# The intelligentsia and Russia's twentieth-century crisis of trust[1]

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**UNTIL RECENTLY**, we tended to associate trust as a social mechanism with archaic societies. It used to be thought that, with the rise of science, technology and management theory, the place of trust and its natural accompaniment, religion, would diminish in society, gradually giving way to rational calculation and planning. Nowadays, it is clear that this is not the case, and that trust is just as much needed to confront the risks and contingencies of modern life.[2] All societies depend on systems of trust, without which they simply cannot operate. People need to know that in most of their everyday dealings with others, they can rely on those others reacting in ways favourable to their interests, or at least in a predictable manner whose unfavourable effects can be neutralised.

However, it is true that the forms which trust assumes vary greatly from one society to another, and also change within the same society over time. The clearest general model of the evolution of trust is offered by Anthony Giddens. According to him, one can make a distinction between pre-modern and modern societies. In pre-modern societies trust focuses on *(a)* kinship structures, which 'may involve tension and conflict', but are 'very generally bonds which can be relied upon in the structuring of actions in fields of time-space'; *(b)* local communities, of which something similar may be said; (c) religious cosmology, which 'provides moral and practical interpretations of personal and social life ... which represent an environment of security for the believer'; and *(d)* tradition, which 'sustains trust in the continuity of past, present and future'. In modern society, by contrast, the focus of trust is much broader, but is also more impersonal, replacing kin and local community with contacts which for certain purposes may extend over the whole globe. At the same time 'religious cosmology is supplanted

*1* I am grateful to the Leverhulme Foundation, whose award of a research professorship made possible the research for this paper.
[2] A key work in establishing this perception was Niklas Luhmann, 1979, *Trust,* Chichester.

by reflexively organised knowledge, governed by empirical observation and logical thought', while tradition has to yield to the capacity to adapt to change.[3]

Trust is not simply an individual decision or an individual attitude towards the world. It is strongly influenced by the way in which people react to each other in society at large. Some societies seem to contain a 'culture of trust', while in others trust for one's neighbours, work colleagues, fellow-citizens or the authorities is much more difficult to feel, so that one could almost talk of a 'culture of distrust'.[4]

The Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka has suggested four sets of conditions which enable a 'culture of trust' to flourish:

1. *Normative coherence.* Laws, habits, customs, traditions make sense and are in accord with one another, so that social life is predictable and readily understood; qualities such as loyalty and honesty are easy to display and are normally rewarded. In the opposite condition there is either constant flux, or there are sharp divisions and disagreements within society, so that it is difficult to know whom one can rely on or according to what principles one should act. This is the condition which Dürkheim labelled 'anomie'.
2. *Stability and familiarity.* If the associations of people within which one moves are durable and persistent, then decisions about whom to trust can be taken much more easily, without much deliberation or calculation. They become virtually automatic, a matter of habit. The responses people give to our behaviour are much easier to read and react to. Social change is not incompatible with this condition, but needs to take place gradually and within recognisable boundaries. Very rapid change, on the contrary, faces individuals with new social situations where they can no longer react automatically, but must reflect and calculate, perhaps between a wide variety of unfamiliar alternatives. They feel insecure and ill at ease, and are more likely to respond with distrust.
3. *Transparency.* We can see and understand what is going on in the society around us. We receive reliable information about events and processes, about social groups and institutions, their failures as well as their successes, and are able openly to discuss ideas concerning them. In the opposite situation, if we know little about the way

[3] Anthony Giddens, 1991, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, 100-106.
[4] Piotr Sztompka, 1999, *Trust: a Sociological Theory*, Cambridge, ch 6.

institutions operate or about the way of life of people around us, 'then ignorance, rumour and probably conspiracy theories govern our thinking, and we are far more likely to display distrust and to have recourse to exaggerated and even violent modes of action.

4. *Accountability*. Institutions have recognisable people running them and procedures which on the whole are observed. When things go wrong, we know who is responsible, and have some way of rectifying matters or obtaining redress. If this is not the case, individuals feel helpless and resentful. They may react by providing their own self-defence, 'taking the law into their own hands'. Suspicion and distrust become the norm, and violence can easily become widespread.[5]

These are of course ideal types. No perfectly trusting society has ever existed, and never will. But it seems clear that some societies approximate more closely to these conditions than others. In the perspective of history, trust operates in different ways in different societies. In nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe the dominant focus of trust was the nation and its political corollary, the nation state. The nation sustained the culture and traditions which underpinned stability and familiarity. The nation state provided the law courts, police forces, taxation systems and so on which guaranteed normative coherence. Law-governed nation states, with representative assemblies, active voluntary associations and lively mass media furnished transparency and accountability.

It could be hypothesised that one function of an intelligentsia is to provide us with the ideas, the narratives and the symbols which generate and sustain the pre-conditions of trust at the various stages of social development, and in the various forms of human community. There is a paradox about trust, though: creating narratives and symbols which bind together one community may have the opposite effect at a higher level, in generating distrust and conflict in a wider context. Thus late-nineteenth-century Czech intellectuals might augment harmony and mutual trust among Czechs, but provoke disharmony and mutual distrust in the Habsburg Monarchy as a whole. As Norbert Elias has remarked, there is an inescapable downside to social norms which unite people: 'They bind people to each other, and at the same time turn people so bound against

[5] Sztompka, *Trust*, 120-5. Sztompka posits five conditions, but two of them seem to me so close to one another that I have reduced them to four.

others. Their integrating tendency is, one might say, also a disintegrating tendency, at least as long as humanity as a whole is not their effective frame of reference.'[6]

In Russia, for various reasons, the sense of nationhood has been relatively weak. In traditional Russian society, as it still existed at the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of people, the peasants, had two main focuses for their trust. One was the village community, with its established procedures, involving all heads of households, for administering affairs and settling disputes; it exemplified the first two conditions strongly, and the third and fourth at a reasonable level. The other was the image of the tsar, distant and powerful. This image fulfilled conditions one and two, but three and four not at all; it replaced them by projecting the symbolism of strength, military might and great power status, the capacity to win wars and put down internal unrest.[7] In Giddens's terms the structure of trust was entirely pre-modern.

One of these focuses of trust was ethnic, *russkij,* the other imperial, *rossijskij.* The problem was that there was little to mediate between them. Civil society was not absent, at least since the major reforms of the 1860s, but it was undeniably weak, inadequately equipped to mediate trust among different social classes or ethnic groups. The other institution which might have been able to fulfil this role, the Orthodox Church, lacked the wealth, institutional independence and intellectual self-confidence to do so. The sense of nationhood, as a large collectivity connected by ethnic and civic ties and bridging the gap between empire and local community, was very weak, mediated, if at all, by writers, artists and musicians.[8]

By the early twentieth century, rapid social change was in any case tearing people out of familiar communities and plunging them into new and unfamiliar social milieux in the towns and factories, on the railways and rivers. Neither the socio-economic institutions of the towns, nor the parishes of the Orthodox Church were ready to assimilate them, to help them find a firm footing in their unaccustomed surroundings. They were exposed, unprepared and unde-fended, to poverty, harsh work discipline and the clash of social and

[6] Norbert Elias, 199e, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,* ed Michael Schröter, transi Eric Dunning & Stephen Mennell, Cambridge, 160.
[7] Richard Wortman, 2000, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy,* vol. *2,* Princeton.
[8] See Geoffrey Hosking, 1997, *Russia: People and Empire,* London, part 3, ch 4 'The Orthodox Church', and part 3, ch 7, 'Literature as "nation-builder"'

ethnic conflict. None of the pre-conditions of trust were present in their lives. Hence their tendency, much remarked on at the time, to react in unruly and sometimes panic-stricken ways.[9]

The revolution of 1905-07 was an expression of these tenden-cies. Much of the empire was plunged into unsystematic violence and conflict, between political parties, social classes and ethnic groups. Although the tsarist regime in the end managed to restore social peace of a kind, many of the underlying problems were not solved, and in any case the outbreak of the First World War cut short the gradual move towards more stable and predictable forms of political, social, economic and cultural life.

The war coincided with another process undermining public trust: the monarchy became discredited, one might almost say desacralised. In part, since the monarch claimed to rule by divine right, this was a result of the weakness of the Orthodox Church. But there were other factors at work too:

1.military defeats, from the Crimean War onwards, but especially those suffered at the hands of the Japanese in 1904-5, and the Germans in 1914-15, undermined the tsar's image of military strength as the leader of a great power;

2.the shooting down of the worker delegation led by Father Gapon in January 1905 had besmirched the image of the tsar as someone who was merciful, would listen to his people and offer them some kind of redress against abuse;

3.the influence of the corrupt sectarian 'holy man', Rasputin, at court (rumoured to be greater than was in fact the case) tarnished the moral reputation of the ruling family and cast doubt even on their adherence to Orthodoxy.[10]

For all these reasons, Nicholas II and the Romanov dynasty had few supporters in February 1917, even among the generals, the court and the aristocracy. The fall of the institution of monarchy was accompanied by the collapse of its reputation. During the civil war none of the White leaders proclaimed the restoration of the monarchy as his aim; whatever they might privately believe, their publicly declared aims were to restore 'Russia, one and indivisible' and in some cases the Constituent Assembly, but not the monarchy. This is in sharp contra-distinction to the case after the French revo-

[9] Joan Neuberger, 1993, *Hooliganism: Crime, Culture and Power in St. Petersburg, 1900-1914*, Berkeley.
[10] O. Figes & B. Kolonicskii, 1991, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: the Language and Symbols of 1917*, London, ch 1.

lution: the royalist cause was openly taken up in the civil wars which followed, and of course the monarchy was actually restored in 1815. The Russian monarchy had not only fallen in 1917, it had been totally discredited.

It is difficult to exaggerate the crisis into which Russia was plunged in 1917-21. Not only had a monarchy ended in disgrace, an empire had fallen apart too. The relative order imposed by the state had crumbled, millions had been killed and millions more uprooted. New political and national entities were emerging, with no inherited order and little in the way of tradition to guide them. The pre-conditions of trust were destroyed about as comprehensively as could be imagined. The only surviving institutions were the village communities, but even they had to function in a hostile world and were threatened by inner conflict between rich and poor. It was natural in such circumstances that extremist political and religious ideologies should flourish.

**Bolshevik spirituality**

What did the victorious Bolsheviks represent? The cardinal fact about them is that they combined the multi-ethnic outlook of the imperial state with the messianism of the former Russian religious and political opposition. This was the first time, at any rate since the seventeenth century, that the Russian Empire had been messianic in its official outlook. In its new hypostasis as the Soviet Union, it was to be the bearer of the one true faith, Marxist socialism, and was to carry it to the entire world under the slogan of 'Workers of the world, unite!' This was an intoxicating vision, which provided a vision of trust and harmony extending across the boundaries of class and nation to embrace the entire planet. It inspired a whole generation of young educated people growing up during the 1920s and 1930s, as well as most soldiers, a good many workers and some peasants. It provided the working ideology of an extensive and rapidly growing ruling class.

The Bolsheviks were generating a new form of religion, with its own spirituality and its own forms of trust. Recent publications of diaries, memoirs and letters from that period tend to confirm how strongly this faith moulded the spiritual life of Russian society during that time, including that of many people who were sceptical about significant aspects of the Communist project. Bolshevik spirituality was in many respects different from that of the Orthodox

Church. It denied a transcendent God, and worshipped instead the new human being', especially as led by the great heroic leader. It was an active, aggressive faith, reminiscent perhaps of that of the Teutonic Knights or the medieval crusaders, preaching asceticism and self-denial in the interests of the collective, but also the cultivation of will-power, self-discipline and collective discipline, physical strength and stamina of the kind needed to gain victory. It offered new hope to non-Russians and especially to Jews, the most oppressed ethnos in the old Russia. Because it believed in urban and industrial modernity, it set about destroying the remaining community of trust which Russian peasants had preserved, the village commune, in the collectivisation of agriculture.

For the Russian Orthodox Church, the triumph of such an ideology meant not just indifference, but active persecution. The so-called 'separation of church and state' in 1918 really meant that the church was deprived of most of its legal rights, of its capacity to organise itself centrally and to provide for its own institutional survival. Patriarch Tichon responded by pronouncing an anathema on the Bolsheviks, and he called on believers to resist them by all possible spiritual means. It should be noted that he did not, though, authorise violent resistance.

The regime turned to militant atheism as a natural expression of its beliefs. It created the League of Militant Godless to devise secular festivals, set up 'red corners' at the workplace and preach the advantages of a non-religious 'scientific' worldview. Collectivisation in the villages usually meant the closure of the church and the arrest of the priest. In the towns too during the first two five year plans parishes were closed and clergy arrested or at best compelled to take up non-ecclesiastical employment. By 1939, of the 50,000 churches open in 1917, only some 300 had survived. Of 163 bishops, only four were still at liberty. One of those, Metropolitan Aleksij of Leningrad, was living in a cubby-hole in the bell-tower of the cathedral, in accommodation previously intended for the caretaker.[11]

What did this mean for Orthodox believers, that is, for those accustomed to place their trust in the church? We know that there were still quite a lot of them, for the suppressed census of 1937 showed that roughly a third of townsfolk and two-thirds of rural

[11] Testimony of Anatolij Levitin-Krasnov in: Michael Bourdeaux, 1969, *Patriarch and Prophets: Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church Today*, London, 291.

dwellers considered themselves believers. However, most of them had no church to go to. Deprived of regular services and of normal contact with other believers, or any kind of congregational life most of them probably gradually lost Christian faith as a meaningful part of their lives. The Orthodox Church, at least outside the monasteries, had always cultivated a public and symbolic faith rather than one based on private piety or personal study of the scriptures. As a result, the absence of a public ecclesiastical sphere meant for many people the atrophying of an active Christian faith.

On the other hand, as long as church services continued, many ordinary people continued to participate, both in town and countiy, especially at Easter and other festivals. They did so not least for the aesthetic pleasure and the joy of being with other people. In 1924 a Komsomol report bemoaned the fact that 'the workers go to church simply because the choir sings well'. On the other hand some Komsomol processions and dramatic presentations were also popular, perhaps because of the strength in Russia of what the scholar Dmitrij Lichačev calls *smechovaja kul'tura*[12]. The young Leningrad historian A. G. Man'kov noted in April 1933 ordinary people's 'need to change their lives, their almost physiological compulsion to break out of the rut of measured monotonous days', and remarked that if Russians were no longer baking Easter cakes, it was not because they no longer had a desire to vary the monotonous daily diet of cabbage and black bread, but simply because they could not afford cream cheese or sugar in the shops. In any case, there was little cream cheese or sugar in the shops by this time.[13]

By the 1930s, however, not only were most churches being closed, but the organisation of everyday life made it far more difficult to participate in divine service even in those which remained. From 1929 to 1940 the working week was calibrated in ***dekady,*** ten-day weeks, which meant that only on one week in seven would one's day off be a Sunday. It was also much more difficult to have an icon hanging on one's wall to pray before in a communal apartment, let alone to organise a 'red corner'. Religious processions were permitted only at Christmas and Easter, and even then were confined to the area immediately around the church; party members who participated would be expelled. In April 1939

[12] Н. Б. Лебина, 1999, *Повседневная жизнь советского города: нормы и аномалии. 1920-19JO годы,* Санкт Петербург, 127, 133.
[13] А. Г. Маньков, 1994, Из дневника рядового человека (1933-4 [rr]-)> *Звезда* 1994:5,140-1.

Ljubov' Šaporina, wife of the composer, did not attend church in Leningrad at Easter for the first time in her life. As she recorded in her diary, 'There are just three churches left in the city, and all are completely packed, so that there is no Easter procession, and you won't even hear the words "Christ is risen" spoken on the streets.'[14] by 1939 it seemed distinctly possible that the 'apostolic succession' might be fatally cut short, and therewith a central pillar of the church's existence destroyed. The church survived as a few disconnected and besieged worshipping communities, isolated from society at large, though permanently under threat from it. The extent to which having a church available made a difference to belief is suggested by a survey undertaken some decades later, in I988. It showed that in L'vov oblast', where for historical reasons there had always been a large number of working parishes, the number of those considering themselves believers was many times higher than in Kemerovo oblast, where there had been virtually no open churches for decades.'[15] So there seems to be a strong correlation between the number of churches open and the number of believers.

A few believers however clung the more fiercely to their faith, joining one of the underground churches, flocking occasionally to meet a 'wandering' priest who would perform a clandestine service in a cellar or perhaps in the nearby woods. In many ways their faith was rigid and conservative, natural enough in a siege situation, yet, like Old Believers in the late seventeenth century, they were driven to try out innovations, like communal confession or lay administration of the eucharist.[16]

## The re-emergence of rossijskij and russkij

With the failure of world revolution, Stalin began to reassess the significance of the Soviet state: his recipe was socialism in one (multi-ethnic) country. Gradually the Jewish and internationalist content was squeezed out and then vilified as 'Trotskyism'.

[14] Véronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaiya & Thomas Lahusen (eds), 1995, *Intimacy and Terror: Soviet Diaries of the 1930s*, New York, 368.
[15] Nathaniel Davis, 1995, *A Long Walk to Church: a Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy*, Boulder, Colo., 204.
[16] William C. Fletcher, 1971, *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1970*, London.

During the 1930s, rather than a springboard for world-wide proletarian revolution, the Soviet Union became a *neo-rossiiskij* empire acting as the trustee of the international working-class and the bastion of their interests for the foreseeable future. There were unacknowledged elements of Dostoevskij in this outlook: Russians as an essentially supra-national people who because of their suffering and their poverty, compared with the bourgeoisie in most European countries, could act as the guarantors of peace and the protectors of the world's poor and oppressed. But, as Ljubov' Saporina noted in her diary in February 1939,

> [t]hey used to say 'Great is the God of the Russian land.' But first of all, we are not the Russian land, we are the anonymous Union of **SSR**, and secondly why should God save us? How easily people betray their faith, how easily they forget all their moral principles. Informing has becoming the key to everything . . . I always feel this burning shame for Russia, and it hurts.[17]

She was right: the Soviet state continued to destroy or suppress much that was *russkij*—the *mir,* the Orthodox Church, the best of Russian literature, art and music—and to encourage the breakdown of community through denunciations. Russian messianism was for the first time integrated with Russian imperialism, but at the expense of the Russian people and of Russian culture.

Till 1941, then, the *russkij* was despised. But the second world war changed that. It turned out to be not a class war but a national war of the most vicious and destructive kind: Russians versus Germans. It was necessary to reintegrate the *russkij* into the Soviet ideological synthesis. The most remarkable expression of the *russkij* during the war was Aleksandr Tvardovskij's narrative poem *Vasilij Terkin,* very popular with Soviet soldiers: it glorified the ordinary Russian peasant, but did not mention the Communist Party or Stalin. Soviet soldiers were said to carry it in their knapsacks and to read it in the intervals of non-combat.[18]

One of the signs of this reintegration of the *russkij* was the re-emergence of the church as partner of the state, albeit in a role so subordinate as to be humiliating. The patriarchate was restored, a theological academy and a few seminaries were permitted to function and some parishes reopened. Spiritual life, though, was confined to weekly divine service in designated church buildings,

[17] Garros, *Intimacy and Terror,* 367-8.
[18] А. Л. Гришунин, 1987, *«Василий Теркин» Александра Твардовского,* Москва.

attended by those registered as members of a parish. All other religious life—bible study, prayer meetings, Sunday schools, public pocessions, charity and voluntary activity on behalf of the poor and oppressed—was forbidden. Bishops and indirectly priests were appointed as part of the nomenklatura structure controlled by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Congregational life was stunted, and the church existed mainly in its symbolic role. Orthodox believers shunned reform because it was associated with the renovationist experience, so the church was highly conservative in its liturgical and institutional life. From the viewpoint of the regime the church's function was mainly to promote the great power status of the Soviet Union in the Balkans and the Middle East and its ideological stance within the world peace movement.[19]

One important result of the Second World War was the reorientation of the official spiritual life of the Soviet Union from the future to the past. Messianic hope had faded: it no longer seemed likely that the regime would build socialism. But nobody could deny that it had achieved a pretty good second best: it had saved not just the Soviet population but the whole of Europe from the apocalypse, conquest by the Nazis. For most of the Soviet population this was the most attractive and 'trust-generating' feature of the regime. Memories of the war thereafter played a dominant role in public propaganda, outstripping even memories of revolution and civil war. Public festivals were dedicated to the celebration of great victories, and these festivals enjoyed a good measure of popular support and involvement.[20]

**The revival of the intelligentsia**

From the 1960s onwards, with the church impotent and the regime increasingly rigid and oriented towards the past, there was a moral vacuum, which unexpectedly led to a remarkable revival of the Russian intelligentsia (in its new Soviet guise).[11] [21]Its members projected a vision of community which was partly derived from the official ideology, but partly also from older or over-riding values. In the

[19] М. В. Шкаровский, 1995, Русская православная церковь в 1943-1957 годах, *Вопросы истории* 1995: 8, 36-56; Т. А. Чумаченко, 1999, *Государство, православная церковь, верующие. 1941-1961 гг.,* Москва.
[20] Nina Tumarkin, 1994, *The Living and the Dead: the Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War Two in Russia*, New York.
[21] Also of the non-Russian intelligentsia, with which I do not deal here for lack of space.

long run, their message proved to be incompatible with the Soviet system as it operated in practice, and it arguably played a major role in its collapse. How can one explain this revival of the intelligentsia in the midst of what seemed like a tightly centralised polity closed to new ideas?

It was partly a result of the gradual disintegration of the ideological synthesis within the Communist Party between westernised and Russian messianic/imperial outlooks, a process finally completed only with the formation of the Russian Communist Party in 1990. As the Soviet state became more sympathetic to both ethnic and imperial elements in the Russian heritage, westerners and non-Russians among the professional strata began to detach themselves spiritually from the party and its official ideology. By the 1960s they had become extremely disillusioned with both.

Intellectuals nevertheless remained indebted to the Soviet state. The very fact that the Communist Party depended on ideology for its legitimacy entailed high status for those whose business was ideas. It paid large numbers of people to do intellectual work of one kind or another, and to propagandise ideas among the population, and it offered privileges to those whose work it especially needed. At the very least, intellectuals had security of employment and a guaranteed minimum income. With the dismantling of indiscriminate terror, the structure of professional organisations, which had been designed in the 1930s to subject professional people to party authority, began, paradoxically, sometimes to work the other way and to offer little islands of security to them for autonomous professional activity. A new kind of split began to open between public and private spheres, with the private one offering some of the preconditions of trust which were absent in public life. Tolerated in academic and cultural institutions, and threatened only by a modified and reduced threat of official sanctions, circles of intellectuals began to study and discuss themes not envisaged in the curriculum.

Certain types of ideological output were particularly important to the regime. One was literature. Already in the nineteenth century literature had acquired a high moral reputation by articulating both political and spiritual concerns which could not be expressed in any other form. It had inspired more than one generation of radicals and revolutionaries, and for that reason was part of the pedagogical repertoire of the Soviet educational system. Literature played the role of the Greek classics in the formation of the Victorian Christian

gentleman: it introduced an element of tolerated, even revered ideo-logical unorthodoxy inherited from the past. If your parents were cultured people, or you had access to a good library, you could read the thoroughly heretical and anti-socialist Dostoevski). His acknowledged closeness to the imperial aspects of the official doctrine made him a kind of 'shadow' ideologist of the late Soviet period. But even the more 'acceptable' Tolstoj encouraged a strict conscience, truth-telling and extreme suspicion of the state. Reading them was a revelation for many young Russians. A teacher at Moscow's School no 2 in the 1960s, for example, later told Philip Boob-byer, 'Reading Tolstoi, I realised I was an enemy of the [Soviet] system ... My spiritual conscience [was formed] through Russian lierature.'[22] It was not uncommon for readers to discover a religious significance even in writers who were far from mainstream Orthodoxy: in a completely non-denominational sense, literature fed the spiritual life of educated Russians.[23] By meticulous and vivid examination of the spiritual life of different individuals, it opened ^honest channels of communication between people who had few others.

The Soviet Union had its own literary tradition, of course, but tinder the patronage of the Union of Soviet Writers and the ideological monopoly of the CPSU the spiritual impulse behind 'socialist realism' had degenerated into a lifeless formula. The standardisation of the authoritative monological text had become self-defeating. It could no longer fulfil its intended pedagogical function, because it obstructed normal communication between writer and reader. Even readers from the 'new class', as they became acculturated, no longer looked for information in what a text *stated*, but rather in what it implied or even omitted. They became insensitive to the deaden-ingly omnipresent norm and reacted only to the fleeting aberration. Cultural communication became a treacherous quicksand of veiled hints and implications comprehensible only to coteries of readers equipped with their own decoding procedures. In the whole Soviet information sphere there was a very sharp division between the public and the private; highly placed officials and certain academics

[22] Philip Boobbyer, 2000, Truth-telling, conscience and dissent in late Soviet Russia: evidence from oral histories, *European History Quarterly* 30, 557-8.

[23] At a public lecture in London in June 1988, Archbishop Kirill of Smolensk (now Metropolitan and in charge of the external affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church) admitted that the church had not been able to fulfil its proper function of providing spiritual enlightenment in Soviet society, and that mat function had been taken over by artistic literature.

were well-informed about what was going on in the world, while the majority of the public remained ignorant and confused. The result was to undermine the sense of cultural community and to intensify the cliquishness of Soviet society.[24]

In the 1950s and 1960s, though, one of the cliques tried to restore normal communication. Under its editor Aleksandr Tvardovskij, *Novyj mir,* official organ of the Union of Soviet Writers, worked to revive the tradition of the pre-revolution 'thick journal'. We have already seen how Tvardovskij placed the Russian ethnic paradigm at the centre of the Soviet Union's war effort. Now once again he played a key role, this time in the civic sphere. He deliberately modelled *Novyj mir* on nineteenth-century 'thick journals', with their consciously assumed civic and educational roles. He espoused the official aesthetic of socialist realism, but interpreted it in such a way as to restore some genuine content to it. The result was to subvert its authoritative political function and actually to change the direction of Soviet spiritual life.

For Tvardovskij socialism meant not a dream to be reached after a great struggle, but rather the pragmatic effort to improve people's lives so that they would be properly fed, clothed, housed and educated; realism meant publishing works which gave a frank picture of Soviet social life as it had been at various stages of history; ***narod-nost'*** meant focusing on the lives of ordinary people, especially perhaps on those left under-privileged or even cheated by the system. Tvardovskij specifically repudiated the 'positive hero', who had been the staple of Stalinist fiction, and whose exaltation, he complained, 'inevitably meant despising the "ordinary masses"'.[25] By contrast he welcomed works about ordinary people, and especially about peasants.

The most celebrated work he published was Solzenicyn's ***Ivan Denisovič,*** but that was only the most extreme example of the tendency the journal already embodied. Writers of prose fiction wrote as though there were no longer simple global answers to society's problems, but as if the honest, artistically skilful depiction of reality would itself inspire readers to seek their own humane ways of facing them. Increasingly authors adopted the language and the outlook of the ordinary people who were their characters, who saw life

[24] Hans Günther, 1984, *Die Verstaatlichung der Literatur: Entstehung und Funktionsweise des sozialistisch-realistischen Kanons in der sowjetischen Literatur der joer Jahre*, Stuttgart, ch 8.
[25] А. Твардовский, 1965, По случаю юбилея, *Новый мир* 1965 : i, 13-14.

without any kind of superior knowledge, in fact from a consciously limited viewpoint. This was a reaction against the way in which superior knowledge, embodied in the institutions of the party-state apparatus, had become a form of social barrier, impeding rather than facilitating communication. Ruthless struggle in the name of anything was now seen as pointless or even harmful, at least outside wartime, while kindness and tolerance in dealing with one another became the projected social ideal.[26] By implication—though this implication was not articulated—the *'pravda'* of the Soviet ideological authorities was being rejected in favour of the *'pravda'* of the traditional village community. Bolshevik spirituality was giving way to the old Russian communal outlook.

Literature, then, made one crucial contribution to the revival of the intelligentsia. A second, no less important, was made by the scientists. Science had an honoured place on the school curriculum, and scientists were members of the Soviet pantheon of glory. Even more important, the authorities needed top-quality scientists and technologists for industrial growth, for military might, and for the country's international standing. But the qualities and practices which were required for real achievement in science—scepticism, rational thinking, constant questioning of accepted notions, keeping up with the latest ideas and information, regular contact with foreign colleagues—were decidedly not fostered by the Soviet system. Science requires a culture of trust, for no scientist can replicate all the experiments and measurements he would need to be sure of his facts. He must be able to trust his colleagues to do their work honestly and conscientiously.[27] By the same token, he must be in a position to send and receive ideas across frontiers, and to evaluate and discuss them openly. Hence there was a paradox at the heart of the official Soviet adulation of science: a closed society was extolling an open system of cognition.

The scientific project which spearheaded the Soviet Union's drive to superpower status was the development and construction of nuclear weapons in a secret establishment run by Beria's **MVD** (Ministry of Interior). Here began one of the most remarkable destinies in the Soviet spiritual re-awakening, that of Andrej Sacharov.

[26] Geoffrey Hosking, 1980, *Beyond Socialist Realism*, London; on Tvardovskij and *Novyj mir* generally, see T. A. Снигирева, 1997, *А. Т. Твардовский: поэт и его эпоха,* Екатеринбург, chs 2 and 3.
[27] See the suggestive study by Steven Shapin, 1994, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*, Chicago.

Transferred compulsorily from pure research to what he calls the Installation ***[ob"ekt],*** provided with slave labourers not properly protected against radiation, he accepted his situation in the full knowledge that he was working on an 'inhuman weapon'. He was attracted by what he considered 'superb science'. But he also felt that the Soviet Union had to stand up to the United States, not leaving her a monopoly of nuclear weapons, in order to defend again what had so nearly been lost in the Second World War, and to create at least a balance of international terror, rather than an imbalance. Evaluating himself critically later, he considered that he had been gripped by a 'war psychology', but those were his genuine feelings at the time.[28]

However, once the efforts of himself and his colleagues had been successful in producing a working Soviet hydrogen bomb, he realised with horror that the atmospheric testing of such bombs would inevitably, through radiation, cause the deaths of an unknown but potentially considerable number of people. There was no safe minimum threshold. He also realised that he had put terrible weapons in the hands of politicians, who were capable and energetic, but would take decisions on criteria quite different from his own. Even his own colleagues did not share his concerns.

> During the 1950s I had come to regard testing in the atmosphere as a crime against humanity, no different from secretly pouring disease-producing microbes into a city's water supply. But my views were not shared by my associates, and I saw how easy it is for people to adapt their thinking to what they regard as their own best interest[29]

His failure to persuade Chruščev not to resume atmospheric testing in 1961 was a turning point in his life.

> It was the ultimate defeat for me. A terrible crime was about to be committed, and I could do nothing to prevent it. I was overcome by my impotence, unbearable bitterness, shame and humiliation. I put my face down on my desk and wept. That was probably the most terrible lesson of my life: you can't sit on two chairs at once. I decided that I would devote myself to ending biologically harmful tests.[30]

[28] Andrei Sakharov, 1990. *Memoirs*, transi Richard Lourie, London, 96-8.
[29] Ibid., 225.
[30] Ibid., 229.

I have related Sacharov's spiritual crisis at length because it seems to me paradigmatic. Sacharov was torn between different and ultimately incompatible ideals of the Soviet system. Thereafter he espoused some of them passionately—internationalism, humanitar-ianism, devotion to science—while explicitly rejecting others—uto-pianism, class struggle. Like Russian Marxists, he outlined a univer-sal solution for a problem diagnosed in Russia. In his memorandum 'Refeflections on progress, peaceful coexistence and intellectual freedom' he projected the image of a world run on scientific principles, that is, by methods 'based on the deep study of facts, theories and opinions, and assuming open discussion, unprejudiced and dispas-sionate in its findings'.[31] He warned that the present disunity of humankind threatened it with complete destruction, that human beings must try much harder to live together in tolerance, and that for this purpose they needed intellectual freedom and the ability to choose their own governments. He warned of the dangers posed by nuclear war, famine and environmental degradation, but also by closed societies and tyrannical political systems which violated the law and were unresponsive to the aspirations of their own peoples, He proposed that statesmen should aim to dismantle the barriers which divided them, cooperate to tackle the problems which could only be solved by common effort, and ensure the rule of law and democracy in their own countries. He called specifically on the Soviet leaders to reverse the tendency to arrest and sentence nonconformist thinkers who tried to disseminate their views, and to Undertake a complete re-examination of Stalin's crimes, with a view to making the results public.[32] :Sacharov was espousing humane and internationalist ideals not so distant from those which had inspired early Russian Marxists seventy years or so before. However, although he occasionally referred to 'socialism', the context for his project was completely different. It resembled far more the practice of the liberal and constitutional states of western Europe and North America, as well as the principles of international legality on which the United Nations was founded. Sacharov explicitly recognised that he was recommending the convergence of socialist and non-socialist systems, not their continuing struggle. In later years he quoted **UN** documents in appealing for the rule of law inside the Soviet Union, especially after

[31] Андрей Сахаров, 1973, *В борьбе за мир,* Frankfurt-a.-M., 9.
[32] Ibid., 9-65.

the **USSR** signed the final act of the Helsinki conference in 1975. He was trying to create a foundation for trust in both the Soviet and international spheres. In general, international agreements endorsed by the **USSR** in pursuit of peaceful coexistence became a major source of both concepts and inspiration for a generation of human rights activists, among whom Sacharov was the leading but far from the only figure.

A third source of civic and spiritual renewal came from the environmental movement. Throughout the Stalin period, a few scientists and writers had never entirely given up the struggle to preserve the natural environment from the destructive processes of modernisation. They were impelled by motives which were partly aesthetic, partly scientific and partly patriotic—the desire to preserve sources of life which were beautiful, ensured bio-diversity and symbolised something essentially Russian. In spite of the general Soviet drive to 'transform nature', those who shared environmental concerns had always been able to find a few modest strongholds inside the system: in the Academy of Sciences, among some local politicians, and at times in the RSFSR (as opposed to the Soviet) Council of Ministers. They had set up and fought to preserve *zapovedniki*, environmental protection zones, withdrawn from economic use and placed under the protection of the state, as 'something sacred and indestructible, not only in nature but in the human being; this was a commandment, a sacred vow *(zapoved').'* Environmental activists were highly committed and active people, who often cemented their personal relationships by going out together on expeditions to remote regions, sharing primitive living conditions and camp fires. Among the participants in such a youth group was the future priest Aleksandr Men'.[33]

By the 1970s environmentalists were openly claiming a spiritual significance for their work. See for example the following quotation from a popular scientific journal:

> Virgin forest and the unploughed virgin steppe ... are sources of experiences of a higher order. They speak to us ! . . . Nature is not only something outside us, but it forms together with us an integral whole. . . To learn how to penetrate to this unity, to feel around

[33] С. Залыгин, 1992, Откровения от нашего имени, *Новый мир* 1992: ю, 215. The environmental movement is examined in detail in Douglas R. Weiner, 1999, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev,* Berkeley; on Aleksandr Men', see ibid., p 284, and Зоя Масленникова, 2001, *Александр Мень: жизнь,* Москва, ch j.

> oneself the beating of the unbroken pulse of life, means to create a positive foundation for spiritual development, to incorporate into the developing soul a powerful counter-weight to the narrow, practical 'I'.[34]

Such religiosity, vaguely pantheist in orientation, was certainly incompatible with the traditional Soviet drive to overcome and har-ness nature, and suggests an altogether different spiritual orientation.

The environmental movement also had practical outcomes. During the 1980s its activists were the first to combine in civic associations and undertake public political agitation. It was difficult for the authorities to object to public campaigning on issues which were by now almost as uncontroversial as motherhood and apple pie. Already from the 1960s a semi-tolerated debate had been going on in the press on how to protect Lake Bajkał from the effluent of a cellulose factory. As the world's largest fresh-water lake, Bajkał —'the bright eye of Siberia' as the publicist V. Civilichin called it—was a prime symbol of what needed to be rescued from headlong industrialisation. For a long time nothing was done about the factory, but the debate was permitted to continue. By 1987 the cause had Become a civic issue resonant enough for the government to pass a decree ordering the closure of the Bajkai Pulp and Paper Combine. 'At about the same time the Politburo ordered the halting of project work on a hugely ambitious scheme to divert waters from the rivers Ob', Irtys and probably Enisej through a 2000-kilometre long canal to flow into the Aral and Caspian Seas and save them from gradual dehydration.[35] These changes of tack were the first signs that the Soviet leaders were backing down from the Utopian approach to economic development and, more than that, opening major projects to public debate and influence.

Dissent, then, put down roots first and foremost among the activists of culture and science, and in the environmental movement. Ideologically speaking, it went in two main directions: (i) those who wanted a full rehabilitation of Russian ethnic life and Orthodox religiosity, and were usually anti-western in outlook, and (ii) those who believed Russia should join Europe in the full sense, by introducing genuine rule of law. In broad terms, we may say that

[34] Н. Ф. Реймер & Н. Ф. Штильмарк, 1979, Эталоны природы, *Человек и природа [1]979'* 3 > quoted in Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom*, 399.
[35] Geoffrey Hosking, 1990, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*, London, jo-6.

on either side of the borders of the old official Soviet ideological synthesis the nineteenth-century Slavophile-Westerniser split revived.

Both sides looked back to the Russian religious renaissance of the early twentieth century, but drew different lessons from it. Both wanted to see revival of 'personality' *(licnost')*, conscience *(sovest')* and 'spirituality' *(duchovnost'):* these decidedly un-Marxist keywords were constantly used in the literary criticism and intellectual discussion of the 1960s to 1980s, but the two sides interpreted them very differently.[36] The 'Slavophiles' stressed the Orthodox understanding of those terms, while the 'westerners' brought out their political and juridical implications: human rights, rule of law, freedom of creativity and a government answerable to the people. The 'village prose' writers rehabilitated aspects of Christian morality without the ecclesiastical underpinning. [37]

The westernised dissenters had their counterparts in some of the leading **CPSU** Central Committee departments and Academy institutes, notably the Institute for the Study of the United States and Canada, under Georgij Arbatov, and the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (**IMEMO**), under Aleksandr Jakovlev. Already from the late 1950s these institutes were publishing confidential memoranda for circulation to the party leaders reporting on developments in western Europe and North America, notably Keynesian economics, the welfare state and the European Economic Community. They increasingly argued that modern capitalism was proving more flexible than Marx had expected, that it was accommodating itself to trade unions and socialist parties and generating wealth which was not confined to a few embattled rich, but was dispersed in most strata of society. They reported that western governments were not just the tools of a rapacious bourgeoisie, but were ready to cooperate with the socialist countries over such matters as trade, the environment and disarmament, and they advocated responding in a positive spirit. Accompanying party leaders as

[36] For the origins of this use of the term *licnost'*, see Derek Offord, *Lichnost':* notions of individual identity, in: Catriona Kelly & David Shepherd (eds), 1998, *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution*, Oxford, 18-27.
[37] Geoffrey Hosking, 1973, The Russian peasant rediscovered: 'village prose' of the *1960s, Slavic Review* 32, 705-24 ; Kathleen Parthé, 1992, *Russian Village Prose: the Radiant Past*, Princeton.

advisers on visits to the west, they grew to admire the rule of law, the greater press freedom and the general levels of affluence they observed there.[38]

A parallel development was going on in the Central Committee department for Relations with Socialist Parties, headed in the 1960s by Jurij Andropov. Its members were well acquainted with the alternative models of socialism tried out in Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and had perhaps been especially influenced by the short-lived 'Prague spring' of 1968. The journal *Problemy mira i socializma*, edited in Prague, adopted a language and outlook close to that of western socialists. From that Departement and that journal came many of the activists of Gorbačev's reform movement.[39]

That reform movement, based on westernised ideals, thus emerged in the very heart of the Soviet establishment. It took over *'some* of the main Soviet norms and tried to apply them in a new yay. It was supported by Sacharov and most of the 'dissenters', however varied in their views, who had long been developing their ideas mostly inside official Soviet institutions.

The thrust of Gorbačev's reform programme provoked as a reaction the last and in some ways most paradoxical development in Russia's twentieth-century spiritual crisis: the coalescence of much of the church hierarchy with the Russian imperial elements in the Communist Party. The official ideology had always ostensibly been internationalist whilst becoming in practice, as we have seen, a new form of Russian imperialism. Now the ambivalence was removed. The Russian Communist Party, set up in 1990, proclaimed an unambiguous imperialist doctrine, and to do so dismantled the long-standing virulent hostility towards the Orthodox Church. Zjuganov and Ruckoj (Rutskoi) on the one side and Metropolitan Ioann of St Petersburg on the other preached a faith derived in part from the Stalinist synthesis of the late 1940s: that Russia was inherently different from the west, that the Russians were in essence a supra-national people, that their sufferings and their collective mentality qualified them to become defenders of the poverty-stricken and oppressed throughout the world against the us-, IMF-dominated global economic system.[40]

[38] Neil Malcolm, 1990, De-Stalinisation and Soviet foreign policy: the roots of 'new thinking', in: Tsuyoshi Hasegawa & Alex Pravda (eds), 1990, *Perestroika: Soviet Domestic and Foreign Policies*, London, 178-205.
[39] Archie Brown, 1996, *The Gorbachev Factor*, Oxford, 98-103.
[40] Joan Barth Urban & Valerii Solovei, 1997, *Russia's Communists at the Crossroads*, Boulder, Colo.

At the end of the twentieth century the Russian Orthodox Church seemed poorly placed to absorb the spiritual searchings of Russians. It seemed still too wedded to the values of an imperial state, to church buildings and the liturgy, with a stunted congregational life and undeveloped practice of social service. Already during the winters of 1990-92 it found itself upstaged in providing food, shelter and clothing for the poor by the Russian Baptists, who had greater experience of mutual aid, and even worse by western Protestant sects, who not only knew how to conduct social work but also had much better funding. They also found Mission Volga, John Guest and Billy Graham preaching to thousands in football stadiums or over the television.[41] It was also being challenged in Ukraine, where since the war most of its parishes had been situated, by both the Greek Catholic Church and a breakaway Kievan Patriarchate. Moreover, its bishops were under pressure to explain how far they had co-operated with the secret police during the Soviet period. During the 1990s, with a still under-trained priesthood, the laity often ignorant about basic tenets of the faith, underfunded and under attack from all sides, Orthodox prelates reacted like army commanders in a besieged city, by trying to uproot disloyalty and rivalry on all sides.

Meanwhile the secular cultural and civic movements of the revived intelligentsia, though they survived the fall of the Soviet Union, were visibly enfeebled by the operations of the post-Soviet economy. Once the state no longer depended on ideology, the status of intellectuals—not to mention their income—plummeted. Education, science and culture, which had been cherished by the Soviet regime, enjoyed very low priority in marketised Russia, while literature fragmented into what one might call high-, middle- and lowbrow genres as in the west, and was no longer sought out by intellectuals as a lodestar by which to guide their lives.[42] The elements which had enabled the intelligentsia to build its own modified 'trust culture' in the later decades of the Soviet Union were once again abruptly devalued. Trust was once again vested in small social groups of family and friends or in patron-client networks centred at the workplace. In Giddens's terms, Russia was still in the pre-

[41] Davis,/! Long Walk to Church, 91,105.
[42] The process is examined in Stephen Lovell, 2000, The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras, London.

modern phase. Even these networks worked less well, for they were operating in a much harsher, less friendly economic climate which constantly jeopardised their stability.

All the same, Russians were definitely looking for some sort of spiritual life. The 1988 survey which I quoted earlier showed that, whereas there was a large discrepancy between the number of believers in Kemerovo and L'vov, the proportion of convinced athe-ists was about the same: 8% in Kemerovo, 7% in L'vov. Rejection of all religious belief was quite rare in both towns. Now, deprived of an empire which claimed a universal messianic role, Russians had become riotously eclectic in their religious outlook. They were tak-ing to astrology, witchcraft, spiritualism, extra-sensory perception and faith healing, while Protestantism gained an ever greater number of adherents, especially in the cities.[43]

## Conclusions

The twentieth century has been a time of profound crisis for Rus-sians in their understanding of themselves, their community, their state and their relation to each other. Twice their state has collapsed, both monarchy and Communism were in turn discredited, their national church was nearly destroyed, and was then permitted to survive in a truncated and distorted form. In the later Soviet decades the secular intelligentsia provided a moral compass which attracted a maturing generation, but that attraction was undermined by the collapse of the Soviet state. Finally, the forms of primitive commu-nity which offered people some—often unwanted—mutual support in the collective farms, factories and communal apartments are also dissolving fast in the unrestrained market society. Tvardovskij's village community is an anachronism in the globalised twenty-first century economy.

Overall, then, the structures and symbols of the kind which reinforce mutual trust in most societies have been destroyed or devalued not once but several times in twentieth-century Russia. People find it difficult to understand the world in which they live, or their own place within it, and hence to judge according to what moral criteria they should act. One result is the extreme distrust which one senses today in Russian society. Inherited forms of com-

[43] С.Б.Филатов, 2002, Феномен российского протестантизма, and: Послесловие. Религия в постсоветской России, in: idem (ed), *Религия и общество: очерки религиозной жизни современной России,* Москва, 293-3 Ч [an]d 470-84.

-munity have lost their ethical and cognitive underpinnings, and people do not know how to relate to each other. The Russian crisis of trust continues, and it is difficult at the moment to see how it will end.