship of human beings to state power. This unreconstructed national consciousness is transforming the principles and ideas that are being applied to the economy.

. . . The democratic political alternative has never been properly formulated and incorporated into the government, and now we are suffering from a shortage of genuine leaders (*iavnyi defitsit liderov*). . . . I agree that we do not need to acquire European values or policies; rather, we need to find another path. There are two cultural tendencies, and it is not yet clear which one will predominate: a gradual move towards a liberal, European, rational democratization, or a move towards a country that is imperial (*derzhavnaia*) and despotic. These tendencies are both present in Russia today to one degree or another and they can determine Russia's fate. That's how I see Russia's future. There is an important role for the intelligentsia to play by studying this. I am trying to do my part by working on the publication of declassified (*rassekrechennye*) sources. . . .

Our reformers simply announced things—nothing was explained to the people, including the agreement in December 1991 to dissolve the USSR. There was a policy of silence (*politika molchaniia*). The question of the space that Russia occupies is a question of governance (*vopros prostranstva—pravovoi vopros*). The intelligentsia needs to raise its voice. There are changes in national consciousness going on, and this would become clearer if the values we had ten years ago were to be restored.

Mikhail Kaluzhskii: We are using old terms to discuss new phenomena. What do we mean by the intelligentsia today? We talk about the reformers, but were there really any reforms? What were the values ten years ago and who held them? The people as a whole? We have to get our terminology straight before we can talk about 2020, about the future. Terms like *zapadniki* (Westernizers) and *gosudarstvenniki* (adherents of a strongly centralized state) preserve the tendency to identify oneself not with society but with the government. When we are talking about and planning for the year 2020, we need to remember that while politics unfortunately still determines too much in our lives, it is not the only thing people are thinking about. There are other important social and cultural phenomena, and the government is becoming increasingly distant from private life and the life of society.

Aleksandr Kazarkin: When considering the future, the important issue is regionalism (*regionalizm, oblastnichestvo*) and possible disintegration, and whether, as Lev Gumilev asked, there is enough energy—and a reason—to keep the empire going, whether that comes from Orthodox ideology, or a resurgent Communist party. There is a little-noticed tendency towards regional unification, that is, unification of the new cultural and economic centers, the ones that are more promising, that will lead to a confederation. It will be a powerful force, and any attempt at a restoration of centralized communist power would be short-lived and tragicomic. That path functions as a negative alternative, the way we do not want to go. There is a strong and genuine Siberian regional identity (*sibirskoe pochvennoe oblastnichestvo*). We foresee possible Chinese expansion into Siberian lands (*prostory*) that they see as empty spaces, as wilderness (*pustyni*) and we wonder whether the Americans would help us to keep this from happening.

The rebirth of Russia—you have to be careful when you use that word, because there cannot be any re-birth. Just like Tatar Muscovy could not be the same as Kievan Rus, post-Petrine Russia could not be just like pre-Petrine Muscovy, so post-Soviet Russia cannot be like

pre-Soviet Russia—it's moved even further away. Moscow is at present the conduit (*provodnik*) of Western economic principles, but will oppose a Western cultural influence. We have resources, and we will be more independent and self-reliant, and there will be a new variant of Russian culture. Siberia has always distanced itself from the West and will continue to do so in the future. It will do what Japan did, taking the most appropriate ideas from Western economics while also preserving its own culture.

Father Leonid Kharaim: The revolutionary, critical (*perelomnye*) moments in our history were: the acceptance of Christianity, the time of Peter I's reforms, the events of 1917, and what we might call provisionally the move away from socialism towards democracy in recent years. To a significant degree there was a change in both the philosophical and cultural foundations of the very idea of the nation, but we only started talking about this after it had happened. So we are attempting, after the fact, to understand the basis of this change, which makes it very hard to plan for the future. But since it is now possible to talk more openly, we can discuss the two major influences there are at present: the first comes from the commercial or business sector and from those researchers who study economic questions; and the second could be called the humanitarian-intelligentsia influence. Although the term intelligentsia isn't adequately defined at present, it is that influence which is based in the traditions of Russian culture, philosophy, and the Russian Idea, and it is not yet possible to predict which one of these will prevail. But political ideas will not influence the people, since our politics is seen as having little to do with Russian national identity—it is applied (*prikladnoe*) rather than basic.

Nikolai Rozov: . . . When looking ahead to 2020, we have to talk about processes, laws, and conditions which depend on what's going on in the outside world, as well as what depends on the government, and on us. There are a number of alternatives and possible scenarios for the future.

1. The null hypotheses, i.e., the most probable case, not requiring extensive proof—this means we will continue as we are, with no major changes, as Russia becomes more and more marginalized (*periferizatsiia*). This can go on for quite a long time—maybe there will be a change in political forces and the Communist Party will come to power. We will still have our natural resources. . . .but the supplies are not unlimited and infrastructure problems make it hard to use the resources of Eastern Siberia. We could be in a half-criminal situation, with the possibility of a break (*lomka*) in the identity and integrity (*tsel'nost'*) of Russia. There could be an economic and demographic rupture (*razryv*). . . . Right now the [Russo-Chinese] border is stable, and China's interest is focused on the lands to its south, where the United States and Japan have interests as well. Russia will have to either move people into the underpopulated areas of the Federation or the Chinese will.

2. Restoration and rebirth—there could be a move backwards (*brosok nazad*) towards an empire and a strongly centralized state structure, reflecting the wish to once again be a military power that everyone fears. We have successfully carried out military expansion for 500 years, and no one has threatened us from the North or East. We suffered territorial losses in 1854-6 and 1904-5. After 1945, our empire—that is, where our troops were located—stretched all the way to Berlin. A new move towards an empire would not be successful, given that we are surrounded by countries that we cannot count on as friends, and any such attempt would lead to territorial disintegration.

3. Russia could choose to adopt a strategy that was adequate for the purpose of uniting the population.

It's absurd to think that our stores are selling butter from Belgium. What we really need to do is get the technology from Belgium to produce better products ourselves. We need to find and follow a third way. . . .

Nelli Krechetova: It is easier to take a longer view, to go beyond 2020, because all these changes take time. Our traditions were disrupted—we have no traditions, including in the sphere of Russian Orthodoxy. And we haven't experienced the kind of regionalization that would lead to a true confederation. . . . There are no meaningful values reflected in the support for regionalism. The center is weak and what we are seeing is more **anti-center** than **pro-region**. . . . And there will be no restoration of either the empire or the Communist Party's role. What is really going on? . . . There has been a break in the system of values (*razlom tsennostei*) and a move towards a liberalization of Russian values. It's as if we are in a swamp, and it feels sticky and heavy. But if we are depressed, it is still a positive kind of depression, because little by little we are moving ahead.

Andrei Sagalaev: How can we understand the dynamics of such a complex system and predict further developments? There will definitely be a bifurcation (*bifurkatsiia, razvilka*) and it may split into two or three or more parts. We can describe national identity before it breaks up, but at the moment of the split, chance factors play a major role, so it would be very risky to talk about what directions national identity will take after that. . . . It would be very desirable to have in 2020 some kind of functioning national system shaped by (*pod upravleniem*) our national identity. When we use the word *upravlenie* ((direction, authority) we associate it with an *administrator* who sits in his office and sends out senseless directives, but what I have in mind has more to do with the way evolutionary biologists describe the transition from one stage of development to the next, where the dominant characteristics change.

We don't have one national consciousness, we have multiple ones: one for the Russian Federation, and then local ones, for example, Siberians, and Tatars in the Tomsk Republic. We have to examine the content and structure of national identity to see which values are stable (*ustoichivye*) and which are movable (*mobil'nye*). There are binary oppositions, like the ones examined in *The Icon and the Axe*, that help us understand the Russian *mentalitet*. Our job (*zadacha*), our project—however utopian it may sound—is to analyze these components and think about how the system will look in the year 2020.

Viktor Muchnik: You know, it's going to be very hard for us to talk about these things because among the other crises we face, there is a language crisis. It's a little awkward—the words are not adequate to the *realia* we face. We say 'reformers,' 'counter-reformers,' 'Communists,' 'empire,' 'a third way'—is there a fifth and sixth way?—'the Russian idea' that has been such a popular term in our history, and the 'yellow terror' (*zheltaia opasnost'*). We talk about China and we predict that in a certain number of years—ten, twenty, thirty—they will violate our borders and take over our land. My warning concerns how we use certain terms—we speak so boldly, with such conviction. Perhaps we are not predicting but communicating our fears, in which case we need to do this intelligently, like well-educated people (*intelligentno, obrazovano*) and not

just blurt it out (*progovaryvat'sia*). Then we can all judge how serious these fears are. Our reality is very distinct (*svoeobrazna*), and we need to be careful in the terms we use and what kind of prognosis we make. . . . When we use concepts carelessly, aggressively, they can get away from us and start living their own separate existence and go in directions we hadn't expected. When we say that Russian identity has to be formed and shaped (*russskoe samosoznanie nado formirovat'*), the way the government has talked about it these past few years . . . , we see how it can turn into some mix of the military, the bureaucratic, and the Orthodox—in a distorted form.

. . . **Alekseev:** A given term can always have two different meanings. Let's use the terminology that would be acceptable in the mass media, in a newspaper.

Sagalaev: I don't agree that our traditions were disrupted (*prervany*). Russia is a very traditional country, that is our strength and our weakness. There wasn't any rupture, there was some kind of a stoppage (*ostanovka*) so that later there could be a return to those traditions. One can hardly say in any serious way that in 1917 Russia became Communist, and then in 1991 it became Orthodox again. And I have to disagree with other speakers who say that there is a binary foundation to the Russian *mentalitet*. It's actually a ternary system. If it's a binary system then we have to be either Orthodox or Communist. Russian culture is always in motion but it has evolved according to already determined components. Because we have always been a traditional society that changes slowly, it is possible to look ahead 20 or 30 years and see that the new things that have been added to the mix these past years are going to be around for a while, that's what's sad. Something's brewing (*chto-to varitsia*) but it isn't exactly clear what.

. . . In Russia now we are groping about trying to see what direction development should take (*nashchupivanie vektora razvitiia*), while the West comes up with commonsense solutions for us. Maybe the solution we need is not self-evident, not trite (*banal'noe*), one which in the West may seem completely crazy (*sovershenno dikovato*). I honestly don't see any straightforward solution at the moment—not on the geopolitical level, not for the Siberian region. There is Russia the empire or federation, and Russia the society. There is the official ideology, economy, and politics, and there is a lot that is unofficial, in the shadows (*tenevoe*), that goes on living its own life—the people's (*narodnaia*) ideology, economy, and culture—and this isn't any less of a factor now than it was under Nicholas II, or under the Soviet leaders. There is the playing out of all these forces, and the people will have to decide for themselves. We have to keep that in mind when we think of what it might be like in 2020. We need to understand what we would like to have happen, what role Russianness (*russskost'*) will play in the search for a religious, ethnic, regional, and political identity—this isn't a cosmos where all lines intersect. It is important that at the end of the 20th century, 'Russian' not come to signify simply 'Russian Orthodox'—that would be a step backwards. A person amounts to more than Russian Orthodoxy or Buddhism. We haven't gotten to the specifically Siberian questions yet, but I want to mention that what is interesting about Siberia is that we still have a frontier, like America used to have, an open political, economic, and cultural border between Russians and native peoples. How that relationship develops will have a lot to do with the future of the place. Up till now there has been no line drawn (*razmezhevanie*) between the two groups, unlike the United States.

Eleonora Lvova: What Andrei Markovich [Sagalaev] says about the regional structure of Siberia could be said about the country as a whole. Russia is a multi-national country. . . . Over the course of 500 years there was an expansion of the lands occupied by the Russian people through warfare or the simple adding of new territory. Now we are in a different situation and talk about gathering our people together from other lands—UNESCO now refers to us as one of the national groups that has been split up (*k chislu. . . raskolotykh natsii*). Ethnic Russians are now the absolute majority in the country, whereas before 1991 Russians made up barely 50% of the population. Given this, it is natural to ask what fundamental ideas are held collectively by this ethnic group which has lived for so long in a multi-national setting. Despite different ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds, the entire Russian (*rossiiskoe*) population can unite at least around one cultural idea, one unifying force. . . .the idea of suffering. Because it is around the idea of the suffering we have gone through, as Father Leonid rightly said, that one can construct the entire history (*istoriosofiia*) of Russia. There is a poem that refers to Peter the Great as the first Bolshevik; our entire contemporary history is structured around the suffering we have overcome.

We tend to talk about the question “What is Russia?” from the point of view of our generation, who will be of a pretty advanced age twenty years from now. We really need to direct this question to those who will be working at the peak of their strength—the 20 and 30 year olds. In my seminar I try to cover this question with my young students: what do the future and the present look like to them? And while they have different perceptions of the present, they all sense the tragic nature of Russia’s historical path. There doesn’t seem to be any way to answer the question: what will Russia be like in 2020? One shouldn’t make any predictions because everything is happening now—it’s as if it is all taking place in a dark tunnel. We don’t know what combination of factors and forces—rational and irrational—will affect the latest of Russia’s regularly occurring tragic situations. There can be results that are completely unexpected, quite irrational. . . .

Olga Rychkova: I can talk about the consciousness of the younger generation, my generation, the ones who are between 25 and 40 now. . . . The government is seen by the majority as being distant and hostile, and not behaving very honestly. They are afraid of being deceived, and the feeling is that we have only ourselves to rely on. In fact we really don’t even see ourselves as a generation, and the only thing uniting us is our language. When I look at the fate of Russia—maybe it won’t happen by the year 2020—I’m afraid that if history moves in spirals, then we may return more or less to the disintegration of Kievan Rus when people retreated into separate principalities (*udel’nye kniazhestva*), what we now call regions, and Siberia could be a separate entity. . . . The consciousness or identity of the younger members of this group has little to do with nationality and a lot to do with computers. They have cut themselves off from this world since their childhood and live in a virtual reality, and it is difficult to say how they will act in light of all the changes. I am afraid that about most things they are rather indifferent.

Russia today: Unifying Forces

2. What common memories, values, and goals unite the Russian people? Are the forces that unite the population of Russia stronger than the forces which divide them?

Lvova: What we have now are negative values: a profound estrangement (*global'noe otchuzhdenie*) from the government, an absolute, internalized lack of trust (*vnutrennee absolutnoe nedoverie*) in everything that the government says and does.

Father Leonid: What I said earlier didn't apply just to religion, but to the special qualities of the Russian character as a whole. Suffering isn't just a negative value, because we can learn from suffering. It always makes a person spiritually rich, because suffering brings out the desire to share with others, the desire to endure these things together. . . .

Billington: And what will result from the fact that Russians have suffered so much?

Father Leonid: It isn't that we have suffered so much, but that when you look at our history as a whole, it is the constant suffering that has kept us on a steady course, and has kept us from perishing spiritually. . . . Russian civilization—maybe no longer called an empire, but a multinational society (*soobshchestvo*) imbued with Russian values—has always oriented itself around compassion (*sostradanie*) for those who suffer. If you look to the very beginning of our history as a state, you see the story of Boris and Gleb¹³—compassion for them helped the Russian people raise themselves up and strengthen their government as well. . . . Suffering actually kept this society from dying out (*k neumiraniyu*) during the Soviet period and, for all its horrors, what we experienced between 1941 and 1945 bound us together, allowed us to feel forgiveness for all that had happened to us, and strengthened us for all the years that followed. Suffering is one of the values and moving forces in our society.

Alekseev: . . . The key is not *what* we must remember, but *that* we must remember in order to avoid another break in generational continuity, a break in our way of thinking (*razryv v sisteme razmyshleniia*), a break in knowing our identity . . . , all those things that influence culture, broadly defined. When we talk about the phenomenon we call culture, we have in mind the fundamentals (*osnovy*) that we have lost. We live in the atmosphere of a culture not entirely our own (*v nesvoistvennoi nam kul'ture*), a culture on a more democratic plan, which over all the world lowers itself to the point where it merges more easily into society. This is quite a change from the past, where high culture was the achievement of a much smaller segment of society—it was more clearly defined, more individualistic, better-suited to its purpose. The process of disunification (*protsess raz'edinitel'nyi*) so strongly felt in our time is due to the cultural break between past and present that has taken place. It is difficult to say when this happened, maybe it was 1917, maybe earlier.

Father Leonid: There is a real predictability about generational continuity and change—things change as we grow older. We really weren't so different from these young people when we were their age.

Rozov: Here's how I would describe the social groups in Russia today: there are depressed potato buyers (19%), immobile villagers (16%), potato growers (26.5%), the lost generation

(12%), the home improvers (10%), white collar workers (6.7%), young Russians (5.7%), and elite groups that I call the Manhattans (3.9%), and all of these groups have their own values. The research that has been done on them is very weak in terms of theory.

In their Orthodox-centered world, peasants used to judge actions by the government against the standard of a just cause (*delo pravoe*). Before the Revolution, the tsarist government definitely embodied a set of values. Placing a value on suffering is a tricky thing. It was useful to the government to have a very patient, long-suffering people, and in World War II, the military was able to throw soldiers into battle in such great numbers that we won. What we see now is a cross-roads (*perekrestok*) of world values, rather than one set of values for the entire population.

Yanovich: . . . One thing that is clear is that the myth of the state has been preserved.

Billington: The state is still seen as the source of direction, but its opposite, private life, is becoming more important. As for people who believe in a strong state and a strong leader (*derzhavniki i gosudarstvenniki*), these terms both appear to be fairly new.

. . . **Kaluzhskii:** I don't really want to use the term generation, because people aren't really identifying themselves as belonging to a particular generation, with its own set of values—they aren't really experiencing things that way. What is important now is how people see themselves vis-à-vis the government, and where they see themselves in terms of our economic reality. There is now what we might call a private believer in a strong central government (*chastnyi gosudarstvennik*). . . . Basically, it amounts to a belief that the government should be left to fulfill *its* functions, while individuals take care of *their* business. . . . You will not find many thirty-year-olds working for the government, just older people who have worked for the state all their lives. Younger people are much more likely to be working in the private sector. The events of mid-1998 strengthened this process, both the value given private life, and the feeling of distance from the government.

Billington: Let's turn now to the question of your dreams and visions of the future.

Russia in 2020: Ideal Visions

3. What kind of Russia would you like to see in 2020? What must be done, what must be changed, where must attention be directed, so that your vision of Russia could be realized? With the present economic difficulties, do you think it will take significantly longer for this to happen?

Kazarkin: . . . Perhaps Russia's inertia is a good thing in that it has helped save some regional differentiation in culture at a time when all around the world cultural difference is disappearing. . . . A difference in natural and geographical features ought to be reflected in culture. What do Russians want? That there won't be ecological catastrophes, that this won't be the end of our culture. I would like to see a Russia with many facets, many cultures. I believe, I want to

believe, that cultural energy will be strong in Siberia, that it will become—to use Spengler’s words—the location of a mighty culture (*velikaia kul’tura*) and have a mighty future. . . .

Rozov: In the past, all Russians were part of the state system (*gosudarstvenniki*), and both members of the gentry and peasants all claimed to serve the tsar. Everyone served the state in one capacity or another. Now there is a dangerous split (*raskol*) between the population as a whole and each person in particular, and between the government and middle-level organizations and corporations. Now no one pays taxes, no one trusts anyone anymore, particularly in the government, which like the bureaucracy of Imperial Russia, generates a steady stream of data. And this lack of faith is due to the fact that there was so much deceit.

As for the question about the future of Russia, we need to compete in world markets. . . . And as we do that, we should remember that Russia has a single set of interests (*tselostnye interesy*)—it’s the same for the government, for all political groups, for corporations, and we all need to unite around this. And people should remember that we need to buy Russian goods (*pokupat’ rossiiskoe*), which is important. I am happy to see in Tomsk that there are regional goods for sale. This is a normal economic strategy. As far as material prosperity (*material’nye dostatki*) goes, what would I myself like to see? Despite our formidable winters, there are still too many places that don’t have their own bathrooms. That’s awful. I want to see a prosperous Russia with well-built homes, with very nice bathrooms, where homeowners and housewives have a comfortable place to live and the women are healthy. There is a lot of talk about the fate of culture in the future, but I’m not worried about that—a distinct Russian culture will always exist. Until we have heated bathrooms, it doesn’t seem right to have conversations about high culture.

Alekseev: In essence, we all want to see Russia in 2020 as a country full of good roads and smart people.

Sagalaev: I want to see people not all having to grow potatoes. Right now, 75% of the potato growers are neither peasants nor city dwellers, not the intelligentsia or the middle class—they just have some pitiful strip of land. They’re a segment of the population that has been thrown to the mercy of fate (*narod broshen na proizvol sud’by*), afraid that tomorrow there will be nothing to feed their children. It’s a paradox—we listen to all these political leaders talking on television, it’s a farce (*balagan*), and people are working so hard to have a sack or two full of potatoes. There are so many people who resemble the little man (*malen’kii chelovek*) familiar to us from our literature, and they are in a pauperized, pitiful state. What I would like to see in 2020 is a middle class, even a modest one.

Yanovich: Russia could lose some of its national values and interests. We can join economic unions with other countries, with Europe, that’s fine, but along with this process of unification, national interests and values have to be preserved. We see in Europe how borders are beginning to be transparent, but there are still national interests along with the supra-national interests (*interesy soobshchestva*). And supra-national interests have to be raised to a higher level, along with national interests.

Muchnik: The ideas and habits of private life are increasingly valued, and that is a good thing, because it helps to increase the level of trust (*doverie*) between people and between people and the government that we need in order to do business. We had it in the 17th and 18th centuries when we were doing business with Europe. Nothing could have worked for us without trust. But now there isn't a very calm attitude towards the government and there's a lot of anxiety between individuals doing business. The government creates rules that can't be followed.

Alekseev: When you talk about relations between businesses and the government, it's a legal question. But when you talk about behavior within the business world, that's a moral-ethical question. We are touching on some very important and painful places that make our society feel unnatural (*malolestvennoe*) at present, and that demand to be clarified, to be strengthened, that require our attention. . . .

Russia in 2020: History's Values

4. If you were to write an introduction to a textbook on Russian history and culture for schoolchildren, what institutions, problems, and achievements would you especially stress in order to help the next generation create the kind of Russia that you would like to see in the year 2020?

Kazarkin: I would talk about how Russia has evolved in a number of spatial settings, from the great expanse of the nation as a whole, to the region, and to the home (*prostranstvenno, regional'no, domashne*). First, how Russia was formed (*sozdavalas'*) region by region: Kievan Rus, the northern forested regions, the area along the Volga and the Don, the Urals, and Siberia. During the Soviet period, research and publishing on local history (*kraevedenie*) was pretty much curtailed, and this tradition has to be restored as we create a new patriotic consciousness, which has to be a living thing. Religion is important, and Russian Orthodoxy definitely falls within the boundaries of this identity. Paganism was also a factor but not as the state religion of a unified Rus, so there was no such thing as "Pagan Rus" (*iazycheskaia Rus'*) but the pagan beliefs of a number of tribes which varied from region to region. For the past thousand years, Orthodoxy has played a key role in the history of our state and the identity of its inhabitants. We can't talk about Russia as being something united only by a common language—that wouldn't be enough to make us a people. And when we talk about the Russian character, of course we have to bring in Russian literature in the broadest sense, the Russian classics. Literature can still be seen as something that holds the nation together (*derzhit natsiiu*). We need to prepare textbooks that will help the younger generation to appreciate their national identity.

Kaluzhskii: We don't need something of a purely instructive nature (*vospitatel'nogo kharaktera*), but a history of the country's economic, historical, and military development, something with primary documents, and not just the interpretation of documents. Previous textbooks decided to ignore major aspects of our economic history, and were simply blasphemous (*bogokhul'stvovali*) on other subjects. Textbooks should include a number of

documents: at least parts of our Constitution, important newspaper articles from different points of view. . . .

Alekseev: . . . Textbooks are a curious genre, the culmination of all the best that has been achieved in a particular field. So a textbook takes the form of a gathering (*sniatie*) of all previous knowledge, a compression (*szhimanie*) of all this information, in a way that will be accessible to the next generation. It is an attempt (*opyt*) by each generation to pass things down in the best possible form. We need to pass on much more than a collection of documents, and it must be made clear what position the documents reflect, because according to which documents you choose for these books, I can determine your point of view. Textbooks are a kind of instrument in the formation of the next generation. We face many problems today (*aktual'nye problemy*). We may not be able to resolve all of them, but at the very least, we can leave an explanation of how this has affected our national and personal lives, and help the people who follow us to solve these problems.

One such problem is the attitude towards official regulations. The whole system of laws that regulate the activities of government needs to be analyzed. After the Revolution everything from the old order was cast out, and new regulations were written in a great hurry while the civil war was going on, and yet we are still living by and with a number of these regulations today. . . .

Why is there so much corruption? We have no legal consciousness (*net pravovogo soznaniia*) in this society—such a consciousness never developed and we need to work on this. Our history is full of material that we can put in a textbook: the old law codes, like the *Russkaia pravda* [from Kievan Rus], and the law code (*sudebnik*) under Ivan Vasilevich¹⁴, which further developed the laws. We can see how a new law code succeeded a previous one. And then, in the 20th century, there is the complete rejection (*ottorzhenie*) of everything that had accumulated over the course of a millennium. The political forces in our society today—the right, the left, and the different types of centrists—are all using the same raw materials (*syr'e*), the same tools—the incomplete law codes of the post-Revolutionary period—as a basis for reform.

. . . **Yanovich:** To write the kind of textbook we would like to is not yet possible because as a discipline, history hasn't asked or answered some very important questions about the nature of our political institutions and practices. Whose fault is it that Russia is backward? Chaadaev had some answers for us in the 19th century. He saw problems in our cultural heritage (*kul'turnaia genetika*), in our spiritual links to Byzantium. Others say that the Tartars are to blame, the West, the Jews. To this day we have no serious answer to the question of our backwardness. We need to work on these topics. We know so little about the rise and rapid predominance and international renown of Moscow, about the 15th and 16th centuries, the policies of Ivan III, about the Josephites and others, the struggle between Volokolamsk and Nil Sorsky and how the tsar intervened in this struggle, or about Novgorod and its defeat, the Livonian War, why certain policies were formulated, who advised the rulers, about the Time of Troubles, and how Peter was trying to solve *old* problems. We need to understand the rules of the game for the 17th and 18th centuries. A textbook ought to include positive achievements as well, to illustrate positive things.

Boris Poyzner: I'm from an Old Believer family. Among Old Believers, people knew each other, knew how the other person would act, and they didn't need pieces of paper to regulate their behavior towards one another, just a person's word of honor. That's a pretty serious thing and at some level this can work at other times and places. If we try to remember what were the best of the Soviet initiatives, we should remember that the government didn't just guarantee work and pay, but also kindergartens, Pioneer camps, everything from the conditions of individual work to factories. Some of this system could be saved, there could be some kind of symbiosis from different systems, even if the fundamental values changed. Right now we have a situation where the banks act as if they exist in a different world than the government and the people. Banks, other businesses, universities, all need to unite in a common cause and take part in the transformation of the country, in figuring out how to make us productive once more. Let's all figure out how it is that the Americans have done so well.

Textbooks can be positive and patriotic, but can't limit themselves to that. Along with remembering the power of Russian arms, a textbook should discuss some of the truly superior products we've made, the progressive post-reform law courts, the private companies and banks of the late 19th-early 20th centuries, and support for the arts by successful members of the business community. A textbook ought to identify where the gaps and problems are, how it is not good when the power at the center is weakened. People fled Moscow to seek a new land, but they cooperated with the state and there was a kind of symbiosis. Coming from an Old Believer family, these topics are of special interest to me.

Alekseev: In order to help the government, we need a cultural and educational institution that focuses on the legal basis for government actions, and that studies how government actions can be guaranteed and affirmed by law. . . .

Lvova: Pushkin showed us, in a very enlightened way, how to love our homeland when he wrote: "There are two emotions that are equally dear to us and that nourish our hearts: one is love for the family hearth, and the other is love for the graves in our native land" (*I dva chuvstva ravno blizki nam / V nikh obretaet serdtse pishchu: / Liubov' k rodnomu pepelishchu, / Liubov' k otecheskim grobam*). Pushkin expressed himself with amazing subtlety and any textbook ought to keep those two emotions in mind. To love ones homeland not only as a flourishing civilization, well-satisfied with its own existence, but with all its tragic history and all the complicated circumstances and the drama of its existence—for me, that's the most important part.

. . .

There is a curious fact about the life of Grigory Nikolaevich Potanin, a regional expert and advocate (*oblastnik, regionalist*). I think it was when he was in exile in Tot'ma that he sketched out a plan for a textbook based on local history (*uchebnik kraevedcheskii*) that would begin with the home and radiate out to the land surrounding it, the village, and the county (*okolo doma, usad'by, sela, uezda*), moving all the way out to the furthest borders of our native land. This is a very important foundation for the structure of a history book with texts in it, and they cannot leave out the best historical understanding (*soznanie*) we have, because a person's general culture and state identity is based on knowledge and understanding of their personal history, their memories, and their own freely-developed orientation in history, that gradually moves outward into broader spheres. This is a way to conceive a new kind of textbook.

I think that one of the leading characteristics of the history of our country is its spatial fate (*obrechennost' prostranstva*). This is connected with our historical path, our greatest successes, and our greatest losses. And by losses I don't mean just territorial losses but the loss of historical principles and a sense of personal responsibility (*poteri istoriosofskie, poteri lichnoi otvetstvennosti*), because ruling large territories made us forget about our smaller homelands (*o malykh rodinakh*) and territories. The idea of something large and important (*ideia velikogo*) covered up and obscured the idea of everyday life (*ideia povsednevnogo*). . . . And this complex aspect of our national life needs to be examined at each stage (*srez*, meaning a cut or microscopic section) of our history. As an ethnologist, I have to say that when you look at the history of this land from the beginnings up to the present day, you come across many different groups, large and small, of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, ways of life, all of which contributed something to the whole. . . . But in telling this story, we must not neglect the dominant role and positive aspects of the ethnic group that has flourished as the majority in this land. All of this is significant and has to be included in a textbook of Russian history.

Krechetova: A textbook should analyze the leading alternatives and ask, for instance, whether it would have been possible to avoid the turn that events took in October 1917.

5. What meaning does the concept “Russian national identity” have for you? Do you think that Russia’s national identity consists of a set of core beliefs, values, and characteristics, or is it something that varies greatly through time? Does *russkost'* (Russianness) in St. Petersburg mean something significantly different from *russkost'* in Siberia?

Billington: Does Russianness change, depending on where you are?

A general discussion followed about the way the question was structured. Alekseev was disconcerted by the use of St. Petersburg instead of Moscow as a point of contrast. Others believed that the word russkost' is not in common use (ego net v russkom obikhode) and sounds alien (chuzhoi) to them. Parthé explained that russkost' was frequently found in contemporary Russian newspapers and journals. Participants said that what is meant by russkost' would be discussed in Siberia as russkii kharakter, russkii dukh, or russkii tip uma (the Russian character, the Russian spirit, the Russian intellect). Kazarkin claimed that if a Russian-speaking Tatar went to Ukraine, he would be called a Siberian, while in Moscow he would be treated as a Tatar. The category of Russianness means less in Siberia where so many are of mixed ethnic background and anyone who speaks Russian is considered one of the group (svoi). But Russian culture changed as it moved eastward so that some aspects of Russianness are different depending on where you are in this country.

Yanovich: *Russkost'* is a very individual feeling. In Siberia, for instance, many people have no extensive family biography¹⁵, and a given generation may know very little about their *rod* (the family, extended through time) beyond one generation back. Father Pavel Florenskii taught us about Russianness in *Znanie svoego roda* (Knowing Your Family Background), which he felt was the way to know Russian history. . . . Some really interesting books have come out recently

on the Russian emigration, especially Russians in France, and how the children of the emigrants were taught to be Russian.

Father Leonid: It's very interesting to think about the contrasts between what *russkost'* means here and in St. Petersburg. Let me remind you about Aleksandr Nevsky, who lived in an age where Russia was being threatened from both East and West. Paradoxically, he did all he could to get along with the East, with the Tatars, who were of a different faith. He put up with a lot so that he could devote his energies to fighting enemies from the West, who were after all fellow Christians, spiritual relatives. But he saw his Western neighbors as a threat to *russkost'*. Peter the Great, in founding St. Petersburg and making this foreign place Russian, paid great attention to Aleksandr Nevsky, naming the main boulevard after him and bringing the saint's relics to the new city from Yaroslavl'. So there was an attempt to bring closer together Russianness and the West, which is especially visible in the architecture. You see this as well after the Revolution, when the spirit of the International put a lot of pressure on Russianness, although one can argue about how strong this pressure really was. In Moscow, a number of the most Russian aspects of the city's architecture, of its profile, were destroyed after 1917¹⁶, but in St. Petersburg the beautiful old buildings remained, with their peaceful unification of the Western and the Russian.

Siberia, with its variety of peoples, is more like the American West, where the emphasis is on present challenges and future possibilities. St. Petersburg, our West, is orienting itself towards the West, while Moscow is marked by the intensity with which it remembers its roots, its past, its traditions. Think of how popular Nikita Mikhalkov is. Moscow is attracted by all aspects of antiquity (*starina*). Siberia depends on itself, relies on its own strength, and is sure it will survive thanks to its inner potential.

Lvova: Let's address the question of whether Russian national consciousness consists of unchangeable (*neizmeniaemye*) values, or whether this idea is constantly in the process of changing. If "National idea" is equated with "ethnicity," then ethnicity is going to look quite different at various historical moments and framed by various institutions. The ethnic idea can reveal itself as an idea of the state (*gosudarstvennost'*), as a religious idea, or as the idea of a small local group of people. No one group can display all the aspects of the *etnos*. What we get instead is a collection of sub-ethnic formations (*subetnichnosti*) against the background of the group as a whole. In this sense, I have no doubt that there is a Siberian Russian identity and an identity based in central European Russia—I don't make a distinction between Petersburg and Moscow. . . . I've posed provocative questions to the young scholars in my seminar, and I got answers that were amazing in their artlessness (*prostodushie*) and specificity (*tochnost'*). One student said that she spent the summer with relatives in their dacha on the Volga, and found the people there, these Volga Russians (*volzhskie russkie*), to be very strange. They walk slowly, converse slowly, and even think slowly, she said.

You can talk about a Siberian sub-ethnic formation with more confidence when you look at material from the second half of the 19th century. Then the distinct characteristics really come out of a vigorous, energetic, self-reliant population that had never known serfdom (*moshchnogo, energichnogo, samobytnogo i ne znavshego krepostnogo prava naseleniia*). Siberian industry developed rather quickly and intensively and changed the makeup of Siberia, which, like the

ethnic composition of the United States or Canada, was heterogeneous, so that there are ways in which we can genuinely compare our ethnic and national cultures.

The picture changed in the 20th century. The structure of the population of Siberia, especially that part of the population whose culture has a folkloric foundation, changed repeatedly. Now you almost can't find a Siberian settlement whose inhabitants have been living there for four or five generations. The changes that came after 1929 [with collectivization] transformed the structure of Russian ethnicity in Siberia. There is very little rootedness any more (*ochen' malo ukorennosti teper'*). Residents of the Altai mixed with those of Tomsk, while Tomsk people went further north. I'm not even including all the different kinds of people who were deported or exiled to Siberia, sometimes in great numbers. But all the same, Siberia is so far from the capitals (*metropoliia*) that it has worked out its own way of reacting to things. Siberians sense that they have their own higher cultural identity (*osobennoe povyshennoe kul'turnoe samosoznanie sibiriaikov*) which consists of a sense of superiority. We realize that Siberia amounts to three-fourths of the land in the Russian Federation and about the same percentage of its natural resources, and we realize that 32 million of us, including one million native inhabitants, carry the burden of pulling the engine of the Russian state. The poet Batiushkov said that Siberia was the flywheel (*makhovoe koleso*), a heavy wheel which regulates the movement of a mechanism) of Russian history and the pledge (*zalog*) of its greatness. One way or another, this sense of our worth makes us wonder about the center's exploitation of Siberian territory.

Rozov: Siberia has always been a bit hungrier than Moscow or St. Petersburg. On the subject of identity, I wonder how "British" Americans felt before the Revolution. General Washington was once a lieutenant in the British army, so from one point of view, what he did was treasonous. Halfway around the world, we Russians see a land that found its identity. Siberia had such a chance, we all know about it, its capital was Omsk, it fell apart, and people identify the whole undertaking with Kolchak. We know that we live on a vast territory with vast resources. . . .allowing us to feel it was okay not to conserve these resources, that there was always another place to go. We ought to have some self-respect and realize that we are a very rich territory.

Alekseev: A lot of what we are talking about comes under the term *mentalitet*. I think that we can find a lot of material that will help us mark off some limits to the *mentalitet* of people of the northern capital and our ancient capital (*o pervoprestol'noi stolitse*) from the mentality of someone from Siberia. None of this happened yesterday—it's the fruit of our historical development. Who came to Siberia from the very beginning? Enterprising people, people who didn't fear physical or spiritual challenges. There is a lot of documentation from the 17th and 18th centuries, for instance from the Yenisei Cossacks, about individuals who could do any number of different things. This created a certain kind of person—energetic, goal-oriented (*deiatel'nyi, tseleustremlennyi*) and decisive (*skorogo resheniia vsiacheskikh del*).

But what about more recent times? I remember that when you used to arrive in Moscow by train or airplane, you would see the slogan "Moscow—City of the Communist Way of Life" (*Moskva—gorod kommunisticheskogo byta*). Someone coming from Siberia would look with eyes and mouth wide open and think that here was the radiant future we had been building for so long and with such effort. There were products, especially groceries, that didn't require coupons and

you could get them in any store and you could take as much as you wished (*beri skol'ko khochesh'*). This all went to determining the specific atmosphere of that relatively small territory where all the important decisions at the very highest level were being made. The aura had to be sufficiently calm, prosperous, and contented (*dostatochno spokojnyi, blagopoluchnyi, umirotvorenniy*), and full of the good things in life. Siberia for centuries had the reputation of a Russian Golgotha, with all the stages of the journey (*etapy*) to the place of hard labor (*katorga*) or exile—this is how Siberia was used. And then we were asked to build Communism. The government attitude towards this region has formed a certain kind of Russianness that differentiates a Siberian from a Muscovite. I specifically say Moscow, because in that respect Petersburg also feels its provincial character vis-à-vis Moscow.

Billington: Siberia represents a different aspect of the Russian theme, one that focuses on pioneers. In connection with this, there is a new American-Russian project called “The Meeting of Frontiers” that has won Congressional support. We will begin gathering materials on Siberia and the formerly Russian parts of North America for an interactive web site, among other venues. We already have a number of relevant manuscripts in the Library of Congress, including those connected with the translation of the Bible into the languages of the indigenous peoples of Alaska, and the whole history of the Orthodox Church in Alaska. . . . Siberia calls to mind the image of exile, which is how a number of nationalities wound up here.

Yanovich: That’s quite true, and a fund has been set up to help publish some previously unpublished materials, including memoirs by Krasovtsev and others.

Rozov: So many prisoners representing so many different nationalities came to Siberia, and the genuine criminals left their imprint on the culture. In prison you find one of the ethnographically most interesting subcultures, and this criminal subculture flourishes throughout the country but particularly in Siberia. Sometimes when I pay for a ride somewhere, like this time coming from Novosibirsk, the driver plays the music of this subculture. Theirs is a language mixture with lots of Belorussian words and other secret criminal slang called *fenia* that includes virtually no Russian words. There is a lot that would be interesting for ethnographers to study.

Krechetova: On the one hand you have pioneers, and on the other hand prisoners and people living in exile.

Billington: When California was still the wild west, you could find some questionable characters and in general a lot less law and order. And of course there was Chicago in the 1920s. But what about inner, moral values in Russia now? A few years ago, right after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a flurry of interest in the church, in being baptized. Is this continuing and deepening and are there difference between the church here and in the European part of Russia? Young people seem to have an absence of faith these days.

Father Leonid: You can’t call the criminalization of culture or language in Russia. . . . a Siberian development. Camps and places of exile existed in the western part of the country as well. Think of the infamous SLON [initials of a camp set up on the grounds of the Solovetsky

Monastery on a real archipelago in the north of Russia]. The exiles sent to Siberia had a positive influence in that they brought what they knew of Western culture to the people living here, including notions of tolerance. Because of the exiles, some relatively isolated places in Siberia, in the Tomsk region, wound up having one or more theaters and a library where you wouldn't expect them to be found in the 19th century.

Some very religious people fled here from what they saw as the corrupt, sinful atmosphere of Western, Europeanized Russian civilization, and in the places where they settled, monasteries were founded. You see the evidence of heroic, righteous behavior (*podvizhnichestvo*) in the deep religious roots in Tomsk, for instance, where Orthodoxy helped the people to resist the temptation of criminal behavior. After the Revolution, especially in the twenties and thirties, the Orthodox Church was less oppressed (*ispytyvali men'she gneto*) here than in the western part of the country. So we don't say that there has been a re-birth of Orthodoxy, but simply that it has opened up a bit wider and come out more into the open (*raskrylas*). St. Innokenty of Moscow brought the idea of Orthodoxy and Russianness to America. Remember that when Russians pushed towards Alaska and through that territory to America, priests from Siberia went along with them. In terms of spiritual values, Siberia has very rich traditions. Now to a certain extent things have leveled out and it is hard to see the regional differences in the way that Orthodoxy functions.

6. The period since 1991 has been called post-totalitarian, post-Communist, post-Soviet, post-imperial, post-perestroika, *mezhvremen'e* (between two identifiable time periods), and *bezvremen'e* (timelessness, hard times). Which of these terms do you think most accurately characterizes this complex period? When do you expect that Russia will arrive at a new era that can be named and judged in its own right?

Alekseev: . . . We are trying to characterize our situation today on the background of our whole past: at what point are we on our historical path of development? And then we have to find a name for the period. If we call it transitional we won't be wrong, but transition **from** what and **to** what? Then we have to pick more precise places from which to take readings (*pravil'nye točki otscheta*). I will come up with one set of places but someone else will have another set.

. . . I think we can call this period transitional, if we expand our view a little to see the origins of the rupture (*razryv*) in society. The problems we've been looking at—especially of national identity—have been linked to events that took place in the 20th century, but I think that we are just reaping the fruits from seeds that were sown in the previous century, when at some point *Rus'-Rossiia* began to act quite differently. For instance, why did we sell Alaska to America? We expanded towards the east, and then we ran out of time for swallowing that final piece of our great expanse (*gigantskoe prostranstvo*), a piece to which we had only weak geographical links. We found ourselves at a dead end in our journey and the imperial idea could go no further. That led to a sense that there had to be a change, a reorientation in history. So we sold Alaska for a purely symbolic sum to America to mark the end of that stage.

How would things have gone had it not been for the events of 1917? After the Revolution, our imperial ambitions, such as they were, were directed not east but west. Now we

have to determine: what are we changing *from* and what are we changing *to*? It's hard for me to pick a name for this period because we don't know the vectors we are moving along.

Parthé: I've seen the term *post-perestroika* many times in Russian journals, and it seem to have a negative meaning, in the sense that something hoped for didn't happen. *Post-sovetskii* seems to just say that there was a Soviet Union, but it no longer exists.

Kaluzhskii: *Post-perestroika* is the government's term and it disappeared with the Soviet Union. All *post-communism* says is that there used to be communism—otherwise the term has no content and just indicates the absence of something. *Post-Soviet society* conveys a sense that there has been a continuation of some aspects of Soviet society. *Post-totalitarianism*—that's just a statement of fact.

Krechetova: Some of the terms convey something important, others don't have a lot of content if they just tell us what is no longer active and it isn't a useful way of dividing things up. As for *post-perestroika*—at least there was an attempt at liberal reform.

Parthé: What I find most interesting in your journals and newspapers is that I don't come across any terms for what I sense is beginning, only for what is ending.

Krechetova: Things are changing and it's hard to know what to call it.

Rozov: The terminology is secondary—the essence of the matter is more important to understand. In August 1991 there was an attempt to go back in time, but this led to the end of the USSR. The term *post-imperialism* is accurate in a non-journalistic sense, in that we have a 500-year history of imperial expansion and it is over. But it is used not descriptively but pejoratively in journalism so it is better not to use it here. There is no returning to that stage and this is a positive move for us.

Yanovich: What we are going through now I would call a Time of Troubles [*smutnoe vremia*, referring to the years between 1605 and 1613]. There is a genuine search for a new type of dialogue, and lot going on that is hidden from view, something very deep, and at some point we will see what the results are. I call it *smutnoe* (vague, confused, troubled) because we don't know what's going on, nothing is fully formed yet (*nichego ne opredelilos'*), and it isn't clear what we ought to be doing.

Rozov: I see Time of Troubles (*smuta*) as a dangerous term when used in the mass media. You can find this historical reference, for instance, on the masthead of *Nash sovremennik* (Our Contemporary, a conservative nationalist journal) with Minin and Pozharskii [heroes of this turbulent period], and it appears to hint at military mobilization.

Yanovich: The system created in Russia was oriented around extreme situations and was structured to mobilize people. In normal situations it didn't work well.

Billington: If there is a crisis of legitimacy, where is it? For instance, only 2% of the population seem to support Yeltsin, and people prefer “none of the above” when asked how they feel about various leaders. What does this mean?

Rozov: That there are no bold ideas and no bold people.

Yanovich: There is a society-wide depression and a sense of paralysis of our impulse for action. The myth of the state is paralyzed, it's in an expectant state, a state of disenchantment (*razocharovanie*).

Billington: But was there an enchantment (*ocharovanie*) before the disenchantment?

Yanovich: In the late 1970s the government (*vlast'*) didn't want to forge ties to the intelligentsia because it didn't want their help, which was a very infantile attitude. One may speak of historical memory as non-continuous (*diskretnost' istoricheskoi pamiati*). There was a vacuum of ideas (*ideinyi vakuum*). The ruling power was always merciless (*bezposhchadno*) towards any independent thinking.

Kaluzhskii: I can tell you that on paper the legislation we have for things like social organizations (*obshchestvennye organizatsii*) seems very progressive now, but it isn't clear to all sides what legal orbit these organizations function in, and there are a lot of them now that aren't government and aren't private but something else. We haven't had a genuine emancipation of consciousness in the government or in the private sector and we still really don't trust one another. When people hear the words “social organization” they think of Komsomol and the *profsoiuzy* (Soviet-era labor unions).

Lyova: In 1945, in the ruins of Berlin, we could have asked the same questions. Seeing the ruins of one empire, we might have wondered what would happen to other empires. Like all imperial civilizations, Russia in 1998 is a complex world in its psychological expectation of big new structures, a new ideology for the external world, a society that is still part-open/part-closed, and in our memories of the past. Remember the lines from Mandelstam about not feeling the country beneath our feet?¹⁷ We ethnographers go into villages where, for example, there are exiled Russians and Germans, and we learn how people reacted, how they were disillusioned.

Rozov: You can compare post-fascist Germany and a defeated Russia at the end of the Cold War, except that Germany was reborn, it repented, there are even young Germans who travel to Israel to do volunteer work. Here there was no cleansing and no purification from Communism. .

..

Yanovich: Attempts to bring the Communist Party to justice won't work.

There is a general discussion about the aftershocks of the dissolution of the USSR. One person can't believe that a visa is needed to go to Kazakhstan and another participant mentions that all

his family graves are in Ukraine. Their personal geography is no longer coterminous with national borders and that feels very strange to them.

Friday, November 6, 1998

Siberia, Economic Development

7. In reading Russian history, the Russian interior in general and Siberia in particular may be said to represent two sets of values: on the one hand, *derzhavnost'* and the extension of a strong Russian state to the Pacific Ocean, and, on the other hand, *volia* and the tendency to create a freer and more entrepreneurial society based more on the cultural, communal, and spiritual values of Orthodox Christianity and of Russian culture than on the power of an overly controlling center. Are either or both of these variants of Russian identity (a) still relevant to Russia as a whole, and (b) likely to unify or further divide the Russian Federation? What is Siberia's potential for contributing to Russia's spiritual, political, and economic development for the future?

Sagalaev: In Siberia we can see the re-archaization of culture. There is elemental freedom (*volia*), lawlessness (*bezzakonie*), and on the spiritual side there are the followers of shamans (*shamanisty*), a lot of Old Believer activity, and a more pagan kind of Eastern Orthodoxy, but not the Slavic paganism you find in European Russia. Tomsk has had an intelligentsia for a long time. And if we talk about what kind of ethnic hierarchy exists in our consciousness, people will say that they are "Siberian first, then Russian." Actually, what they will say is "I'm a resident of Tomsk, a Siberian, and a Russian" (*Ia tomych, sibiriak, russkii*) in that order. The regionalism (*oblastnichestvo*) of the 1990s was extinguished by the Siberian Accord (*Sibirskoe Soglasie*) between governors—or rather it was institutionalized so it would be less scary. This regional identity did not oppose the territorial integrity (*tselostnost'*) of Russia, and it did not express or reflect a wish to be separated from Russia. Siberia has always been seen in terms of how useful it could be to Russia, more the way that you look at a colony. James Forsythe, in *The History of the Peoples of Siberia*, describes Siberia as a northeast Asian colony of Russia. That's a pretty narrow interpretation, and if it has some meaning, it's only in economic terms. After the work of Yadrintsev, Potanin, and a host of others, Siberia acquired a sense of itself, a spiritually independent state, and a spiritual consciousness. Siberia is just too big a territory for Russia. Russia is made of European and Asian parts, and it is still not clear how they fit together.

Poyzner: Ukrainians who live here say "I am a Siberian from Ukraine." Because of the system of exile (*ssylka*), many groups were sent here and they practiced many different religions. . . . As for our spiritual consciousness and how it differs from that of European Russia, well, this is an enormous place and was always full of *brodiagi* (tramps, people who were down and out, from *brodit'* 'to wander, roam'), and what you might call *chelovek okrainy* (a person from an outlying

district or borderland). Compared to Europeans [including European Russians], our character is more emotional, more open, broader, so we have the compensation of a richer emotional life.

There are positive feelings about Siberia, a local patriotism (*mestnyi patriotizm*), but the locality (*mestnost'*) is very large. The qualities that are found here are ones that have been weakened or lost in the European part of the country. There is a myth of Siberia in folk literature, about our vigor, our hospitality, the spiritual treasures deep in our souls. In the absence of real economic freedom, the spiritual state of a person gives them some compensation. . . . With the Urals on one side and the ocean on the other, the great scale of Siberia gives us a kind of boldness (*bodrost'*).

Kazarkin: Russia is preventing us from living normally. Russia saw us in two quite different ways: (1) as a wonderful, natural place, a mythical “White Water” (*Belovod'e*, the Old Believers’ promised land) which would be transformed into a New Russia; and then the opposite, (2) as a disastrous, fatal place (*gibel'noe mesto*), a place where people were sent to suffer and die. As for Moscow, they don’t give us anything. Who needs them? We will organize our own life here even if it will seem a little more anti-civilization and anti-West. The railroad of course passed us by. The Eurasian theory (*evraziistvo*) in the works of Fyodorov, Roerich, Gumilev, and Potanin can be seen as a basically European imperial complex. . . . The development of regionalism is based on the theory of Eurasianism.

The European Russian *ethnos* has reached its apex, and we see its breakdown (*obskuratsiia, degradatsiia natsii*), but healthy sub-ethnic groups (*subetnosy*) are coming to the fore, ones that are hardier and more viable. Siberia is the future, Russian culture’s second breath, which will be livelier than the first one. . . . Siberia is always trying to purify itself, but Moscow keeps sending prisoners, for instance, to the Kemerovo region where there are twenty prisons. In accord with nature’s will and the laws of geography we will develop differently from other places. We will accept some economic influence from the West, but not every other kind of influence that comes with it.

Muchnik: The Siberian myth is a structure that helps shape and organize this enormous expanse. Spiritually it is the abode of suffering (*obitel' stradaniia*), which has led to a frame of mind that has real spiritual depth. Moscow is very practical and spiritually superficial. And each region has its own myth, one for Kaluga, another for Kazan.

Kaluzhskii: There is the myth that Russia colonized Siberia in order to use it for raw materials. Siberia could take care of itself, but Moscow hasn’t tried very hard to develop it and has been content just to take the raw materials and go. The Siberian Agreement is just some governors’ lobbying group and there is nothing specifically Russian about it. The regional elite are the old and new *nomenklatura*.

Rozov: . . . There was the myth—not entirely false—that European Russia was ruined by the West. Russia is meant to be a bridge between Europe and Asia. The great expanse (*prostranstvo*) is both a resource and an anti-resource, since transporting raw materials out of here is so expensive.

Behind regionalism we can see the right-wing notion that Siberia has been treated like a colony of Russia, as well as the tendency towards isolationism. I disagree with Aleksandr

Petrovich [Kazarkin]—I don't see any geopolitical or cultural foundation for this possibility. I don't see any functional center in Siberia of sufficient historical depth with which people can identify. If Petersburg were on Siberian territory one could identify with a former capital. But a movement like this would be more revanche than anything else. At the very depths of Russian consciousness there is the need for control over territory and a reluctance to give up any land. The depression and frustration we feel in 1998 is precisely because of the loss of territory [in 1991] in places like Central Asia. We need to work out partnership arrangements (*partnerskie otnosheniia*) with different developing areas throughout the country, on the polycentric model of Germany, and even more, the United States, where besides New York, Washington, and New England, there are other centers of development in California, Chicago, and Texas, and in what was the wild west. If the research done in Tomsk and Novosibirsk were recognized internationally. . . .

Billington: The phrase “the second breath of Russian culture in Siberia” was used earlier in our discussion. What does it mean? Is it a continuation and repetition of what came before, or is there something in it that is substantially new and different for Siberia and for Russia?

Kazarkin: . . . The pessimistic view is that Moscow and its unique culture will weaken, but that Russian culture will evolve and be preserved in the outlying regions (*na okrainakh*), and democratic developments will help this process along. So this is connected to democratization and regionalism. Eighty years ago there were regional initiatives under Kolchak, but then the Bolsheviks came and ended whatever had been undertaken. But the *belaia ideia* (‘white idea’ represented by the pro-tsarist, anti-Bolshevik White Army) was kept alive in the Russian diaspora and is being discussed once more. Yeltsin’s Duma discussed the question of the self-organization of Siberia. It consists of Eastern Orthodoxy at its base plus the identity that comes from the native soil (*pochva*). We’ve identified various periods in our culture—post-Petrine, Petersburg, Bolshevik—and there will be another period but it hasn’t got a title yet. The democracy we have now allows people to try all sorts of new ideas. Life will sort this all out (*vrazumeet zhizn'*) and the Russian idea will get its second breath.

Lvova: I want to define more precisely the question of what Siberia can offer Russia’s future spiritual, political, and economic, development. . . . I would state the question somewhat differently: is there a future for Russia without Siberia? What did Russia, the center, receive with the acquisition of Siberia? If you look at the four-century-long history of this relationship you see how much changed for Russia when it conquered Siberia, in terms of its historical vectors and the international weight (*ves*) of Russia. Today, in terms of size, Siberia and the Far East make up two-thirds of the Russian Federation. But this unbelievably large expanse has just 32 million inhabitants, which amounts to one-fifth of Russia’s population, and in the last decade the numbers have been decreasing, both the indigenous population and those who are exiles or the descendants of exiles. There have been catastrophic events—almost the complete closing off of our northern and far eastern territories. . . .

What’s going on now is a stark drama of depopulation and the disappearance of whole cultures. . . . The unity and integrity of this territory is said to be so important, but no one cares about the people *on* this land. This attitude is outside the bounds of all logic. This is discussed

as if we are in the 1950s and there have been no technological changes. After all, it is Siberia which has become the guarantor (*zalog*) of our country's well-being, but this has also made the Siberians hostages (*zalozhniki*) of the nuclear power complexes located here. If people knew the whole story they would be afraid. . . . A short distance from Tomsk there is a closed city, full of nuclear warheads which were built in our plants. What's better, we ask ourselves, strong central control or more autonomous regional authority to regulate these processes? And Siberia is not unimportant to the health of the natural order throughout the world. Not very far away from here (*riadishkom*), in the northern part of the Tomsk *oblast'*, there is the Vosiugansky swamp, which, along with the Amazon jungle, is one of the world's "lungs," a great expanse of plant life (*legkie planety, zelenyi massiv*). We can think about our private interests, but we must also understand the terribly important role that Siberia plays in the natural balance and harmony of this planet.

It is still early to talk about the unity of the Siberian spirit—there is a remarkable degree of interaction (*soobshchestvo*) between researchers within the Tomsk *oblast'*. But you can tell just by looking out the window of an airplane that between oblasts—Tomsk and Novosibirsk, for instance—it is more difficult to have regular contact, and the potentially important border cities are underdeveloped. . . .

The first explorers of Siberia for the most natural of reasons came up with the image of it as a no-man's land (*nich'ia zemlia*). . . . It is no accident that textbooks referred to all of this acquired territory as the borderland (*okraina*) of an empire, and that formulation hasn't really changed since tsarist times. . . .

Sagalaev: There is a certain level of domestic chauvinism (*kukhonnyi shovinizm*) exhibited towards the native population. . . . That's a fact of Russian history and not an attractive one. Siberian Russians are not just bearers (*nositeli*) of Russian nationalism, but also formulators of nationalism, and our own intelligentsia, educated at our universities, are part of this. Ethnic-based national feeling is growing, and with that, violations of the rights of ethnic minorities.

Father Leonid: In an earlier age, the conquest of Siberia was led by the Cossacks, a Christian military organization, which took icons from Moscow all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Old Believers came—the priestless ones (*bezpopovtsy*) who didn't recognize what they called a satanic government and kept very much to themselves— and the traditional church, and of course there was paganism. The Eastern Orthodox peasants were a little freer in their religious behavior and they had a lot of contact with the local population, which is where they got their medicine. There was a lot of missionary activity and concern about the morality of peasants so far from the center and the government's control mechanisms. The native people had good relations with the Russians who came here, and the Tatars converted to Russian Orthodoxy. After 1917 there were attempts to level off (*nivelirovat'*) all the differences. But now when the Patriarch visits, the Tatars stage a protest. They know they are not Russians, but they don't know what exactly they want, maybe a separate parish.

Dr. Billington turns participants' attention to a question that begins with statements made at the June 1998 colloquium in Istra.

8. “During the Soviet period, we [Russians] restructured what was around us and not what was within us. Now we need not just to find a Russian identity but to find life-organizing ideas (*zhizn'-organizuiushchie idei*). And we need local and personal projects more than grand ones.” Do you agree? What local projects are underway in the Russian interior? What ones should be undertaken? Can you give examples of life-affirming, practical local projects that are pointing to a better future at the local level?

Kaluzhskii: There are number of local [non-governmental] organizations—NGOs like the Eurasia Foundation, private American and German groups—and they help set up a variety of projects, like Krasnoyarsk Community, projects that involve local businessmen with local schools. In Vladivostok there are US-administered grants for small projects, what are called independent social initiatives (*samostoiatel'nye obshchestvennye initsiativy*).

Billington: Are there many projects like the ones you've mentioned?

Kaluzhskii: . . . in Omsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk, and Barnaul—because of the good educational systems—there are a number of local projects, including ecological activities. In European Russia there are greater resources—meaning both money and people—for carrying out these kinds of activities, and St. Petersburg is very solid in this respect.

Billington: And in the areas of the North and Far East that are especially suffering?

Lvova: Here we have to turn to foreign help.

Rozov: There are all these big ideas—Russianness, the Russian mentality. Here's another one: service (*sluzhenie*), an idea we got from the gentry. We need scholars and artists who will be devoted to culture (*sluzhenie kul'ture*), who won't be in it only for the money. When Eisenhower saw the Autobahn, he was inspired to begin a major highway building program in the United States. When I think about getting Russia better organized (*ob ustroistve Rossii*), to borrow Solzhenitsyn's term, I think of how badly we need highways in Russia, not just paved roads. . . . Much of the public and private investment by Americans that goes to the western part of the country could just as well come here. And we understand that mutual benefit may be the goal—Soros is something of an exception to this—and that it won't be without some price. There is a Russian saying that “cheese is free only in a mousetrap” (*besplatnyi syr byvaet v myshelovke*).

Poyzner: There are many tasks and a lot of restructuring to do in the educational system, for example. There is movement back and forth right now between the centers and the borderlands. Between these two poles there are places in transition, as certain former centers now find themselves on the periphery. Because of this, we need our transportation system to function properly if we are to fulfill our potential.

9. What do western authorities in general and American specialists and policymakers on Russia fail to understand about the state of Russia today, about the direction and pace in

which Russia is moving, and about what, if anything, the outside world can and should do to help?

Alekseev: I think people should read Benedikt Erofeev's novel *Moscow-Petushki*. Russia is the suburban train (*elektrichka*) endlessly traveling the route between the capital and Petushki.

Povzner: Remember how Nabokov rewrote Gogol's statement to read: "Where are you headed Russia? . . . To the devil!" (*Kuda Rossiia. . . K chertu!*).

. . . **Kaluzhskii:** Discussing mutual expectations helps in the search for new funding possibilities. There needs to be greater understanding of the American concept of the "third sector" of the economy in Russia. So many things are different here. For instance, I work for a private fund. I see how the people who get the money are not always the ones who can make the best use of it.

Yanovich: In the geopolitical framework, the USA continues to use the old paradigms. In general, both America and Russia are behaving in traditional ways. What we need is collaboration (*sotrudnichestvo*), and this can begin with some very simple projects. . . .

Rozoy: I think that Russian-American relations have undergone a significant shift (*sdvig*). Sometimes we see the Cold War attitudes, or Russia is seen as a banana republic and a source of natural gas. . . . The United States, Europe, and Japan are trying to include Russia in geopolitical economic groups. It is very important that Russia not be pressed to the wall, which could lead to an aggressive reaction, but find its niche on the international economic scene. Exporting ready-made projects to Russia doesn't help all that much. We need help with our infrastructure, technology, and social organization.

Yanovich: We need partners for economic cooperation.

. . . **Billington:** Will there be civil society in Russia or not? And will there be the rule of law? These are two very topical questions.

Kaluzhskii: We could probably agree on what the rule of law means. . . .but I'm afraid that civil society means different things to Americans and Russians. Ours only began seven or eight years ago. . . . Little has been written about it and much still needs to be determined. We still aren't clear on what constitutes a third sector [enterprises that are neither public nor private, e.g. NGOs], and there is ignorance and a colossal lack of trust about some of the social initiatives that have been taken. Of course this third sector will develop and find its niche not only in economic matters. But it will take a long time for this to happen.

Muchnik: I think it was [the poet] Viazemsky who said that we don't have a society, just a population (*net obshchestva, est' narodnoe naselenie*). What ideas will be circulating in this civil society? The government circulates big ideas and they sound ridiculous, and some could even turn out to be dangerous. Most people feel a sense of disbelief about big ideas. What is more

productive now are small ideas (*malye idei*) about culture and daily life, about what surrounds us. We need to become accustomed to these new ways, working first on family life, and then moving in circles outward into society. When we think of social models, the West is too much of a generalization. In the end, if these new ways are to take hold, it is because we depended on ourselves and not on the rest of the world.

Billington: The big ideas seem less important to Americans as well. Only half of the U.S. population takes part in elections—it's not so important for them. Americans are afraid that Russia is experiencing a time of trouble, a Weimar period, and that this could lead to an explosive situation, and there are all those nuclear weapons. Both here and in the States there is an eschatological perspective on the dissolution of the USSR, that it's all very unpredictable.

Muchnik: My "small idea" is that people need to know the space (*prostranstvo*) around them, and this is the idea that I think will take root and will become more important to people than the dangerous big ideas.

Billington: We don't fear a return to Communist imperialism, but to an authoritarian regime, like that of Milošević in Serbia. Likhachev makes a distinction between patriotism and nationalism. When there is talk of law-and-order (*poriadok*), the name of Pinochet comes up, and in Russia this kind of leader might be dangerous. Do you think there could be a situation on the territory of the former Soviet Union like there is in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia? We don't exactly expect it, but we still worry about it.

Muchnik: We certainly hope there won't be anything like that. Either there will be a catastrophe or there won't. It's not really something we are looking forward to (*my ne mechtaem ob etom*).

Billington: If this is in fact a Time of Troubles, then at some point a Time of Troubles comes to an end. A Minin and Pozharsky come along, or a Young Guard (*molodaia gvardiia*, a reference from the civil war that followed the 1917 Revolution), a Romanov family appears. The question is: how will *this* Time of Troubles end? It may not end in catastrophe but in an authoritarian regime or a more federally structured state. So we return to Gogol: Russia, where are you headed? It seems that, like the troika in *Dead Souls*, we are always racing back to that first question, and to your sense of what will happen.

Parthé: And it's not only a question of what will be in Russia, but what Russia will be in the world.

Rozov: . . . We are in the midst of a social revolution. First, there is a fiscal crisis because taxes are not being paid and are not being collected, so there isn't enough money to run the country. Second, there is a conflict between the elites, and other popular forces are moving into the fissure that has been created. And, finally, there is geopolitical pressure. In October 1993 we had a small civil war, with dual centers of power (*dvoevlastie*) as in the Time of Troubles: two centers of power, two presidents, two governments. We have a crisis now but there are some hopeful

signs that it will not turn into anything like 1993. There is more of a tendency to find ways to work things out, to come to an agreement on important matters, and the Duma is learning how to strike bargains (*torgovat'sia*). So it doesn't look like the conflicts we have will lead to a complete breakdown.

Where we have a middle class, we are developing a civil society. Moscow is at a better stage than the provinces, and their justice system works, but Moscow depends on us and on the West. There are geopolitical pressures that have been building for twenty years. When the situation arose with the GKO's (*gosudarstvennye kratkosrochnye obligatsii*—short-term government bonds), world capital reacted as they would in the case of a banana republic. We must join the world economy over the next ten to fifteen years, or we will wind up throwing in our lot with China and the Arab world and be seen once again as an evil empire.

Rychkova: There are two alternatives on Siberia: a regional economy will develop, for which a justice system is needed, and that will allay the fears of foreign investors about legal controls and control of criminal activity, or, America will move further away from us.

Sagalaev: America worries about having to be the world's policeman, but we're no Yugoslavia. There are all these dramatic scenarios that are always being written for Russia, all this Western hysteria. We are used to being on the verge of catastrophe—the USSR collapsed, and later the ruble collapsed as well. There is a negative side to popular psychology: on the one hand there are geopolitical realities and considerations, but on the other hand there is daily life (*obydennyi mir*) and a civil society is developing. I don't feel as if Washington or Moscow will decide the future. And I don't think that a catastrophe is on the way. I'm tired of living in this atmosphere of impending crisis. It's as if there has to be a scarecrow (*pugalo*) and it's Russia, the bear, the supporter of world terrorism. But that isn't the way I see it. We can already see a lot of positive processes. How about a discussion like this? This is not a small thing. We are sitting here today having a normal conversation and that is something to think about. This kind of discussion is becoming a regular part of our lives.

Yanovich: We've had ten years of free choice. For the first time in Russia we live not by declarations but by choices. We have freedom: what will each one of us choose, what will each one of us do?

... **Parthé:** There seem to be a great many polls (*oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia*). What do they tell us about what people are reading, where people are getting their information? Western researchers look mostly at newspapers from the capital. It's important to know where else we should be looking for significant material.

Poyzner: The way polls ask questions determines the kind of answers they get. We need to identify not just the current state of national identity, but more importantly, the tendencies in national identity.

Yanovich: We have to understand how the role of the individual and the individualization of roles are working themselves out (*kak realizuiutsia rol' lichnosti i lichnost' roli*), and what kinds of roles there are for the creative personality (*tvorcheskaia lichnost'*) in this society.

Poyzner: There are so many roles—for ethnologists, anthropologists, psychologists. We have to study myths and archetypes—there is so much to study, so much to know.

*As the formal session came to an end, there were comments about the cultural offerings that America sells Russia, which are contributing to a growing cultural semi-literacy (nenachitannost'). This material passes through no external censor and is guided by no moral judgment. **James Billington** pointed out that the American television programs shown in Russia are not representative of the range of programs shown on American television, and are even more unrepresentative of the American people, who are among the most religiously observant in the advanced, industrialized world.*

THE THIRD COLLOQUIUM

The Russian Academy of Sciences Institute for World Economy and International Relations, Moscow, Russia

Friday, December 3, 1999

Opening Session

The Deputy Director of IMEMO, Vladimir Baranovsky, welcomed participants to the institute and described national identity as a fundamental question (bazovyi vopros) for those who study how Russia is adapting to change and how this is reflected in Russia's relationships with the outside world. He then introduced James Billington, calling him a superb connoisseur (velikolepnyi znatok) of Russian culture, civilization, and history, who has done so much as a scholar, analyst, and author to spread information and increase understanding of Russia. Dr. Billington gave a brief history of the Russian identity project and stressed its importance at such a complex (neprostoe) time in relations between the two countries.

Russian faith in the objectivity and political neutrality of Americans doing research on Russian culture seems to have significantly declined. Russian studies (rusistika) in America bear some responsibility for this state of affairs. Unable to distinguish the ephemeral from deep historical tendencies, many Western observers were taken unawares by the events that transpired ten years ago. Today, many of these same experts cannot explain the revival of nationalistic sentiment that is now underway. A more complete understanding of contemporary Russia's cultural and psychological experience is necessary for the West, and for America in particular. A sense of humility in the face of what one does not know is a necessary pre-condition if we are to diminish the mutual non-comprehension between Russia and the West. I hope that our deliberations today will to some degree assist in that process.

Dr. Billington briefly touched on the other reason that brought him to Moscow this week, an organizational meeting with the heads of the National and State Libraries to officially launch the Meeting of Frontiers project. This involves setting up a virtual library (<http://frontiers.loc.gov>) which will tell the parallel history of Americans moving west and Russian moving east, and where they met in Alaska and California. The idea of the frontier is central to the mythology of American identity, and the goal is to present the American and Russian stories and allow people to see where there are parallel lines in development. This is a Congressionally-funded project and Rep. Charles Taylor, Chair of the House Appropriation Committee, accompanied Dr. Billington to Moscow for these meetings.

Baranovsky: The study of parallels between Russian and American identities is very interesting, and it would be easy to ask the questions under discussion today about American identity as well.

At least when we reach points in our colloquium where things are not clear or where we see the biggest problems, we might learn from taking a look at what the situation is in America.

Billington: It is worth noting that you are unlikely to find the French sitting around a conference table wondering what French identity is. We don't hear the English saying things about English identity. Americans, though, do this all the time. We are always asking ourselves who we are and where we are headed, although it's not quite like asking 'Where are you flying, oh proud horse...?'¹⁸

Parthé: If you substitute 'car' for 'horse' the question works pretty well for America.

Igor Chubais: . . . We take up such questions when they are perceived as problems. Russia is experiencing an identity crisis and that's why everyone is talking about it. Evidently in America an identity hasn't been fully formed or it's an ongoing (*dinamichnyi*) process. When everything is clear, people don't talk about it. So the French don't have this problem. . . . When it [identity] exists and is functioning normally, we don't have to think about it. We've experienced it as a problem and that's why since the end of the 19th century we've had an ongoing search (*poisk*) for an answer.

The content of national identity in the Russian (*rossiiskii*) context

1. What, in your view, is the most substantial quality that is characteristic of Russian national identity? What is your understanding of national identity in the Russian context of ethnic and cultural diversity?

2. Variations of Russianness: ethnic, civic, religious, cultural, and territorial definitions. According to the dominant tendencies today, can one speak of Russia moving in the direction of a strongly-centered nation-state (*gosudarstvennost'*) based on ethnicity?

Billington: The second question helps explain what we are looking for in the first. What is the key to this identity—is it ethnic, civic, religious, cultural, or territorial? And are we talking about an ethnic (*russkii*) or a civic (*rossiiskii*) identity? I've found that in such discussions this often isn't completely clear.

. . . **Chubais:** .. Russia is experiencing a polysystemic crisis. . . . If the most acute (*samyi ostryi*) crisis is economic, then the deepest crisis is over ideas and identity. We aren't sure who we are and what our identity is, and until we can do that we won't be able to solve any of our other problems. Some people insist that there is no crisis. Others say that the crisis arose only in 1996, when President Yeltsin announced that we needed a new national idea. A third group says that the crisis arose in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed (*kogda rukhnul Sovetskii Soiuz*).

I'm convinced that the crisis arose towards the end of the 19th century. Dostoevsky, Berdyaev, Solovyev and other powerful Russian thinkers. . . .wrote extensively about Russian national identity. What kind of crisis was this? And what kind of identity do we have? We can

only answer this question when we take into account that we are talking about a process, a dynamic process. . . . We have to talk about what has taken place, what are the tendencies and the lines [of development].

At the end of the 19th century we had a crisis of ideas. . . . Russian identity was built around three principles, three fundamental values: Orthodoxy, imperial policies such as the expansion of the nation's territory, and peasant collectivism (*obshchinnyi kollektivizm*). All three principles were unstable (*shatalis'*) at the end of the 19th century. The expansion of land had exhausted itself and come to an end (*ischerpalo*), as it reached natural limits in the south. Western expansion was pretty much finished by the end of the 18th century. Orthodoxy, like all Christianity, was in the midst of a crisis. Nietzsche wrote about this in Europe and Dostoevsky wrote about it in Russia. And with Orthodoxy in a crisis all sorts of phenomena began to appear—nihilists, terrorists, bomb-throwers (*nigilisty, terroristy, bombisty, vse eti -isty*), all these types who caused problems for Russia. And the third element, peasant collectivism, was also in a crisis. As a result of the Stolypin reforms the peasants were leaving the commune (*obshchina*), and it began to dissolve as a social structure and as a social community (*obshchnost'*). . . .

What was the Bolshevik answer to all of this? The October Revolution itself—like the February revolt—did not happen by chance. The whole spiritual movement that took off at the beginning of the century, the Silver Age, with its wonderful music and art, was part of a spiritual quest (*dukhovnyi poisk*), a search for an answer to the questions: Who are we? How do we change the foundation (*fundament*) and restructure what the state is based on? The Bolsheviks won this discussion and proposed, or rather thrust upon us, their answer. . . .

In order to do what they wanted to do, they had to establish a totalitarian regime. It was unnatural, it went against the logic of Russia's prior development. So we got totalitarianism, and expansion went on. Orthodoxy, which was unstable and in need of support, was cut off, together with other religions, and the communist idea, communist ideology, was set up in its place. And the peasant collective was replaced with Soviet collectivization, all directed from above. Every Soviet person found himself in a number of collectives—the pioneers, the Komsomol, the Party, at work. . . . Bolshevism worked against the logic of a thousand years of Russian history, and the result was that after seventy years, this government fell. This was inevitable. Although seventy years seems like a long time from the point of view of one person's life, from the point of view of history, it is nothing. And today we find ourselves in what might be called the second edition of the crisis of ideas. We are again faced with the same questions we failed to answer at the beginning of the century: Where should we go? Who are we? (*Kuda zhe nam idti? Kto my?*).

There are only four possibilities, four paths that we can follow to restore our identity.

(1) The new Russia could become just another version of the Soviet Union, under a different name and a different flag, but it would be basically the same thing, a *nomenklatura* totalitarian state. This is a dead end, not a way out (*eto tupik, a ne vykhod*).

(2) The new Russia could renounce all its history, throw out its entire past, begin everything from the beginning (*s nulia*) and copy everything from the West. There are advocates of this, but it is also hopeless (*besperspektivno*), also a dead-end. Even if we constructed everything on a Western model, we wouldn't be comfortable with the results. . . . We have somewhat different sets of values, we live a bit differently. We are Europe, and Germany is

Europe, and France is Europe, but these are all different Europes (*I my Evropa, i Germaniia Evropa, i Frantsiia Evropa, no raznaia Evropa*). . . .

(3) Russia can link up with its traditions, with the logic of its development, with its history. There was an unraveling of the knot (*uzel*) of traditions and values and texts at the beginning of the century, but this can be restored in the 21st century. The third path is the only one that is acceptable (*priemlemyi*). We parted the Iron Curtain, but the red substructure that was built after 1917 still has not been dismantled. We understand that we have been cut off from the outside world, but we've understood only poorly how we were torn away from our own roots and our own history. The path of self-reunification is also a path of returning to our roots, and returning to Europe, because historically Russia was always part of Europe. . . . This is the path to restore our identity.

Billington: What is this path called?

Chubais: It's called the path of continuity, of succession (*preemstvo*), and there is a group of scholars who study this joining up of traditions (*shkola preemstva*). There are philosophers, historians, legal experts, experts on religion, language, and culture who have worked out a precise mechanism, an algorithm for this reunification, for how this could be done. This is the path and school of continuity with historical Russia.

(4) There is a fourth path, and it's the one which has been implemented by those in power today, which can be called the mixed-salad alternative (*put' vinegreta*), which makes use of all of the first three paths, which are incompatible with each other. So, there is the official burial of the remains of Nicholas II, and the hospitably open doors of the Lenin Mausoleum, when the latter is responsible for having killed the former—and people bow respectfully to one and the other. We restore the Order of St. Andrew, and celebrate the anniversary of the KGB and the Young Communist League (*Komsomol*). These are things that cannot be joined together—you either go in one direction or the other. . . . But the power structure, which is very weak, tries to lean on any group or force it can, so it is playing every game you can think of.

. . . The urge for expansion that has been so important in our history has to move from an increase in quantity to an increase in quality. . . . We shouldn't rail about Sevastopol really being a Russian city—unfortunately, that train has already departed (*k sozhaleniiu, etot poezd ushel*). . . . We shouldn't be trying to put border guards on Georgian territory. . . . We need to rebuild our own country. The government's main expenses are for defense—what about science, health care, education, culture, new ideas, new technology, and new spiritual initiatives?...

We need to go from expansion to reconstruction, and we have to think about values. In order to reunite with Russia's history, we need to have a deep feeling for thinking historically and for getting our values from history. There is a special role and value for historical knowledge in Russia today. We have schools which specialize in subjects like English or biology, but all our schools should also have a historical emphasis. We need to figure out what country we're living in. We didn't begin our existence as a country in 1917 but back in the eighth century. . . .

We don't need a democracy just because we are copying from the West. . . . We need it because it flows logically from our history. During the expansion stage, we didn't need

democracy—no one was demanding it. At the reconstruction (*obustroistvo*) stage, democracy is very necessary to the life of the country. Along with this, we must also keep in mind the importance of the Orthodox tradition. . . . If you look at Orthodoxy not from the point of view of believers and non-believers, but from the vantage-point of cultural studies (*kul'turologiia*), what is the specific character of Orthodoxy?. . . . The Orthodox tradition affirms the priority of spiritual values...; if we want to preserve our identity, then the spiritual (*dukhovnost'*) must play a special role in this. A feeling for democracy, comprehensive restructuring, and spiritual values—these will be the characteristics of a revived Russian identity, and they already exist in part.

After 1917, things were completely different from the point of view of symbols and key ideas. . . . And the laws changed: in December 1917 there was a decree that forbade any use of the entire previous body of laws, which meant a total break (*razryv*) with the past. Today we can try to revive a Soviet Union that was severed (*razorvano*) from the Russian past, or we can try to reconnect with that past, with historical Russia, to restore the continuity of Russian history. . . . We need restitution [of legal traditions], we need to reconnect with Russian law, to use Russian law as a basis, and then add what is required in Russia today. . . .

Baranovsky: How far back in the past do we have to go?

Billington: Do we go as far back as something like the landed assembly (*zemskii sobor*)?

Chubais: The fact is that before the beginning of the [20th] century Russia had a completely normal government. I'm not saying it was the best of structures, but it was normal. What we have after 1917 is a pathology—the way a person can lose control, this state lost control.

Baranovsky: What do you think of the theory that this pathology began during Peter's time?

Chubais: . . . There was nothing pathological about it. The reforms were complex and costly and there were many victims. . . . From the point of view of morality it's difficult to evaluate, but from a historical point of view we can see how the reforms that Peter enacted are operative up to the present day. We live in the midst of these reforms. He established the port of St. Petersburg, and that port is still part of Russia. . . . The blood that was shed during Stalin's reign was shed for nothing (*vpustuiu*), in vain. He expanded the Soviet Union and created the Socialist camp (*sotslager'*), which lasted thirty years and then fell apart, and there is nothing left of it. The Petrine reforms have been vindicated by history as being a logical development and they are still working. The Bolshevik reforms brought us catastrophe.

. . . **Sergei Chugrov:** . . . I see as the main feature of our national identity the fact that we are always searching for our national identity. The West values results—we concentrate on process. We see internal contradictions (*vnutrenniaia protivorechivost', antonimnost'*). The Russian character lurches (*mechetsia*) between extremes, while trying to limit these extremes. The Western type of thinking is sufficient unto itself (*samodostatochnyi*), while the Russian thinker rushes from one thing to another, never achieving that feeling of self-sufficiency. There are pluses and minuses to this.

On the downside are internal disharmony (*razlad*), inner conflict..., an attraction to Utopias (*sklonnost' k strane Utopii*), doubts, a casting about between contradictory impulses. The pluses include: openness, the tendency to act in an extroverted way, the ability to make Western models and values and types of behavior work for Russia. From here we get other characteristics, like the tendency to move between the formal law (*zakonnost'*) and conscience and the concept of justice (*spravedlivost'*). . . .

Baranovsky: I think that to the Russian way of thinking, legality and justice are incompatible in principle.

. . . **Chugrov:** Nevertheless, there is an attempt to make formal law and justice compatible. Our national character collapsed and we have to reconstruct what we understood by the word justice. It's not a formal concept. . . . It's a constant appeal to conscience. As a result it turns into a kind of compensatory mechanism where life is difficult and there is a despotic suppression of individual identity. A person thinks: "I know that we live badly, but I have a conscience, and a conscience is better than power or legality." Unfortunately, we wind up with self-affirmation by means of self-obliteration (*samoutverzhdenie cherez samounichtozhenie*)—a peculiar psychological mechanism. . . .

Chubais: The deepest crisis is the lack of a national idea. When they start trying to solve that, things will go differently.

Chugrov: National consciousness was exaggerated by the fall of the Soviet Union—there's a kind of post-operative shock. . . . Now we have the struggle [for power] in its pure form, without solving any economic or social questions. It's the struggle to restore national identity that is based on a new imperial idea, unfortunately. Because of that the developmental paths (*puti razvitiia*) of Russia and the West are going in different directions. The Kozyrev period of reckless admiration (*bezogliadnoe voskhishtchenie*) of the West was very brief. Kozyrev was still in the cabinet when this approach began to be criticized from all sides. The West is at fault for this because they treated Russia with an eye still on Cold War barriers, and if they saw Russia as a partner, it was as a junior partner and not an equal.

The window of opportunity (*okno vozmozhnosti*)¹⁹ began to close in 1993. At the G-7 summit in Tokyo, U.S. Secretary of State Christopher slapped Kozyrev on the back and asked him why Russia wasn't behaving better and insisted on selling materials to India which would allow them to produce rockets. This kind of humiliation provokes an upsurge of imperial ideas and imperial pride. If the West had treated Russia as an equal partner—even without giving money, even superficially—then a lot of the upheaval [of 1993] could have been avoided. Instead, the fighters went to their respective corners, and now we have Uncle Sam and Uncle Vanya looking out [at the world] from different sides of the room.

. . . **Viktor Aksiuchits:** . . . If you want to speak about their [the Russian people's] most essential (*sushchestvennyi*) characteristics, then you have to admit that the first act of national self-consciousness, the baptism into Orthodoxy, was a religious act. . . . It was after the baptism that we see the different neighboring tribes begin to crystallize into one people. . . . The Russian

people, as the subject of a historical act, become the people who organized the state (*narod gosudarstvoobrazovatel'nyi*) and the people who created Russian culture and Russian Orthodox civilization. Other groups entered into this civilization, just as other cultural streams, languages, and religions fed into it. The religious side of national character has the following basic characteristics: the metaphysical, collective spirituality, universality, and binary oppositions (*metafizichnost', sobornost', universal'nost', antonimichnost'*).

Baranovsky: Isn't *antonimichnost'* the same as *protivorechivost'* (showing a contradiction) or *vnutrenniaia konfliktnost'* (internal or intrinsic conflict)?

Aksiuchits: No, they're not the same. *Antonimichnost'* is a deeper and more complex phenomenon. Russian consciousness is shaped by these principles and everything else is grouped around them. . . . The metaphysical orientation of the Russian character is the primary reason and source for the unprecedented creation of a state system for a large territory in the tough conditions of northern Eurasia. Only the existence of an overarching ideal (*sverkhideal*) made it possible for the Russian people to create on this territory a unique state structure and a unique culture and civilization. You can't explain this by referring to more mundane factors.

The spiritually collective (*sobornyi*) aspect of the Russian national character allowed a multi-national state and a multi-national Russian (*rossiiskaia*) culture to take shape within the framework of Russian Orthodox civilization. . . . In forming a multi-national state, the Russian people did not destroy, forcibly convert, or enslave others. This can be attributed to a sense of spiritual collectivity and not to anything pragmatic. Universality explains the unusual openness to both Western and Eastern influences. It accounts for the ability to yield to an influence and grow from this exposure, and the fact that Russian civilization has assimilated many antithetical influences.

As for *antonimichnost'*, there is of course a baser form of it, a tendency to extremes and polarization (*sklonnost' k krainosti i poliarizatsii*). But it is also tied to the Christian message: death is defeated by death, God appears as man. At the higher stages of Russian consciousness, this principle of opposites resolves itself into a special kind of harmony. For example, in this enormously strong, centralized state, with its tradition of subordination, you also see anarchy and *vol'nitsa* (a collective term for freemen, outlaws, runaway serfs, and Cossacks).

Baranovsky: *Volnitsa* is like freedom, only worse.

Aksiuchits: These characteristics aren't mutually exclusive, but rather simultaneously existing. Along with the strict centralization required to govern this country, we find a strong tendency to local self-government, which increases the further you get from the capital. You can see this in the 19th century Russian Empire: Finland's constitution, the Kingdom of Poland, the considerable autonomy allowed the Caucasus and Central Asia. There are a lot more examples, but this is the essence of the *genotip* (the basic genetic group that generates a number of related organisms) of the Russian national character. It can manifest itself in a direct or a distorted form, but it is on this base that various cultural archetypes develop (*na etom naslaivaiutsia raznogo roda arkhetipy*), the specific cultural and historical forms. . . . Chubais also mentioned a number of these characteristics as coming together: the metaphysical, the collective, the universal,

imperial policy, and Orthodoxy. I see them more as social-historical manifestations of a primordial (*iznachal'nyi*) national genotype.

Baranovsky: The end of your statement shows a certain coming together of your two positions [Aksiuchits and Chubais].

Chubais: All the same, there is a lot that I would have to dispute.

Baranovsky: Igor Borisovich [Chubais], don't you see a similarity between *antonimichnost'* and your fourth variant, which combined the other three paths into what you called a vinaigrette?

Chubais: Those are quite different concepts.

Baranovsky: But what about your example of keeping Lenin's Mausoleum open while burying the tsar with great solemnity? Isn't this an example of things that are completely incompatible and yet coexist?

Chubais: No, it isn't at all the same. There is a difference between having hot water and cold water, and having hot water and an old boot.

Billington: What makes these oppositions significant? What do they explain? Where does it get you to say that on the one hand, we have this set of characteristics, while on the other hand, we have their opposites?

Aksiuchits: You will hardly find this degree of *antonimichnost'*—of both knowledge and character—in any other Christian civilization.

... **Billington:** There are similar types of oppositions in Spain. Perhaps this *antonimichnost'* comes from them [Spain and Russia], being at the outermost edge of Europe. The Spanish are also very religious. So you find this dualism in Spain, but not, for instance, in France, England, or Holland. This is important in understanding the history of Russia, especially when you think of times when there has been a split (*raskol*) in society and in religion. But what is specifically Russian about this?

Aksiuchits: I tried to show that these oppositions are at the very core (*v samom genezise*) of the Russian people and their identity. The first action of the Russian people was a religious one. The Russian people make their appearance on the historical stage with their baptism, and Orthodoxy is what united the different tribes into one people. This is unprecedented: the loftiest truths give birth to ethnic unification. This one act of baptism has all the elements in it: the metaphysical, the collective, the universal, and the principle of binary oppositions (*antonimizm*).

Billington: And of course there is dual faith (*dvoeverie*, the juxtaposition, even melding, of Russian folk belief and Orthodox beliefs and practices).

Aksiuchits: That kind of opposition can grow into a real split (*razryv*), which harms the organism. I'm talking about an opposition that brings the organism to life, that's part of its constitution. . . .

Viktor Kuvaldin: . . . We are living through a rather curious (*liubopytnyi*) period. Behind the crisis of national consciousness and of identity, it's as if we are trying not to notice that what has collapsed are myths that were attached not only to the Soviet period but which have much deeper roots.

. . . Somehow I can't understand how a people who supposedly have such a well-developed identity show so little interest in the fact that [after 1991] 25 million Russians wound up living outside the country. The reaction of Russian society is inexplicable. I don't understand how a people who are supposed to be so collectively minded have evolved forms of asocial behavior that don't exist in the United States—at least I've never come across them. Russia in the 1990s has given birth to a completely wild, coarse type of individualism whose equal you will not find even in a very individualistic country like America.

Chubais: We're in the midst of a crisis, and that's why everything is breaking down.

Kuvaldin: . . . I'm hearing about the people in terms of national self-consciousness, a strong state principle, collectivism, and a strong feeling for Orthodoxy. Even taking into consideration all the horrors of the Bolshevik terror, how is it that our religious values were so thoroughly destroyed? It didn't turn out this way in other countries. Poland, I grant, had a shorter and less intense totalitarian experience, but it is also just a more religious country, while our church turned into a branch (*filial*) of the KGB. I don't think that the construction of new myths is an adequate response to the collapse of the older ones, and in the nineties we have been actively engaged in new myth-making (*novoe mifotvorchestvo*). Rather than looking at relations in the social sphere (*sotsium*) for answers to our questions about Russian national identity, I think that the answer lies deeper down and that we need to look at our attitudes to space (*prostranstvo*) and time. We exist in a tremendous expanse and over a long period of historical time.

It seems to me that as a people we have been made sick by all that space (*my bol'ny prostranstvom*). . . . We swallow up (*pogloshchaem*) space, and then we don't do much with it. We don't perceive it as land (*zemlia*), and we never have enough time to make good use of it. In this sense, we are hostages (*zalozhniki*) of this space. . . . Because the space we conquered doesn't support life that easily, we evolved a particular kind of agriculture which is distinguished by its very low productivity and its limited variety of crops and by special forms of economic exchange. . . . And this has led to the creation of a special kind of political organization. The fact that in some places we overcame all these obstacles in the 19th century led to a rupture (*vzryv*) in Russian culture and Russian thought.

Billington: In what sense a rupture? Is it because you then have a break between the city and the countryside?

Kuvaldin: Yes, a break in the sense of intellectual and artistic creation. In a few locations, in some of the major cities of European Russia, we were able to cast off the chains of that vast

expanse which had shaped Russian culture up until then. And with that liberation came the great artistic and scientific achievements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. And I see this as the origin of the break in the flow of Russian history (*porvannyi ritm russkoi istorii*). We exchanged space for time and broke with our previous nomadic existence.

We are always behind (*my vse vremia otstaivaem*) with our unique forms of agriculture, economic and social organization, and government. As a result, we are always trying to catch up (*my vse vremia dogoniaem*). This is how we got the Petrine reforms, Aleksandr II, Bolshevism, and the attempted reforms of the Gorbachev era. Everything is very concentrated, it's like a race against time, and the country is never prepared for these changes. . . . By the beginning of the 20th century, we had exhausted the possibilities for absorbing territory without coming into conflict with neighboring countries. We exhausted the possibilities of an unmodernized society. We were substantially behind Europe and the United States and we tried to catch up economically, socially, and politically. Our problem, our task, at the beginning of the 20th century was to try to return Russia to historical time while still holding onto our vast expanse. One possibility (*vozmozhnyi variant*) would have been to trade space in order to buy time. But the logic of the entire period of the Bolsheviks and the Soviets was to hold onto that space while rejoining historical time. . . . That led to a crisis (*krakh*) at the end of the 20th century.

I don't think that we lost the Cold War. We brought it to an end in a favorable way (*na ochen' pochetnom uslovii*). But we lost something else: the struggle to bring this vast Eurasian territory, from the western borders of the Soviet Union to the Pacific Ocean, into the next century. . . . The problem of Russian consciousness at the beginning of the 20th century involved finding a way to give a modern form to this vast expanse of land which we had gathered with difficulty, and which we found hard to develop, but which had become part of our identity.

Aleksei Kara-Murza: I agree with Chugrov that identity in Russia is a subject of much disagreement (*konfliktnyi protsess*), and that there is no single Russian identity. . . . To show the conflicted character of the identity problem, I will refer to three key periods of Russian history, when what we now call an identity crisis was most sharply felt.

(1) The first major crisis comes with the Petrine reforms. You can talk about the enserfment of the peasantry and the church schism under Aleksei Mikhailovich [Peter's father and the second Romanov tsar, 1645-76], but it seems to me that the height of the pre-Revolutionary identity crisis was stimulated by reaction to Peter's reforms. The two warring parties—the Westernizers (*zapadniki*) and the nativists (*samobytniki*)—who tried to resolve what Russia is in quite different ways, formed around the question “What did Peter make of Russia?” (*Chto Peter sdelał s Rossiei?*). . . .

This isn't just a question of nuances and approaches, but touches on existential questions. Half of the thinkers say that Peter gave birth to Russia, created Russia, and in opening up a window to Europe led us from darkness to light and from death to life. . . . The other half, the nativists, say that he killed Russia (*Petr ubil Rossiuu*). There's no more critical moment than this in the history of a culture or a national consciousness. Arguments about the French Revolution, arguments about American identity don't reach this level of stark oppositions. Either he gave life or he killed (*libo rodil, libo ubil*). This is the most radical Russian question up till the present time.

(2) The second radical identity crisis is Bolshevism-Communism. Yesterday we got the first copies of a book that Polyakov and I have been working on for eight years. It contains everything of substance that Russians had to say about Bolshevism in Russian culture. The argument took place most freely in emigration, the question of what Bolsheviks did with Russia. You will come across the same sort of oppositions: Lenin gave birth to a new, modern state, or, Lenin killed the state. . . .

(3) The third identity crisis—the problem that Professor Kuvaldin spoke about—began in 1985 with the Gorbachev reforms, or in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev and Yeltsin gave birth to a new state, leading the country from the totalitarian darkness to the light, from non-existence into historical existence, and moved onto the broad road (*stolbovaia doroga*) of world civilization. Gorbachev—or Yeltsin, depending on the particular nuance—also killed the Russian state. Up until the present, Russian social consciousness has been divided in two by this question of life or death, darkness or light, so what is a plus for one side is a minus for the other side. There aren't just heroes, there are diametrically opposed heroes. Some compare Peter to Christ or to the Apostle Peter, and others call him the Anti-Christ. Lenin is the creator of a new state, or he is a murderer. And it's the same with Gorbachev and Yeltsin—we find the same model throughout Russian history.

Chubais: It's a conflict between the old and the new, over which is better.

Kara-Murza: If what we have now is the perennial situation of either/or, then Russian identity is split and in a state of great conflict. So there is no single Russian identity. . . . The second important thesis has to do with the question of what it is that makes Russia possible, what held it together?. . . . I think that there are three forms of integration that hold the community (*obshchnost'*, *sotsium*) together:

(1) As an ethnocracy (*etnokratiia*), where the ethnic sign has a unifying power. . . .

(2) The second way is through state service, through a vertical status hierarchy. We are close because we are on the same professional ladder and we both have the same boss at the top. It's integration by means of service and power.

(3) The third principle is more contemporary. It's a horizontal integration through the reconfiguring (*obustroistvo*) of territories and cultures, based on the principle of the nation-state (*politicheskaia natsiia*). On the one hand, it's half-ethnic, because the nation is partly an ethnic construct. On the other hand, the nation is built to a significant degree on horizontal ties, while the imperial principle involves a vertical structure.

These three principles are of course not mutually exclusive, but at any given moment, one will dominate. I think that my colleague Chubais correctly names the three identity principles that, when taken together, made Russia possible before the Revolution: Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality. Which is the most important? Religious theoreticians, at least the liberal ones, all agree that while the wish was for the principles of Orthodoxy and Orthodox communities (*pravoslavnye obshchiny*) to guide the nation, in practice it is the imperial principle that has been decisive. It subordinated the church to itself, made the church part of the state (*ogosudarstvennaia tserkov'*). And that is a tragedy—I agree with Aksiuchits.

The imperial principle dominated, and it was Peter who made this happen. He brought communal structures into the table of ranks, subordinating them to the interests of the empire. And I think that Chubais is right that Communist identity recreated these structures: instead of Orthodoxy there was Communism, instead of the imperial table of ranks there was the hierarchy of Party committees, and the new Soviet collectivism took a variety of forms. What I can't say is how one can call this a violation of Russian tradition—it was a continuation of Russian (*rossiiskii*) tradition. These traditions were winding down, and the Bolsheviks had to use force to maintain this old imperial logic. . . . Don't say that there is a fundamental conflict between pre-revolutionary and Soviet Russia—the latter actually represents an attempt to forcibly continue this system. . . . Andropov and Stalin to an extent modeled themselves on Peter the Great. Whether they did this intentionally or not, they worked in similar ways. Stalin for all practical purposes killed his son, as did Peter. There can be no ethnic or family feeling in the imperial setting—everyone serves the ruler. Stalin said: “I'm not giving up a field marshal for a soldier.” His son was in captivity and Stalin wouldn't give up Paulus to get him back. And there are many other examples of this type.

Baranovsky: But Nicholas II tried to save his son by abdicating for himself and for Aleksei.

Kara-Murza: He departed from the paradigm. Andropov in 1983 was trying to reanimate the imperial principle, especially the idea of cleaning up (*ochistit'*) the empire—once again, a man from the security branch.

Billington: What specifically was he doing to clean up the empire?

Kara-Murza: He was trying to clean up the police force (*militsiia*), which was beginning to steal, to restore the honest profile of a Party member, especially by bringing in younger people, and to fight against the shadow economy because in an empire you can't have anything shady. Peter wrote that the ruler's eye has to see everything—everything has to be regulated, mechanized, and completely transparent. We learn from sociological surveys that Andropov and Peter the Great are in some ways equated in mass consciousness. I have the impression that Putin's people understand this archetype. . . . So Putin doesn't have to come up with a new model—unfortunately nothing new has come along in a while. The political nation has a hard time functioning in Russia, and I don't exclude the possibility that [post-Soviet] Russia is not possible as a political nation. . . .

Chubais: Then Russia must perish as a nation.

Kara-Murza: . . . Let's not talk about myths, but about real political possibilities. . . . Let's clear away (*ubrat'*) the myths and come up with some actual constructs (*real'nye konstruktsii*) that we can live with. I am ready to work on reestablishing the model of Russia as a political entity, although I can see that it's a lot more complicated than in America. As Solonevich—whose thinking comes close to Aksiuchits—correctly said: geography limits Russia's freedom. If in England geography guarantees their freedom, in Russia freedom is limited by geography. . . .

... **Chubais:** ... There are some things I need to clarify. ... I'll start with Kara-Murza and the question of whether the Soviet Union is a continuation of Russia or not, and whether one can return to old Russia. It would be madness (*bezumie*) simply to return to pre-Revolutionary Russia. We would wind up with 1917 all over again, so we would just be repeating everything. What I'm talking about is a return to what there was at the beginning of the century, but having untangled the problems and contradictions theoretically, and having overcome the ideological crisis (*ideinyi krizis*) that was solved in the past through Bolshevism, totalitarianism, and the Gulag. Russia wore itself out (*ischerpalo sebia*) this way. Forty-three million people passed through the Gulag system—do we want to raise that red banner once again?

We can move another way, not directly, but along a more complex path—history isn't one line or one tendency. In trying to overcome the ideological crisis of that time perhaps we'll see another solution (*inoi vykhod*), not Bolshevism. In some ways the Soviet Union is a continuation of Russia, but the most primitive kind of continuation. We need to find a way out of that situation—expansion must be transformed into rebuilding.

As for what Professor Kuvaldin has said, any system can be simplified in two ways (*dvoiako*), quantitatively or qualitatively. At the time of the Petrine reforms, Russia wasn't outside of time or backward. It was just that the European countries had stopped their quantitative growth 100-200 years earlier than Russia, so they were small, but well-structured (*obustroeny*). They moved on to another historical stage much earlier. Charles XII waged war against Peter and lost. But, as they say, the winner doesn't realize how much he has lost, because we continued to grow while Western countries had cut off this process.

Peter represents an attempt to combine quantitative growth—the window he hacked through [to Europe], the northern part of the Caspian Sea region, and the 20-year war with the Swedes—with qualitative development. At the same time he was building internally, starting up over 200 factories. These dual processes cost a great deal, but on the whole he was successful. And in this sense, the Petrine reforms do not mark a rupture with Russia. ... Orthodoxy, peasant collectivism, and imperial policy all remained. How can we say that Peter tore Russia apart? He didn't tear it apart, he continued its existence (*on ne razorval, on prodolzhit*), and set in motion the costly process of restructuring the country.

You [Kuvaldin] talk about the choice being space or time: we gain space and we lose time. That's a pretty good model. ... America expanded until it reached the other shore and had gotten rid of most of the Indians, but it moved rather quickly across this space, while we expanded and gathered land for five centuries, until the middle of the 19th century. By the beginning of the 20th century, no amount of effort could have continued this quantitative growth.

Aleksandr I understood this—he beat Napoleon, and with the Russian army moved in a triumphal march into Paris, but he didn't annex any land or people. He liberated half of Europe and then he returned. Stalin, on the other hand, occupied half of Europe and, as a result, lost everything. ... He didn't understand what age he was living in—expansion was no longer possible. ...

Aksiuchits: The attempt to set aside the religious and philosophical aspects of the topic impoverishes any examination of the question. There was a remark about communism being a continuation of pre-Revolutionary Russia. My dear friends, the anti-Christ is not a further development or extension of Christ—it is the direct antithesis of Christ. Communism has been defined in many ways; you can even call it a psychic disease, but it is also a religious, spiritual

one. This is a sickness of self-consciousness, a sickness of the human spirit and the spirit of the nation.

Looking at matters from that point of view, a lot more begins to make sense: (1) that communism is a spiritual illness; (2) that all the people who carried this ideological obsession (*ideomaniia*), this spiritual sickness, were raised on European culture and that none of them were products of Russian culture, so that Russian culture didn't develop an immunity to these people. That explains why this god-bashing (*bogoborcheskii*) communist ideology was so destructive in Russia, why here it utterly ruined (*dotla razrushil*) the church, not because the Russian people or character were drawn to it, but because it was the absolute antipode of the Russian mentality and Russian religious consciousness.

. . . The revival of the Russian state structure and Russian culture is directly dependent on the rebirth of the Russian people. And identity becomes the pivotal question (*sterzhnevoi vopros*). Now we are at that relatively brief stage where the Russian government organism is in such a state of destruction, dismemberment, collapse, and decomposition (*razrushenie, raschlenenie, raspad, razlozhenie*) because of all the internal effects of this illness and all the external circumstances surrounding it, that to restore it would require a national dictatorship of the kind that [Ivan] II²⁰'in suggested²⁰, that is, a strong authoritarian regime with a national orientation. . . . If it gets much worse and Russia is breaking up into provinces (*gubernii*), then we may get a very tough fascist regime.

. . . As for the first question, "Who is a Russian?," even with a distinctive genetic source, there are some unusual criteria for national identity. A Russian is someone for whom the Russian language is native and Russian culture is one with which he identifies himself, independent of what ethnic group he belongs to. That's why Russian culture has assimilated material from so many other cultures. And in that sense, if you look at all the territory located outside the Russian Federation on which there is a Russian (*ruskii*) majority, one of three things can happen: (1) the population can assimilate and cease to be Russian, which is possible, but painful; (2) we can repatriate this Russian population, or they can return at a more moderate pace, which means that (3) the best, most natural alternative is the peaceful reuniting of the lands on which there are large Russian populations. This will happen to the extent that Russians begin to identify themselves as Russians (*samoidentifikatsiia sebia kak russkie*). This self-identification takes the form of instinctive self-consciousness (*samosoznanie*). It exists, it is functioning, and we see the results of its functioning around us today. The Russian people lives (*ruskii narod zhiv*), and to the extent that it lives it can try to bring this about.

Kuvaldin: Among those gathered here are political analysts, ideologists, and real-life politicians. Aleksei [Kara-Murza] is too modest to mention that he is part of the brain trust at the Union of Right Forces (*Soiuz pravvykh sil*), and that he works on these sorts of problems for them. . . . The most important thing, and here I agree with Professor Kara-Murza, is that whether we like it or not, Communist Russia was fully a successor of the previous state. The integration took place on a number of levels, including the establishment of a secular religion (*svetskaia religiiia*), the military-industrial complex, and a unified command economy. And [like tsarist Russia] they wound up with a set of unsolved problems (*nereshaemye zadachi*). During the Stalinist period, the Soviet empire stretched from the middle of Europe all the way to North Korea. The [Soviet]

attempt to modernize the empire and expand it was unrealistic, and we all know how it turned out. . . .

Chubais: I need to say that I am not a supporter (*storonnik*) of any party—I despise all Russian politicians for having sold out. The only thing I’m a supporter of is a civil society (*grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*). [This is in response to a remark made by Kuvardin about Chubais’ political opinions possibly influencing his thinking on the question of continuity.]

Baranovsky: There seems to be a real rejection (*ottorzhenie*) of any association with the contemporary political class. That’s typical of the Russian national character.

The discussion over lunch was not recorded, but included comments by Kara-Murza on the groups fielding candidates in the upcoming December 19 Duma elections, which he felt could not be called parties, since they mostly consisted of one strong personality and assorted followers. He believed that a party must include a number of people who take turns in leadership positions, unlike Yabloko, for instance). His interest in the Union of Right Forces was based in part on the fact that they were an alliance of twenty groups involving many capable people. The political scene was still structured on a power/anti-power (vlast’/anti-vlast’) axis. When asked his opinion of several prominent pre-revolutionary buildings in Moscow torn down during the Soviet period and recently reconstructed, Kara-Murza said that this would create the illusion for future generations that nothing had happened. Conveying the country’s historical record fully and accurately was very important.

Russia and the World

3. How do Russians define themselves in terms of the international community? How should Western countries and the international community define them?

4. How valid or useful are any of the following terms for describing the cultural-historical place of Russia in the broader context of world civilization: “a land of European culture,” “a European state,” “a third world country with nuclear weapons,” “a unique country, whose recent experience contains ‘some important lessons’ for mankind”?

Baranovsky: Even though we didn’t exhaust the possibilities of the first two questions, half of our time is gone, so we should go on to the next set, which concern Russia and the world. But first I would like to welcome the American Ambassador, James Collins. We are getting to a more provocative topic this afternoon, how the theme of our identity gets played out against the context of relations with other countries and in international associations, and how Russia is perceived and how it perceives other nations.

Kara-Murza: We’ve talked about internal identity, self-identity (*samoidentichnost’*) and ways in which Russia has not completely worked this out. Now we are talking about external identity

(*vneschniaia identichnost'*), Russia on the outside (*Rossiiia vovne*), how the country positions itself in the international sphere. The conflicting, mutually exclusive conceptions of how to describe the present situation belong to three basic groups.

(1) The first idea is that Russia is Europe, that it is genetically descended from Christian civilization, albeit in its Eastern variant, so it's Eastern Europe. Variants of this idea see Russia as a Europe that is underdeveloped (*nedorazvitaia*), sick (*bol'naia*), failed (*neudavshaiasia*), or just-born-but-already-corrupted (*tol'ko nachavshaiasia rozhdat'sia no uzhe isporchennaia*). There is also the belief that Russia is the best Europe (*luchshaia Evropa*), to use an expression coined by Georgii Fedotov ..., the idea that Russia is Europe is the one that I agree with.

(2) The second idea is that Russia is Eurasia, and in this sense, a Eurasia in opposition to Europe. Lev Gumilev believed that in a certain sense the Russian and Turkic peoples complemented each other, that the Russians were simultaneously Slavic and Turkic. From this you get neo-Eurasians, the interest in Chingiz Khan as part of the Russian genetic constitution (*genotip*), the opposition of Eurasia and Europe. In this conception, Christianity doesn't play much of a role. . . .

(3) The third idea is one that comes from the early Slavophiles and can be traced from there to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Russia is neither West nor East, Russia is the North, the idea of the northernness (*severianstvo*) of Russia. Russia is not Europe, but it also has no relationship of any kind to Asia. Russia is the North, it is Orthodox, directly in opposition to Europeanness with its Latin confession, and to Islam.

These are three powerful conceptions, existing in opposition to each other, with little in common. While there are moments in history when they were brought together by (*za schet*) the imperial idea, they could only be united through force (*nasil'stvennym sposobom*). . . . How could you harmonize these identities in a non-coercive way? I completely agree with Professor Aksiuchits that this country is Christian at its base (*po genotipu*), but in the 20th century there are massive problems of a culturological nature. Judging by the classic theoretical works, civilizations are formed on the basis of one religion (*tsivilizatsii konstatiruiutsia bazovoi religiei*), which some call the sacred vertical (*sakral'nyi vertikal*).

. . . Russia is a country with a dual identity (*dual'naia identichnost'*) in its culture, civilization, and geopolitics. In the sense of culture and civilization it is undeniably European. It is the Eastern Orthodox variant, standing in contrast, even in opposition, to Catholic Western Europe, but this is still all within the European context.

Geopolitically, we are Eurasia. This gets confused all the time. The intelligentsia likes to say that we are completely European, and whatever they can't fit into that picture is deemed unnecessary. This is a dangerous delusion (*zabluzhdenie*) of the intelligentsia consciousness. The contradiction between cultural and geopolitical identities matches to a large extent the difference between the intelligentsia and the regime. . . . They want to be civilized, like Europe. I wouldn't say we have a geopolitical mission, but we find ourselves on a geopolitical landscape. Russia has a mission to hold onto that expanse and protect it from chaos. But to expand this geopolitical idea to the cultural realm is wrong. Not only did the intelligentsia try to substitute their own idea of culture for conceptions of power, but the geopolitical imperatives, the holding on to power and land, often expanded to the idea of culture, suppressing it. That's why the

Western-oriented intelligentsia so often was cut down (*vyrezalas'*) during the cruel totalitarian years, both in the tsarist and Soviet eras. The search for harmony between the European cultural and Eurasian geopolitical identities is one of the most complex tasks that faces a Russia in search of unity. An analysis, a diagnosis, is the first step. . . .

Baranovsky: Does anyone else have thoughts on the idea of a dual identity?

Kuvaldin: . . . I think that Russia is Europe, although far from the heart of Europe. . . . The West lost its historical chance in connection with Gorbachev's economic policy. . . . I remember how I felt on January 7, 1992, just a week after the end of the Soviet Union. As part of Gorbachev's political team I was at a dinner with the then-advisor to the ambassador, now Ambassador Collins. It was both a friendly (*teplia*) and a sad meeting, because I had a feeling that a chance had slipped away. . . . This historical chance to bring Russia more firmly (*prochno*) into the family of European nations and civilization, not only spiritually but also politically and geopolitically, was allowed to slip away. Why this happened is more for our American colleagues to answer, whether this had to do with some aspects of the 20th century legacy, or whether it was due to excessive pragmatism on the part of American politicians reluctant to embark on another Marshall-type plan. It is now a question for history.

. . . The more important question is: did this train leave forever (*ushel li etot poezd navsegda*) in the sense of attitudes of Russia and the West towards each other? I don't think so. I've done a lot of work on a practical level outside Moscow, for instance, in connection with the election campaign, and I've had a lot of contact with people as we conducted opinion polls. Despite all the stages of humiliation (*unizhenie*) that Russian society went through, I don't see extreme national feeling. Of course there were moments of strong emotion, for instance about Yugoslavia, the war in Chechnya, and the apartment building bombs. Anti-Semitism has been reduced to almost nothing (*do nulia*), about 1%. The feelings against people from the Caucasus are minimal, only 7%. When people were asked whom they blamed for Russia's troubles, 50% blamed Yeltsin, 25% Gorbachev, with smaller percentages for Russians themselves—only 7% blamed the West. So I don't think that the train has left the station yet, and the door has not yet closed (*dver' eshche ne zakryta*).²¹

If you ask people, you will find that democracy has taken deeper root in Russia than it might appear. In contrast to ten years ago, the only legitimate power is one that is voted into office (*legitimna tol'ko vybornaia vlast'*). I think it's an incredibly important development when people say that they will recognize no power that they haven't chosen themselves. . . . I'm not ready to agree with the anxieties expressed by Aksiuchits about a possible return to totalitarianism and the accompanying oppression. I think that there are too many forces working against that happening.

What's most important is the relationship with world markets and the market economy. Everyone knows that our market is essentially a synonym for robbing the country (*razgrablenie strany*). A very small group of people closely connected with the powers that be robbed one of the richest countries in the world in the blink of an eye (*v dva scheta*). But no one talks about the possibility of a return to a command economy. People talk about the regulation of the economy, and that seems like a very sensible strategy. Despite the basic layer of European principles that have taken hold, the country hasn't been substantially dislodged (*strana ne sdvinuta*) from its old

structures. . . . Nevertheless, Russia is more European in its basic characteristics—its mentality, its economic and political circumstances—than it was ten or fifteen years ago.

What could cut off this process? Right now, the greatest danger comes from politics, especially international politics. If Russia doesn't find a way to integrate with the rest of the European land mass, there is the chance of a sharp reversal. . . . It seems to me that the people making foreign policy in the West are not looking ahead to the 21st century, even though they've had ten years to get used to the fact that we are living in a new world, and that globalization is advancing. . . . What's going on isn't an attempt to isolate Russia so much as not taking the changes in Russia into consideration when looking at the world. I think that Russia is a part of Europe and that there are enough healthy forces around to make sure that Russia remains a part of Europe. The final paradox is that Russia is a country that has moved towards the East, but with its head always turned back the other way [towards the West]. And that's pretty important.

Baranovsky: How do the rest of you feel about what's been said? Despite all the reservations, I think that the last two statements were generally optimistic.

Chubais: In determining whether Russia is Europe or Asia, a lot depends on the methodology used. If we say that the basis (*osnova*) of Russian (*rossiiskii*) identity is ethnically Russian (*russkii*), then we will get one type of answer. If we see religion as the foundation, then we will arrive at a different solution. As we look at geopolitical space, we'll get a third variant. So the methodology, and what we choose as our fundamental element, are all-important. . . . This identity question is something that will be decided by society and not by the political elite, which will make a mistake if it doesn't listen to what society wants.

On the question of determining Russia's place in the world—as European, Asian, or Eurasian, or some other variant—the Europe/Asia dilemma is too narrowly stated and doesn't work (*ne srabatyvaet*)—the result is always a state of vague disagreement. The question is broader than that and needs to be looked at less theoretically and more practically. Russia can and must feel at home (*svoi*) in Europe, and can come to an understanding of its position in Asia—that is what our forefathers did as they moved on from here to Alaska.

Professor Kuvaldin has said that democracy is taking root (*ukoreniaetsia*) here, and that our society will only accept as legitimate a power structure that is elected. I think that things are a bit more complicated and that the current situation has caused most political terms to be discredited. When we hear “socialism,” we don't think of Willy Brandt, but of Stalin. Democracy has also been discredited, and if this continues, there will be a rejection of the electoral process, because at present it is a form of socio-political sublimation or distraction from problems, rather than a way of solving them. As long as people think they are deciding something when they drop their ballot in the box, they won't head for the barricades. If it becomes clear that nothing will ever come of this, then there will be some kind of reaction on their part, beginning with a reduction in participation, and then a rejection of the electoral process.

. . . Russia's chief objective (*kliuchevaia tsel'*) is. . . political friendship with all its neighbors, which will help the reform process in those countries as well. I think that it is possible to come to an agreement with NATO and with China, to be clever enough to get along with everybody and not get involved in any quarrels. . . . At the end of the 20th century, what you

have is not so much the case of one nation threatening another, but of a conflict taking place within a given country: the Basques in Spain, [Northern] Ireland in Great Britain, Chechnya in Russia—these factors alter our conceptions of internal consolidation, and we can't ignore them.

Chugrov: I happen to disagree with Igor Chubais about elections. In a country like Russia, we have no other way to quiet internal contradictions, to put out these fires, other than through honest, democratic elections. To turn from elections to some more aggressive way of solving problems would be a great mistake.

Chubais: But that isn't what I said.

Chugrov: You expressed doubt in the value of elections.

Chubais: . . . I was talking about the kind of elections we have now. The amount of money that is being spent just discredits the whole process. . . .

Chugrov: We have to find a balance. In the Russian mentality there is a sense of inner conflict and contradiction. I fully agree with those who call Russia a torn country (*razorvannaia strana*). If we choose to talk about identity as a subjective and dynamic category, then we have to ask people how they feel and how they want to feel in the future, what kind of life they want for Russia. More than 90% say they want it to be like it is in the West. Russians don't want to live in a place like Iran or Pakistan, or—despite our better relations with these countries—like people in China or India.

. . . Russia is Europe in its self-consciousness, but with its own original profile. But this can give rise to serious conflict. The West, seeing itself as a model for Russia, relates to it like a sister, not as if it is a foreign element . . . but like a person acts towards a relative. And we know that you make more demands of a relative than of a stranger to whom you can smile politely—that is the basis of the criticism that the West makes of Russia. A culturally closer Russia irritates the West more than a distant China or India, and Russia ought to understand this. For decades, the West feared a nuclear attack, and this left its psychological traces. When this danger passed and the situation changed completely, first there were benevolent feelings and then disillusionment, more or less as we felt towards them. . . . The West's fear of Russia is a legacy of the Communist past.

How should Russia act? I don't think that Russia should choose an orientation either towards the West or towards the East. We should act in an ad hoc way in each situation, according to our national interests and the internal problems we are trying to solve. We should have close, friendly relations with the United States, but not try to please (*ponravit'sia*) or charm the West. If Russia acts according to this principle, I think that in a couple of decades it will once again be a great power (*velikaia derzhava*), and it won't have been achieved artificially, but in a natural way.

Aksiuchits: . . . I still don't hear any convincing argument to counter the idea that the most universal factor is Russian Orthodox civilization, which covers (*pokryvaet*) all the other elements that have been mentioned: Europe, Eurasia, the North, the sacred vertical, and a dual European cultural and Eurasian geopolitical identity. Russia's spiritually collective nature has allowed it to

integrate all these conflicting elements in its grand, multinational cosmos—all these different parts coexist in what remains an organic whole (*tseloe*).

We're discussing what was one-sixth of the earth's surface, and we need to use our terms a little differently. We shouldn't try so hard to determine whether Russia is Europe or Asia, because in essence, this weakens national distinctiveness (*samobytnost'*). It's as if the space occupied by Russian Orthodox civilization is transformed into a black hole (*chernaia dyra*). The world will be better off not trying to integrate or assimilate Russia. A revived Russia, with its own identity, can offer an alternative paradigm to the technological civilization that is spreading around the world but which is reaching a dead end of its own creation. . . .

When I talk about national identity, I don't have anything *anti-*, like anti-Semitism, in mind. There is proof that Russian identity is reviving (*prosypaetsia*) in healthy, non-chauvinistic ways, and thank God for that.

Billington: What do you think about the question that you just touched on briefly: is Russia a unique civilization whose recent historical experience can teach mankind an important lesson? What do you think of this as a characteristic of Russia? This is often said in literature, or at least there are suggestions (*nameki*) to that effect. As a historian, I'm very interested in this because it seems to me that Russia's experiences (*perezhivaniia*) in this century were unique (*unikal'nye*) in the history of mankind. Maybe there is some special lesson that should become part of Russian identity.

Chubais: I can mention two lessons. The 20th century has shown the tragic and dramatic dead-end of regimes built on lies and coercion. For a positive lesson we have to go deeper than that historically. If the West and Europe used law as the great regulating force and built law-based states, for Russia the governing force was morality. A united European civilization of the kind we might have in the future should combine both these concepts, recognizing the value of law and the value of morality.

Baranovsky: It's too bad that Panarin was unable to take part in our discussion because he has written on this subject, but I will say a few words about his point of view. Western civilization is in a state of crisis because of economic inequality, overdeveloped individualism, and environmental stresses, among other factors. Russia's problem is in being insufficiently developed, according to the standards of the West. This is, of course, a simplification, but it is a view that we have discussed at this institute. Russia may be able to avoid some aspects of the crisis to the extent that it is not westernized. As the world enters into a post-economic, post-industrial, post-modernist phase, Russia might be in a favorable position not only to avoid problems, but to offer some positive example.

I remember the discussion about national identity that took place three years ago at various levels, including in the [Russian] Security Council. The image of a caravan was used: we are in the position of the camel at the very end of the procession, going slower than the others and carrying a heavier burden. But if you just turn the caravan around, we could wind up being the first to get out of this crisis.

There is a positive service that Russia can offer the world in the sense of moral considerations in our relations with other countries. . . . The U.S. today is acting like a world

policeman, trying to bring order wherever necessary. We can in turn function as a defender of justice and objectivity, with Russia acting as a champion of moral truth (*pravdoliubets*), a role that I think is natural (*organichen*) for the Russian national character, not something we are inventing on the spot. That was what we tried to do in the case of Kosovo, which led to a greater solidarity on the part of the Russian population with those who are subject to immense force, and this was more important than any solidarity with fellow Orthodox Slavs. . . . Yeltsin spoke during an early phase of the conflict and said that we act from a position of greater morality. Even though he said it in a somewhat sarcastic tone, and it is not completely true . . . it expresses something significant about our national character in international relations.

Chubais: But those words came from the wrong lips (*ne s tekh ust prozvuchalo*).

Kara-Murza: There aren't any others.

Baranovsky: It reflected the mood of a large segment of the population. We identify with and feel sympathy for the weaker party when there is a great disparity in the strength of the two sides. Many critics in the West said that the war against Yugoslavia was not legitimately based on international law, but was fought on moral imperatives, due to feelings of solidarity with the Albanian people as victims of violence from the Milošević regime. So there was a kind of parallelism between our position and that of the West, and we were both acting from moral imperatives, although our objectives were different.

Amb. Collins: How do you reconcile this side of the Russian national character with attitudes towards Chechnya?

Baranovsky: I will defer to my colleague Sergei Chugrov, who spoke about this during the first part of our discussion, when he analyzed some of the fundamental aspects of our national identity, which include contradictory behavior, a failure to carry through, constant searching, and dashing from one side to the other (*protivorechivost', neposledovatel'nost', poisk, i sharakhanie iz storony v storonu*), which leads us to take what seem to be antithetical positions. I may be exaggerating, but I can say that what happened in Kosovo has a lot to do with what is now happening in Chechnya. Without one, there wouldn't have been the other, there wouldn't have been a second Chechnya.

Chugrov: The first war in Chechnya was seen as unjust in Russia, while this one is seen as basically just, and that's where the support comes from, that's the main criterion, not any legalities.

Kuvaldin: I'd like to return to something James Billington said earlier, when he asked for our reactions to Chaadaev's formula that Russia can serve as an example for other nations of what not to do.

Chubais: At the time Chaadaev said this, no one agreed with him.

Billington: That Russia is a lesson to others may be true without the second part of Chaadaev's formula automatically following [that Russia is an example of what not to do].

Kuvaldin: One lesson falls within the framework of European civilization. Chaadaev saw Russia operating on the very fringes of Europe, but while his criticism was justified at the time, this is no longer the case. If we remain within the framework of European civilization, if this is our fundamental conception of Russia . . . then the development model we followed until the end of the 20th century turned out to be one that we haven't been able to activate here. . . . But that doesn't mean that we should cast this model aside completely. . . .

Billington: But where exactly is the lesson in all of this?

Kuvaldin: The lesson is that Russia's experience can be judged within the framework of European civilization, so that if you apply a model not based on European or American experience, then you will run up against historical barriers.

Baranovsky: Then we shouldn't be looking for different models?

Kuvaldin: Right, even though there is no guarantee we will be able to make this one work any time soon. The second lesson is that the West and the United States are to some extent giving up on Russia, because they misjudged the scope of the situation here and now feel obliged to sharply change their positions. The process of transformation and modernization in Russia turned out to be much more complex, difficult, and slower than we had anticipated in tsarist times or at the beginning of perestroika. A lot depends on the extent to which the U.S. objectively fulfills its leadership role during the next couple of years, even though there is a desire on the part of some for greater isolationism.

The third point is that I am not as optimistically oriented as Vladimir Georgievich Baranovsky. I spoke at the very beginning about the burden of Russian-Eurasian space, in the sense of the social-political development of the country, and its ability to live normally. . . . This is a much more fragmented country than 10-15 years ago. It's harder for people to move from region to region, for one region to work with another, because transportation and communication are harder. This brings back the historical problems connected with the idea of expansion that we couldn't solve in the past, not due to a fanatical (*izuverskii*) imperial impulse. I have been talking about the charm of expansion, and that explains a lot, including the kind of problem we inherited in Chechnya. All of this is a brake on development.

Kara-Murza: Both pre-revolutionary Russia and the Soviet Union have offered negative lessons to the world—what not to do. After the Revolution of 1917, German intellectuals gathered together and asked each other what must be done so that the same thing doesn't happen to Germany. And Germany suffered from totalitarianism for twelve years, as opposed to more than seventy years for Russia. Russia gives these kinds of lessons.

There is a second lesson that follows from something Chaadaev wrote, not in the "Letter" but in a work that followed, "The Apology of a Madman." The fact that we are behind means

that we can do it better than Europe. Herzen in his later years said something like this as well, seeing in Europe a new barbarism. My friend Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin, who couldn't be here today, offers an exaggerated version of this: a Russian peasant sits on a log, smoking a cigarette and playing his accordion (*garmoshka*). A technology-centered society doesn't need him, but when we reach a post-industrial, culture-centered society, then this singer may prove useful. I don't agree with this at all. History shows that you can fall a little behind, and if you're cleverer than the ones who have gotten ahead of you, and you look around to see what they're doing, you can make up the difference. Intelligence is cumulative. It comes from a mind in motion, not standing still (*um narabatyvaetsia v protsesse nekotorogo dvizheniia*).

One of the heroes of my new book is a right socialist émigré named Ivanovich, who doesn't fall into the common émigré trap of thinking that the worse things get in the Soviet Union, the better for Russia. He wrote in 1932 that the more Soviet society rots, the harder it will be for Russia to make a normal democratic post-Communist transformation. Why is this the case? From nothing you get nothing, while strength accumulates (*iz nichego, nichego ne byvaet, sily nakaplivaiutsia*). For the majority, prison is a positive lesson. Lev Gumilev came up with his theories of the *etnos* while lying on his bunk in the camps and people above him were playing cards. He said that winding up in the Gulag was a bit of luck because it gave him lots of free time. We see this in Solzhenitsyn as well. But mostly the whole country left the Gulag in a broken condition (*pokalechennye*). In a letter from the Gorbachev period, Joseph Brodsky wrote that Russians ought to be strong and united because of their training in the Gulag, while in the West no one has pressed hard on people so their muscles won't work as well. We ought to have come out of this experience purer and stronger . . . but that isn't the way it worked out. Mostly people came out crippled.

Billington: Could we finish this section by briefly talking about what you see happening in the next twenty years, your predictions—without any moral judgments—of what differences there will be between Russia as it is now and Russia twenty years from now, Russia's place in the world, and where all these lessons will lead Russia. It isn't on the list of questions, but I would be very interested in hearing your thoughts on the subject. I know they will only be guesses, but they will be very intelligent guesses.

. . . **Chubais:** . . . I see the following possibilities: Russia as a new Soviet Union, Russia having cast off its past and copied the West, or Russian connecting with its past and reviving its historical identity. If Russia follows a course of intensive, high-quality development and not expansion, it will become very attractive to all its neighbors. Then the kind of integration we see today in Western Europe will without fail happen here as well. . . .

Aksiuchits: I think that in twenty years the Russian state will have come to a closer arrangement with some of the former Soviet territories—in the form of a federation or a confederation—with Belarus', with all of Kazakhstan or at least the northern, Russian part; with Ukraine except for the western parts that [between the mid-13th and mid-17th centuries] fell under the influence of another civilization. The government structure will be either a strong presidential republic, or perhaps one of the presidents will turn the country into a constitutional monarchy. In a cultural

sense, a talented new generation that is now growing up in freedom will do more than we were able to do to reconnect with the past.

Kuvaldin: The state will begin to fall apart but this will end with the rebirth of some fundamental part of the former USSR. The transformation of the country will happen slowly, and with difficulty, at the same time that a market economy is taking root.

Chugrov: I see a powerful state in twenty years, but our contradictions won't be disappearing. We will still suffer from our duality and inner conflicts. Russia will come closer to the West and its values, but will never become an organic part of the West. I see a federative structure with the Slavic countries, but the Muslim world will never rejoin Russia, although there will of course be economic ties. I do not doubt in the least that Russia will regain its health (*budet vyzdoravlivat*).

Kara-Murza: Just last month I had a book come out on this very question.

Chubais: How many books have you written?

Kara-Murza: I wrote this one with Gelman, Dragunsky, and Kabakov. We looked at all the possible variants of what Russia might be like in 2015. Some things will be decided in twenty years, some over the next six months. You see this is the first time that a leader is due to leave office peacefully, and alive. [*Someone asks: "But is he really going to leave office?"*] And the fight over what policies there will be under the next president is another problem we're facing for the first time. In the next century there will be greater social stratification, as people will be earning a lot more privately than they could in government service, and the economy will diversify. And there will be a differentiation according to degrees of national feeling. The playwright Gelman has come up with a future vision based on the fairy tale about lost time (*skazka o poterianom vremeni*), where the characters try to keep a new period of stagnation from falling apart, patching up things as best they can.

Then there is the question of a Russian renaissance, which amounts to a civilized good neighborliness, but there is an aggressive nationalist variant of this. The democratic mechanism will continue to evolve and become ordinary. . . . We are trying out a mass of different strategies (*proiti massu melkikh razvilok*), and we don't need utopias and radiant futures—they're very dangerous things. It's like a pupil who wants to read the solution at the end of the book right away and find out who was the murderer. We need to read precisely, seriously, thoughtfully (*akkuratno, vdumchivo, gramotno*), and every day make decisions on routine problems and make small choices (*melkie vybory*)—a variety of these small decisions will lead us along a positive developmental path. The theme of choice (*tema vybora*) is key here. We don't want to narrow our choices, but choose our own future. In twenty years, a new generation will make these choices.

. . . **Chubais:** . . . I remember what the writer Kornei Chukovsky said, that you have to live in Russia a long time to get to see something change (*v Rossii nado zhit' dolgo-dolgo, togda do vsego dozhivesh*). Russia has fantastic possibilities, but up till now they have not been realized.

And these possibilities remain gigantic. The most important thing is the choice of correct strategies, not ones that will lead us into dead ends.

Baranovsky: We're trying to figure out what will Russia's place in the world be in twenty years. The economic position will not be an enviable one, and we will have to work hard not to slip further back than we are now. Even if we pick such a wonderful strategy that we could all agree on it, we will need very favorable conditions over this period of twenty years for this all to work out. We've only just begun to strengthen our economic position in the world.

Chubais: In twenty years we will have spirit, morality, values—who needs money (*Chto tam den'gi*)?

Baranovsky: . . . A lot depends on how the world system changes, and where Russia will fit into any new international structures, where China will fit, and what role the Muslim world will play.

. . .

Chugrov: Even if our GNP grows at the rate of 8% a year, we're not going to be an economic world leader, but in fifteen years, the annual personal income may rise to the level of a country like Spain or Portugal. Spirit is of interest only to Russians. There are scenarios of a more nightmarish quality, and ones that look more desirable, but there will probably be a lot of what has been called muddling through.

Aksiuchits: Twenty years ago very few Sovietologists and Soviet political analysts understood the degree to which the Soviet Union had rotted from within. Then it all collapsed. The level of economic development everywhere, but especially in Russia, depends to a large extent on the revival of national spirit.

Amb. Collins: Before I leave, I have two questions about the future. One has to do with competitiveness in this world system. I agree that a lot will be determined by what happens outside Russia, but Russia's place in this system will also depend on choices made within this country. My other question concerns the level of power in this federal structure, and how the distribution of power will be decided. When I visit various regions, I see how they are making a go of it, and of course a lot is happening in Moscow. Who will be making the choices about Russia's future economic development—that's a crucial question. Thank you for a very interesting discussion.

There is a short break, and when the colloquium resumes Vladimir Baranovsky asks John Brown for his reactions to what has been said. Brown offers some observations from his first year as Cultural Attaché in Moscow.

How do Americans look at Russia today? It is not as much on the radar screen as it was during the days of the Evil Empire. Russia is increasingly seen as a normal country, and this creates the problem of keeping Americans interested. . . . Dr. Billington is one of the people who has done the most to keep American attention focused on Russia. . . . The one thing I do feel

quite strongly about is that the old concept of two superpowers is completely gone. Trying to see the US-Russian relationship in terms of the old Soviet-American relationship just doesn't work any more. To find the right new framework for comparing these two countries is a great and challenging intellectual problem.

. . . My sense is that the Soviet system for seventy years created the kind of environment where people were told who they were and therefore did not struggle as much as Russians do today with the problem of identity. You were a Soviet person—you may not have liked it, but you were told what you were and many people accepted it. And now, I think, with the collapse of the Soviet system, Russians are facing what is the ultimate problem of modernity, their identity. . . . In the United States, there is the notion that identity is defined by change more than by tradition, and I think that is the key distinction. When we try to find out who we are, we look to the future, while from the discussion here I see the search for a post-Soviet identity looking more to the past. . . .

Baranovsky: Aksiuchits has raised the question several times: who is the agent of identity as it changes?

Chubais: Everyone.

Aksiuchits: There is the identity of the unique individual, his substance, that remains the same throughout a lifetime, but there is also the functional identity of a person or a nation, and that can change as well. I can understand that kind of change—I was a businessman, and briefly a millionaire, before I got into politics.

Chubais: A millionaire in rubles or in dollars?

Aksiuchits: In rubles, but it was in 1988, so it was worth a lot in dollars as well.

Baranovsky: But you didn't enjoy it?

Aksiuchits: In America's cosmopolitan, consumer-oriented (*potrebitel'skii*) civilization, the accent is on the search for a functional identity. We are at the other end of the spectrum.

Chubais: That's an important difference. Here, a person who changes his identity—to use your terminology—is often a person without principles. Yesterday I was a Communist, today I'm a democrat, tomorrow a monarchist, the day after tomorrow something else. . . . From what I understand, political identity is rather stable [in America]. You may change your career, but a politician doesn't become a member of the Ku Klux Klan one year and then a different group the next year.

. . . **Aksiuchits:** The extreme form of the search for functional identity can lead to paranoia, as the search for individual identity can lead to a loss of one's sense of self, where all you are is your function.

Billington: The majority of Americans don't know much about Russia, coming primarily from European countries, and most of the people who came to us from Russia weren't ethnic Russian, but were from the minorities in the Empire: Armenians, Jews, Lithuanians, Ukrainians. Most had experienced the period of Russification in the empire. They may have liked Russian culture, but they opposed Russia as a political entity.

But, on the other hand, Russia was a Christian country, so we never sent missionaries as we did to China and India. Americans knew and understood China better because so many missionaries had gone there, and there was also more trade. The third reason for our lack of knowledge is that we never fought against Russia, although that seems a little ironic, but there was never a war between our countries. So the usual reasons that would lead us to know about a place so far away didn't exist between our two countries.

I don't have a Slavic background, but I got interested through the culture. During World War II, when I was a schoolboy living near Philadelphia, I wanted to know why the Russians were defending their land against the Germans so vigorously after other countries, like France, had given up at the sight of the first tank. So I asked this question in school. I found a Russian émigré, a very strong-willed old woman, and she said: "Young man, you have to read Tolstoy's *War and Peace*." Sometimes in your life, a person comes up to you and issues an order (*zakaz*). So I read *War and Peace*, and I found that it was easier to understand the present through a novel about the past than from reading the latest newspapers.

Although I was never much of a fan of the theory of convergence during the Cold War, I sensed that something was happening that resembled convergence. We think of Russians as being much more spiritual and religiously oriented than Americans, but the very foundation of the American experiment involved the coming together of two tendencies. On the one hand, there was the Enlightenment through Jefferson and others, with its ideas of reason and progress. On the other hand were America's religious roots. . . .

At the Library of Congress we recently organized the first exhibit about the religious roots of the American experiment. This subject has been absent lately from our public culture. Among the advanced countries, Americans are a more religious people than, for example, the English, French, or Swedes. That's simply a fact. So that one side of the American experiment is not well represented in the current literature. On the Internet, where we receive four million hits (*transaktsii*) a day, this has been the most popular of all our exhibits, and the responses came from all over America. It's interesting that *The New York Times* didn't write about this exhibit. Our curator had found all kinds of materials in the archives, for example, about government buildings being used for services by a number of different religions in the nineteenth century. . . . There's a whole side of America that never gets talked about, so it's very difficult to get a complete picture of the country.

We have a culture today that emphasizes the significance of freedom and human rights, but freedom without responsibility and rights without obligations is only half of life. You also spoke about rights and morality here. When you look at our founding fathers, you'll find that Washington, for example, was a very religious person. He gave a wonderful speech at the end of the war for independence, his farewell to the troops, saying that we were together during the war, we fought together and I was your leader. But now that the war is over, we have a country to build; and he suggested that God, not a general, is now your leader. Washington also said that

our system wouldn't work without a moral people, because it's a very delicately balanced, and morality wouldn't survive a generation without religion.

Last summer the U.S. Congress funded a program through the Library for emerging Russian leaders. . . . We had 2,000 people come over from virtually all corners of the Russian Federation. They lived in the houses of middle Americans, so, it wasn't a tour of the *nomenklatura* to big cities, staying in hotels. It made a tremendous impression on the Americans, because they didn't know much about Russians other than what was said during the Cold War. They hadn't believed all of that, and now there was a new approach. The basic problem is that Americans have very little first-hand knowledge about Russia, and Russians know little about America because our cultural products don't represent us very well, don't show the country as it really is, because of the clash of cultures, the culture wars. You read only about one side of our life.

What was interesting last summer with all these Russians visiting America, was that the Russians and Americans sensed that they have a lot in common. . . . There were different understandings of elemental and civic freedom, but in both countries there is a common sense of great expanses and of religiosity or spirituality. In both Russia and America now the process of comparison, enlightenment, and cultural exchange is playing a very important role. The largest library system in the world after ours is in Russia; even if some of it is in a very poor state, still it exists. It seems to me that convergence is possible, especially as the federal idea develops here.

Kuvaldin: The 1990s in Russia have been a great experiment. On the surface, there is the move to democracy and a market economy. But what was really going on was the apotheosis of amorality and lawlessness. All the moral norms and legal limitations had been cast aside. . . . Towards the end of the Communist era, Soviet society had reworked (*pererabotalo*) Bolshevism and had reached a new understanding of rights and laws. But now we have no morality, no law, no normal kind of democracy, or economy, or organization of society. It's all turning into something wildly repulsive (*diko ottalkivaiushchie*).

There are two possibilities for the future. Aksiuchits spoke of the possibility of Russia getting its values and its identity from another country, but such a choice by a very small group of people would be rejected by the rest of the population. . . . When Yeltsin leaves office, will we see what has been going on for the last decade as the norm, or will people turn away from that and seek something different? When freedom is taken too far, it turns into a destructive Russian kind of unregulated free will and anarchy.

National Identity in Contemporary Culture

5. When you think back on the 20th century, what event, person, written work or other cultural achievement tells you more about Russian identity than anything else?
6. Have literature and the arts in post-Soviet Russia told us anything important about the big questions facing Russia? Or have they lost altogether that role in Russia's national life?
7. Will Russian Orthodoxy—or religion in any form—play a significant role in shaping the Russian future?

Dr. Billington reads the fifth question aloud and asks colloquium participants about what would best explain Russian identity to an average American. What event should be studied? What book should be read?

Aksiuchits: An event or person would have to be studied for their significance in the context of Russian national identity. . . . In that sense, the most important event is the Great Fatherland War [the Russian term for World War II], when Stalin for the first time was forced to allow certain elements of national and religious identity to come to the surface in order to beat Hitler. And once they emerged from the underground, it was impossible to completely suppress them again.

The most important personality is Solzhenitsyn, and the work of art is his historical cycle *The Red Wheel (Krasnoe koleso)*. Along with the pre-Revolutionary Russian classics there is the first genuine Russian philosopher, Solovyev. In the post-Soviet period there isn't much to talk about—there are living classics, the Village Prose writers, although they marginalized themselves politically. But the Russian genius can show up in other creative forms, so you can't say that artistic literature has completely lost its role in Russian society and as an expression of national identity. A new generation will produce new literary talents.

As for Russian Orthodoxy [*Question 7*], it is not just the church hierarchy, but all the faithful, and Russian Orthodox civilization, with all the streams that flow into it. The problem is that it functions at different levels. As I go around the country it is miraculous to see all the ground-level activity, all the churches that are being built, and all the parish activities that are being organized. Monastery life is being revived after near-destruction. And all of this is playing a role in the renewal of society. The church hierarchy, the synod, is completely made up of people named by government organs, which means the KGB, some of them are even atheists. They have put the brakes on reform, first of all by putting off the periodic assembly (*sobor*) that is supposed to be held. The last one was 1990, they put off the 1995 one, and now they are putting off the one scheduled for 2000, all because they are afraid of being replaced. This is temporarily holding things up, but with a new generation, the role of Orthodoxy in Russia will be strengthened.

Chubais: I'll confine my remarks to identity and literature. I don't think that our literature has been fully appreciated or sufficiently read, and there are layers and layers of literature and film in which you can find something very genuine and true about Russia. When Shukshin was trying to get permission to film "Snowball Berry Red" (*Kalina krasnaia*), he wrote that throughout their

history, the Russian people have always preserved a respect for the qualities of honesty, conscience, hard work, and kindness (*chestnost', sovestnost', trudoliubie, dobrotu*). A movement like Village Prose had great social-philosophical meaning. Why did they write about the countryside when the city was a much more comfortable, attractive place to live? Because in the village, in that small community (*obshchina*), you couldn't lie to yourself or to others. A lie might come across the television screen but it wouldn't work in face-to-face encounters. Village Prose was a way to save ourselves in the midst of all these ideological lies, and it emphasized the Russianness (*rossiiskost'*) and not the Sovietness of our culture.

In a similar way, Vysotsky and Galich were artists who played an enormous role in preserving human values (*chelovechnost'*) in an ideologically compressed society. They said what they thought despite all the limitations. Rasputin's *Live and Remember (Zhivi i pomni)*, and Aitmatov's *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years (I dol'she veka dlitsia den')* reminded us to learn our history, to know everything that happened. Even the titles are deeply critical of the regime, and this value for the truth of our history and our culture got past the censorship. Solzhenitsyn did not so much create something new as destroy every Soviet lie. Since the end of the Soviet period, television has had a catastrophic effect, destroying all national values. It's not Russian and it's anti-culture.

A great, broadly-based spiritual search is taking place in Russia and it isn't covered in the newspapers, but there are large book fairs with lots of new publishers, art exhibits, and forty new theaters over the past three years in Moscow alone, all of this without government support. So, despite everything, a great deal is growing below, and it will have an effect. New names, new leaders, new ideas, new images will emerge from this spiritual, artistic, intellectual sphere and not from the world of political battles.

Kuvaldin: The two most significant personalities in 20th century Russian history are Lenin and Stalin, two fundamentally different figures. I think that the most important aspect of Russian identity is a strong centralized state (*samoderzhavie*), and these two leaders succeeded in preserving the state's control over a great land mass as they also tried to catch up with historical time. As for the most interesting artistic personality, I would mention Vladimir Vysotsky. His songs really did reflect the consciousness of the people, and he didn't create any myths, and eventually, in his final creations, he saw not only the destruction of his country, but his own tragic end. . . .

Chugrov: I would propose Malevich's black square.

Chubais: And why not Lenin's red star?

Chugrov: I see how Lenin and Stalin can be mentioned, but I think of them in pairs, for instance, Lenin-Solzhenitsyn. It reminds me of Kornei Chukovsky's children's book *Doctor Aibolit*, where there is a symbolic figure called Pull-and-Push (*Tiani-tolkai*), a camel with two heads that look in different directions. One person who best reflects the contradictions of Russian identity is Maksim Gorky. He was genuinely European, and he also sang of Stalin's White Sea Canal [a slave labor project which writers were invited to describe in glowing terms]. . . Russian literature has lost its gift of prophecy. There are good writers like Viktor Astafiev

and Vladimir Makanin, but they aren't prophets. And the journalistic writing of Solzhenitsyn, for instance, has lost its power. Solzhenitsyn is no longer the writer he was during the years of protest. This is both bad and good. It is unfortunate to lose the prophetic role of literature, but that may mean we are turning into a normal country.

On the subject of religion, there is the church—and that has always been part of the government structure—and there is faith. But there is a great potential for faith in this country. According to statistics, the number of people seriously attending church is growing, it's gone up from 10% in 1995 to 15% this past year. Religious observance will help raise the level of morality and responsibility. But remember that centuries ago, Joseph Volotsky won out over Nil Sorsky [Russian monks and important figures in their respective monasteries], the possessors over the non-possessors. Sorsky placed prayer above material gain, and he lost. But I wouldn't expect the Protestant ethic to completely take hold here. That's both good and bad. That's the way Russia is (*takova Rossiia*).

Baranovsky: When we are putting together a list of people who have contributed to Russian identity and to what the intelligentsia understood, we have to include Tarkovsky, with his films *Andrei Rublev* and *The Mirror (Zerkalo)*.

Chubais: Did anyone really understand *The Mirror*?

Baranovsky: He provides a way to understand the intelligentsia and their cultural life.

Billington: And will the intelligentsia play a significant role in Russia's future?

Kuvaldin: No, and that will be Russia's salvation.

Chubais: When [Dmitrii] Likhachev passed away, two different television channels made an official announcement that the last member of the Russian intelligentsia had died. But the intelligentsia will always be here and will always speak in opposition to those in power.

Baranovsky: Today's *Izvestiia* has an article on the first page that insists that no matter what people say about Russia's special path, we will move forward in the same direction as every other country. So the first line of the main article of this newspaper concerns the very questions that we have been discussing here today. And these problems will be the subject of intense intellectual attention in our country, and I hope in yours as well. That's why we were so interested to hear Dr. Billington's thoughts about different layers of identity in America and where there are parallels with Russia.

Dr. Billington thanked the participants and asked Professor Parthé to say a few words. Parthé spoke about the study of Russia in American universities, which declined rapidly after 1991, but which is showing signs of significant growth, because students find it exciting to watch a civilization changing so dramatically on so many different levels, and they are taking advantage of the increased opportunities to study and work in Russia. Vladimir Baranovsky also thanked

participants for their many interesting observations and Dmitri Glinsky-Vassiliev and everyone else who helped to organize this colloquium.

AFTERWORD

Tracking Identity in the New Russia

by Kathleen Parthé

This condensed transcript of the meetings held in Russia preserves all the significant lines of discussion of the three original reports. I will comment briefly on the essential ideas that emerged from each colloquium, and, from the vantage-point of fall 2002, offer a preliminary evaluation of the predictions that were made in Istra, Tomsk, and Moscow.

I. The View From Istra

The June 1998 meeting at the New Jerusalem Monastery outside Moscow brought together ten Russians in leadership positions for an intense discussion of their country's future. Acknowledged experts in their fields, they were, like all Russians, coping with frequent changes in the circumstances of their professional and personal lives. Thoughtful analysis was at times punctuated by a telling anecdote from their own experience. Much was at stake, and they took our questions seriously.

The Russians who came to Istra were living solidly in the present, neither brooding about the past nor fantasizing about the future. They placed great emphasis on personal responsibility (*otvetstvennost'*, lit. 'answerability') and demanded it not only of themselves and their fellow citizens, but also from the government and from those outside Russia who wished to positively influence its development.

In reviewing the first post-Soviet decade the word *zazor* (a decisive moment) came up repeatedly. The window of opportunity in the early 1990s had been largely squandered by Russian leaders and their Western advisors, with "shabby criminal means . . . being used to bring about an absolutely noble goal" (Nikolai Shmelev). Alexander Rubtsov asked with great feeling: "Could things have gone differently? . . . What did we want to have happen?" Viktor Aksiuchits felt that at the time the system could not have produced any other kinds of reformers, but for oligarchs to appear before a middle class had been created was obviously absurd.

Contemplating the difficult times that lay ahead, Grigory Yavlinsky referred to the Russian fairy tale about Ilya Muromets and the Dragon. Setting out on a quest, the hero rides up a steep mountain only to find at the top a sign pointing in three directions. The first way promised food for Ilya but not for his horse, taking the second meant that the horse would eat but not its rider, and the third warned that the champion would die. Strangely enough, Ilya "followed the third road, although the inscription said that on this road he would be slain; for he had confidence in himself."²² Confidence pays off as Ilya survives an encounter with Baba Yaga, slays a dragon, saves one princess and marries another. The refusal to be satisfied with a vastly

unequal distribution of wealth, and the willingness to take great risks for a heroic deed (*podvig*) reflect values articulated at Istra.

In listening to the music of the revolution surrounding them—as the poet Blok did in 1918—what did these Russians hear? Alexander Yakovlev claimed that history was moving so fast that it was impossible to say what would happen that fall, and Lev Anninsky added that Russians had no idea what was going on and were just acting instinctively. Rubtsov described a particular kind of prediction called a black box. “It’s not clear what’s going on inside, and in principle it is impossible to say. . . . Much depends on the spiritual state of society, on its consciousness. What is important is the interrelationship with reality: do we understand and correctly assess what is happening around us?”

Despite all the caveats, colloquium participants saw a great deal. The low-key authoritarianism (*miagkii avtoritarizm*) identified by Aksiuchits and Shmelev as the best of two possible outcomes (the other option was close to fascism) turns out to be an apt description of the Putin regime, which is often referred to as a “managed” democracy. Aksiuchits believed that with such a government structure, Russia could experience a genuine revival by 2020. Speculating about who would govern Russia after Yeltsin, Georgy Satarov suggested that “maybe a new figure from the provinces, someone we don’t know yet, will appear on the scene.” In the end, the little-known successor came from St. Petersburg.

The Orthodox Church was said to need another generation before leadership was in place that was not tainted by some level of cooperation with the Soviet state (Ivanova, Tishkov). Eighteen months later, at the Moscow meeting, Aksiuchits stated in even plainer terms that while there was healthy growth at the level of parishes and monasteries, the still-Soviet church hierarchy was trying to slow down reform by refusing to convene the scheduled *sobor* (periodic assembly). In 2002 the same church leaders seem to be spending a great deal of energy keeping other religions from practicing freely, especially in the regions.

Rubtsov and Aksiuchits predicted that the new rich would eventually want a more civilized state for their children, with lower profits but a greater chance of living to enjoy them. By 2002 some of the oligarchs—and other prosperous individuals and companies—have begun to act less like predators and more like citizens, investing in Russia, conducting business in a more transparent manner, and contributing significant amounts of money to social and cultural projects. Shmelev stressed how important it was to make it easier for small and medium-sized businesses to operate, and, several years later, the situation is demonstrably better, if far from perfect. Valerii Tishkov’s assertion that a majority of the population feel some level of xenophobia has been borne out by subsequent polls. Lastly, we have Yavlinsky’s observation that Russia no longer has permanent enemies and friends and will pursue its own interests. In 2002 it is obvious that like Ilya Muromets in the fairy-tale Yavlinsky cited, the country has greater confidence in itself.

II. Siberia's Map of Russia

The second colloquium took place five months later and four time zones to the east in Tomsk, where both time and distance contributed to a meeting that was markedly different from the first. While Moscow was still in the early stages of recovery after the August 1998 economic free-fall, this southern Siberian city of graceful churches and elaborately carved wooden houses was remarkably calm. Self-reliance is a habit Siberians had learned centuries before and, as one university official remarked, you cannot miss a BMW that you never had to begin with.

If the country's past experience had been taken into account, said Vladimir Alekseev, the upheaval in Moscow could have been avoided and change could have proceeded at a slower pace and in a more civilized fashion. On the other hand, Nikolai Rozov reminded us, reinforcing former imperial, military, and authoritarian values was hardly desirable. Alexander Kazarkin dismissed the idea of a "rebirth" of Russia. "Just like Tatar Muscovy could not be the same as Kievan Rus [and] post-Petrine Russia could not be just like pre-Petrine Muscovy, so post-Soviet Russia cannot be like pre-Soviet Russia—it's moved even further away." Instead of depending on a restoration of the old Russia, Siberia, with its natural wealth and resourcefulness, would produce a "new variant of Russian culture." The Tomsk group seemed comfortable with a "symbiosis from different systems," which was reflected in the city itself, where pre-revolutionary architecture shares space with Soviet-era buildings and street names, and post-Soviet stores and restaurants.

In assessing the region's potential at the beginning of 1881, Fyodor Dostoevsky claimed that Siberia could "restore and resurrect" European Russia and show it the path to follow.²³ In the works of Valentin Rasputin, Siberia is the Great City of Kitezh, a traditional emblem of Holy Russia's glorious past, suffering present, and promising future. The Tomsk group saw Siberia as Russia's *zapas* (reserve supply) of more than just raw materials. It was the place where Russian culture could get its "second breath" (*vtoroe dykhanie*). Small, positive changes would accumulate over a long period of time, and not as the result of directives from Moscow.

Viktor Rozov felt strongly that service to the country (*sluzhenie*) was an important if little-discussed national idea that had originated among the gentry. The lives of members of the regional intelligentsia we met in Tomsk illustrate the value placed on service to something larger than themselves: they run research institutes, publishing houses, journals, newspapers, libraries, and a very active branch of the Memorial movement, putting in long hours to stretch the limited resources at their disposal. They are building post-Soviet society and demonstrating civic virtue and even civic heroism every day. The descendants of pioneers and exiles do not take freedom lightly; it is conceived of as freedom to do something worthwhile.

Vladimir Alekseev insisted that if we call the 1990s a transitional period, we must ask the question: a transition from what and to what? Although the future role of Siberia is not yet clear, our participants identified a number of positive tendencies that have since been confirmed. Fall 1998 the distance between the government and both private life and the life of society was beginning to grow, and Mikhail Kaluzhskii spoke of the emergence of the "private believer in a

strong central government (*chastnyi gosudarstvennik*). . . . Basically, it amounts to a belief that the government should be left to fulfill its functions, while individuals take care of their business.”

Nikolai Rozov observed a nascent tendency towards political compromise and away from confrontation, especially between the Duma and the presidential administration. In 2002, it is generally believed that as long as the state creates conditions for economic growth—and does not interfere where it is not needed—Putin’s ratings will be high and Russia will remain relatively calm. In Father Leonid Kharaim’s opinion, political ideas appear to be having little impact on people and on the formation of national identity. Viktor Muchnik reiterated the importance of retreating from the search for big ideas in favor of work on smaller projects in the areas of culture and daily life, including improving ones surroundings. Dramatic scenarios of Russia’s demise were dismissed by Andrei Sagalaev, who instead saw a civil society developing around him. Not all the lines of development were clear, but “maybe the solution we need is not self-evident, not trite. . . this isn’t a cosmos where all lines intersect.” Eleonora Lvova agreed that it was difficult to imagine what would result from the combination of forces and factors in play. The results might be completely unexpected.

III. Russia, On the Eve ...

At the beginning of December 1999, Moscow had an air of nervous anticipation, like the feeling conveyed by Ivan Turgenev’s novel *On the Eve* (*Nakanune*), published the year before the first of the great reforms. Many were asking once again, as the critic Dobrolyubov did in 1860: “When will the real day come?” The second Yeltsin term was winding down—as it turned out, he resigned just four weeks later—and change was palpable. The era of a virtual president managing a virtual economy was largely over, but what next? And what better time to ask a distinguished panel of experts to envision Russia’s future.

Participants in this colloquium chose three questions from our list on which to focus the most attention: the Europeanness of Russia, continuity in Russian history, and whether binary contrasts made Russian identity dangerously unstable or uniquely strong. And, to a greater extent than in Istra and Tomsk, participants took charge of the discussion. The largely self-generated recovery from the August 1998 crash and negative reactions to the spring 1999 NATO campaign in Yugoslavia were two of the factors that led to greater confidence on their part that Russia would find its own way to not just muddle through, but perhaps even to grow strong again.

Igor Chubais believed that Russia is Europe “and Germany is Europe, and France is Europe, but these are all different kinds of Europe.” Alexei Kara-Murza sketched out mutually exclusive conceptions of Russia as Europe, as Eurasia, and as the North. According to Kara-Murza, those who agree that Russia is Europe still differ on what kind of Europe it is: underdeveloped, sick, failed, just-born-but-already-corrupted, or the best Europe of them all (*luchshaia Evropa*).

Viktor Kuvaldin traced a continuous path from tsarist to Soviet times while others saw a stark contrast between these two Russias. In defending the latter view, Viktor Aksiuchits insisted that “the anti-Christ is not a further development of Christ,” but its direct antithesis. Among those gathered at the Institute there was a consensus about the presence of binary opposites in the structure of Russian identity, but disagreement over whether this has strengthened or weakened the nation. Aksiuchits found the synthesis of unlike elements a source of creative tension: having both a strong center and a tradition of fleeing that center gave Russia great energy and a safety valve. For Sergei Chugrov, the Russian openness to a variety of forms, values, and types of behavior was praiseworthy, but he worried about a nation that lurched between contradictory impulses, moving from one unfinished project to another.

Chubais felt uncomfortable with a national identity cobbled together in the 1990s from Russian traditions, Soviet elements, and entirely new phenomena. “So there is the official burial of the remains of Nicholas II and the hospitably open doors of the Lenin Mausoleum, when the latter is responsible for killing the former.” Vladimir Baranovsky asked whether this could be seen as an example of things “that are completely incompatible and yet coexist,” to which Chubais replied that “there is a difference between having hot and cold water, and having hot water and an old boot.”

Arguments continue about the bizarre tsarist/Soviet/post-Soviet combinations possible in Russia today—what Chubais called the “mixed-salad alternative” (*put’ vinegreta*). In early fall 2002 the focus was on the statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky near the Lubyanka, taken down in August 1991 and replaced with a boulder from Solovki, where so many suffered under the secret police. Mayor Luzhkov proposed to restore the statue to its original location because of its aesthetic value, others spoke of Dzerzhinsky’s kindness to orphans and his skilled management of the railroads, and polls show substantial public support for the statue’s return. In trying to explain this “conceptual chaos,” one analyst cited a passage from Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pnin* in which an emigre couple’s ideal Russia included the Holy Tsar, the Orthodox Church and anthroposophy, along with the Red Army, collective farms, and hydroelectric dams.²⁴

At Istra, we heard forthright admissions of Russian passivity throughout the nation’s history and the terrible consequences of having allowed themselves “to be led through history by whoever had power” (Alexander Yakovlev). In both Istra and Tomsk, there was a plea for joint Russian-American projects that individuals and private groups could work on while the government did its job. Russia was no longer concentrating on the quantitative growth that had so marked earlier centuries; now was the time to look inward, and focus on the quality of life. Kara-Murza spoke eloquently of Russians taking charge of their destiny:

We are trying out a mass of different strategies, and we don’t need utopias or radiant futures—they’re very dangerous things. It’s like a pupil who wants to read the solution at the end of the book right away to find out who the murderer was. We need to read precisely, seriously, thoughtfully and every day make small choices, and a variety of these small decisions will lead us along a

positive developmental path. The theme of choice is key here. We don't want to narrow our choices, but to choose our future.

The Search for Russian Identity

How is Russian national identity shaping change, and to what extent is identity itself being reshaped by the transformation of life in Russia since 1991? In reviewing the transcripts of the three identity meetings, I was struck by the extent to which the twenty-seven Russians who took part in our deliberations all share fundamentally the same cultural information. A participant only had to mention a name, the first lines of a song or poem, or the beginning of an anecdote for it to be clear to everyone present which people, texts, ideas, and attitudes were being brought to the discussion. The existence of a common cultural base may change over the next generation or two, but it still can be observed among educated Russians today, and it would be difficult to read Russia accurately without an appreciation of this fact.

Russia is drawing on a vast cultural and spiritual heritage, if not to solve problems, then at least to offer comfort. While the designation of a patron saint for the tax police may seem an odd move (although tax collections rose significantly afterwards), the canonization—on the first anniversary of the Kursk disaster—of Admiral Fedor Ushakov (1744-1817) as patron and intercessor for the Russian navy was a moving gesture. The icon and relics of the admiral who never lost a battle were taken around the Russian fleet, and copies of his image were set up in shipboard icon-corners. The admiral's message (about not despairing because everything they do will be for the glory of Russia), written on the icon's scroll, is said to have been echoed by one of the Kursk's officers in a final note found in the wreckage. There is, on the whole, considerable interest in Russia's *podvizhniki* (heroes displaying both spiritual strength and a love of country), whose ranks are said to include such secular figures as General Kutuzov, the historian Karamzin, and the brothers who founded the Tretyakov Gallery.²⁵

Beginning in the late 1980s, regrets were frequently expressed for a lost Russia, and the centenary of Vladimir Nabokov's birth elicited the poignant comment that Nabokov was "what we did not become because of the Bolsheviks."²⁶ By now, however, there is a growing sense that at least some portion of this past Russia can be recovered, not simply as a series of museum pieces but as a source of wisdom, beauty, and spiritual depth. One example of the way that older cultural streams are feeding into contemporary Russian identity involves the use of Tolstoy's legacy. The major literary works are, naturally, still a source of national pride, and some of them have been reworked for opera, stage, and even comic books. But the later Tolstoy, who renounced earthly pleasures and denounced both church and government, has retreated into the background, as the worldly Count Leo Tolstoy emerges. Tolstoy's provincial estate—once again linked to Moscow by a direct train on weekends—is promoted to the Russian public as an example of good taste and a genteel, dignified way of life, and his widely-scattered relatives are invited back to celebrate their ancestor and Russian family traditions.

Russian Ark, Alexander Sokurov's celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of St. Petersburg, uses a daring cinematic technique—96 minutes of non-stop filming—to convey the

continuity of Russian imperial history in all its variety and excess. A character based on the Marquis de Custine, Russia's most articulate nineteenth-century visitor, and a contemporary artist wander through the Hermitage past 2,000 actors who present episodes that, while seemingly random, still make up a whole. The Marquis is horrified by a preview of Russia's twentieth century and charmed by the final tableau, the 1913 ball celebrating a Romanov dynasty that was, in retrospect, living out its final years.

This phenomenal cinematic achievement is no surprise to those of us who study Russian national identity from the vantage-point of cultural history. While the three meetings convened by James Billington provide ample evidence of the uneven pace of change, the mixed record of help from abroad, and formidable problems still awaiting solutions, what remains with me, after listening to tapes of the discussions a dozen times, are the energy and intelligence that these Russians bring to the challenges their country faces. Yavlinsky cautioned Americans who follow events in Russia not to be overly influenced by anxious comments, complaints, and dire predictions, and to keep in mind that "in our thinking process we are pessimists, but in the way we act freely we are optimists."

Participants at all three meetings remarked that what would once have been extraordinary—Americans, including the Ambassador and the Librarian of Congress, engaged in a wide-ranging discussion with Russians about the country's future—was now a wonderfully normal event. The move of serious and frank talk out of the cramped—but secure—intelligentsia kitchens of the Soviet era into more public arenas has added a measure of tolerance, a capacity for compromise, and a much-needed reality-check, without a noticeable loss in the intensity and quality of what is said. What we observed in these colloquia is no longer simply post-Soviet Russian identity, but the beginning of something new, whose exact contours are still taking shape.

ENDNOTES

1. See, e.g., the comments I made beginning with “The majority of Americans . . .” located in this text between remarks of Aksuichits and Kuvaldin and just preceding the section “National Identity in Culture” in the report on the Third Colloquium.
2. All proceedings were conducted in Russian without translators.
3. Information about participants in the colloquia can be found at the end of the third report.
4. A mathematical term; a system is regarded as a black box, theories are based on input and output, but never what is going on inside the box, which cannot be observed.
5. Viktor Anpilov is the radical, ultra-nationalist Communist who heads *Trudovaia Rossiia* [Workers of Russia], an offshoot of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation [CPRF], which is headed by Gennadii Ziuganov. Anpilov’s party considers that the CPRF is not communist enough. Anpilov is also especially known for his extreme, anti-Semitism.
6. This indicates that one or more comments by another participant have been omitted.
7. Both the *zemstvo* and the modern judicial system were the results of the reforms of the 1860s.
8. *New World*, one of the most important ‘thick journals’ of the post-war period, which published key works of literature and criticism for decades, culminating in the publication of Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* in August 1989.
9. This has been confirmed by eyewitnesses, among them former Ambassador Jack Matlock.
10. This sounds like a paraphrase of Winston Churchill’s comment: “This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”
11. This familiar quotation is from *Dead Souls*, from the end of Part I. The complete passage is: “Russia, where are you flying? Answer me! There is no answer. The bells are tinkling and filling the air with their wonderful pealing; the air is torn and thundering as it turns to wind; everything on earth comes flying past and, looking askance at her, other peoples and states move aside and make way.” Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, tr. George Reavey (New York: Norton, 1985), 270.
12. A major scientific center outside of Novosibirsk during the Soviet era, it declined quickly with the drop in government funding, but by 2001 was beginning to make a comeback as research institutes set up new for-profit high-tech enterprises.
13. Sons of Prince Vladimir, who were killed by their brother Sviatopolk in 1015, and became the first Russian saints. Because of their acceptance of death as a way to end fratricidal struggle in Kievan Rus, they were believed to be powerful advocates for the Russian people with God.
14. The 16th century ruler who is also known as Ivan IV, Ivan Grozny, and Ivan the Terrible.
15. Presumably because they are descendants of exiles who were uprooted or whose pre-exile life elsewhere is unknown.
16. Several buildings torn down during the Soviet era have been rebuilt since 1991.
17. From Osip Mandelstam’s 1933 “Stalin” poem. The line in question is “We live with no sense of a country beneath our feet” (*My zhivem, pod soboiu ne chuiia strany*).
18. A line from Alexander Pushkin’s *The Bronze Horseman*.
19. This corresponds to *zazor*, a term that came up during the June 1998 meeting. *Zazor* was used to describe a very brief period in which a number of different decisions and outcomes are still possible.
20. Ivan Il’in (1883-1954), a leading Russian legal scholar who was deported with other key

members of the intelligentsia in 1922 on the famous “philosophers’ ship.” In German and Swiss exile he wrote about Russian cultural identity and the future of Russia after Bolshevism.

Beginning in the late 1980s, his writings were published in Russia and excited a great deal of interest. Il’in emphasized that a dictatorship would be a temporary measure to avoid the complete ruin of the country and to preserve it until the rule of law could be established. See Philip Grier, “The Complex Legacy of Ivan Il’in,” in *Russian Thought after Communism: the Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 163-86.

21. Like Chugrov’s earlier use of “window of opportunity” (*okno vozmozhnosti*), Kuvaldin’s metaphors “did this train leave forever” (*ushel li etot poezd navsegda*) and “the door is not yet closed” (*dver’ eshche ne zakryta*) relate to the idea of a very brief time period (*zazor*) from the first colloquium: there was a decisive moment in the early 1990s which was wasted, but it is not yet too late.

22. *Russian Fairy Tales*, collected by Aleksandr Afanas’ev, trans. Norbert Guterman, commentary by Roman Jakobson (New York: Pantheon, 1973), 571.

23. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary, II 1877-1881*, trans. and annotated by Kenneth Lantz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 1373-5.

24. Daniel Kimmage, “End Note. Variations on a Hangman,” RFE/RL Newsline vol. 6, No. 187, 3 Oct. 2002. The original passage can be found in Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (New York: Vintage, 1985), 71.

25. A. N. Sakharov, V. D. Nazarov, A. N. Bokhanov, *Podvizhniki Rossii* (Moscow: “*Russkoe slovo*,” 1999).

26. Vladimir Kirgizov, “*Vse proshche*,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 1997:119 (July 2).

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